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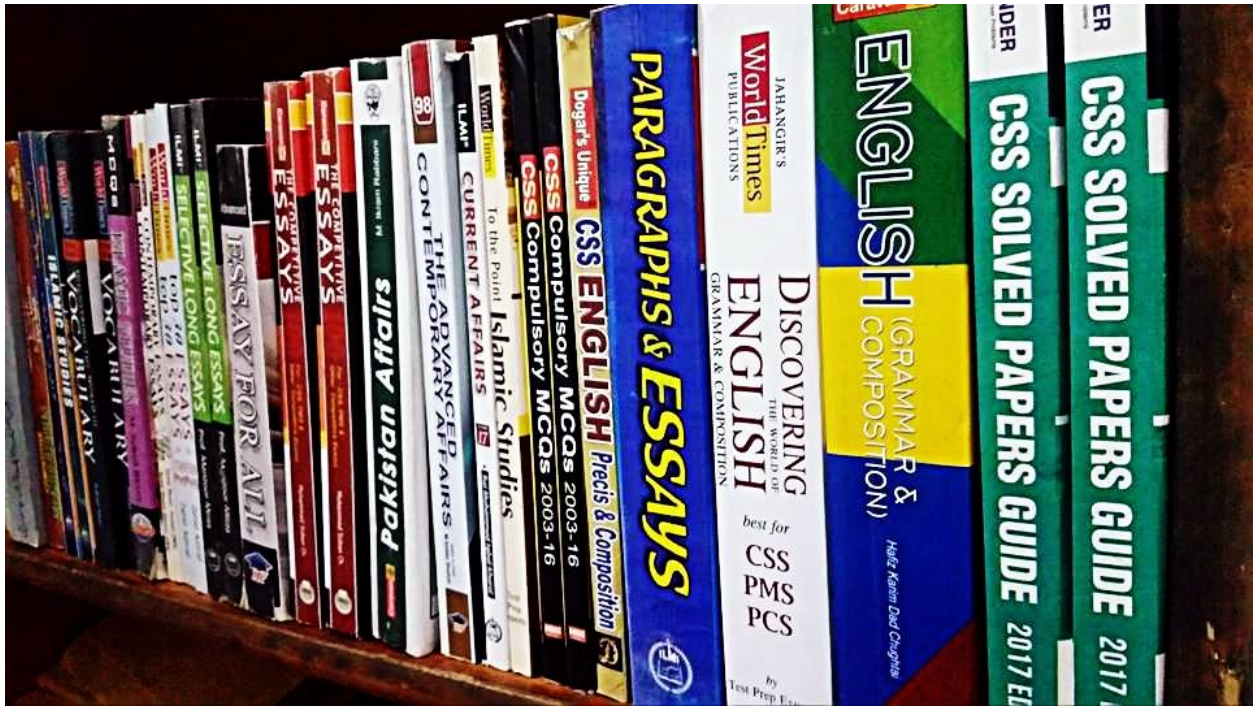
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PAKISTAN

PAKISTAN-INDIA IMPASSE BY YASIR MASOOD

Despite dangling and dilly-dallying epochs between the two neighbouring nuclear giants, Pakistan and India must bury the chronic contentions which have been decaying their relations for such a long time. History witnessed that despite Herculean struggles while attaining independence in 1947, Pakistan slipped away from the clutches of the British crown as a determinant country.

Rolling through turns and turmoils, now it is a breathing reality to India and to the rest of the world that Pakistan is a non-collapsible state, and thus cannot be failed, frailed or fractured by the external flirtations of the black-eyed states. Packed with natural resources and human capital, Pakistan is likely aiming to invigorate its dream of becoming an 'Asian tiger'.

Undoubtedly, at present, relations are at stalemate because our neighbouring geographical giant is in the hands of small-hearted hardliners and hegemonic right-winged, anti-minorities, anti-Muslim, and anti-Pakistan — the BJP.

Astoundingly, sincere efforts were made by a true statesman like Atal Behari Vajpayee — India's former prime minister from the BJP — who wrote musings in the quest of better Pakistan-India relations at the dawn of this millennium. Nawaz Sharif, then prime minister, also resolutely reciprocated. However, hate mongers on both sides tuned up relations back to the old symphonies.

India needs to stop the wild goose chase while holding hostile, historic sentiments against Pakistan for today's synchronised and moving relations. Lately, Islamabad has gone extra miles to call for repeated dialogues which are no less than an embarrassment now. Meanwhile, India is blatantly abjuring the adherence of the Simla Agreement and of the composite dialogues: that it will bilaterally establish peace by finding quick fixes to the issues. For sanity to prevail, truth has to be given a nod to extricate from the current tailspin between both countries. Pakistan has a je dure to consider Indian occupied Kashmir (IoK) incumbent to move forward with the peace process, whereas India winks at the Kashmir issue, and instead tags terrorism as the real cause of halt in the dialogue process.

Indian-occupied Kashmir — a bleeding thorn — remains unresolved which surely holds both atomic powers in a ticklish situation for decades. First things first, India must stop taking the mince out of Kashmiris, Pakistan did not start the recent uprising in Kashmir and cannot stop it either. In the current insurgency, about 30,000 Kashmiris have been injured, maimed or bruised in the state-sponsored terrorism.

The more New Delhi grinds down the suppressed Kashmiris, the more azadi (freedom) slogans will zap against Indian defiance. Similar thoughts were presented by the renowned Indian historian Rajmohan Gandhi — grandson of Mahatma Gandhi — in The Economic Times last year in September: a de facto plebiscite already seems to have taken place there. Kashmiris appear to have voted with untiring throats, with eyes destroyed or deformed by pellets, and with bodies willing to fall to the ground for what the heart desires. And the vote seems to be for azadi. Yashwant Sinha, a former Indian foreign minister from the BJP, also believes that “Kashmiris have lost their fear of India.” Subduing loK from the peace talks will not be a workable solution both for Pakistan and India. Indian-occupied Kashmir must be accepted as a political problem by India in the first place, otherwise the South Asian gridlock would remain in a criss-cross.

India must remember that terrorism is an external conspiracy and not the cause of standstill between both countries. In the 1970s, original sin was committed by India when terrorism was first entrenched to ignite the separatist movements against Pakistan. Even today this monster is being fed by India to destabilise Balochistan and the rest of Pakistan, while supporting extremist organisations like the Tehreek-e-Taliban-Pakistan (TTP), etc. India should realise that no other state in the world like Pakistan is undergoing the test and trials against the horrible and horrendous acts of terrorism. In fact, the Pakistani nation has epitomised that the callousness of extremists can only be curbed by standing against them with undying wills and valour. Undoubtedly, these triumphs of uprooting terrorism/extremism on the part of Pakistan have already been widely acknowledged by the entire globe but India.

Islamabad does not shy away from talking about terrorism with New Delhi, but compromise on eroding loK and other core issues drag the current state at sixes and sevens. Pakistan has garnered untold lessons from its mistakes of Islamic extremism and buried the concept of ‘strategic depth’ to anchor peace in the region. Unfortunately, extremism and jingoism are frequently reflected in the Indian civil society, the media, military and political parties, etc. which are indeed undermining dangers for a secular India ahead. Albeit, Afghanistan could have become a bridge of peace between both countries but India’s proxy with the former against Pakistan can turn the whole region into a terrible turmoil.

Despite the prevailing grumpy situation between Pakistan and India, constructive cooperation in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and the Bangladesh–China–India–Myanmar Economic Corridor (BCIM-EC) can carry the seeds of immense potential to change their fortunes. Economic trajectory of CPEC can certainly knit together South Asia, Central Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Europe. Afghanistan and Iran are also dreaming to partake in CPEC and more interestingly the quiet rise of Bangladesh and Nepal will likely get a boost from this game changer project, too.

Historic opportunities are on offer for both countries, as economic transition is taking place from the west to the east. It is high time to rid from hysteric world of Pak-India hostility as tri-Star economic chain of Pakistan, India, and China, can surely stoke tangible prosperity to South Asia and beyond. Regional guild must harbour some sanity; India has been opposing Saarc which surely breeds more antagonism in the region.

For peace to make inroads between Pakistan and India, back-channel diplomacy must be restored. Finally, the media, think tanks, and people-centric dialogues combined with reciprocal utilisation of prudence and political acumen can lead to a peaceful and welcome settlement of issues between Pakistan and India.

Published in The Express Tribune, April 5th, 2017.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1374393/pakistan-india-impasse/>

MAJOR ALIGNMENTS IN THE MAKING BY TALAT MASOOD

The favourable global and regional environment, along with deft diplomacy, has opened new avenues of cooperation for Pakistan. Recent positive developments in Pakistan-Russian relations are a reflection of the growing confidence in the country by major powers. It is also a manifestation that India's deliberate efforts at isolating us have not succeeded.

Today, China is Pakistan's closest ally and the huge investment and involvement of it in China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a demonstration of this unfolding reality. Interestingly, it coincides with China's expanding role in world affairs that owes largely to its fast growing economy and domestic political cohesion. China's confidence is reflected in its staunch support of globalisation and the flagship role it has undertaken in promoting a green economy. This is in sharp contrast to Trump's current policy of undercutting globalisation and thwarting measures to reduce global warming.

Pakistan has strong friends among Muslim countries as well. While facing trying regional and internal challenges, Turkey finds Pakistan its most reliable political ally. The two are also working towards enhanced cooperation in defence- and security-related fields. Notwithstanding that major differences in weapon systems stand as an impediment to closer cooperation. Experience has also shown that, despite the best of political relations when it comes to joint production or development, countries find it difficult to collaborate.

The European Union (EU) is an exception because it is an economic and political union and is presently not facing any external threat. Most European countries despite these advantages prefer to produce as much in the country to provide employment to their people. In case of Pakistan and Turkey, serious efforts should be made to give an impetus to mutual trade and economic relations. Pakistan needs larger investment in fields of infrastructure and industry and could benefit from Turkey's vast experience in the manufacturing and construction sector.

Former army chief General Raheel Sharif's appointment to lead the 40-state strong Saudi-sponsored "Islamic military alliance to fight terrorism" is a reflection of the confidence reposed in Pakistan and its armed forces. It is another matter that it has generated controversy due to its political and strategic overtones.

As referred earlier, a new chapter of better relations between Pakistan and Russia seems to be in the offing. It is the most dramatic turnaround since the Cold War when Pakistan was closely aligned with the Americans against the Soviet Union.

Several factors seem to have contributed to this encouraging development. Russia has shown interest in joining CPEC and this provides an opportunity for China, Pakistan and Russia to enhance cooperation. For some time now Russia has been showing interest in utilising the Gwadar port to which Pakistan has willingly agreed. Pakistan expects to benefit from Russian investment and technical expertise in the development of the Gwadar port.

It is in mutual interest that Russia becomes an active partner in the CPEC project. Astute observers of the Sino-Russian relations are of the view that Russia's participation in CPEC and use of Gwadar port would enhance cooperation between the two countries. Already, Russia and China are founding members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and members of BRICs. Pakistan, along with India, has recently become a full member of SCO and Russia's membership of CPEC should facilitate in bringing these regional countries closer. Russia which has been facing intense pressure from the United States and the West since its annexation of Crimea and break-up of relations with Ukraine, will find this cooperation a counter move against its isolation.

Moreover, Russia realises Pakistan's pivotal role in the Pak-Afghan theatre and wants to revive its interest in the region. The hosting of the third regional conference on Afghanistan in Moscow with supposedly 12-member countries as invitees is proof of its growing interest. In a way it is challenging the hegemony of the US in the region, especially with reference to Afghanistan. It is a different matter that this would not be easy — considering the significant presence of US troops and its defence assets in Afghanistan. Moscow is seeking help from the Taliban to counter the emerging threat of Da'ish in Afghanistan and the Chechen Republic. And like other regional countries, it is deeply interested in the end of civil war and return of stability in Afghanistan.

Pakistan's military cooperation with Russia is gradually picking up. Last year in September Pakistan's special forces and Russia held a joint military exercise in northern Pakistan. This occurred despite India's declared opposition to it.

Pakistan Army Aviation for many years has been using Russian helicopters and, with better understanding between the two countries, it is possible that we will see more induction of these weapons systems. Russian sale of military equipment to India is on the decline as it switches to the US and Western sources for its new acquisitions and ambitious modernisation programme. Moscow is looking for new markets and Pakistan is one.

This, however, does not imply that Russia does not value its relations with India any less than in the past. The same is true for New Delhi. India has widened its options and leaned heavily on the US to maximise its economic and overall strategic capability to counter China, but maintain close relations with Russia.

In an ironic twist of history, Pakistan's position that peace could return to Afghanistan only if there is political reconciliation between the Taliban and the Afghan government seems vindicated. In a recent Op-Ed piece in The New York Times former US ambassador to Pakistan and later US Special Representative to Afghanistan and Pakistan, Richard Olson, suggested that the Afghan government should seek political settlement with the Taliban. This shows that on Afghanistan convergence is emerging between Pakistan and US thinking and not surprisingly the mantra of "Do more" is gradually subsiding. A balanced and equitable political outcome of the Afghan conflict should contribute significantly in improving Pakistan-US and eventually Pakistan-Afghan relations.

Islamabad is gradually coming out of the woods and must maintain the momentum of building bridges with global and regional powers for internal stability and peaceful borders.

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Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1374395/major-alignments-making/>

BEHIND THE DISTRUST BETWEEN PAKISTAN AND AFGHANISTAN BY DR RAZA KHAN

Of late bilateral relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan nosedived after several terrorist attacks in Pakistan in which Afghan nationals were found involved — leading subsequently to the closure of the Durand Line border between the two countries.

Ties between Islamabad and Kabul have never been smooth and there have always been issues in mutual relations mainly due to historical distrust between them.

The distrust is rooted in their respective national narrative, which has historically been dominated by their undemocratic and non-representative power elite. Pakistani power elite is composed mostly of its civil-military bureaucracy and the agriculture and industrial classes. The Afghan power elite have traditionally been composed of its civil-military-intelligence establishment and so-called politicians, mostly members of Communist groups, without having a political constituency plus certain pseudo-intellectuals.

In order to have legitimacy, the undemocratic power elite in Afghanistan supported by the national media networks and in pursuit of their vested commercial interests, have been fanning sentiments of hatred among Afghans against Pakistan. Consequently, Afghanistan, without any legal ground, since Pakistan's emergence in 1947, has been raising irridentist claims on large tracts of Pakistani territory. This was the origin of the distrust between Islamabad and Kabul. Otherwise, before getting independence Muslims of areas comprising Pakistan had had a great reverence and emotional attachment with Afghans. For instance, Chaudhry Rehmat Ali while proposing the name PAKISTAN included Afghania or Afghan as a main component in the terms or concept of Pakistan. Consequently, since the early 1970s Pakistan, equally without any legal justification, has been trying to locate strategic depth in Afghanistan by making the state its virtual dependency. However, one aspect of these relations is quite clear that it was Afghanistan which initiated issues between the two countries, thinking Pakistan as one of the successor states of British India would be weak. It proved otherwise however for Afghanistan.

In order to pursue their respective interests the power elite of Afghanistan and Pakistan have also been creating and supporting proxy militant and terrorist groups to create conditions for realisation of these objectives. Therefore, Afghanistan started by hosting and cultivating Pakistani Pashtun separatists by forming a terrorist group 'Zalmay Pashtun' to carry our terrorist attacks in Pakistan in the 1970s to create conditions for secession of Pashtun areas of Pakistan and formation of a pro-Afghanistan,

Pashtunistan state besides hosting and nurturing Pakistani Baloch separatists. Pakistan responded by hosting anti-government Afghan clerics in Pakistan and militants trained them to create trouble in Afghanistan followed by hosting, training and arming anti-Soviet Afghan Mujahideen (1980s) and the Taliban (since 1994) to capture state power in Afghanistan and thus to provide Islamabad strategic depth in Afghanistan vis-a-vis India. Thus it has been the undemocratic and unrepresentative power elites of Pakistan and Afghanistan which have been formulating policies regarding the other state, which have been to the detriment of common Pakistanis and Afghans and thus regional peace and stability. However, the realities of international politics also played a significant role in the relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan in which both states have been pursuing their perceived national interest rather than having friendly or good neighbourly ties with the other. The Democratic Peace Theory of International Relations contends that two democratic states do not go to war and create conflict and try to resolve their disputes pacifically. Whereas, the theory of liberal economic interdependence argues that trade between states creates economic interdependence and disincentives war and conflict between and among states. Another theory Material Incentives as Drivers of Political Violence (Humphreys and Weinstein, 2008) argues that groups resort to violence in order to get material incentives. All these theories are quite relevant to the undemocratic power elite-dictated relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

To sort out the distrust between Pakistan and Afghanistan there is a need for continued democratic institutionalisation, which is possible in turn through enhanced participation of Pakistanis and Afghans in the democratic processes, which in turn is possible through informed public opinion to know the objectives of their power elite policies regarding each other's state. Moreover, that the trans-boundary water and energy projects in Pakistan and Afghanistan are mutually beneficial; therefore they must be supported. Unfortunately, little development is taking place in Afghanistan regarding democratic institutionalization. Moreover, while Pakistan has shunned its policy of locating strategic depth in Afghanistan as unequivocally announced by Adviser to Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz some months back, Kabul is still refusing to recognise the Durand Line as the permanent border between the two countries. In this situation distrust cannot be removed.

Published in The Express Tribune, April 4th, 2017.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1373469/behind-distrust-pakistan-afghanistan/>

US ON PAK-INDIA TALKS | EDITORIAL

US AMBASSADOR to the UN Nikki Haley, a rising star in the administration of President Donald Trump, has made another blunt statement that has drawn the ire of a third country and elicited a restatement of more traditional policy by the State Department. Ms Haley ought to be applauded for her straight talk: speaking at a news conference on Monday, the ambassador claimed that the administration she represents is concerned about the relationship between India and Pakistan and that the US wants to “find its place” in talks between the South Asian rivals before a conflict situation arises. The Indian response to that somewhat soft and fairly sensible statement by Ms Haley was swift: the foreign ministry spokesperson insisted that India-Pakistan talks should be strictly bilateral and could only take place in what India describes as an “environment free of terror and violence”. In essence, the Indian position is that dialogue on matters that concern Pakistan should be bilateral, but India welcomes international pressure on Pakistan to address India’s complaints of militancy and terrorism against Pakistan. One-sided and self-serving as the Indian position is, it is compounded by the reality that India is not even willing to engage in bilateral dialogue currently.

Likely in response to intense complaints behind the scenes by India, the State Department has now reiterated that it desires “direct dialogue” between India and Pakistan. But Ms Haley’s comments have echoed what then president-elect Trump said to Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif last November: “I am ready and willing to play any role that you want me to play to address and find solutions to the outstanding problems. It will be an honour and I will personally do it.” According to Indian media reports, those early remarks by Mr Trump also drew a strong reaction from India. Yet, India’s objections do not undermine the logic of the US offer. While India resists so-called hyphenation by the US — approaching US ties with India and Pakistan as interconnected — such an approach could have beneficial consequences for both countries and further the cause of peace in the region. Moreover, given America’s long-standing concerns about militancy in Afghanistan and terrorism in India, it is difficult to argue that even the softest of US mediation would undermine India’s stance against terrorism and militancy. If anything, Pakistan could be encouraged to find a regional solution to the use of proxies and militants by all sides that has so destabilised the neighbourhood.

Ultimately, India and Pakistan will have to engage in dialogue again. History has proved that there is an alternative, especially now that war has become unthinkable between the two countries. The Pakistani military leadership has been clear it does not seek conflict, and the political leadership that it wants dialogue. Surely, India must recognise the desirability and inevitability of dialogue soon.

Published in Dawn, April 6th, 2017

Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1325122/us-on-pak-india-talks>

THE ENERGY CRISIS BY DR M. ASIF

EMERGING in 2006-07, Pakistan's energy crisis still haunts the country — be it lengthy load-shedding, the growing demand-supply gap, energy insecurity, increasing reliance on imports and circular debt. In recent years, it has become more complicated both in dimension and intensity.

Has there been any effort to determine what went wrong? Apparently not. The energy crisis did not take us by surprise; from a surplus of power in 2001 to a deficiency in 2006, the period was long enough for us to have taken action. The crisis has been cultivated by years of negligence and wrongdoing. Senior Wapda officials were raising the alarm as early as 2003, only to be snubbed by key decision-makers. The Nandipur power project is a classic example, speaking volumes for how successive regimes since 2007, when the project that was set to become operational, have jeopardised it.

Has there been any effort to evaluate the impact of the energy crisis on Pakistan's GDP and macro-economy? It does not seem so. The energy crisis has cost the national economy dearly, not only the loss to GDP in terms of missing energy due to the demand-supply gap but also the loss to industrial and commercial activities due to load-shedding and flight of capital from the country. Safe estimates suggest that it has cost the national economy over \$100 billion.

Has there been any account produced to determine the consequent deindustrialisation and flight of capital? Again, no. The crisis has played havoc with our industrial activities. In industrial cities such as Karachi, Lahore, Gujranwala and Faisalabad, thousands of factories have shut down or are operating at the bare minimum level, which has resulted in huge flight of capital as investments have shifted elsewhere. What a shame that it was not just more advanced countries like Canada, Malaysia and UAE that saw a major influx of Pakistani investors, but countries such as Bangladesh and Sri Lanka too.

Ten years on, are we any closer to solving the issue?

Has there been any effort to analyse the impact on micro-level socio-economics? No. The crisis has heavily dented the socioeconomic fabric of society, reportedly resulting in the loss of thousands of jobs mainly due to skewed industrial and commercial activities. With those affected often being the sole breadwinners of their households, the situation has led to dire socioeconomic implications for millions of people. In the absence of any social welfare support, being pushed towards crime and other forms of moral corruption has been the unfortunate, inevitable outcome for many.

Have lessons been learned? No. With vision and commitment, challenges can be turned into opportunities. And opportunities have definitely arisen, but only for certain individuals rather than the masses or the country at large. Many who have been observing closely argue that the energy crisis is another example of how crises are crafted to serve vested interests.

The entire energy sector, in terms of administration and functions, needed to be overhauled; malpractices and wrongdoings that caused the crisis to be corrected; and projects and deals transparently handled. But the state of affairs shows that little has changed; in fact, strong efforts are needed to ensure transparency and merit. Moreover, reckless decision-making must be avoided. It is unfortunate that powerful lobbies still appear to be dictating key energy decisions.

Has any goal-oriented policy and road map been developed to drive Pakistan towards a sustainable energy future? Efforts here too have been sparse. The diverse and complicated nature of the crisis demanded a paradigm shift in the modus operandi: a holistic and coherent energy policy, a goal-oriented approach and an implementation road map. But the situation is without direction. Various ministries, departments and cells still work haphazardly without any meaningful coordination. No value-engineering behind the projects is emerging. Important issues — an imbalance in the energy fuel mix, addressing our energy security by lowering the reliance on imports, and the lack of utilisation of cheap and indigenous hydropower and renewable resources — do not appear to be challenges that cause concern to the authorities.

But the energy crisis can be resolved. Pakistan has the potential, capacity and opportunity to overcome this challenge. Our existing power plants, currently underperforming for a wide range of administrative and technical reasons, need to run optimally. Vast, untapped indigenous resources including hydropower, renewables and fossil fuels can help with energy security and affordability.

Energy conservation, the cornerstone of energy strategies across the world, has to be embedded in the national energy fabric, not just in letter but also in spirit. Our human resources are competent enough to rise to the occasion. What is really missing is the combination of vision, strategy and commitment on the part of policymakers.

The writer is the author of *Energy Crisis in Pakistan: Origins, Challenges and Sustainable Solutions*.

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Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1326795/the-energy-crisis>

NUCLEAR BAN TREATY: A PAKISTANI PERSPECTIVE BY DR CHRISTINE M LEAH & SAIMA AMAN SIAL

At the UN General Assembly recently nearly two-thirds of UN members that do not possess nuclear weapons, participated in a conference seeking to ban nuclear weapons. A nuclear weapons ban reflects misplaced idealism and an under-appreciation of fundamental strategic issues and concepts. It addresses symptoms of a problem, not the underlying problems themselves.

This is not to say that a ban would not help alleviate states' security concerns. It may well, but it is seriously misguided to think that nuclear issues can be tackled separately and independently from broader military issues and conventional force imbalances. Furthermore, a ban that doesn't involve the states that possess nuclear weapons makes one question the effectiveness of such a ban.

Conventional arms imbalances generally, and US conventional military superiority specifically, are as much a potential driver of nuclear proliferation and geostrategic instability as nuclear weapons. As an example, American preponderance in power projection capabilities has in the past influenced some countries to acquire nuclear weapons as a deterrent against US intervention.

A nuclear weapons ban addresses symptoms of a problem, not the underlying problems themselves. Let us take the case of Pakistan. Historically, Pakistan has been a strong proponent of nuclear disarmament. This acquisition of nuclear capability was an internal balancing instrument against Indian conventional military preponderance and revisionist mindset. Before nuclearising, after the 1974 Indian so-called PNE, Pakistan kept proposing a development of a Nuclear Weapon Free Zone in South Asia. Finally, to develop the nuclear weapon, the threat perception was solely driven by India's conventional superiority that had historically culminated in dismemberment of the eastern half of the country in the 1971 war with India.

Traditionally, Pakistan has held that any significant negotiations on nuclear disarmament should entail some fundamental prerequisites; including 'balanced reduction of armed forces and conventional armaments', with emphasis on 'armed forces and conventional weapons of nuclear weapon states as well as militarily significant states'. Pakistan's representative to the First Committee on Disarmament underlined that any initiative undertaken to address the continuing reliance on nuclear weapons should first ensure that it would arrest the 'disturbing trend of escalation in the number and sophistication of conventional weapons'.

Pakistan's diplomatic community has strong reservations regarding any drive towards banning the nuclear bomb that doesn't take into account the disparities in conventional armament and military balance of forces. This rationale is deeply rooted in the agreed framework that founded the basis of the First Special Session of Disarmament, ie, SSOD-I and which later led to the founding of the Conference of Disarmament. The agreed framework of SSOD-I clearly stipulated the negotiations upon which nuclear disarmament should be carried out on balanced reductions of armed forces and conventional armaments based on the principle of undiminished security of all parties' and with a view to promoting stability at lower levels.

Proponents of nuclear disarmament in Pakistan believe that unless the P-5 states fulfill their end of the bargain in the NPT (Article 6), the efforts of states like the current ban would not be successful, especially as it fails to elicit the support of those states that are in possession of nuclear weapons or are under a security guarantee. A ban that doesn't involve the states in possession of nuclear weapons would carry no weight.

More recently, Pakistan has accused the US and other countries of nuclear hypocrisy, with the Pakistani ambassador to the United Nations saying that a handful of nuclear weapon states advocate abstinence for others but are unwilling to give up their large inventories of nuclear weapons.

Indeed, from the Pakistani perspective, the international community does not give enough attention to the issue of vertical proliferation. It should come as no surprise, indeed, that Pakistan continues to stress the importance of nuclear weapons in acting as a deterrent to perceived Indian conventional military superiority. Pakistan in the past has made efforts at addressing issues of conventional force imbalances with India, but New Delhi has traditionally dismissed these efforts, instead focusing on its larger regional competitor, China. The problem in South Asia is therefore at least a trilateral one. But the issue speaks to a much larger problem, and that is multilateral conventional arms control. If the India-Pakistan strategic situation offers any lesson, it is that weaker states (Pakistan) may have to develop a "great equaliser" to offer the security that they cannot find through conventional means.

One Pakistani official stated to the 1998 conference on disarmament that "nuclear restraint and balance in South Asia will be possible if this is accompanied by effective measures for greater balance and symmetry in the conventional arms capabilities in South Asia". Indeed, then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif stated that Pakistan would sign the CTBT if the Kashmir dispute was solved first.

Simply arguing that nuclear weapons are dangerous does not help us solve fundamental problems of geopolitics and strategy. Moreover, whilst morality has its place in strategy, moral absolutes do not. Many proponents of nuclear disarmament have the “luxury” of sitting in a strategic vacuum and argue that states should simply learn to get on with one another.

Government leaders and military planners, however, do not have such a luxury, and have the responsibility of developing policies that are aimed at deterring conflict and minimising destruction if war comes. Deterrence remains a fundamental part of how the international system works. But this reveals a much broader issue about the disconnect between what we might call the deterrence community and the disarmament/nonproliferation community (although not everyone in the nonproliferation community ascribes to disarmament). The two communities, instead of engaging in meaningful dialogue, seem to still be talking over each other.

For the process to ban nuclear weapons to be successful, it must address the motives that drive states to acquire them in the first place. Not only do these motives include perceived threats from larger conventional or non-conventional forces, the existence of unresolved disputes but they also underline the discrimination in the application of international norms and laws. Absent strong and reliable external security guarantees to states that face hostile adversaries with conventionally strong militaries, these weapons would remain to guarantee national security for weaker states. Taking the case of Pakistan, while it was still developing nuclear weapons, it offered to sign the NPT, if India would, also proposing the creation of a regional nuclear weapons free zone. Later it again linked the refusal to sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, with demands for India to sign.

A successful nuclear ban, therefore, would be one that demonstrates a serious commitment by nuclear weapon states to disarm in a reasonable time frame and one whose ultimate objective is to establish a collective security system for states on an equitable basis while ensuring their security concerns that are the primary drivers for nuclear proliferation.

Published in The Express Tribune, April 13th, 2017.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1381947/nuclear-ban-treaty-pakistani-perspective/>

MUZZLING KASHMIRIS | EDITORIAL

On Wednesday, India aligned itself with the likes of some of the most repressive regimes in the world.

Faced with escalating violence in India-held Kashmir, the local government — a coalition of the PDP and BJP — banned social media networking sites, including Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp, for one month “or until further notice” in the valley.

The ‘justification’ given for the move was that the services were “being misused by anti-national and anti-social elements” and that they were being suspended “in the interest of maintenance of public order”.

There is no mystery as to what has triggered this ban: a number of shocking videos and photographs have emerged in recent weeks showing Indian soldiers inflicting brutality and humiliation on the local population.

Young boys armed with nothing more than stones being shot, beaten and kicked, and perhaps the most widely circulated video of all, that of Farooq Dar, a young shawl-weaver tied to the hood of an army jeep as a human shield from stone-pelting locals while it patrolled Kashmiri villages on voting day.

India is using the oldest, and most feeble, pretext in the book — maintenance of public order — to suppress public dissent. This is not how a country that markets itself as “the world’s biggest democracy” behaves. This is how undemocratic states such as Saudi Arabia, China and Egypt wield control over their people.

As is the case in most rebellions, the protests roiling Kashmir are driven largely by the youth, the demographic that is most active on social media. Burhan Wani, the young separatist leader whose assassination last year in July triggered the ongoing wave of unrest in the valley, also used such sites — an effective tool for organising mass uprisings and street agitation — to mobilise his fellow Kashmiris towards joining the resistance.

India has already done its utmost to prevent the issue from being internationalised by refusing the UN access to the area to investigate the excessive use of force by security personnel. The rights violations have become so egregious that respected voices in India itself are speaking out against them.

Instead of trying to address the underlying causes of the turmoil and growing disaffection, the state of India is now trying to further muzzle the people's narrative, and seal off the valley from the outside world. It will not work.

As many other countries have discovered before, a people's cry for justice cannot be silenced. The Kashmiris' desperation will find a way out.

Published in Dawn, April 28th, 2017

Source:<https://www.dawn.com/news/1329681>

STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF BALOCHISTAN BY SADIA SOHAIL

THE case study of Balochistan reveals many important horizons need to be discovered. The general phenomenon upholding till date by our old and current generation is the issue of separatist movement going on in Balochistan. However, unfortunately nothing had ever been taken into account by the researchers/analysts to explore and disclose the causes of this sustained agony. If we meet common folks belonging to Punjab, Sindh or KPK, they would be complaining about Baloch's inadequate and superfluous behaviour towards Pakistan's government. This needs to be investigated before giving a hard or harsh narrative.

From Pakistan's inception till date, this province hasn't been given equal rights. Lack of infrastructure and development led tribal lords to play their cards well. People of Balochistan while remained ignorant of their due rights, have now become puppets in the hands of tribal lords and enemy states. By getting the facts right, there is no denial that India played a central role in 1971 war in dividing Pakistan through propaganda and by accelerating and catalyzing anti-Pakistan movement in the erstwhile East Pakistan. However, our government's imprudent policies to manage this insurgency in the 1970s are till date a stigma on the history of Pakistan. The story in Baluchistan is taking shape, more or less, in a similar way to the East Pakistan.

However, a number of players had increased with the increase in their interests in Baluchistan. Other than political goals, there are many strategic goals underlying for India to interfere in the matters of Balochistan. An unstable Pakistan is in India's interest. Other than that Baluchistan's rich mineral and gold resources have now become an open secret to the international community. By losing Baluchistan, Pakistan would not only lose its part located at an important geopolitical location but also its natural resources.

Once I read somewhere that oil has become more a curse for the Middle East region than a blessing. The argument in support of this statement derived from international scholars, signifying that the presence of major oil reserves in the Middle East attracted the US and Europe to play their dirty politics in this region. Today what we are witnessing in the Middle East is the result of an aim to capture its large amount of oil reserves. However, a pursuit of democracy is used as an instrument to invade these states. West believes that, monarchs and dictatorship in the states of Middle East has taken away the right of self determination from its people. To restore this believe, they are intervening in these states to establish peace in the name of human intervention.

Politics is at play in major parts of the world. There are many human rights violations occurring in parts of the world. But international community is not concerned with human rights violations.. States like the US, Russia and others invade only those states which are rich in resources. So, is the case with Balochistan. Baluchistan has become an epicentre of international attention, fortunately or unfortunately due to its largest reserves of copper and gold. Other than that, many oil and gas pipelines pass through it. This region is highly volatile to Pakistan's interests. Its instability is the greatest challenge which requires a systematic resolution. A policy made in a hurry could produce heinous results. A step by step systematic approach is needed to produce an environment of peace and stability in this region. There is also need to develop relations with neighbouring states sharing borders with Baluchistan because stability could only be established, if its borders are well monitored and secured. We cannot ignore the fact that Iran is a major stakeholder in our foreign policy, and it becomes more important when we know that future of many international pipelines is highly dependent on our good relations with Iran.

India is another border country and is taking advantage of the situation. Pakistan needs to adopt prudent policies, not only to improve security situation in Baluchistan but also because it is the gateway to improve our unimpeded trade growth. These gridlocks have largely hurt Pakistan's economic interests. By improving relations with Iran, we can have multiple advantages at our end. First, it will improve the security situation in Baluchistan and will help in its development. Second, it will boost confidence building measures among Balochs and government of Pakistan and government of Pakistan can initiate its long promised pipelines through Iran. Whereas India is concerned, India is also eyeing the benefits of TAPI and IPI to fill its thirst for energy resources. While eyeing on its rich oil and gas resources, and an aim to destabilize and cripple Pakistan by separating Baluchistan from Pakistan, India has resumed many insurgent operations in Baluchistan. India's covert operations are not hidden anymore. The declaration of Indian spies of sabotaging Baluchistan through suicide bombing and facilitating small arms manoeuvring across the borders is now an open secret.

At this hour, government of Pakistan should move forward with a better narrative to bring improvement in Baluchistan. The situation in Baluchistan needs a policy plan which brings amelioration economically, strategically and socially. A strong Baluchistan can promise a strong Pakistan. We should unite as a nation to safeguard our national interests in Baluchistan and abandon every possible interference from Indian or western side through strong plan of action. For that government of Pakistan needs to develop its health and education department first. It's not important that mega projects should be launched, but rather small steps towards infrastructure development in health and

education department could lead us to cover miles of restoring confidence and trust upon each other. A decision made in time saves nine.

— The writer is freelance columnist based in Islamabad.

Email: sadia.sohail1@hotmail.com

Source: <http://pakobserver.net/strategic-importance-balochistan/>

CRITICAL JUNCTURE IN PAK-US TIES | EDITORIAL

In an unannounced visit, the US national security advisor, H R McMaster, met with the civil-military leadership of Pakistan on Monday. The American emissary communicated to his Pakistani counterparts to come clear and clean on all types of militants including the Haqqani Networks.

General (ret'd) McMaster had earlier expressed similar sentiments during his sojourn in neighbouring Afghanistan. Given the chequered history of Pakistan-US relations and the recent shift in each other's strategic outlook – where the US has established strategic relations with India and Pakistan has fully embraced the Chinese, and is pursuing the Russians – this American visit is extremely critical for both the Islamabad and Pakistan. The US still is a superpower with its economic, military and epistemic superiority over China, Russia and Europe. The Trump Administration, being conservative, is all clear on the question of militancy emanating from the Middle East, Africa and South Asia.

Little wonder, Trump-led USA attacked Syria, dropped the Mother of All Bombs on Afghanistan and its military might is encircling North Korea for a possible attack. Significantly, China is walking cautiously and is unlikely to confront the US on the North Korean issues. Moreover, Pakistan-India relations are at an all-time low these days due to the Jadhav episode. And Kashmir is burning with Indian atrocities on the rise. In such a constrained context, Pakistan has limited choices: it can either say goodbye to the US forever or balance its relations with China and the US. For the latter to happen, Pakistan ought to open up all channels of communication and diplomacy with the US and work in tandem to eradicate extremism and terrorism. Mashal Khan's brutal murder and the confession of Noreen Laghari regarding her links to the Islamic State are only the tip of the iceberg. The US on its part should appreciate Pakistan's stance on Kashmir and play a mediatory role to resolve this lingering conflict once and for all. China can also be taken on board for Kashmir settlement. Finally, the arrival of US national security advisor is probably the last opportunity for Pakistan. If lost, it is the latter that will suffer economically and strategically for critical junctures are rare.

Source: <http://dailytimes.com.pk/editorial/18-Apr-17/critical-juncture-in-pak-us-ties>

STRUGGLE FOR THE CONSTITUTION BY DR FARID A MALIK

On April 10, 1973 an agreement was reached on the permanent Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (ZAB) was the chief architect of this sacred document whose main features are: democratic, parliamentary and federal (DPF). Despite onslaughts and intrigues this article has survived for 45 years. Dictators, usurpers and their rogues have all done their best to manipulate this agreement between the rulers and the ruled.

The sventies were a tumultuous time for Pakistan. The first free and fair elections were held in 1970. Results shocked the establishment. Instead of a divided house two major parties emerged. Awami League bagged 160 out of 162 East Pakistan National Assembly seats while Peoples Party won 81 out of 138 West Pakistan Constituencies. When the people's mandate was over ruled civil war started in the Eastern Wing and Quaid's Pakistan was dismembered. The 1962 Constitution had been abrogated and the country was being run under a martial law 'Legal Framework Order' (LFO). ZAB assumed power of what was left of the country, first as Martial Administrator under LFO and then President after the promulgation of the 1972 interim Constitution.

When it comes to Constitution making, Pakistan has a very checkered history mainly because of Establishment incursion in the democratic process. The first version was prepared in 1956, nine years after independence. Before its complete implementation it was abrogated in 1958 followed by martial law. Then the second document was imposed in 1962 by the dictator. It introduced sham democracy run by the thana (Police Station).

In 1967 ZAB revolted against the dictator. East Pakistan never accepted the Khaki rule. Suharwardy's Awami League was now under the leadership of an ordinary worker Mujib-ur-Rehman, who wanted complete autonomy under a confederal arrangement. The fall of the dictator paved the way for democracy and elections were held in 1970 on the basis of one man one vote. Will of the people prevailed and they were back in the system. A lot has been written about the break-up of Quaid's Pakistan what was left of it needed a constitution.

In 1972 Yayha's martial law was lifted to be replaced by an interim constitution. ZAB was elected President by the house. He initiated work on a permanent document. As the establishment was beaten and bruised the comrades like Mahmood Ali Kasuri and Hafiz Pirzada had a free hand. After persistent efforts the document was ready. ZAB sought complete consensus. The right wing parties were not comfortable with some of the clauses and there was a deadlock.

In order to remove the impasse, ZAB got directly involved. There was a rumour in the University that he was meeting the Chief of Jamaat-e-Islami Maulana Maududi at their office in Zaildar Park Ichra. By the time the students reached there, ZAB had left after arriving at a compromise. Pakistan finally had a constitution that was agreed to by all the parties. There was a concurrent list of departments that had to be devolved to the provinces in ten years. Instead of the Martial Law and its Jungle Rule, the country was now under the constitutional rule of law in which the establishment was contained. Beaming with confidence ZAB called for elections in 1977 one year ahead of schedule.

While he wanted to surprise the opposition by snaps polls the establishment had already laid a trap for him. The moment assemblies were dissolved a nine party joint movement called Pakistan National Alliance (PNA) was announced to contest the elections on a unified platform under the symbol of 'plough' (Hal). Considering his popularity ZAB allowed the political parties to contest against him as a joint opposition. The electables who had managed to get PPP tickets indulged in their old tricks and the entire electoral exercise in 1977 was disputed by the mischief of the few. A movement was launched to topple the democratic agreement. The establishment was back with a vengeance.

ZAB was not only removed from power, he was physically eliminated through judicial murder on April 04, 1979. Once again the constitution came under attack. The usurper openly expressed his disdain of the document saying, I can tear and trash it. He introduced his own brand of religion through illegal and unwanted amendments. His draconian amendments allowed dismissal of elected governments and denial of basic rights like education (Article 25-A). It was the darkest period (1977 to 1988) of history from which recovery has been very difficult.

The 1973 Constitution has saved the federation despite several unholy onslaughts by the Khaki dictators and their political rogues who ruled after them. The United States Constitution that was enacted in 1787 is hailed as 'Miracle of Philadelphia'. While it ensures freedom, it also allows progress. Today USA leads the world in technology and democracy and is the lone super power.

Pakistan is a constitutional democracy, largely due to the efforts of the truly elected assembly of 1970. As a nation we must, defend and protect our Constitution. The Lawyers Movement in 2007 was supported by the civil society for the rule of law. The 1973 document has to be restored to its original form, all martial amendments should be annulled to cleanse it. Amendments are fine but after a due process and open debate. April 10, 1973 produced a miracle for Pakistan, a Constitution that is democratic,

parliamentary and federal it is time to uphold, defend and follow it if progress is desired. The rulers and the ruled have to work in unison under an agreed framework. Sham elections and fake leaders cannot deliver. Dictators and their NRO's have been disastrous for the country. Constitutional rule of law is the way forward as envisioned by the Quaid.

Source: <http://nation.com.pk/columns/19-Apr-2017/struggle-for-the-constitution>

SOLUTIONS TO OUR POWER CRISIS BY J. SADIQ

Load shedding and Pakistan seem to be inseparable. As the sun blooms in all its splendour, daytime temperatures become unbearable and incessant outages of power cause life to be piping hot yet again. Public criticism seems to have gone up. Energy shortages are once again front page news. In all honesty, the Sharifs don't give a fig about the emergent situation. The ace politician has been too busy, of late, defending his money stashed at the May Fair, London. However, excessive load shedding may knock the Sharifs off their perch. In their last election campaign, the PML-N had rallied the public behind its slogans of "zero load shedding". The energy crisis was as threatening back then as it seems to have become now. A lot of compulsive chatter, coupled with faithful acolytes, had yielded them a victory in the 2013 general elections. However, if the present misery caused by incessant power tripping lingers on, they are sure to lose their way into another term in government in 2018. Load shedding has once again infested Pakistan like a plague, devastating economic life across the country.

Let us examine what genuinely seems to be the problem here. Demand for power in the country wobbles in the range of 18,000 - 20,000 MW during peak summer months. However, with its current generation capacity, the national grid can supply up to a maximum of 12,000 MW. Simple arithmetic yields a supply demand gap of 7,000 MW on average.

The power sector remains as cash starved as it was in the beginning of the N-league tenure. The circular debt has ballooned to a nerve racking level of over Rs 500 billion. What leads to circular debt is hardly a puzzle anymore. Pakistan's power distribution utilities periodically determine their tariffs. Once these utilities are done with their calculations, they file a petition with the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) which then determines its own tariff through a series of dialogues held with senior energy sector minds in the country. Once a rational, cost reflective tariff has been determined, the NEPRA sends it for the government's approval. The government, in violation of the NEPRA Act of 1998/99, frequently lowers the tariffs, and notifies uniform tariffs across all the utilities in the country. The difference between a cost reflective tariff and one notified by the government is then paid by the Ministry of Finance as tariff differential subsidies. This has serious ramifications for the government's already edgy fiscal purse. In a country like Pakistan, with disappointingly low tax-to-GDP ratios and an ugly external debt profile, having circular debt on your books can be ravaging. Then, there are system deficiencies. Not only is Pakistan's generation capacity below par, but its transmission and distribution infrastructure is in complete tatters and sorely in need of repairs. The clamour about adding more general capacity to the national grid makes little sense, if concurrently, no capacity enhancements are made in the already bloated

transmission lines. After all, what good is additional power, if it cannot be transmitted to the end user.

Solutions to our power crisis J. Sadiq

Given that Pakistan recurrently hauls back to frequent and unscheduled load shedding, I believe that the persons in charge of the situation have not had a good handle on the subject. As successive governments over the years have made a hash of the national grid, there is clearly a strong case for off grid solutions to the country's power crisis. Pakistan is located in a region exposed to considerable sunlight around the year. Its solar power generation potential exceeds 50,000 MW. Analysts well-versed in the engineering details of such a scheme have repeatedly harped on going off grid. Load shedding, if not controlled, will continue to be a drag on the economy. Economists and rational thinkers, endowed with brains far more superior than mine, estimate that the economic cost of load shedding runs into billions of dollars. Why then our governments have been so dead on their feet? Does it usually take decades to get a hang of an economic problem? Have we not suffered enough discomfort already? Are those entrusted with the task of ensuring uninterrupted power supply to the nation suitable for the job?

The writer is an alumnus of the University of Cambridge and an economist. He previously worked as a journalist in London and has also played for Pakistan's Junior cricket team

Source: <http://dailytimes.com.pk/opinion/22-Apr-17/solutions-to-our-power-crisis>

BETTER US-CHINA TIES CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PAKISTAN BY ANWAR IQBA

WASHINGTON: A recent improvement in US-China relations can create a 'comfort zone' for Pakistan as Washington views Beijing's growing influence in Afghanistan as a positive development, diplomatic observers say.

"While Pakistan has close and tested friendship with China, it also desires strong and mutually beneficial ties with the United States," says Aizaz Ahmed Chaudhary, Pakistan's ambassador in Washington. "Pakistan was a bridge for the US to China and remains so for common good."

Senior US and Pakistani officials met in Washington last week to review their relations, discussing both "difficult and less difficult" issues, as an observer said. Finance Minister Ishaq Dar led the Pakistani team at these talks. National Security Adviser Gen H.R. McMaster led the US team.

Speaking at a seminar on US-Pakistan relations at the Harvard Kennedy School on Thursday, two days after the White House meeting, Ambassador Chaudhary said that both sides showed a desire to strengthen their ties.

"The recent high-level engagements between the two sides were cordial and there was a desire on both sides to constructively engage for a broad-based relationship," he said.

Islamabad hopes that new US policy for Afghanistan will protect its interests in the region

Pakistan's relations with the United States began to strain in May 2011, when Americans discovered Osama bin Laden in a compound in Abbottabad, launched a commando operation and eliminated him without informing Islamabad.

Since then, the United States has regularly accused Pakistan of allowing terrorists to use its tribal belt to attack targets inside Afghanistan. Pakistan rejects these charges as incorrect and says that it launched two major military offensives in the area, eliminating militants' sanctuaries and killing hundreds of terrorists.

The United States acknowledges the success of those operations but says that some elements of the Haqqani Network are still operating from the Federally Administered Tribal Areas.

Mr Chaudhary, while talking to Dawn, stressed the need to overcome the disputes as ties between the two nations were too important to be ignored. “Both Pakistan and the US have a shared interest to stabilise Afghanistan, defeat the increasing presence of Daesh, and augment the ongoing cooperation in several areas, from education to health to energy to IT and commerce and investment,” he said.

Pakistan expressed desire to reboot ties with the US at a time when the Trump administration is reviewing its policy for the South Asian region. But US sources say the review process focuses on Afghanistan, not Pakistan or the greater South Asia. The team making the new Afghan policy is expected to complete the task by mid-May.

“Since the relationship between the US and Pakistan is security-centred, the US administration looks at Pakistan from the Afghan perspective,” said a diplomat while explaining why the review also concerned Pakistan.

Pakistan has already conveyed its views on Afghanistan and hopes that the new policy would also protect its interests in the region: it wants a role in the peace process and an assurance that India will not be allowed to use the Afghan territory for stirring troubles in Pakistan.

A former Taliban spokesman, Ehsanullah Ehsan, confirmed Pakistan’s concerns in a confessional statement earlier this week, stating how Indian and Afghan officials had sheltered Pakistani Taliban, who had fled after the launching of Operation Zarb-i-Azb, and were now encouraging them to attack targets inside Pakistan.

The US concern, however, revolves around the militancy in Afghanistan as it wants enough stability in that country to allow a peaceful disengagement. The Americans also want the set-up they established in Kabul to continue after their withdrawal.

Washington also notes with concern that their apparent failure to contain the Afghan insurgency, and continued terrorist attacks inside Pakistan, have encouraged two other international players — China and Russia — to claim a role in Afghanistan.

Diplomatic observers say that US does not want Russia to re-enter Afghanistan after its disastrous withdrawal from there in 1989 and that’s why it’s suspicious of Islamabad’s growing ties with Moscow. But it is more comfortable with China, particularly after President Donald Trump’s April 6-7 meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping.

The improved ties have paved the way for China to play a greater role in bringing peace and stability to Afghanistan and this is where Pakistan also sees an opportunity for itself.

“We do not consider it a zero-sum game,” said Ambassador Chaudhary while stressing Pakistan’s desire to maintain close ties with both China and the United States. “We played a bridge role in the 70s and we still believe we are a bridge.”

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Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1329965/better-us-china-ties-create-opportunities-for-pakistan>

WHY PAKISTAN IS PURSUING FULL SPECTRUM DETERRENCE AGAINST INDIA BY BEENISH ALTAF

Pakistan's former envoy to United Nations, Amb Zamir Akram said that Pakistan is not seeking parity with India in terms of nuclear weapons, but is rather pursuing Full Spectrum Deterrence to ensure that there are no gaps in its deterrence capability. It is the need of the hour, while looking at the growing Indian aspirations of becoming a giant South Asian nuclear power. It includes both the nuclear weapons development and the missile development.

The number of nuclear weapons, enough to maintain nuclear deterrence, has continued to trouble nuclear deterrence theorists, strategists and policymakers since the post-Cold War period. Meanwhile, the world's nuclear weapons stockpile is estimated to be at 16,000 approximately, and all states possessing nuclear weapons, in one way or another, are constantly modifying and modernizing their nuclear inventories. No state will place a number or cap on what it considers to be a sufficient nuclear force for credible deterrence.

In South Asia, India and Pakistan, nuclear armed rival neighbors, have estimated stockpiles of 90-110 and 100-120 respectively, according to estimates from the SIPRI Yearbook 2015. Both countries have committed policies of minimum nuclear deterrence and no-nuclear arms race. While India seeks to maintain a nuclear force sufficient to deter mainly China and Pakistan, Islamabad maintains that it seeks a deterrent equilibrium vis-a-vis New Delhi and not nuclear parity.

Amb Akram, with a practical command on the subject, viewed that the threats were growing in the region due to large scale acquisition of military hardware by India, its public rejection of the policy of No First Use of nuclear weapons, determination to carry out disarming strikes against Pakistan, and its espousal of dangerous and destabilizing doctrines like the Cold Start Doctrine.

Ironically the revolving ongoing speculation on the transformation of NFU policy of Indian Nuclear doctrine is getting a lot of hype nowadays. The strategy might be to keep all options open by putting ambiguity in its nuclear doctrine. Diplomatically, the Indian doctrine is only to show the international community that New Delhi has maintained a responsible use of its nuclear weapons by declaring a written doctrine, which, paradoxically, was never credible enough.

Only due to the abovementioned espousing weaponry expansion and military enlargement, 'this has required us to move towards Full Spectrum Deterrence for

responding to threats at the tactical level, the counter-force level, and the counter-value level. We need to cover all levels of threat.' It should be taken into account that the strategic stability in South Asia was not just about Pakistan and India, but also involves China and the US in the sphere.

Referring to a recent statement by Massachusetts Institute of Technology scholar Vipin Narang, and assertions by former Indian National Security Adviser Shiv Shankar Menon in his book suggesting that India could shed its No-First Use doctrine and carryout disarming pre-emptive strikes against Pakistan, the former envoy said this did not come as a surprise because Pakistani security quarters never believed in an Indian declaratory statement of No-First Use, which could not be verified.

It is important to note here that India is the largest arms importer, and is engaged in several nuclear deals worldwide for which US is the biggest helper. An evidence estimated that for the US it would be desirable if a friendly Asian power beat Communist China to the punch by detonating a nuclear device first for which the very likely country was no other than India. So, the US assisted by helping India acquire nuclear explosive, for balancing communist China that is evident from the recently declassified Sept 1961, top secret memorandum from State Dept official George McGhee to Secretary of State Dean Rusk.

There were various national and international factors behind the Indian nuclear program. Internationally, New Delhi perspective is that its program was driven by its reservations about China, which had nuclear weapons, and its desire to achieve "great-power status".

Nevertheless, posture of Credible Minimum Deterrence has remained a principle option of Pakistan's nuclear policy. This principle is based on the concept that Pakistan's nuclear policy is driven by its perceived threat to its security from India and is therefore India-centric. Deterrence is the sole aim and a small arsenal is considered adequate for satisfying it. But ironically this is also a fact that with the introduction of Tactical Nuclear Weapons in the region or with the introduction of battlefield weapons is actually a modernized advancement in the inventories. Those are ironically meant to balance out this superiority complex.

So, it could be concluded that it is only when states feel threatened they opt for defending their territory and sovereignty that actually compels them to maximize their security measures under the perceived threat of vulnerability. But for maintaining a deterrent posture, according to my understanding, the quantitative number is not necessary, as the possession of a nuclear weapon is itself enough for crafting

deterrence. Because even by possessing one nuke, the nuclear aggression from the other state can be discouraged. So the question of numeric parity or nuclear sufficiency does not make sense. Therefore, it would not be in correct to conclude that credible minimum deterrence is not the same as nuclear parity and nuclear supremacy.

Source: <http://nation.com.pk/blogs/29-Apr-2017/why-pakistan-is-pursuing-full-spectrum-deterrence-against-india>

MAKING PEACE IS HARDER THAN MAKING WAR BY GULSHAN RAFIQ

Since the nuclearisation of South Asia in 1998, both South Asian nuclear states, India and Pakistan, have successfully avoided any major war. This restraint was due to the deterrent effect of nuclear weapons that come along with the massive destructive capability of nuclear fission. However, owing to the proximity between India and Pakistan, two unfortunate developments happened. First, India discovered a threshold below nuclear level in the shape of Operation Parakaram wherein India aimed at extracting its adventurism at a conventional level. Second, Cold Start Doctrine was realised to quench its historical enmity with Pakistan. As a result, India kept on advancing its nuclear and conventional arsenals quantitatively as well as qualitatively.

Such is the case of recent Indian Defence budget 2017-18, presented on February 01, 2017 that witnessed a hike of 6 percent in Indian defence budget which translates into approximately Rs. 2.74 lakh crore, including a massive amount of Rs. 86,488 crore for modernisation and operational preparedness in future. Interestingly, a report, entitled 'Trends in world Military expenditure, 2016' by Swedish think-tank Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SPIRE), puts it in further perspective by stating that since 2009 to 2016 India has increased its defence spending so much that it moved from 7th to 5th position in international ranking. On the contrary, Pakistan does not even being counted in the first fifteen defence spenders due to its belief on minimum credible deterrence; nevertheless, makes Pakistan more and more vulnerable on its Western front with the increase in Indian arsenals. Defence analysts narrate that gap between arch rivals on military spending has widened to 1:7; that, India spends seven times more than Pakistan on its military. It is hard for Pakistan to match India's spending as later economy is comparatively much greater in size. Therefore, Islamabad believes that India is disturbing balance of power in South Asia.

Moreover, India has also been world's top arms buyer for the last three years according to a report released by SPIRE. This unbridled spending in defence sector has augmented especially during the last three years. Unfortunately, this blind drive for the arms accumulation and military modernisation unleashes an unending arms race in South Asia, which resulted in deterioration of prevalent strategic stability between India and Pakistan. Western governmental and private arms manufacturing companies are rushing towards India with the hope of landing multi-billion dollars and New Delhi is aiming to leverage some of that buying power to get transfer of technology and end the overwhelming reliance on imports. In this sense, India's heavy military spending and acquisition of weapons threatens Pakistan and its efforts for regional peace.

Though India justifies its expenditure on various accounts, such as pointing its need to tackle China's rise; however, its actual focus is on Pakistan as nearly 90 percent of its arsenals are Pakistan specific. In other words, India's adventurism threatens security and survival of Pakistan and other small neighbours which feel insecure as India has substantive territorial and resource sharing issues with all its neighbours.

The two neighbouring countries, India and Pakistan, are nuclear armed and cannot live in an environment of hostility towards each other forever, especially when both are fighting terrorism on their soils. The rational way forward is to sit on the seats of dialogue to talk about peace and find real solutions. World powers might be cooperating with India on defence and nuclear weapons, but their discriminatory attitude against Pakistan must stop as it has already destabilised the strategic stability of South Asia.

What does need to be increased is the funds for the development of downtrodden. India is home to World's highest poor population. Millions of Indians do not have access to safe drinking water and to washrooms. The human population is at the mercy of warmongering leaders. It is not only a South Asian issue but also should be the concern of International community for peace and security of the region.

Consequently, what could be suggested is that India should start thinking rationally. It should cut its booming military spending, educate its youth, feed its hungry, elevate its poor and cooperate with its neighbours for regional peace. In this regard, economic activity between India and Pakistan with very strong relations is key to success for both, maybe more so for Pakistan than India.

Nevertheless, as it was advised by Mikhail Gorbachev, quote, "We could only solve our problems by cooperating with other countries. It would have been paradoxical not to cooperate.

And therefore we needed to put an end to the Iron Curtain, to change the nature of international relations, to rid them of ideological confrontation, and particularly to end the arms race."

Source: <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2017/05/01/making-peace-is-harder-than-making-war/>

THE CASE OF URDU | EDITORIAL

A DIVISION bench of the Lahore High Court has suspended a directive passed by a single-member bench that called for the Central Superior Services examination to be held in Urdu beginning in 2018. The earlier LHC direction had come in the wake of a Supreme Court ruling in 2015 that called for having Urdu as the language for running the affairs of the state. The latest order was passed last Wednesday on an appeal by the Federal Public Service Commission with the next hearing fixed for April 20. In its arguments, the FPSC echoed the views that were widely expressed in the public domain after the court order to make Urdu the medium for the CSS examination.

Talk of Urdu as the language of power typically stirs up sensitivities. Not least among them is the question of native tongues and the view held by so many that Urdu — as yet — doesn't quite have the capacity to cater to the state. Indeed, it is commonly and controversially contended that a switch to Urdu will bring CSS standards down. It is said that the language, because of a sheer absence of sufficient exposure to many modern subjects such as science at the highest level, lacks in certain essential expressions. This often charged debate will continue as the LHC sits down to deliberate upon the matter. It is an important case and the decision will be eagerly awaited by not only the aspiring CSS candidates but Pakistanis at large. A salient point put forward so far is that there is no Urdu syllabus and no experts around who are trained to measure just how competent the CSS's Urdu-medium candidates are. This would entail, first, implementing Urdu as the medium of learning at all levels to enable both the language and the candidates required to take this high-efficiency test in Urdu. Rather than an abrupt transition, there must be a gradual, phased approach towards the creation of a system where the candidate can choose from multiple language options.

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ECONOMY

PAKISTAN'S DYSFUNCTIONAL TAX SYSTEM — WHO WILL FIX IT? BY OBED PASHA

There is one way to ensure the country's progress and viability — make the rich start paying taxes

During Fiscal Year 2016, Pakistan celebrated a tax collection of over \$31 billion. Not only did the Federal Bureau of Revenue (FBR) surpass its own target, but also managed to increase revenue collection by \$7 billion when compared to previous year's figure. This is laudable, but only until we don't consider the mechanisms of tax increment. The brazenly unethical structure of our economy prevailed as always, and the tax burden was yet again shifted towards low income households. The state continued to rely on intensifying tax collections through indirect means such as increasing sales taxes on petroleum products, which favoured the elite. Last year, the country collected over 60 percent of its taxes through such unfair methods. Although the government is working on increasing the share of direct taxes, the progress is painstakingly slow and remains biased towards the rich.

An overwhelming majority of direct taxes are collected through withholding taxes received from salaried individuals, whereas the elites contribute less than 5 percent to the revenue at a time when it controls over 44 percent of the wealth. Wealthy businessmen have found inventive methods to dodge taxes, whereas most individuals engaged in property and construction businesses prefer to operate from outside the tax system. Same goes for other self-employed professionals. As a result, Pakistan's tax-to-GDP ratio hovers around 10 percent, which is comparable to other countries such as Haiti and Gabon. This ratio is much lower if we account for the 36 percent of our economy that remains undocumented. Comparatively, India's tax-to-GDP ratio is 18 percent. According to Research and Advocacy for the Advancement of Allied Reforms (RAFTAAR), less than half a percent of our population pays taxes which is a mere 0.5 million out of 4 million potential taxpayers.

It is an open secret that Pakistan is in an abysmal fiscal state, which desperately needs to increase its tax base. Increasing the base requires extensive administrative reforms within the FBR with immediate focus on incompetent regional tax offices (RTOs). According to the Tax Reforms Commission (TRC) report, RTOs collect a mere \$68 million in taxes, whereas the cost incurred by the FBR to maintain these offices is \$78

million. In other words, the government would be in a better financial shape without them. Hence, the core problem is the outdated organisational structure followed by the FBR.

Countries around the world are moving towards a centralised structure based on the type of taxpayers, rather than the region they belong to. Advancement in Information Technology (IT) has contributed to this move that allowed taxation departments to process data at centralised locations. The Internal Revenue Services (IRS) of the United States., for example, adopted such structure back in 1998 through four divisions. These divisions operate through their national offices, dealing with taxpayers based on their specific needs. Catering to specific customers means that each division is defer in handling and aware of the laws that govern them. The needs and laws governing a self-employed doctor, for example, would be different to that of a vegetable whole-seller. Operating at scale and providing specialised services decreases the cost by streamlining the process while reducing direct contact with taxpayers. Hence, low chances of corrupt practices.

Moreover, modern data management techniques have made it possible to easily detect tax evasion. Adopting proper IT tools can help the FBR synthesise data from the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) with its own tax return database to identify non-filers. Similarly, consolidating data from airline companies, private schools and banks can help generate algorithms to single out individuals for tax audit. If properly implemented, such systems can substantially reduce, if not eliminate, corruption and illegal wealth accumulation.

This isn't rocket science and is already being used by states around the world to combat such practices. The question remains is whether the government has the political will to implement these reforms. In recent years, Finance Minister Ishaq Dar has tried to institute some reforms such as introducing withholding taxes on banking transactions and new property taxes. However, these reforms were met with tough opposition from traders and property dealers. The government has no option but to take on their vested interests and ensure fair and effective tax collection.

Desperate monetary measures are required to provide services such as policing, education and healthcare that have deteriorated owing to lack of funds. In addition, there are high chances of unrest should such matters aren't resolved duly.

Pakistan is already under tremendous pressure from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank due to an annual fiscal account deficit of over 4 percent, which forces the state to continue accumulating loans. If we are to ensure the progress

and viability of the country then we'll have to make sure that the rich and influential pay their due tax shares for there is no alternative.

Obed Pasha is lecturer of Public Policy at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. He can be reached at obedpasha@gmail.com or @ramblingsufi

Source: <http://dailytimes.com.pk/opinion/04-Apr-17/pakistans-dysfunctional-tax-system-who-will-fix-it>

WHAT IS WRONG WITH PAKISTAN'S ECONOMY? BY NAVEED IFTIKHAR

DELAWARE: What's wrong with Pakistan's economy? An economist, most likely, will reply by pointing to macroeconomic indicators such as slow GDP growth, lower investment, higher fiscal deficit, a troubling balance of payment, lower tax collection, weak export competitiveness and higher public debt.

Some may highlight rampant corruption and microeconomic foundations of key economic and social sectors. Often, the economic dialogue is narrowly confined to these indicators and sectoral reports.

Most of the economists cannot unearth the societal and cultural foundations that may be constraining economic growth and prosperity in the long run. This is perhaps one of the reasons it is remarked that "the economy is too important to be left to economists."

Since independence, Pakistan's economy sporadically achieved GDP growth higher than 5% — especially during military governments in 1960s, 1980s and 2000s. However, it would be too simplistic and flawed to establish a correlation between military rule and higher economic growth; the phenomenon is indeed "borrowed growth".

Pakistan achieved higher economic growth due to support by international players. We have rarely made efforts to reform institutional architecture, strengthen state capacity, foster a culture of knowledge creation and diffusion and harness human resource potential. Vibrant societies give space and value to ideas and new knowledge.

However, in Pakistan, the chief executive of every public or private sector organisation considers themselves final authority in a range of issues. Hence, there is generally no appreciation of diversity of opinions and ideas. Cultural attributes such as openness to new ideas and honouring transaction-commitments feed into overall economic performance. Both traits are marginalised in the country.

It is important to appreciate that these policy and cultural attributes cannot be transplanted in a vacuum. Sometimes, visionary political leaders can influence societal and cultural changes to advance economic and social transformation agendas.

It may appear true in the cases of Lee Kuan Yew (Singapore), Paul Kagame (Rwanda), Seretse Khama (Botswana), Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaopeng (China) and Lula da Silva (Brazil). Pakistan has been waiting for such miraculous leadership. But little attention is paid to the fact that, more often than not, the transformation is organic in nature and requires a society-wide response.

The most recent book by economic historian Joel Mokyr, 'A Culture of Growth: The Origins of the Modern Economy', is an excellent account of such societal changes which shaped industrial revolution in western nations from 1500-1700 AD.

He has explained eloquently why the sustained economic growth based on scientific and technological advances only occurred in Europe: "What changed in this age was the culture—the beliefs and attitudes of educated elite towards, useful knowledge, how to acquire it, how to distribute it, and what it could do".

The respect and influence that cultural entrepreneurs like Francis Bacon and Newton gained was perhaps unmatched in any other society at that time. The elite took pride in intellectual ventures and literary dialogues.

The transnational and virtual community of intellectuals—The Republic of Letters—fostered competitive market for ideas in philosophy, physics, medicine, mathematics, and other fields. Many of the ordinary technicians and workers turned themselves into inventors of technology by exploiting the existing knowledge and favourable patent structure. And of course, the society was open to new ideas and knowledge coming from Islamic, Indian, and Chinese civilisations.

Mokyr described the role of politics in this process: "Princes and kings competed to provide patronage and protection to the most successful and best known artists and scientists."

If we try to find such things in today's Pakistan, we will certainly be disappointed. How can we achieve economic advancement in this environment?

Certainly, an increase in so-called GDP numbers will occur occasionally but it would be hard to create and sustain any economic transformation. Bureaucratic structures are prevalent in universities, scientific organisations, research centres and business organisations.

Most business corporations have raised empires through an insidious nexus with the state. Hence, the prevalence of "Seth Culture" and intergenerational businesses don't promote creativity, innovation and competitiveness by employing a talented work force and giving space to new business ideas.

We need to pose a right set of questions to know what's wrong with Pakistan's economy. Some of these questions are: Why Pakistan could not develop educational institutions like Delhi School of Economics and Indian Institute of Technology?

Why our business organisations could not become TATA? Why Pakistan could not develop a city like Shenzhen? Malaysia and many other countries used to send their bureaucrats to Pakistan for training in 1960s but what happened to us afterwards? Why does the public sector no longer attract and retain talent? Instead of a rhetoric of security challenges and political instability, the answer to many of the above questions lies in the absence of market for talent, ideas, and knowledge.

The aforementioned weaknesses and constraints rarely attract the attention of policy makers and popular economic writers. Without addressing these fundamental issues, Pakistan will continue to rely on "borrowed growth" with the change of one lender after another.

While there is an urgent need to fix pressing security challenges, more deep rooted reforms are required to develop and attract talent to serve in the public sector and businesses. Instead of politicians, the community leaders, academics and intellectuals should have a greater role in societal transformation.

The writer is a public policy practitioner and researcher

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WHY PAKISTAN'S TRADE POLICY IS SUFFERING BY KHURRAM HUSAIN

THE new secretary commerce has assumed charge at a very difficult time it seems. Only days after his appointment, data shows that Pakistan's trade deficit widened to a record high of \$23.385 billion for the first nine months of the fiscal year. Arresting this trend, and eventually reversing it, ought to fast become a crucial policy priority for the country, but the options are limited.

The figures are now rising to alarming levels. The justification offered by the government, and echoed by the State Bank, is that the trade deficit owes itself to the imports of machinery and infrastructure equipment, which will not only support future growth but will also help plug Pakistan's energy shortages. The argument is partially valid, but it is disingenuous to rely on it beyond a certain point.

Imports of oil and associated products are the largest share of the increase in imports. Last year, oil imports declined by 35 per cent, while this year they grew by 10pc, in the first half of the fiscal year according to State Bank data. Much of this reversal owes itself to the rising price of oil in international markets, although some amount of quantitative increase is also a factor.

The second reason why the machinery argument must be received with scepticism is because we have heard it before. Once the boom years of the Musharraf regime reached their peak, around 2004-2005, the same situation materialised. Widening imports led to a growing current account deficit, and the regime took to telling us that this was due to machinery imports which would boost exports once installed. But the boost in exports could not keep pace with the import growth, leading to a blowout in the external account and the rapid depletion of reserves, ultimately forcing a return to the IMF in 2008.

The same story a second time round is necessarily going to meet with more scepticism.

Compounding the problem is a total absence of thinking (beyond CPEC) on trade matters at the top levels of government. This is not unique to this government. Pakistan has a history of treating trade casually, or treating it as a part of our overall push to constantly seek 'assistance' from the world for one reason or another.

What our trade policy suffers from is too much strategic input, and not enough economic thinking.

So the biggest push for trade that we have seen recently was the pursuit for inclusion in the GSP regime of the European Union, mainly as assistance to help compensate for the costs of the war on terror. The previous government tried to push through a normalisation of trade ties with India, but failed due to pressure from the military, which would prefer to keep our relationship to India wedded to territorial grievances. The present government made a second attempt to push through that initiative, but failed for the same reason.

Most trade around the world is regional first and long distance second. Neighbouring countries with long histories of animosity and outstanding border issues, whether territorial or maritime, have managed to keep their strategic and economic interests separate from each other. A prime example is China and Japan, one of the largest economic relationships in the world, yet two countries with a depth of animosity towards each other that rivals, if not surpasses, that of India and Pakistan.

But Pakistan's economic ties with three of its four neighbours are grossly underdeveloped, despite strong affinities. Many imported products can be substituted for cheaper alternatives from India if trade can be normalised, although in the present climate this is difficult to imagine. That window was open a few years ago, but shut at the moment.

Iran has massive energy surpluses and a food shortage; we are abundantly endowed with food yet suffer from energy shortages. This natural affinity has not been tapped, partly due to the sanctions, but in equal measure, due to our place in the larger Middle Eastern rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

Likewise with Afghanistan, which provides us natural access to the markets of Central Asia. This was seen with disdain in the years before CPEC, but now suddenly with the arrival of Chinese investment in our transport and communications infrastructure, access to the Central Asian markets is being presented as some sort of 'game changer' for the country.

What our trade policy suffers from is too much strategic input, and not enough economic thinking. Rivalry rather than cooperation with our neighbours is the primary lens through we view all regional relationships. Where the rivalry is our own, such as with India, we are quick to subordinate economic issues to it. Where we have no rivalry, such as with Iran, we easily import it from the Middle East, whose disputes have little to nothing to do with us.

Until this is changed, we will be left to battle this yawning trade deficit with stopgap measures, such as the so-called Strategic Trade Policy of last year, which had nothing strategic about it. That policy envisioned providing some cash support to a few areas in a puny attempt to boost exports. Its failure is evident in the fact that nobody in the exporting community even applied for the benefits on offer.

The new secretary commerce is not in a position to rectify this imbalance in our trade outlook. Those decisions are made far above his level. But without addressing this imbalance in our policy priorities at the top, all successive commerce secretaries have been left with little more to do other than tinker at the margins — an incentive here, a rebate there — with no meaningful change in the larger picture, driving us inexorably deeper into the quicksand of growing deficits.

The secretary cannot change this by himself, but perhaps he can do something to sensitise the government and the military to the enormous price that Pakistan has always paid, and continues to pay today, for its failure to put trade on top of its external policy priorities.

The writer is a member of staff.

khurram.husain@gmail.com

Twitter: @khurramhusain

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RISKS TO GROWTH | EDITORIAL

THE World Bank has served up another reminder that Pakistan's economy is on a growth path, reserves are high, inflation is "on target", and all other indicators are improving, but risks from the fiscal and external side remain a source of concern. This constant refrain, of a steadily growing economy with strong caveats hanging over it, is now becoming ubiquitous. Almost every entity other than the government itself, is qualifying its assessment of the growing economy with the observation that the risks are growing alongside as well. The World Bank has presented its assessment in a report titled South Asia Economic Focus, which takes a close look at the impact that a growing protectionist backlash in the advanced industrial democracies could have on South Asian economies, which have registered the highest growth rates in the world in recent years.

Pakistan tracks the rest of the region in its developments, but the risks it faces are unique to it. The report notes South Asia may even stand to benefit from the backlash, due to fortuitous circumstances, but in the case of Pakistan, the approach of elections could cause the leadership to take its eye off the ball, resulting in the growth process losing momentum and any reforms fizzling out. Aside from this, the additional risks pointed out by the World Bank emanate from the same areas identified by others: rising trade deficit and falling remittances. "Therefore, the current account is experiencing some pressure", state the authors, going one step beyond the State Bank which pointed to the external account as a source of worry in its last report, but stopped short of saying it was coming under pressure. Likewise, the fiscal framework is also taking some pressure, with the deficit widening by 0.7 percentage points in the first half of the fiscal year compared to the same period last year. With headwinds expected from the global economy depending on how Brexit works out, and how US economic policy shapes up under the new administration, the World Bank says the risks facing the economy are significant. It is worth noting that by now almost all institutional assessments of the economy, and its seemingly comfortable position, are in agreement on this point. With high reserves and growth ramping up, perhaps the greatest risk facing the economy is complacency at the top. With the approach of elections, the risks are solidified further.

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Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1327793/risks-to-growth>

PAKISTAN POISED FOR ECONOMIC SUCCESS BY MALIK MUHAMMAD ASHRAF

The World Bank in its South Asia Economic Focus Report for 2017 has projected 5.25 % GDP growth rate in Pakistan. In early February Fitch Ratings, a global agency which monitors the performance of economies around the world with a view to assess their growth potential and the future prospects, gave 'B' rating to Pakistan which denotes prosperity. The report predicted a GDP growth rate of 5.3 % during the current financial year registering more than 2% raise since 2013. The report issued by the agency on the basis of the review concluded that Pakistan would not face external liquidity problem in the coming years. The agency attributes the strengthening of the economy to phenomenal raise in the foreign exchange reserves, reduction in the fiscal deficit, structural reform, soundness of the banking sector leading to fall in the non-performing loans, fiscal consolidation, boost in the revenues and reduction in general government budget.

This reality has also been acknowledged by a number of other rating agencies like Moody's, MCI and global lending institutions including IMF, World Bank and ADB besides internationally renowned papers like The Economist and Wall Street Journal have also from time to time been acknowledging the turnaround in the Pakistan economy, triggered by sound management of the economy by the PML-N government. In its latest assessment of Pakistan's economy, Wall Street Journal said that poverty and terrorism in Pakistan were on the decline, foreign investments have increased, as have consumer spending leading to a burgeoning middle class.

The fact is that the Chinese investment in CPEC and the booming economy have given confidence to the foreign investors. Reportedly a Dutch dairy company, Royal Friesland Campina recently paid \$461 million to buy control of Engro Foods in Pakistan. The CEO of the same company who visited Pakistan in the recent past, in his meeting with the Prime Minister revealed that the company would bring additional investment of \$ 100 million to Pakistan in the next two years. Last year China's Shanghai Electric Power agreed to pay \$ 1.8 billion for KESC shares. Turkish Electric appliances company Arcelik paid \$258 million for Pakistan appliance maker Dawlance acknowledging that Pakistan had an increasingly prosperous working and middle class. Our pro-active finance minister Ishaq Dar deserves unqualified compliments for winning the economy out of the economic mess and putting it on the path of sustained economic growth.

Management of an economy, particularly a developing country like Pakistan is undoubtedly an arduous task due to international linkages, developments on the global level as well as internal economic, social and political situation. Needless to emphasise

that when the PML-N government was installed in 2013, the economy was in shambles with the GDP growth rate hovering around 3%. Fiscal deficit stood at 8.8% and inflation was in double digits, foreign exchange reserves were at \$ 6.008 billion. The country faced a debilitating energy crisis.

Three and half years later the growth rate achieved during the last financial year was 4.7 %, the highest in the last eight years, which during the current year as per predictions of the international agencies is going to touch 5.3%. The fiscal deficit has been reduced to 4.2 % and further squeeze is expected during the current year. Inflation has been maintained at a single digit. Foreign exchange reserves stand at \$24.258 billion which represent almost four times increase since the present government took over. What is remarkable is that the revival of the economy has been orchestrated in spite of heavy drain on resources due to the operation Zarb-e-Azb, rehabilitation of the displaced persons of North Waziristan and rebuilding of the destroyed infrastructure as well as heavy repayments of the loans obtained by the previous governments.

The energy crisis that was attributable to the negligence and criminal indifference of the previous governments to the growing energy needs of the country and was hampering progress in the industrial and agricultural sectors in addition to causing difficulties for millions of households across the country, has been checked in its tracks. The power outages have been considerably reduced owing to the addition of 3000 MW of electricity to the national grid. Under CPEC power projects with a cumulative production capacity of 10,640 MW have been set rolling and all of them are expected to come on stream by the end of 2018 which means that the energy crisis will not only have been overcome by then but the country would also have enough electricity for the new industrial projects. The government also envisages addition of another 30000 MW by the year 2030. The government has also concluded an agreement with Qatar for import of LNG and a similar agreement with Azerbaijan for import of LNG is in the offing. Russia reportedly is also interested in exporting LNG to Pakistan. The initiative to diversify the sources of import of LNG is a visionary move to avoid any disruption or crisis due to dependence on a single source.

The PML-N government very rightly has also been giving top priority to the development of infrastructure. The fact is that all modern growth models invariably rely on development of infrastructure, which is considered as an indispensable ingredient of industrialisation and economic growth. The phenomenal economic prosperity and industrial development in Asian countries such as China, South Korea, Singapore and Malaysia during the last three decades is a ranting testimony of this modern reality. The establishment of Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank by China with the objective of

development of infrastructure in the Asian countries to spur economic growth is a pointer to that fundamental reality.

Unfortunately Pakistan has failed to achieve rapid industrialisation due to wrong approaches and policies of the successive governments, divorced from the emerging economic compulsions and variables. However it is heartening to note that the PML-N government has adopted a pragmatic and visionary approach to economic development through building of necessary infrastructure. Peshawar-Karachi motorway which is expected to be completed by 2019 and a network of roads being built across the country will surely act as catalyst to nudging economic growth and bringing about national integration. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was right on money, when inaugurating the first phase of Karachi-Hyderabad motorway in February he said that people were witnessing the emergence of new Pakistan with improved infrastructure and communication network and the motor ways were life line of the economy. The CPEC is also about building infrastructure, which holds the promise of enabling Pakistan not only to make up for the lost opportunities but also to become an economic power house within the next two decades.

Malik Muhammad Ashraf

The writer is a freelance columnist. Email: ashpak10@gmail.com

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GLOBAL ECONOMY: SPRING BREAKS THROUGH A POLITICAL STORM BY SHAWN DONNAN, GEMMA TETLOW AND SAM FLEMING

Brexit and Donald Trump were supposed to bring doom, gloom and trade wars to the global economy, if not famine and populism-fuelled pestilence. But time heals many a prediction. And so instead this week's spring meetings of the world's finance chiefs in Washington have been brimming with an optimism worthy of the season.

"Spring is in the air and spring is in the economy as well," said Christine Lagarde, managing director of the International Monetary Fund, as she opened the meetings on Thursday.

The IMF's confidence is fuelled by improving performance in most of the major world economies. The fund has raised its forecast for global growth for the first time in six years based on a stronger China, which this week said its economy grew at an annual rate of 6.9 per cent in the first quarter, and improving economies in Japan and Europe. The US is approaching — if not at — full employment. For the IMF, which is predicting 3.5 per cent global growth in gross domestic product this year, the stronger outlook is the fruit of broad-based recoveries in manufacturing and trade.

"What is different this time is that all the engines are firing for the first time," says Raghuram Rajan, a former Indian central bank governor and IMF chief economist. "They are not firing very strongly. But they are firing."

"The strengthening of the recovery is for real," says another former IMF chief economist, Olivier Blanchard, who argues that the legacies of the 2008 crisis and the adjustment to a more "mediocre" low-growth future are at an end.

In short, while politics in much of the western world is being overwhelmed by the built-up angst from a decade of low growth, the global economy is at its most robust since the financial crisis.

Which means, of course, that if the pattern of the post-crisis years holds it could all go horribly wrong, and quickly. The early looming threat is this weekend's first round of the French presidential election, where opinion polls have made even the IMF nervous.

Were the far-right leader Marine Le Pen to win the two-round election and deliver on her promises to exit the euro and the EU "it would certainly entail major disorder", the normally wary Ms Lagarde told a television interviewer.

The potential risks also still loom large just down Pennsylvania Avenue from the IMF at the White House. Even as Ms Lagarde was praising the new US administration, Mr Trump was launching a national security investigation into steel imports, which appears likely to lead to new tariffs and what would be his first act of significant protectionism. It could trigger retaliation from China and the EU. Although Mr Trump has given some signals economic nationalism is fading as a force in his administration, his instincts on trade and immigration still appear distinctly protectionist.

Just beneath the immediate optimism about the global economy, the existential questions about what the Trump administration and the broader wave of populism might mean for institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank have been much debated this week.

James Boughton, who until 2012 was the IMF's official historian, argues that not since President Richard Nixon lobbed rhetorical cannonballs at the IMF in the 1970s has it been under so much assault from the US. Yet he says the current crisis is even more profound. "At a very deep level we are at a moment . . . where the crisis of leadership is greater than it has been at any time, certainly in the lifetime of the IMF," he says.

"There are very good reasons to be optimistic about the [global] economy over the next 18 months. [But] the incoming administration in the US does not seem to have any appetite for exercising leadership in the world economy and in the international system. That is something that is new and dangerous."

Steven Mnuchin, Mr Trump's Treasury secretary, disputes that assessment. "We've been a huge part of the IMF since its creation," he told the Financial Times in an interview this week in which he also expressed admiration for the work of the World Bank's private sector arm, the International Finance Corporation.

3.5% IMF prediction of global growth in GDP in 2017

0.5% Annualised Q1 US growth prediction from Atlanta Fed's 'GDP Now' tracker

But Mr Mnuchin, who just last month led US efforts to block G20 language renouncing protectionism, still faces a long road ahead to prove the administration's commitment to an internationalism that Mr Trump has assailed.

"It's America first, you better believe it," the president declared to a crowd at a toolmaker in Wisconsin this week as he signed an executive order aimed at bolstering "Buy American" laws that require the US government to buy domestic goods.

Mr Blanchard is among those who argue that the economic risks of populism are “probably not catastrophic” in the US and other advanced economies thanks to the “checks and balances” in their political systems. Even in France the election of either Ms Le Pen or the far-left’s Jean-Luc Mélenchon would in all likelihood see them confronting a legislature with a hostile majority and struggling to deliver on promises.

“From a macro viewpoint, Brexit is a bump in the road. Even if Greece explodes, I suspect it will not be seen as systemic. Even [President] Trump is likely to be able to do little, leaving North Korea aside,” he says. “When I go around I do not see clear and present macro dangers.”

*** Even the optimists at the IMF concede there are still important reasons to be worried about the global economy.

China’s growing debt pile and the authorities’ inability to rein in credit growth still cause shivers among fund economists. So too does the procession of corruption scandals in Brazil, where Latin America’s largest economy continues to struggle. In Africa, where hopes for a new growth-fuelled reality were so prevalent just a few years ago, the two major economies of Nigeria and South Africa are languishing.

Maurice Obstfeld, the IMF’s chief economist, says the present optimism should be tempered by the lower potential growth in productivity that governments seem to have been too ready to accept since the crisis.

“We are seeming to converge on what [Ms Lagarde] has called a ‘new mediocre’ of lower long-term growth driven by lower productivity growth,” he says, though “we certainly do not think that is necessarily our destiny”. Mark Carney, governor of the Bank of England, is among those who points to a gap between so-called “soft” confidence data and “hard” economic results.

“There has been a much more positive outlook [for the global economy] over the course of the last six months,” he said in Washington. “But there is still a fairly significant gap between . . . corporate enthusiasm versus corporate spending.” That soft/hard data gap is perhaps most evident in the US. The National Federation of Independent Business’ survey of bosses’ optimism hit its highest reading since 2004 in January, and has edged only slightly lower since. The University of Michigan’s survey of consumer sentiment points to the strongest view of current economic conditions in 17 years, with the reading only a shade below 1999’s all-time peak.

However, many economists expect next Friday's first-quarter US GDP numbers to point to a soft patch. The Atlanta Federal Reserve's "GDP Now" tracker points to annualised GDP growth of just 0.5 per cent in the first three months of 2017. Retail sales dropped 0.2 per cent in March, following a 0.3 per cent February decrease. The significance of soggy first-quarter numbers should not be over-dramatised. But heady predictions from the Trump administration that it can deliver sustained growth of 3 per cent or more still appear far-fetched. And that will stay true if Mr Trump falls further behind in attempts to deliver his economic agenda. Healthcare reform was meant to pave the way to significant tax reform, yet talks in Congress remain snarled on both fronts and Mr Mnuchin this week admitted that he will fail to meet his own August deadline for tax reform. An infrastructure plan faces similar doubts.

Still, the overall optimistic tone remains. European officials insist that a region that has become a byword for high unemployment and persistent disappointment is on the mend. According to Pierre Moscovici, the EU's economics commissioner, Europe's recovery is "firming and broadening across sectors", though he concedes a "two-speed eurozone has emerged". Klaus Regling, managing director of the European Stability Mechanism, the eurozone's bailout fund, this week expressed frustration that Europe's nascent growth story was "not sufficiently recognised".

John Rice, who as vice-chairman oversees GE's international operations, argues that the last piece missing from a global recovery would be a bounce in commodity prices that would help many emerging economies. He is sanguine about protectionism and political risk. The new US administration, he argues, is just like any of the 20 to 30 new governments that GE deals with around the world in any given year. "It's a fact-based world," he says. And that, Mr Rice says, is helped by a world economy that is "better than we've seen it in a few years", adding: "That's the world that we see. It's more positive than negative."

Source: <https://www.ft.com/content/5fa23838-2642-11e7-8691-d5f7e0cd0a16>

OF PAKISTAN'S STRATEGIC POSITION AND PROGRESSING ECONOMY BY SYED HAMZA SALEEM GILANI

Pakistan's geostrategic location is a major attraction for developed economies to invest in for lucrative returns. The country is strategically located in the crossroads of Asia with China as its neighbour in the north, India in the east, and Iran and Afghanistan in the west.

The country lies in a region which has great political, economic and military importance. Being in the same vicinity as two major powers, China and Russia, adds to its position. Similarly, Pakistan has an access to the six Muslim central Asian states through Afghanistan. These states are landlocked and Pakistan can provide a link between the Gulf States as well as African, European and Central Asian countries. Its sea-route remains open throughout the year due to moderate temperatures.

Consequently, there are a series of Muslim countries from the Middle East to the African continent which are easily accessible from Pakistan. Thus, it connects almost all the Muslim countries of the world from the Atlantic Ocean to the Arabian Sea.

Pakistan is the sixth most populous country in the world, with an estimated population of over 180 million at a growth rate of 2% and the median age in Pakistan is 22, thus making it a country filled with young people. However, this vast population is unevenly distributed, with almost a majority of the population living in rural areas. Over the past few years, many rural residents have been migrating to cities in search of better paying jobs. If the current pattern of urbanisation continues, the urban population of Pakistan will cross the figure of 122 million by 2030, which is 50% of its total population.

We have the potential to develop a transit economy on account of our strategic location. Consider landlocked Afghanistan, it is currently under a phase of reconstruction and is linked to the outside world mainly through Pakistan.

China, with the fastest economy growth rate of 9%, is developing southern provinces because its own port is 4,500 kilometres away from Xinjiang, but Gwadar is only 2,500 kilometres away. Moreover, Pakistan offers Central Asian regions the shortest route when compared with Iran's 4,500 kilometres or Turkey's 5,000 kilometres. The Gwadar port, with its deep waters, attracts trade ships from China, Central Asian Regions and South East Asian countries. Furthermore, the coastal belt of Balochistan can provide an outlet to China's western provinces, in the sense that it will have access to Middle Eastern markets with the development of coastal highways and motorways.

Globally, Pakistan stands at 138 in the ranking of 189 economies on the basis of starting a business, dealing with construction permits, getting electricity, registering property, getting credit, protecting minority investors, paying taxes, trading across borders, enforcing contracts, and resolving insolvency.

China and Korea are both considering Pakistan for their respective economic ventures. The South Korean company, Hyundai is entering in a joint venture with Nishat Mills to assemble cars in Pakistan. Hyundai's return will boost the government's efforts to shake up the Japanese-dominated car market and loosen the grip of Toyota, Honda and Suzuki, who assemble cars in Pakistan with local partners.

The market structure of the automobile industry in Pakistan is concentrated. In economic terms, we could say it's an oligopoly which is characterised by the imperfect competition in which the industry is dominated by a small number of suppliers. This is because the auto industry is highly capital-intensive and requires high investments, and the products are also expensive. Hence, the barriers for entry are high, resulting in the presence of a limited number of suppliers. Therefore, Hyundai's entry will reap tremendous economic benefits.

Chinese companies are also interested in investing in the cement, steel, energy and textile sectors, the backbone of Pakistan's \$270 billion economy. According to analysts, the interest shows that Chinese firms are using Beijing's "One Belt, One Road" project – a global trade network which Pakistan is an integral part of – to help expand abroad at a time when growth has slowed down at home.

Pakistan's economic indicators show a constant progression and Pakistan's economic progress has been recognised by the Asian Development Bank as well as the International Monetary Fund (IMF). However, there are certain political entities that are adamant to challenge the political stability of the country, without realising the negative repercussions for the economy.

Source: <http://blogs.tribune.com.pk/story/48954/of-pakistans-strategic-position-and-progressing-economy/>

THE IMF AND PAKISTAN BY ANJUM IBRAHIM

Criticism against the handling of the three-year 6.64 billion dollar Extended Fund Facility (EFF), completed in September last year, has been sustained by the country's independent economists. The reason, so it is argued with a degree of validity, is because the caveats continue even though the Fund is at great pains to emphasise that gains were made during the duration of the programme.

Two questions come to mind. First, what were the gains made during the September 2013-September 2016 EFF? And has the situation changed dramatically during the past seven months, post-EFF, that would justify the caveats? There are three outstanding and need one add extremely disturbing elements that steadily worsened during the EFF and continue to do so till today.

The first relates to the worsening current account deficit. Exports have been steadily declining since 2014 and declined from 25 billion dollars in 2014 to 21.9 billion dollars in 2016 and have been declining each month since then. Imports on the other hand were estimated at 40.36 billion dollars during July-June 2013 (with petroleum products accounting for 14 billion dollars due to rise in international oil prices) and rose to 40.45 billion dollars in the comparable period of 2016 (with petroleum products accounting for only 8.35 billion dollars due to a dramatic decline in the international price). The decline in value terms in imports of oil and products between the two years was a whopping 5.65 billion dollars.

The biggest import rise in monetary terms in 2016 was accounted for by an increase in power generating machinery - from 511.9 million dollars in 2013 to one billion dollars in 2016 - a rise of 489 million dollars. Additionally, the rise in imports of power generating machinery would not lend a comfort level to the general public these days given the ongoing load shedding and the recent reports by government departments including National Transmission and Despatch Company (NTDC), administratively under the control of the Water and Power Ministry that reflect continued poor performance of the sector. Machinery imports per se rose from around 4 billion dollars in 2013 to 6.2 billion dollars in 2016 or a rise of 2.2 billion dollars between 2013 and 2016, transport vehicle imports rose by 155 million dollars during the two years - and the two combined is 38 percent, or not even half of the decline in imports due to petroleum products.

The oft cited reason for declining exports and rising imports (other than petroleum products) is (i) an overvalued rupee and (ii) rising refunds that led to borrowing from the banking sector which raised their costs of production making them uncompetitive in foreign markets. The IMF, during the duration of the EFF when it had considerable

leverage, did make mention of the overvalued rupee and made some half hearted attempts to convince finance minister Ishaq Dar to allow the real effective exchange rate to prevail (which was critical if Pakistani exports were to be able to compete internationally especially given the depreciation of currencies of those countries with which our exporters compete), but to no avail. Instead the Fund staff focused on a time-bound reduction in the budget deficit, evidently unconcerned with the resulting escalating reliance on external borrowing, directly from multilaterals and/or issue of Eurobonds/sukuk at rates well above the market rate. The mission leader though did acknowledge in a press conference that the country's rising foreign exchange reserves were largely from borrowing.

Secondly, the energy sector's performance has not improved and claims to the contrary are easily dismissed given the recent rise in unscheduled load shedding. The Minister for Water and Power Khwaja Asif explained the reasons behind the demand-supply gap of 7000MW (according to a Business Recorder report that was not refuted though the Minister claimed 5000MW shortfall in the National Assembly last week) - a level comparable to what was evident during the tenure of the PPP- led coalition government: higher temperatures on the plains sooner than in previous years, slow snow melt in mountains like in previous years leading to hydel generation well below capacity.

The Prime Minister reportedly expressed displeasure at the Ministry's failure to take account of these two factors - a displeasure that prompted no response from the Ministry though Khwaja Asif has been at pains to take on everyone else who has dared to challenge his claims about a marked improvement in the sector's performance: (i) NTDC in a recent report expressed concerns over the sector's poor performance - a report which was cited by the German bank KfW prompting it to conclude that the claims by the Ministry of a marked improvement are 'political' which in turn energised Minister Asif to insist on an apology which was tendered; however KfW added that it was meant to be an internal document and should not have been leaked; (ii) the performance evaluation report of the regulator Nepra based on quarterly reports submitted by the state run generation companies; (iii) the Independent Power Producers (IPPs), the main source of power generation today, invoked sovereign guarantees and the IPP's Advisory Council issued advertisements detailing their woes with the Ministry leading to Khwaja Asif's ire; and (iv) the media for bringing unscheduled load shedding to the notice of the public though one doubts if the public can ever be unaware of the extent of load shedding. In this context the Fund during the three years of the EFF simply insisted on a do-more mantra which effectively implied raising the power tariff, though actual billing was less with the decline in the international price of oil.

Finally, there has been a marked failure in reforming the tax structure and its administration. The inordinate focus of the Fund staff and the government was on total revenue collections instead of on rendering the tax structure equitable, fair and non-anomalous which accounts for heavier taxes on existing tax payers' - a situation that the IMF together with the government must be held accountable for. And additionally, as in the past the Finance Minister opted to reduce the development as opposed to current expenditure to meet the requirement of slashing the budget deficit at the cost of growth. Perhaps this was one of the reasons that prompted the Finance Minister to overstate growth rate.

To conclude, the IMF's conditions and its monitoring of the EFF leave a lot to be desired and one would hope that next time around, a time that economists are agreed would be soon after the general elections 2018, a more informed team both from the IMF and the government side negotiates the terms of the deal.

Source: <http://fp.brecorder.com/2017/04/20170424172199/>

IS PAKISTAN'S DEBT REALLY A PROBLEM? BY DR KAMAL MONNOO

As per the national debt figures released by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) in November 2016:

- Total Central Government debt as on 30.09.2016: Rs19.9 trillion, 'excluding contingent liabilities'.
- Break-up: Domestic debt=Rs14.4 trillion & External debt=Rs5.5 trillion.
- Estimated contingent liabilities: Rs1 trillion (not completely accounting for CPEC).

Comments: What this latest debt number also means is that over the first quarter (July-September) of this fiscal year, the government added to the debt by some Rs858 billion, taking the debt to GDP ratio to nearly 69.50%, which in June 2016 stood at around 66.50% - 'Fiscal Responsibility and Debt Limitation Act of 2005' calls for 60%, which was amended last year through a 'Finance Act' and the new deadline for achieving this level has now been reset to June 2018!

Government's Stance:

A) The national domestic debt portfolio as part of the total public debt is much bigger than the external debt portfolio (net domestic debt constitutes 66% and external debt 34%) – Domestic debt does not carry a very high risk.

B) Stating external debt at \$73 billion is incorrect, since one should not lump together public & private external debts, and

C) In the total public debt the year-on-year growth of its short-term portfolio is 8.4%; For the medium term it is 13.7%; for the external debt the annual growth is 6.3%, and that all these growth levels in each of the specified debt components cannot be termed as being 'exponential'.

Further, it says that its debt management strategy clearly sets target ranges for currency, refinancing and interest rate risks, and though quite a few indicators are currently in red, they still fall within the limits prescribed in its Medium Term Debt Management Strategy 2016-19. And Pakistan's current debt at around \$73 billion (over a population base of 200 million) is still quite manageable in comparison with say for example, Greece \$367 billion, Ireland \$865 billion, Spain \$1 trillion and Italy \$1 trillion.

All very well from the Government's perspective, but the trouble is that the real underlying weaknesses become glaring as one further dissects the nature of Pakistan's debt:

- * Bad History: Our debt (historic) has little to show for in social development and sustainable big-ticket projects. For example, NPV (net present value) of our debt spending comes out to be much lower than that of European Debt spend. Even for intangible assets our deficit/spending does not match results, e.g. support over the years to sectors like health, housing, utilities, education, social benefits, etc.
- * No winning public sector corporations to show for.
- * Real poverty level still stuck at around 30%.
- * An extremely narrow and small industrial base.
- * Top-heavy public administration system that despite being inefficient has become further entrenched over time.
- * CPEC is both an opportunity and a challenge. It can dramatically add to debt and contingent liabilities, if not allocated prudently and with clear surety on sustainability/feasibility of the projects under implementation. Also, repercussions to domestic manufacturing pose some serious concerns.

Expensive Debt:

- Government has been on a borrowing binge, and in the process resorted to acquiring expensive foreign and domestic debt at commercial rates.
- While it has repeatedly claimed that it is increasing its credit only to the extent of the budget deficit requirements, the reality is quite different. For example, the increase in federal government's debt from July-September 2016, adds up to Rs858 billion, whereas, the budget deficit in the same period was only Rs450 billion - about half.
- Domestic debt in one year, December 2015 to December 2016, grew to 14.54 trillion (43% of total debt) or by 10.3% further raising dependence on commercial banks and adding to "various" other financial sector risks.
- In its own report the finance ministry has conceded that Pakistan's debt sustainability indicators have worsened over the last 18 months.

- At this rate, if not checked (or if nothing changes), External Debt will reach \$110 by 2020.

Now borrowing in itself is not essentially a bad thing as long as it can be spent in a productive manner. If all or majority of these borrowing would be put to productive use in self-sustaining projects, it would be wonderful, but then this does not seem to be the case!

Current Situation:

- Additional 'latest' borrowing of \$4.6 billion in the last 7 months (\$1.9 on commercial terms & used for project financing) + \$1 from rather expensive Sukuk Bonds + \$1.2 from foreign commercial banks + balance miscellaneous from the likes of World Bank, Asian Development Bank, Islamic Development Bank, UK Government (under DFID), etc.

- Our External Debt returnable over the next 15 months: \$6.5 billion.

- In the Budget 2016-17: Projected annual economic assistance \$8 billion. \$4.6 now already borrowed but then this includes 'budgetary & balance of payments support', which as we know cannot be used to repay loans. Further, \$1.65 billion accounted for under inflows from CSF billing is also likely to be short by about \$1.25 billion.

- Reserves have slipped by around \$2.5 billion since last year while the Finance Minister's obsession with the current Rupee parity remains.

- Likely scenario going forward: Another IMF Program soon.

Source: <http://nation.com.pk/columns/26-Apr-2017/is-pakistan-s-debt-really-a-problem>

EDUCATION

PROBING THE CSS EXAMINATION BY ANJUM ALTAF

IT stands to reason that a poor selection test would be unable to identify the best candidates in any given applicant pool. Given the importance of the civil service, I reviewed recent CSS written examinations and discovered serious issues of intellectual ineptitude and quality control.

Questions from the 2015 and 2016 examination papers whose scans are posted on the official FPSC website were reviewed. Those mentioned below are faithfully reproduced without correcting for errors of spelling, capitalisation, punctuation or grammar which the alert reader would spot easily. Commentary is avoided for lack of space leaving the reader to identify problems which range from the amusing to the highly problematic. Some would merely confuse applicants while others might force them to disassemble or risk being failed.

Starting with the less serious, a question from the compulsory English Precis and Composition paper asks applicants to correct the following sentence: “We were staying at my sister’s cape’s code vacation home.” From the British History paper: “Margate Thatcher is judged to be best post war Prime Minister of England.” Discuss.” From the History of Pakistan and India paper: “Political Parties are responsible for the imposition of Marshal Laws in Pakistan. Comment.” From the economics paper: “Discuss the Rostow’s stage of growth with special reference to Pakistan.”

Two questions from the International Relations paper: “Critically discuss the fundamental factors of “Greece Economic Crisis” which need huge financial assistance from European Union and IMF as a debt relief to create “a breathing space” to stabilize economy and explain out-of-the-box solution for the crisis-ridden country.” And, “Critically discuss main political, socio-economic and strategic hurdles between “Afghanistan-Pakistan Relations” and how can both countries come out from the Cold War scenario?”

Some questions reveal a sloppiness that comes in the way of a proper understanding of the question.

Two questions from the Comparative [sic] Studies of Major Religions paper: “What was the secret of success of Buddhism and its effects on the Hinduism? Discuss.” “Describe the effects of biography and teachings of great preacher of Hinduism “SHIRI RAM Chandar G” on the society?”

Two questions from the Sociology paper: “Youth is an asset of any nation but Pakistani youth is inclined towards youth bulge. What strategies being an expert suggests the state to put the youth on positive track? Give your suggestions in the light of sociological theories.” And, “Why social stratification is an inevitable for a society? Explain its determinants in the context of Pakistani society.”

Some questions are out of place. From the Anthropology paper: “What are the major Contemporary Social Problems of Pakistan?” Some lack meaningful details. From the English Literature paper: “After their gift exchange, are Della and Jim richer, poorer, or just about where they were at the beginning? Have they made a wise decision in sacrificing their most precious possessions?”

Some questions reveal a sloppiness that comes in the way of a proper understanding of the question. Consider this from the General Knowledge paper: “Jinnah in his Presidential Address to the annual session of All India Muslim League in March 1940 said, “The problem in India is not of an inter-communal character, but manifestly of an international one, and it must be treated as such.” Write note on the Two Nation Theory and the Lahore Resolution of March 1940 in the light of this statement.”

From the Governance and Public Policies paper: “Do you support the representation of public opinion information diffusion in the policy making process? Support your answer with valid justification in the context of policy advocacy.”

More problematic are questions that really allow only one answer to avoid putting a candidate’s chances at risk. Consider this from the General Knowledge paper: “Discuss the prospects and challenges to the construction of “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.” How will CPEC become a game changer for the region?”

From the Islamic History and Culture paper: ““Administration of Justice” has been the policy of Muslim Rulers throughout History. Explain.”

Other one-sided questions are ambiguous in addition. From the Islamiyat paper: “Highlight the importance of Zakat and prove that economic stability of a society can be ensured through its effective implementation.”

Some questions combine many of these problems: From the Islamic History and Culture paper: “The Spanish Muslims established the foundations of Knowledge which become the mile stone of progress in Europe. Explain.” And, “Muslim culture in Pakistan is being dominated by European and Hindu Culture. Do you think we need Renaissance and Reformation? Explain.”

From the Political Science paper: “Discuss the features of Turkish model of democracy keeping the distinguished position of the armed forces in the Turkish politics.”

From the Public Administration paper: “It is easier to make a constitution than to run it. Discuss in the light of Politics Administration dichotomy.”

From the International Relations paper: “Discuss the “Moral Dimensions of Pakistan’s Nuclear Programme.” Explain its essential features and justify its offensive gesture which maintained the national and regional strategic balance.”

The following problems are quite obvious: The questions exhibit very poor command of the English language and manifest thinking in Urdu while transcribing in English. It is ironic that applicants are asked to write their answers in a language over which examiners have such poor control. There are factually incorrect, incomplete and misplaced questions. Most importantly, there are questions with only one safe answer and where matters of faith are asked to be scientifically proved.

It was Oscar Wilde who quipped that “In examinations the foolish ask questions that the wise cannot answer.” This kind of examination would surely rule out the wise in favour of the dull, the timid, and the clever — those who memorise appropriate answers, refrain from speaking their minds, and say what would curry favour. A selection mechanism cannot identify selectees wiser than the selectors. That might explain the dilemma of the civil service in which each cohort is weaker than the one it succeeds. The order is the reverse in societies moving forward.

And consider that this is the state of the premier examination in the country. What might be the fate of the testing of lesser mortals is best left unexplored.

The writer is a fellow at the Consortium for Development Policy Research.

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Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1326137/probing-the-css-examination>

HIGHER EDUCATION FOR LOWER LEARNING BY ANDLEEB ABBAS

University is a place to elevate the mind and nourish the spirit, which is why it is known as 'higher education'. It is the ultimate destination of many in pursuit of a knowledge upgrade.

In most developed countries the number of graduates who reach masters and then doctoral level of education is a direct indicator of a country's progress and prosperity. Universities, such as Harvard, Stanford and Oxford are brands that are associated with not only top class education but an opportunity to explore, discover, debate and share diverse ideas with a versatile mix of nationalities, experiences and ages to develop new thinking that leads to innovation.

The story of the deterioration of Pakistan's economy is that of the country's education system. The condition of primary and secondary education in Pakistan has been a topic of serious debate, but little has been done to improve it. Higher education never received the attention it should and the resultant damage has almost gone unnoticed.

The recent spate of violence on university campuses in Punjab and Mardan are evidence of the fact that how far spread and complex this desecration of learning has become. The traditional perception of the poor and illiterate men in remote areas being easily brainwashed, is no longer the story. This segment of young educated and exposed middleclass males and females, who 'volunteer' to join extremist organisations, is far more dangerous.

Psychology of mind is vulnerable to the learning influences around it. The socio-cultural influences traditionally were dominated by family and community interactions. However, in this age of information, the influence of what you see, read, hear, debate, question and respond has a much greater impact on your thinking than just family and surroundings. Amongst the educated youth the time spent online is between six to nine hours per day, and hardly one to three hours with family. This is an indicator that the hardwiring of the brain is now based on a huge variety of uncontrollable sources. This influence has given rise to what I call the MMRT generation, ie, Millennial Mobile Restless Tweens. This is a generation born in a world where the globalisation's goods and ills have been felt with equal velocity. Cold wars turned to hot wars and capitalism lost its shine as a solution to world's economy. Lynching at the Abdul Wali Khan University (AWKU), Noreen Laghari, a student of Liaquat Medical College, and the Safoora Goth terrorist, a student of the Institute of Business Administration, all indicate that terrorism is much more complicated than that perceived to be a combination of

illiteracy and poverty. There are three main reasons for young, educated people to be attracted to such activities:

1) Many MMRTs get caught by the contradictions in their life. Their parents teach them the traditional values as a way of life, while they see the opposite all around them. Their textbooks tell them about the glorious history and their Facebook tells them about the inglorious reality. They read about the fall of communism and the rise of capitalism, and see the slide of capitalism and the rise of materialism. This disconnect starts to bother them and neither universities nor families are able to bridge this disconnect.

2) Many MMRTs find it difficult to settle into traditional routines, careers and education. They may become doctors, engineers or business graduates because that of their parents' wishes or because it will pay their bills, but they find these jobs unfulfilling. They have a lot of information about the outside world but little about the inside world within them, which causes restlessness and an intense desire to escape the normal routines.

3) Many MMRTs suffer from identity crisis. They feel a lack of meaning and purpose in life and in this restive mindset start considering themselves as misfits. This creates a tendency to rebel against the status quo. They tend to change their education fields, jobs and hobbies in search for identity, purpose and direction.

Terrorist organisations, such as the ISIS are much more diverse than al Qaeda and have done their homework on this generation. Their target is 18- to 24-year-olds for whom they use the social media extensively. Their goal is to produce 30-40 high quality videos per day, in almost every language. They have an estimated 30,000 to 40,000 Twitter accounts and guides for discovering true meaning of life, carrying out jihad and how to join the Islamic State. Thus somebody, like Noreen Laghari will receive videos on how unfair the West is to Syrians, and how she as a medical student is empowered to do whatever she can to Christians in Pakistan, in retaliation for what Christians are doing to Muslims in Syria. These videos are based on clever facts and appeal to the restive nature of MMRTs to stand for a cause and have a unique identity.

Universities in Pakistan need a complete overhaul of curriculum, teaching methodology and student relations. However, like most institutions in the country, Vice-Chancellor (VC) appointments in universities are now in political hands. Punjab University has violence erupting every week. The National Accountability Bureau is already investigating the appointment of its VC and his subsequent illegal appointments on key posts. Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa has not finalised the appointment of many VCs, including that of the AWKU.

The first two years in college, as are abroad, should contain liberal arts subjects, such as psychology, comparative religion and literature. Universities need to have psychologists, specialising in student therapy. The incidence of drugs, depression and suicides even in the best private universities is alarming. Colleges and universities need to have talent aptitude tests that can guide the MMRTs to find their passion and direct them to follow it. Parents need to understand this social networked generation, discover ways of communicating with them rather than rejecting their desire to be pursuing different careers and help them to do more meaningful work.

Without these changes, we will be widening the gap between this young, smart but extremely disenfranchised generation and society. We need to understand them better, communicate and connect differently, and create an enabling environment in their learning places to control the damage of this mass social disruption.

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FOR THE CAUSE OF EDUCATION BY ABDUL WAHID MIR

It is an undeniable reality that all the classroom practices and academic activities in Pakistani classrooms are shaped by examinations. Any decision or changes being suggested in the process of evaluation or assessment will have long lasting effects on over all education in the country. Hence it is imperative that the imposition of Board exams in the name of Assessment for Grade V should be discussed at length with all the stake holders and all aspects of the decision should be carefully studied in advance. The haste in which this naively planned program is being imposed on private schools is questionable.

The Examination Boards in KPK have proposed that the students of Grade V will be required to appear in an 'Assessment' that will be summative in nature. The papers will be based on the Students Learning Outcomes of the Curriculum, meaning that, it will not be compulsory for the students to study the textbooks prescribed by the Textbook Board of KPK. This is perhaps an oversimplification of a very complex process. Further the ground realities indicate that the implementation of this exam will create unforeseen damage to the creativity and emotional well-being of the children.

Any examination system cannot be seen in isolation. The government of KPK is very easily neglecting important components of education like curricula, textbooks and teachers training. A mere focus on changing the pattern of exams from Formative Assessment to Summative will hardly play any role in improving the standards of education, especially in Private Schools where very well planned Assessments of children is carried out. After the 18th amendment in April 2010, the development of curriculum was made a provincial subject. The National Curriculum made by the Federal Ministry of Education in 2006, has neither been upgraded by the Government of KP nor are there any plans underway to do so in near future. Furthermore, the task of creating textbooks based on the curriculum of 2006 has not even been completed.

The curriculum suggests that lesson plans should be developed by the teachers on the basis of Student Learning Outcomes enlisted in the National Curriculum. This task requires intensive training for teachers. Ironically, neither the Government gave any importance to this idea of teachers' training, nor encouraged Private sector to take any initiative. In this context, where the lesson planning is based on a single textbook, how can we justify that an exam paper should be set based on the SLOs of the Curriculum? With semi-trained teachers, there is a great possibility that introduction of Board Exams in Class V will emerge as an example of lack of consistency between the teaching and evaluation process. In fact for too little learning, too much evaluation will take place in

the classroom which is tantamount to destroying the atmosphere conducive to acquisition of quality education.

The pressure from parents to succeed with high grades in Board exams will increase the anxiety in students. The summer and winter breaks of young children will be devoted to preparation for board exams. The concept of school being a happy place will slip away from our own hands. Fear of failure can be overwhelming in some children. Tuition academies, claiming top positions in board and 100% success rate will surface in every street. Financial burden on parents will increase. Instead of exploring the playgrounds and parks, the children will be forced to join academies or have personal tutors at home in afternoons. Who will be responsible for the further addition to the already alarming dropout rate of students from schools at Primary level?

— The writer is an educationist based in Abbottabad.

Email: wahidmaps@gmail.com

EDUCATION SYSTEM NEEDS REFORM BY SHAGUFTA GUL

Pakistan remains in a state of confusion when it comes to devising solutions for its most serious issues like dispensation of justice and promotion of equality, peaceful coexistence, and tolerance, alongwith provision of health and education.

The persistence of these issues is weakening not only the state but also the cultural values of the centuries-old social fabric — that had used to strengthen relations among diverse communities living in the territory.

Unfortunately, a weak political structure and inconsistency in public policies including foreign policy has left the state with little focus on the most important sector of public education. Although, a recent constitutional amendment has made education a right of every Pakistani child of age five to 16 years (Article 25-A of the Constitution unequivocally stipulates that the state shall provide free and compulsory education to all children between age five and 16 years).

These include state-run schools, religious seminaries, private schools following the Cambridge GCE/IGCSE system and private mushroom schools growing on a daily-basis in residential areas.

The standard National Education System is a continuation of the colonial-era British system. Religious seminaries are regulated by the Wifaqul Madaris; schools preparing pupils for Ordinary-and Advanced-level (O and A level exams) are affiliated with the CIE and Cambridge Assessment Board. The syllabus taught at mushroom schools is a blend of that taught at these schools, prepared keeping in consideration the need of that particular area or vicinity.

The first factor about these multiple systems of schooling is that they cater to different classes, and contribute to further stratification along class lines. The second most important factor is that curricula taught at these multiple systems varies, and the third key factor is regarding human resources involved in these systems. Let us explain now look into these factors.

The state-run institutions follow the national curriculum. Being a living document, curriculum needs to be revised and updated every five years, as per international standards. Our national curriculum has been in the process of reforms including those that may promote tolerance and cohesion. Unfortunately, the core issue in this regard has remained provision of appropriate training for text book writers to ensure that their products reflect the required reforms. Besides, critical thinking and inquisitiveness is

prohibited, intentionally or unintentionally, at all levels of education, ending up making machines out of pupils who're taught rote learning and memorisation.

The content and scheme of studies imparted at seminaries is approved by the Wifaqul Madaris. Pakistan Studies curriculum of respective education boards up till grade-VIII is taught at seminaries.

The CIE has its own scheme of studies and recommended books. Since CIE emphasises conceptual learning and critical thinking, the students studying in this stream are far ahead in learning, and they get a totally neutral version of our history. But it is also a fact that these students have to come back to compulsory subjects of Pakistan Studies and Islamiyat if they opt for admissions in Pakistani colleges/universities.

Let us now turn to human resources in all three systems of schooling. The state-run institutions have a set criteria and proper procedure of hiring teaching staff (though the widespread perception is that candidates unable to get recruited into other government departments opt for teaching). The kind of trainings offered at times are insufficient and do not practically support the teaching staff in actual class room situation where they may need to deal with a large number of students. Secondly, the teaching staff may transfer their personal biases and unauthentic information on faiths, sects, religions, norms, values and culture, to the students, resulting in situations where religious/regional/ethnic identities may become more important for students than a Pakistani identity.

Though most seminaries have proper criteria for selection of teaching staff, there are instances where those recruited as teachers have completed schooling only up till the primary-level or have dropped out of school. These teachers uncritically promote among their pupil the school of thought they have been taught.

The facts about private schools mushrooming in residential areas are more serious. Teachers at these schools are meant to just run the show. They are paid extremely low salaries. We can very well understand what would be the quality of education given to students at these schools.

Once we look at the overall scenario, it's evident that the state needs to take the most critical component of education more seriously to control growing intolerance and extremism in the society. The current multiple systems of schooling are creating different socio-economic classes and pushing us towards a more segregated and frustrated society, rather than a cohesive and a tolerant one. At provincial level,

governments are taking initiatives to cope up with the areas highlighted here yet we still need a comprehensive and focused plan along with a well-unified system including capacity building of text book writers and teachers.

The writer has experience in the field of education and is currently working as a resource person in the development sector

Source: <http://dailytimes.com.pk/opinion/02-May-17/education-system-needs-reform>

EDUCATION, EDUCATION, EDUCATION

So, here we have it. The number of Pakistani children not attending school has dropped, over the last year, from 24 million to 22.6. This is hardly a cause for celebration. Rather, it makes a mockery of the country's supposed commitment to the UN Millennium Development Goals for Education, including primary universal education.

When the MDGs were drawn up back in 2000, Pakistan had just entered the Enlightened Moderation era, where progress was to be measured by the number of imported luxury car showrooms or else the export of our first malt whisky. Successive governments have fared little better. As the MDGs deadline approached some 15 years later, the UN painted a damning picture of the education crisis threatening Pakistan. More than a quarter of students enrolled at the primary level, it noted, did not complete their education.

What, therefore, is to be done?

The unfortunate answer is that the state apparatus continues to demonstrate how very little it cares.

This needs to change. It cannot simply continue to outsource responsibility to institutions like the British Council, which insists on pedalling the O Level system, here in the developing world that it discarded at home from 1988 onwards. Yet the Council had a point when, at the turn of this decade, it advised the then government to reverse its stipulations that English be the medium of instruction. Better to adopt mother tongue teaching, it recommended, to boost functional literacy retention. That international donors have little faith in governments of the day is underscored by the intermittent practice of calling on local beat reporters to track cash flows to sponsored schools.

Given the above — we must to look elsewhere to have the responsibility shouldered, at least in the short-term. And this brings us to the liberal elite chatterers. For he who holds the power in an unfair system ought to be duty bound to redress the balance somewhat. Especially given that the education system is entirely dedicated to their wants, in terms of competing exam certificates — including the outdated O Level, GCSE and now the International Baccalaureate. They have the clout. It's about time they started using it for the good of everyone else. This might also mean no more pretending that going abroad to secure a foreign degree before returning to teach at elite private schools and universities maketh an education activist of one. Let's call this what it is: active participation in Pakistan's ongoing education apartheid. This message is especially

meant for the elite, foreign educated leaders of political parties supposedly representing Pakistan's vast working class. *

Source: <http://dailytimes.com.pk/editorial/03-May-17/education-education-education>

HEC JOIN HANDS WITH SUN TO PROMOTE RESEARCH ON NUTRITION, FOOD SECURITY

Islamabad: Higher Education commission of Pakistan (HEC) as well as Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement have agreed to join hands in fight against malnutrition through advocacy as well as the promotion of research on nutrition.

The development took place during a meeting of SUN Assistant Secretary General Gerda Verburg accompanied by the team of committee on nutrition along with the Executive Director of Higher Education Commission Dr Arshad Ali at the Commission Secretariat on Wednesday.

Read More: [India sends back 50 Pakistani students after threats by activists](#)

While conversing on the event, HEC chairperson Dr Arshad Ali said that higher education commission had been promoting research based on solutions to social matters, adding that the nutrition and food security were very important regions that required to be focused on during research activities. He guaranteed that the SUN team of full cooperation in advocacy as well as promotion of nutrition through the higher education zone.

He stressed on the requirement for coordination among academia as well as the private sector with respect to the awareness regarding importance of nutrition, especially for women and for children as well.

Source: <https://www.ilmkidunya.com/edunews/hec-join-hands-with-sun-to-promote-research-on-nutrition-food-security-12265.aspx>

WORLD

TOWARDS NON-PROLIFERATION BY RIZWAN ASGHAR

Global efforts to halt the quantitative and qualitative nuclear arms race by preventing nuclear weapons testing started less than a decade after the first nuclear explosive test was carried out in Alamogordo, New Mexico and the US in 1945.

Arms control advocates have consistently pushed for adopting a treaty to ban all nuclear explosions. But no binding framework was put in place. To date, more than 2,000 nuclear tests have been carried out in 60 different locations across the globe.

As the existential threat posed by the existence of nuclear weapons has emerged once again – following the four nuclear tests conducted by North Korea in this century alone – a new momentum is gathering for a worldwide ban on nuclear testing. For more than two decades, nuclear experts have considered ratifying of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). The treaty bans nuclear explosions in all environments as a prerequisite to ban nuclear testing. However, the treaty remains in limbo due to the political processes in some countries – which are complicated and lengthy – and the ‘after you’ policy adopted by some countries.

It has now been more than 20 years since the CTBT was opened for signature. As of January 2017, 183 states had signed the CTBT and 166 had ratified it. A deadlock exists because one of the treaty’s clauses – known as Article XIV – makes the ratification by 44 states with commercial or research nuclear reactors a necessary requirement for the treaty to become legally binding. Of those 44 specified states, China, Egypt, India, Iran, Israel, North Korea, Pakistan and the US have so far been reluctant to ratify.

Under the present circumstances, the chances of the CTBT being ratified by these unwilling countries appear to be slim. With China linking its ratification process to that of the US and Pakistan waiting for India to ratify the treaty first, bring the CTBT into force has been a daunting challenge. After the CTBT was defeated by the US Senate in 1999, the Bush administration made little effort to promote it even though US ratification could have also spurred Egypt and Israel to sign and ratify the treaty. In order to break this deadlock, many non-nuclear weapon states are considering the option of the ‘provisional application’ of the CTBT until the Article XIV conditions are met.

This approach will not only enable the consenting states to avoid unnecessary political obstacles but will also strengthen the nuclear test-ban regimes. Without violating the provisions of Article XIV of the treaty, this approach is likely to increase pressure on other countries to accelerate their ratification processes. After it has been applied provisionally by a large number of states, the CTBT will have an enhanced legal status and thereby increase the political costs of violation. In this way, the treaty will provide a stronger legal basis for collective UN action against violators and there will also be a glimmer of hope to prevent failure of the 'test-ban' norm.

According to Article 25 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties 1969: "A treaty or part of a treaty is applied provisionally pending its entry into force if: (a) the treaty itself so provides or (b) if the negotiating states have in some other manner so agreed." The CTBT does not rule out provisional application. Even during the negotiations over entry-into-force requirements, the idea of provisional application was discussed by many states as a way to prevent a handful of other states from exercising a veto. The CTBT could thus take legal effect for those who wish to abide by the agreement. Though not binding on those who remain outside, the treaty in provisional application will be more likely to act as a brake on further 'copycat' testing.

A major criticism levelled against the provisional application of the CTBT is based on the apprehension that the US – which contributes a fifth of the overall costs of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organisation (CTBTO) – may oppose this step and limit its funding to the organisation. Such fears are exaggerated because any such decision to cut down funding to the CTBTO will be far more costly to Washington in terms of political influence against nuclear proliferation.

Since May 1998, successive governments in Pakistan have tied their stance on the CTBT to New Delhi's future course of action. Pakistani analysts have frequently commented that in a nuclearised South Asia, the CTBT will have relevance only if both India and Pakistan are parties to the treaty.

In 1998, Pakistan responded to India's nuclear tests by conducting its own underground explosions. Pakistan fears that India even harbours plans to conduct additional nuclear tests in the future. But Pakistan has repeatedly made it clear that it will not be the first to resume nuclear testing in the region. Although it subsequently came under enormous pressure from the US to accept the CTBT, the government in Pakistan maintained that its ratification depended on India's future course of action.

Some people have argued that if Pakistan joins the CTBT, it will be able to access CTBT monitoring data. In addition, signing the CTBT will be the perfect tool to promote

Pakistan's position as a responsible nuclear state willing to accept real restraints – unlike India. Pakistan's willingness to join the CTBT might also prove to be instrumental in securing cooperation in civilian nuclear technology from the US and other major powers. On the other hand, some analysts feel that it would be suicidal to sign the CTBT.

The technological advancements in the global nuclear test monitoring system have already made it easier to detect underground nuclear tests with a yield of even less than one kilotonne.

The CTBT's entry into force will also make on-site inspections possible. Over the past few years, Russia and the US have spent billions of dollars on modernising their nuclear forces. The CTBT, after taking full legal effect, could be a major contribution to non-proliferation goals by restraining countries with nuclear weapons capabilities from further modernising their nuclear forces.

Email: rizwanasghar5@unm.edu

Source: <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/196524-Towards-non-proliferation>

PULLING THE TRIGGER ON BREXIT BY MATTHIAS MATTHIJS

Today, the two-year Brexit clock began its countdown. Now that the British government has formally notified the European Council of its intention to leave the European Union, the United Kingdom has passed the point of no return. It could well turn out to be the biggest act of self-sabotage in modern political history.

Despite what British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson has promised, the United Kingdom will not be able to have its cake and eat it, too. The rest of the EU is determined to show that leaving the club has negative consequences. And in that sense, by triggering Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty, the United Kingdom has chosen to relinquish significant control over its own economic future. New trade deals are uncertain and the centrifugal forces of renewed jingoism are beginning to challenge the historic union between England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. As a result, the United Kingdom is bound to lose influence on the world stage.

And so, rather than “taking back control,” as Brexit supporters have argued, the United Kingdom will lose some autonomy in economic and financial affairs. After all, the biggest barriers to a truly “global Britain” are not trade tariffs but non-tariff regulatory barriers, which require either harmonization across trade partners or, at the very least, mutual recognition. From that point of view, the EU single market was the most ambitious free market experiment in economic history. By leaving it, the United Kingdom is giving up its seat at the European table and will therefore no longer be able to influence future decision-making in its largest market, let alone shape future global regulatory standards. And, by turning its back on the EU Customs Union, it is bound to introduce new barriers to trade.

The United Kingdom in a few years may well exist as the “former United Kingdom of England and Wales,” with the unfortunate acronym of FUKIEW.

By leaving the EU, meanwhile, the United Kingdom will also lose influence over European foreign policy and thereby see its global clout wane further. Its so-called special relationship with the United States was sustained only by the illusion that the country served as a bridge between Washington and the rest of Europe. Now, even that illusion has been shattered. The Brexiteers’ dream of the United Kingdom reclaiming its rightful place as leader of the Commonwealth or the English-speaking nations—what officials of the country’s new Department of International Trade call, without any trace of irony, “Empire 2.0”—is delusional for the simple reason that there is absolutely no demand for it. The United Kingdom will continue to try to punch above its weight in international affairs through an outsize role in NATO, but open hostility of U.S. President

Donald Trump and his administration toward the Atlantic alliance makes even that a rather precarious proposition.

Finally, by opting for a “hard” Brexit—meaning leaving both the EU Customs Union and the single market—against the explicit wishes of the people of Scotland and Northern Ireland, British voters have put a dark cloud over the immediate future of the United Kingdom itself. Scottish independence is now more likely than in 2014, and the possible return of a hard border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland has made the dream of a united Ireland—as envisioned by the Irish republican party Sinn Fein—less far-fetched than it once seemed. The United Kingdom in a few years may well exist as the “former United Kingdom of England and Wales,” with the unfortunate acronym of FUKIEW.

A few years ago, David Cameron expressed his hope that he would go down as the British prime minister who would have settled his country’s two major existential questions: that of EU membership and that of Scotland’s future in the United Kingdom. It is fair to say that he has fallen short of his own objective. Now Prime Minister Theresa May has an even more difficult task before her—healing a divided nation while seeking to steer the country out of the EU unscathed. The idea that she will succeed where Cameron failed seems naïve at best.

Source: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-kingdom/2017-03-29/pulling-trigger-brexit?cid=int-lea&pgtype=hpg>

MAKING SENSE OF SYRIA BY AYAZ AHMED

The declining US influence in the Middle East has prompted the Trump administration to militarily intervene in the festering Syrian civil war. After the chemical attack in the Syrian town of Ghouta on August 21, 2013, the US had anxiously waited for a similar attack in Syria to provide a legitimate cause for its direct military intervention against the Assad regime.

The recent chemical attack in Khan Sheikhoun in Idlib has provided a cover to the US to employ firepower against the Assad regime in Syria. All this is designed to outsmart Russia and foster the security of Israel in the oil-rich region.

Without any impartial investigation, the US has made the Assad regime responsible for the deadly chemical attack. According to Russia's defence ministry, the Syrian warplanes pounded a large terrorist depot and a concentration of military hardware in the eastern outskirts of Khan Sheikhoun. The attack dispersed the lethal chemicals in the air, suffocating a large number of people near the epicentre of the attack.

The US launched 59 Tomahawk cruise missiles against the Al Shayrat air base in Homs from the destroyers – the USS Porter and the USS Ross, which are currently stationed in the eastern Mediterranean. Some early reports indicate that the airfield's planes and support infrastructure were severely damaged or destroyed.

What should not be forgotten is that the direct US military intervention in Syria is not an attempt to protect the suffering Syrian people from the continued oppression of the brutal Assad regime and ragtag terrorist outfits. Nor does the US sincerely aspire to see democratic norms flourishing in Syria. Washington's main target is to dethrone Russian regional client – the Assad regime – and subsequently replace it with an American puppet.

The US has a long list of military and economic objectives to maximise after ousting President Assad from the strategically important Syria. First and foremost, due to the US's stunning failure to end the simmering civil wars in Syria and Yemen, Washington's major regional allies have slowly started tilting towards China and Russia. The Saudi king's recent visit to China is a major case in point.

The US sells arms and warfare technology worth billions of dollars to some Arab monarchies. More importantly, the Chinese display of military power in the South China Sea and the Russian application of modern aircraft in Syria and Crimea have attracted some Arab countries to purchase weapons from these two countries. During his visit to

China, King Salman of Saudi Arabia signed a deal with Beijing to set up a factory in the kingdom to produce Chinese hunter-killer aerial drones.

The US seems to have decided to employ firepower against the Assad regime so that Washington's major regional arms importer will not fully jump on the Chinese and Russian bandwagon. US missile attacks against the Assad forces will not only advertise its modern weaponry, they will also assure Arab countries that Washington can militarily intervene in the Middle East to safeguard the core strategic interests of its regional allies.

The Assad regime has provided Russia the Tartus naval facility and the Khmeimin air base. These bases have immensely helped Russia continue its annexation of Crimea and increase its naval presence in the eastern Mediterranean Sea. The US recourse to missile attacks stems from the fact that Western-funded rebels have proved ineffective to oust Assad from power.

Despite Turkey's resistance, the US has continued to provide military hardware to Kurdish fighters against Daesh in Syria. The Turkish government is fearful that the US will use the Kurds of Iraq, Syria and Turkey to carve out an independent Kurdish state in the region in the future.

The hostile attitude of the US towards Turkey has made the latter reset its fractured relations with Russia. Both Russia and Turkey are currently sharing intelligence information and coordinating with each other against Daesh in Syria. More importantly, Turkey has lately shown its interest in purchasing advanced S-400 air and missile defence systems from Russia. Such Russian missile technology will help Turkey get rid of the Nato-deployed missiles on Turkish soil.

The US is aware that Russia will capitalise on its partnership with Turkey to augment its naval and military presence in the Mediterranean Sea and Eastern Europe. If Moscow succeeds in bringing Ankara under its regional fold, the US will lose its most powerful Nato partner in the region. To prevent Turkey from jumping into Russian bandwagon, the US will find more pretexts to organise aerial attacks against the Assad regime. Besides, Washington will slowly keep itself aloof from Kurdish fighters in Syria in a bid to appease Turkey.

The Trump administration is also concerned about the increasing support of Hamas, Iran and Hezbollah to the embattled Assad regime. If President Assad remains in power for a long time, this will probably help Iran forge a strong regional bloc with Hamas, Syria and Hezbollah against Israel.

Arguably, President Trump requires Israel's support to shape public opinions for his domestic and foreign policies. Therefore, the Trump administration has decided to inhibit the unfolding Iranian-sponsored alliance against Israel by further weakening the Assad regime in Syria. The latest missile attacks were designed to strengthen the position of rebels against the Assad government in the raging civil war.

When the US launched the missile attacks against Syria, President Trump was hosting Chinese President Xi Jinping at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida. China is the major diplomatic, military and economic supporter of the North Korean regime that has constantly threatened the US and South Korea with nuclear attacks. Through these missile attack against the Assad regime, the US has presumably indicated to China that it can resort to limited attacks which are geared towards neutralising the nuclear threat posed by North Korea.

Since Syria is the only regional country hosting some Russian naval and military bases, Moscow will employ all possible means to militarily protect the Assad regime from the US and the ragtag rebels.

Russian military support to Assad is likely to further increase the divergences between Russia and the US in terms of bringing a lasting end to the Syrian war. The helpless Syrians will, therefore, continue to reel from the brutalities of the Assad regime and insurgent groups.

The writer is an independent researcher.

Email: ayazahmed6666@gmail.com

Twitter: @ayazahmed66665

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THE IDEA OF POLITICS BY RIZWAN ASGHAR

Until the late 1980s, the inter-paradigm debate in the international relations (IR) theory largely focused on the distribution of material power in terms of military strength and economic capabilities.

States were considered the most powerful actors in the international system by both neo-realists and neo-liberals. While divergent in nature, both the liberal and realist schools of thought agreed that anarchy was inherent in the international system. In addition, the lack of a central authority was keenly felt by both paradigms because it encouraged states to generate a self-help system and act unilaterally.

Anarchy – the central fact of the international system – is derived from the view that the absence of an overarching legitimate global authority in the Westphalian nation-state system leaves states with no option but to resort to war to resolve their mutual disputes. As a result, scholars agreed that anarchy was the single most important characteristic underlying international politics and any understanding of global politics must flow from an understanding of the anarchic international structure.

However, in the early 1990s, the constructivist approach emerged as a challenge to the state-centric paradigms and resulted in an overwhelming focus on the material aspects of the structure of the international system. Constructivist scholars, who emphasised the social construction of reality, argued that the world is not objective. In their view, the variables of interest to IR scholars – such as military power, international institutions – are important not because they are objective facts, but because of their social meanings. For example, the nuclear weapons of France and India are probably equally destructive, but have very different meanings for the outside world.

Constructivists contend that the intersubjectively shared ideas are as important as military capabilities in any empirical analysis. Realists emphasise the role of the balance of power in global politics to minimise the possibility of future wars. While the theoretical approach rests on the idea that security is enhanced with an equitable distribution of military capabilities among nations, the equilibrium of power among all major powers in the world is generally difficult to achieve. Subsequently, states resort to employing different tactics to sustain the balance of power and achieve their desired strategic goals.

However, constructivist scholars argued that power and anarchy do not define whether the international system is peaceful or conflictual at a particular point in time. Instead, it is a function of the shared culture created through discursive social practices.

In the constructivist account, social meanings are constructed from a complex mix of history, norms and the way different leaders understand state behaviour. This is very important because if constructivist scholars are correct, states do not have to worry about relative power and security dilemmas. International politics should be guided by shared values and intersubjective norms held by both state and non-state actors. The focus on the intersubjective dimensions of knowledge makes the structure of the international system look like a causal force because of the proposed role of values as an ideational structure determining the strategic behaviour of states.

In a socially constructed world, this ideational structure has both a constitutive and regulative effect on all actors in the international system because the evolved structure of the international system makes states redefine their identities and interests through a process of social interaction. Unlike realist and liberal theorists, constructivists do not hold identities and interests as constants to understand how the ideational structure determines the way all actors identify their position and interests in the international system.

This leads to an interesting question about the 'agent-structure problem' in international relations theory. Realist scholars define the international structure in terms of the observable attributes of states as primary actors and how the structure constrains the choices of state actors. On the other hand, constructivists believe that both actors and structures co-determine and even constitute each other. In their view, ideational structures constrain the behaviour of actors in terms of their identities and interests. But these ideational structures are also created through the discursive practices of agents.

We cannot treat identity and interests as a given because they also keep changing with the passage of time. As a result, state sovereignty should also be considered a social construct. And there are no objective threats because they are always socially constructed.

Constructivists also highlight how the nature of global politics has changed because of the role that norms play in the equation. Norms are collective beliefs that regulate the behaviour and identity of all actors on the world stage. The structure of the international system is actually a human intellectual creation and it can be changed by introducing new norms.

Even powerful states follow norms and international obligations because they are concerned about their outlook. Norms also strongly influence the way states think about their own security practices. Countries acquire nuclear weapons not because they face

genuine security threats, but because building nuclear weapons is a means to gain prestige.

The constructivist approach explains the complex political socialisation process involved in redefining the identities and interests of actors. However, some quantitative scholars argue that concepts like identities and interests cannot be studied through positivist approaches. There is an element of subjectivity inherent in these concepts because they are relative to different states, institutions and communities. Another critique is that norms exist but are often violated by major powers. Despite this criticism, the idea of politics as a social construction continues to attract significant scholarly research in American academia.

Email: rizwanasghar5@unm.edu

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THE MAKING OF US FOREIGN POLICY BY TOUQIR HUSSAIN

US foreign policy is hard to understand, especially if you do not have adequate knowledge of America's origins and history, political system, its capitalist mindset and strong sense of individualism, that all make it a unique society. Not just foreign policy, everything that America does is different or it does in a different way; or at least it appears different.

This is not an essay on the American society or an all-embracing review of the US foreign policy that would be far beyond the scope of this article. It is just a snapshot of the process of the making of US foreign policy and the formative influences that impact its substance.

It is the foreign policy of a highly open society with a powerful media and advanced civil society that demands answers. The government is thus having to explain its policies all the time, often informing but not revealing. It is also the foreign policy of a highly complex and in many ways unique democracy under constant stress of domestic politics. That means the government saying different things to different audiences, sending mixed fixed signals among the American public as well as people abroad.

Adding to the welter of confusion is the media's approach to foreign affairs specially that of the 24/7 electronic media. The way it plays on foreign policy issues has created its own distortions. The social media which has made everybody an instant expert on foreign policy has made things worse — opinion is moving faster than knowledge. The net result is that foreign affairs have become action drama and the traditionally uninformed American public has become grossly misinformed and behaves as if it has become a protagonist in a conflict. And wants its voice to be heard which a politician cannot ignore because of its impact on his electoral prospects.

There are also multiple systemic issues in the US foreign policy. The administration has to satisfy, specially on issues of critical national importance or of high public interest or both, different centres of power and bureaucratic institutions, like Congress, the Pentagon, and the CIA and various lobbies and special interests. The challenge is how to synthesize differing points of view.

In making a policy the president thus has to resolve the constant tussle between the electoral compulsions on the one hand and strategic imperatives on the other, and between America's own interests that are global and those of its allies that are local and regional. Of particular importance are the tensions between public interest and national interest. The greater the public interest and its impact on politics harder it is to make

policy especially if there is no consensus. Frankly, the consensus has broken down on many issues because of polarised politics and media's influence. Syria is a case in point where it has been difficult to align public opinion, politics and policy. So you either end up with no action as by Obama or adhoc action by Trump.

These are indeed the challenges of making public policy in in an advanced democracy but more so in the complex American system. Issues do not live only at the level of foreign policy. There is an issue and there is a politics of the issue. Ask yourself if it is a policy statement or a political statement. Otherwise you will make the mistake of picking one fragment of a remark by an official or a politician, and start reading a huge meaning into it. Trump's tweets for instance are political, not policy statements.

Now the substance of the policy. The US does command an immense array of diplomatic, economic and political assets and military power. To its credit, it has played a decisive role in international affairs specially in the last century maintaining some semblance of balance of power and international order and stability. But there has been an obvious discrepancy between America's claims of a moralist foreign policy and the practice of a policy whose substance is not markedly different from the traditional power politics of any great power.

There have been thus great success stories in US foreign policy but failures as well. America has done very well in purely economic and military challenges such as the two World Wars. It has also done well in dealing with other big powers despite the fact that they all have now risen and become competing powers. But it would be wrong to say America is in decline. It is just that other powers have come up challenging America's primacy in the world.

Now where have been the failures? The reality is America does not do well in crises which are not entirely military and where you need to understand the internal dynamics of another society (Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya in modern times and Vietnam in the past are examples). America generally fails here because the basic approach is mechanistic, practical and impatient. There is an over-reliance on military power and money.

Washington also has had another problem area of foreign policy. It has had a varying degree of trouble either with the government or the people in two groups. That has included authoritarian regimes mainly from resource-rich countries who have needed Washington's help in staying in power. Or, countries who needed economic and military assistance because of insecurity and poor governance.

Essentially in these countries Washington related only with the elite and tried to buy friendships with money in advancement of its economic and strategic interests. It worked up to a point but is having problems as the elite-based system is under challenge now. Populations whose political self-consciousness has risen because of the new global forces are discovering that it has been a bad bargain. And this challenge is coming from two opposing forces — of democratisation and nationalism on the one hand and religious extremism on the other. And oddly they often converge on one point — anti-Americanism.

US relations with many of these countries are now troubled. But people there wrongly rely on conspiracy theories to explain what has happened. The plain truth is if American actions have caused them problems it is not due to any malice or some grand design to create chaos and instability. No. America has had bad partners in these countries and has pursued flawed policies in which the complex policymaking process where politics, ideology and corporate interests, especially of the military-industrial complex often trump strategy, has made no small contribution.

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Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1386467/making-us-foreign-policy/>

REFERENDUM IN TURKEY | EDITORIAL

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's narrow victory in a referendum designed to give greater power to the presidency reveals deep divisions in the country. Erdogan has always attracted a large, passionate following but now, 14 years after he first attained national power as prime minister, the strength of opposition to him is equally charged-up. The referendum itself was portrayed outside Turkey as an attempt by Erdogan to make himself a dictator. The reality is a little more complex. The current division of power in Turkey between the president and parliament was stifling and only empowered the bureaucracy. Some reform was needed although it is unclear if moving to a presidential system, like that in the US and France, was the best choice given recent authoritarian moves. The referendum will allow Erdogan to appoint more judges and let him stay in power till 2029 should he continue to win elections. But the instability caused by the closeness of the vote may end up weakening Erdogan. The main opposition parties have denied the legitimacy of the referendum, claiming that votes on unstamped ballot papers were uncounted. The general clampdown on dissent after the attempted coup last year has also cast a pall over the referendum and indeed any attempt by Erdogan to expand his powers.

Equally dangerous is Erdogan's declaration after the referendum result was announced that he would now seek a referendum on bringing back the death penalty. Not only would a 'Yes' vote on that issue put an end to any chance of Turkey joining the European Union, it is also being seen as a dangerous tool in the hands of any government in Turkey. It is now Erdogan's duty to respect the independence of the judiciary and recognise that he is the leader of a country that is deeply divided. Unfortunately, his record of going after political opponents is not encouraging. All these changes mean that – if reelected – Erdogan will return as a stronger president. He will have the power to make appointments to the Turkish higher judiciary as well as the ability to issue decrees. Impeachment would become more difficult. Turkey is entering a new phase in its history. The hope is that the changes will result in a more stable Turkey which is able to maintain its commitment to basic democratic principles and human rights.

Source: <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/199228-Referendum-in-Turkey>

IS THE UNITED STATES REALLY BLOWING UP NORTH KOREA'S MISSILES? BY JEFFREY LEWIS

The Trump administration has completed a policy review of how to manage the growing nuclear threat from North Korea. The new policy — massive pressure and engagement — is a tepid serving of leftovers from the Barack Obama, George W. Bush, and Bill Clinton administrations. I actually created a quiz of similar statements from all four administrations — and then when I looked at it a day later, I failed it.

As so often happens when reality disappoints, people turn to rumor and fantasy. And so, disappointed with the reality that Donald Trump faces the same lousy options on North Korea that hamstrung all his predecessors, the new Washington bedtime story is that the United States is secretly hacking North Korean missile launches.

The root of this particular bedtime story was a bit of reporting by David Sanger and William Broad, asserting that the Obama administration had begun, about three years ago, to launch cyberattacks against North Korea analogous to those against Iran.

While the United States is undoubtedly interested in penetrating Iranian and North Korean computer networks, and is doing a bit of mischief, that's a long way from the reality of some keyboard jockey in Utah taking command of a North Korean missile and piloting it into the drink.

First, some inconvenient facts. North Korea's missiles aren't really failing at a terrible rate. Sanger and Broad argued that soon after Obama's decision in 2014, a "large number of the North's military rockets began to explode, veer off course, disintegrate in midair and plunge into the sea."

Correlation is not causation, of course, and a simple review of North Korea's missile launches suggests that if the United States is hacking North Korean missiles, it is doing a crap job of it.

Since 2014, about three-quarters of Pyongyang's launches have succeeded. My colleague Shea Cotton keeps a database of every North Korean missile launch. Of the 66 missiles that North Korea launched during 2014 and after, 51 have succeeded. If hacking is playing any role, it is defeating a trivial number of missiles. A .230 average isn't enough to keep you in the major leagues. And it's a lousy batting average against nuclear-armed missiles.

Moreover, we can see those 15 failures were concentrated in a few new systems — missiles then under development where one would expect to see failures, hacking or no hacking. There was a spike in failures after 2016, but that spike was concentrated in four new systems that had never before been tested: the Musudan (five failures); a submarine-launched ballistic missile (three failures); an unidentified intercontinental ballistic missile (two failures); and a new anti-ship missile (two failures). Overall, North Korea's Scud and Nodong missiles — the ones that it plans to use to nuke U.S. forces in South Korea and Japan — worked just ducky.

The fact is, new systems are expected to fail at a higher rate. There is, after all, a reason that “rocket science” is popular as a metaphor for tasks that are complicated and difficult. While the simple media narrative is to laugh at failed missile launches, the North Koreans learn from every flight, whether it works or not.

Experiencing and overcoming failure is a normal part of building a robust and reliable rocket program. Let me introduce you to Redstone, a missile literally nicknamed “Old Reliable.” It was America's first large rocket, good enough to put Alan Shepard into space. Nine of the first 10 Redstone launches failed. It's possible, I suppose, that Wernher von Braun was an idiot. Or that Soviet spies had turned those lovely Hidden Figures ladies. Or maybe, just maybe, rocket science is f'ing hard.

So while we laughed every time a North Korean missile exploded at launch (2006) or dropped into the drink (April 2009 and April 2012), Pyongyang's finest were busy studying what went wrong and fixing the problems. It seemed like North Korea would never figure it out ... until it did. The last two North Korean space launches, in December 2012 and again in February 2016, were successful. Look up and you can still see North Korea's Kwangmyongsong-2 satellite in orbit.

North Korea's missile launches aren't failing because we are hacking them; they are failing because Pyongyang is developing a wide array of new liquid- and solid-fueled ballistic missiles. Many of those systems — especially the new solid-fueled missiles — are working just fine. And North Korean engineers will either figure the others out or learn from their mistakes and move on to more promising designs.

Another troubling question is lurking in Sanger and Broad's assessment: If the United States were successfully hacking North Korea's missiles, wouldn't it also be hacking Iran's? The two countries cooperate closely in missile development, so much so that it probably isn't possible to hack one without hacking the other. And, of course, it was Iran's nuclear program that was subject to the original high-profile cyberattack — the Stuxnet virus that crippled Iranian centrifuges.

Iranian missiles aren't, however, falling out of the sky. And even Stuxnet was never more than an annoyance to the Iranians. Yes, it damaged a large number of centrifuges and slowed the Iranian enrichment program for a few months. But, ultimately, Iran was installing thousands of centrifuges and developing new generations of the devices before the program was constrained by the 2015 Iran nuclear deal.

I don't mean to say that the United States isn't attempting to get inside North Korea's networks. I suspect that the United States is probably very interested in attacking the systems that control North Korea's new generation of computer-controlled machine tools, which my colleagues and I believe have reduced Pyongyang's dependence on imported components for its nuclear and missile programs. But there just isn't any reason to think cyberattacks are more than a nuisance.

The evidence suggests that the United States isn't succeeding in this regard and that, at best, such efforts would be a nuisance to the North Koreans. In fact, in the wake of Stuxnet, there were reports that a similar program against North Korea had failed. Given the extensive missile cooperation between Tehran and Pyongyang, I would expect that they share cybersecurity tips.

So why is the idea that the United States is hacking missiles out of the sky so prevalent? It is hard to admit that political and coercive policies are not working. And it's especially hard to admit that we are approaching a point where we are going to have to accept something we have long said is unacceptable. Denial, as Sen. Al Franken used to say, ain't just a river in Egypt.

This particular crisis has been a long time in the making. But for whatever reason, it is breaking into the popular consciousness now. People feel powerless, and they expect their government to do something. They just aren't prepared to accept that this particular something is, well, nothing. So there must be some secret government agency, one that doesn't look like the post office, where people know what they are doing.

Add to that a healthy dose of partisanship. We live in a bizarre era where every issue becomes a referendum on Donald Trump. While (slightly more than) half of us are convinced he's going to get us all killed, his fans desperately want to believe that he's not just some grifter in hopelessly over his head. And so when he says North Korea isn't going to test a missile in one of his Twitter outbursts, and then a missile test fails, the Drudge Report and his troll army on Twitter attribute the stroke of luck to Cheeto Jesus. Psychologists call this the fundamental attribution error. You see this a lot in cults.

It's all a dangerous fantasy, though. The Trump administration plainly has no idea what it is doing, opting for a "new" strategy identical to the approach adopted by the Obama and Bush administrations. The unifying feature of this approach has been desperate paralysis — sorry, patiently hoping for a strategic miracle.

Hacking allows us to entertain this fantasy a bit longer. It allows us to imagine that missile failures are not growing pains of an evolving and dangerous threat but evidence of our power, wisdom, and superior technology. The idea that hacking can prevent North Korea's missiles from working allows us to avoid coming to terms with the reality that our policies are failing.

Source: <http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/04/19/the-united-states-isnt-hacking-north-koreas-missile-launches/>

POPULISM'S RISE RESHAPES GLOBAL POLITICAL RISK – ANALYSIS BY KINGSLEY CHIEDU MOGHALU

Risks of populism include substituting conviction for facts and threats to independent impartial institutions meant to safeguard democracy's integrity.

For decades, political risk has been synonymous with developing countries and emerging markets in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The rise of populism in the Western world redefines the notion of political risk and teaches that risk has no permanent address.

Mitigating the risk requires avoiding arrogance toward those embracing populism. A dismissive response delegitimizes the phenomenon, leaving us unable to manage implications for democracy and all issues of economic development in poor countries, and the very idea of political risk itself. Those who oppose populism must engage with it rationally in the political space with the force of their own ideas.

Political populism, characterized by a desire to assert domestic democratic sovereignty and rejection of the "cult of the expert," owes its rise to increasing rejection of the conventional wisdom by citizens who feel left behind by globalization trends favoring the elite that gained ascendance over the past 30 years.

The backlash was inevitable. To the extent that the idea of a "borderless" world diminished the voices of local populations and amplified the powers of bureaucratic global elites in Brussels or Washington, there was bound to be a reckoning between local and global forces for the control of the destinies of nations. These tensions, especially as they affect immigration, jobs and trade, have been long in the making, brought to the fore in an explosive manner by the Brexit referendum. The British vote to leave the European Union confounded conventional wisdom and strengthened the hand of the anti-globalists.

The phenomenon of globalization, while not dead, is in decline in political and economic life, with China's Xi Jinping left as its unlikely champion. For globalization, whatever its virtues, was neither a benign phenomenon nor an agnostic one. It's an agenda with global winners and losers, facing challenges from within industrialized countries, once prior champions, because large populations found themselves on the wrong side of globalization's inescapable logic – the cost-benefit analyses of labor and supply chain costs and technologies that are the chief culprit in the death of the salaryman with lifelong job security.

The rise of populism and its many implications flow from concerns about international forces supplanting the sovereignty of nations. Scholars such as Hedley Bull advanced the theory of international relations known as the “English School” in the 1970s. The theory holds that the contemporary history of the world – and relations among nations – is marked by a tension among three phases: In the international system, nations interacted in a formalistic manner, mainly through trade, military alliances and traditional diplomacy. Sovereignty was sacrosanct. The international society emerged in the late 19th century as technology broke down geographic distances, and maintaining global stability, not through a balance of power but through multilateral cooperation, seemed a superior path. Despite the rhetoric, competition and threats to global order continued among nations inside and outside these frameworks for cooperation – whether the Cold War or the “unipolar world” dominated by America after communism’s fall. Aspirations to a cosmopolitan world society sought to limit sovereignty and create a “borderless” world, a *civitas maxima* prioritizing human rights over national interests. This worldview fueled economic globalization, regional integration, the free movement of people and international humanitarian law led by “norm entrepreneurs.” Populism seeks to reverse the power of the international community by utilizing the democratic legitimacy of the majority to re-assert primacy of the national interest – seen by liberals as isolationism or “nativism” – in public policy.

Home-country multinationals that ship production – and jobs – abroad can anticipate a backlash. Multinationals will no longer receive benign preferences and protections in populist countries if they cannot prove their value to local economies, especially by creating jobs.

Designing corporate initiatives to curry political favor erodes the free enterprise ethic. Business decisions may no longer be taken on the basis of market efficiency, injecting a heavy dose of partisan political considerations into corporate organizations, as shareholders react and CEOs align with populist governments.

Such trends hasten the decline of the global corporation as a business model. As *The Economist* recently noted, multinationals’ profits have dropped by 25 percent in the past five years, and 40 percent of such firms now make a return on equity of less than 10 percent. Global corporations may have Trump to thank for providing cover for a retreat from the failing original logic of profits driving the ascendance of multinationals over the past half-century. Trump’s populist movement focuses on global trade as functioning to the detriment of American interests, and this leaves the World Trade Organization squarely in the sights of populism.

But, if a tariff war breaks out and US companies become the losers – a real risk – numbers will impose discipline on populism. Moreover, as US Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross asserted, several European and Asian nations are also guilty of protectionist policies even as they proclaim the gospel of free trade.

Likewise, the EU, which challenged domestic sovereignty, will be hardest hit as populism rises in France, Italy and the Netherlands. The EU is the most radical embodiment of the cosmopolitan world society worldview, a political project masquerading as an economic one but primarily formed to advance the great-power aspirations of France and Germany.

For developing nations, especially those in Africa, populism's rise in the Western world may ultimately be beneficial, despite negative short-term impacts. These countries will be forced to confront mistaken assumptions about development that relies on the "benevolence" of foreign aid. They must reconsider unquestioning acceptance of the inevitability of globalization and their status as markets, not factory. And they have already seen that efforts to model the African Union on the basis of the European Union, complete with common currency, may not be wise in light of challenges facing the EU over the past decade.

African nations must embrace an inside-out perspective on economic transformation rather than the exclusively outside-in model that, in reality, robbed them of opportunity to control their destiny.

Industrialized countries, aided by technological superiority which produced value-added goods at competitive prices and the WTO treaty regime, flooded the markets of developing countries, leaving them import-dependent. Considering that more than 50 percent of world trade is based on manufactured goods and the rude awakening offered by populism's rise in the West, these nations should pursue the idea of "smart protectionism" – by deploying the "special and differentiated" provisions of the WTO treaty that can apply to less developed nations to prevent the dumping of Chinese goods in their markets and create enabling environments for modest industrial growth and intra-African trade. At 13 percent of its total global trade, Africa's intraregional trade is the lowest in the world compared to North America, Europe and other regions.

The process of global unwinding must be managed carefully. If chaotic, it raises the risk of other knock-on effects, and the risks of populism must be clear:

First, attempts to substitute facts and empirical foundations with conviction as a basis for public policy create sub-optimal outcomes.

Second, populism, in its quest for favorable outcomes, threatens the independence of impartial institutions that safeguard the integrity of democracy and democratic states. Electoral victories should not become mob rule or a tyranny of the majority.

Third, populism, based on its binary convictions about bad and good guys and nations, as well as possible weakening of institutional frameworks, runs the risk of promoting instability in a nuclear world in which several weaker and irrational states possess weapons of mass destruction.

Populism, a product of democratic choice, can create mixed outcomes. Some, like the uprooting of corrupt and dictatorial regimes, are good. But in some cases, autocratic corruption can be replaced with a similar weakening of institutions and the conflation of populist sentiment with competent public policy, not to speak of new forms of corruption. Populism will likely co-exist uncomfortably with globalization – perhaps a scaled-back version – colliding with realities of the world and public policy. One of these is that experts matter, even if they are not always right.

*Kingsley Chiedu Moghalu is a professor of international business and public policy at The Fletcher School at Tufts University. He is the founder of Sogato Strategies, a global risk and strategy advisory firm, and a former deputy governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria.

Source: <http://www.eurasiareview.com/22042017-populisms-rise-reshapes-global-political-risk-analysis/>

OBSTACLES FACING IMPROVED US-RUSSIAN RELATIONS – ANALYSIS BY MICHAEL AVERKO

Lauren Windsor's April 15 Huffington Post article "Maxine Waters: Tension In Syria 'Phony', A Ruse To Lift Oil Sanctions On Russia", gives a misleading impression on what constitutes the political left and right. Especially in this day and age, these categories alone don't tell the whole story. Concerning numerous issues, a good number of folks on the left and right find some agreement that disagree with others on the left and right.

Regarding this particular, there are individuals on the left and right (along with some of those who aren't as easy to categorize), who reasonably disagree with California Democratic Congresswoman Maxine Waters' Russia related comments. She's known for making provocatively flippant remarks without much protest. Refer to her not so distant "scumbags" remark on MSNBC, directed against some in Russia and the Trump administration. (Following an article of mine I noted the likely outrage if someone prominent referred to Waters as a douchebag. When he was with Fox News, Bill O'Reilly felt compelled to apologize for his saying that she wears a James Brown wig. Such are the double standards, which include O'Reilly receiving little criticism when he called Russian President Vladimir Putin a "killer". How many high profile American journalists and politicians have called O'Reilly a sexual predator? Another double standard concerns the characterization of Russian Deputy UN Ambassador Vladimir Safronkov as a "thug", for his replies to the UK and US ambassadors. Upon further review, Safronkov didn't initiate rude behavior. He's reflecting the many Russians who don't take kindly to seeing their country treated as a kind of punching bag. Those resorting to rude behavior should expect the chance of being accorded the same treatment.)

Contrary to what the Democratic Party connected MSNBC host Lawrence O'Donnell suggested, the Trump administration's strike on a Syrian government military base isn't a coordinated covert Kremlin ploy to deflate the (faultily claimed) conspiracy, involving a Trump-Russian government collusion to weaken Hillary Clinton during the 2016 US presidential campaign. Waters' use of "phony" (regarding the raised US-Russian tension over Syria) more accurately applies to the Democratic Party establishment's selectivity when it comes to seeking an investigation of any Trump-Russia ties, unlike investigating the questionably premised Trump administration military strike on the Syrian government military base. The latter involves the possibility of a false flag operation, that jives with the Democrats' desire to poke at Russia, which is supporting the Syrian government as the realistically best option (at least for the moment) in Syria.

Politics aside, there's a very good basis to investigate the pretext that the Trump administration used to attack a Syrian government military position. At present, there hasn't been conclusive evidence provided on what led to the recent chemical incident in rebel held Syrian territory. Instead, there've been unsubstantiated statements claiming proof of Syrian government culpability, which Anglo-American mass media hasn't been keen to challenge.

Two examples from last week come to mind. On RT, a Syrian rebel representative claimed to have the name of the pilot who dropped the sarin gas as claimed. To date, the name of the pilot hasn't been provided. CNN ran an unnamed source, claiming the existence of an intercepted communication of Syrian officials planning a chemical attack. The release of the anonymously quoted intercept claim hasn't been provided. These claims are much different than the raw evidence the US provided in the instances of the Cuban Missile Crisis and downing of KAL 007.

Meantime, some credible Americans cast serious doubt on Syrian government culpability in the recent chemical incident. Among them are Lawrence Wilkerson, the retired US Army Colonel and former Chief of Staff to US Secretary of State Colin Powell and Theodore Postol, an MIT emeritus, who has experience in dealing with a matter like the recent chemical incident in Syria. Postol and former US President Barack Obama join some others in doubting the claim that the Syrian government used chemical weapons in 2013. To the regret of some Donald Trump supporters and others, the US president seems like he might've been conned into supporting the US attack on the Syrian military position. As has been noted, there're several key individuals in his administration who contradict some of his earlier stated views, that have included the reluctance to go against the Syrian government. In addition, Trump might've reasonably assumed that the strike would benefit his ratings. A US military attack on a humanitarian based claim, involving no US casualties, can likely (at least initially) lead to an increase in popularity, as has happened in this instance.

The question arises on how long will that last? In the aftermath of the US strike in question, Trump tweeted about how US-Russian relations will improve. Over the past weekend, his National Security Adviser HR McMaster took a hardline, by unfairly putting the blame on Russia, while suggesting that the US-Russian relationship can improve on the basis that it's at such a low point. In terms of overall improvement, setting the bar at a low point isn't as good as seeking a higher standard from the get go.

As a high ranking military officer, who has been unhesitant to use force when he felt it required, McMaster can consider an open role reversal as part of an effort to foster better US-Russian relations – assuming that he sincerely seeks this goal on mutually

reasoned terms. McMaster probably wouldn't like a scenario where the Russian government (in let's say some place in Russia's near abroad) initiated a debatable humanitarian military action against a perceived US ally, that included the Kremlin telling the White House to remove its personnel to avoid getting hit. The US strike on the Syrian base included the US warning Russia to withdraw its personnel in the area, just prior to the attack.

It has been made less easier for Trump to improve US-Russian relations. A main criticism of him concerns his flip flopping stances. There's nevertheless hope. During the Cold War, US President John Kennedy mistakenly believed the hawkish wing that advocated the Bay of Pigs operation. Its failure is said to have motivated Kennedy into using some restraint when the Cuban Missile Crisis developed. The late Ronald Reagan, his immediate successor George HW Bush and Barack Obama, are among the past US presidents, who took foreign policy stances that differed with some influential elements in their country.

The Syrian and Russian governments haven't been shy in seeking an investigation on the recent chemical incident. Without counter-evidence, the false flag claimed by them isn't so unbelievable. Should this predicament remain, Trump has a good enough base to take the initiative on what he campaigned for. One more shift on his part doesn't necessarily rock the boat too much more than what has occurred. Trump won the US presidency, unlike Hillary Clinton, Lindsey Graham, John McCain and Marco Rubio. Trump's appointed cabinet work under him and not vice versa.

Michael Averko is a New York based independent foreign policy analyst and media critic. This article is an updated version of the one that initially appeared at the Strategic Culture Foundation's website on April 19.

Source: <http://www.eurasiareview.com/20042017-obstacles-facing-improved-us-russian-relations-analysis/>

CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE FUTURE BY KEITH KOZLOFF

On Tuesday, President Trump signed an executive order that decimates his predecessor's policies on climate change. One casualty is the social cost of carbon (SCC), a measure that's been called "the most important number you've never heard of." The SCC captures the estimated costs of climate disruption from things like sea-level rise, storms, fires, crop failures and rising death rates. Before Trump's order, federal agencies were required to consider these costs when designing relevant policies and programs.

While it is difficult to put an exact price tag on future costs from a disrupted climate, a federal court affirmed last August that the current SCC estimate (\$36 per ton of CO₂ emitted) is based on sound science. Mr. Trump's executive order would effectively reduce that figure to close to zero. This will hamstring US efforts to protect future generations from climate disruption.

To understand why, consider an analogy. Let's say that in 2018 scientists discover an asteroid as big as the one that killed off the dinosaurs – and it's headed our way. NASA says there is a 25% chance the asteroid will collide with the Earth in 30 years' time. Fortunately, a new technology could gradually shift the asteroid's trajectory if launched in time. It's expensive: the required investment would be an order of magnitude larger than spending on our moon program. And the effort would need to begin immediately: If the US waits to be sure that the asteroid will hit the Earth, it would be too late to nudge the asteroid from its path of destruction.

To decide what to do, government economists conduct a conventional cost/benefit analysis. The cost side of the equation consists of developing and deploying the asteroid-deflecting spacecraft. Benefits consist of estimated damages to human life, property, etc. that would be avoided if the project moves forward. Economists count only benefits to the US, heavily discount them because they accrue far in the future, and adjust them for the 25% probability of impact. Based on this analysis, politicians – who are always reluctant to pay for benefits that accrue after they leave office – decide not to act. As luck would have it, the asteroid slams into the Earth in 2048.

Today, we face a similar choice regarding global climate change – another problem that requires near-term investments to prevent potentially unthinkable long-term costs. Cost/benefit analysis can be a useful tool, among others, for decision-making on climate policy. But President Trump's executive order calls for federal agencies to apply the same constricted approach used by government economists in the asteroid analogy.

To support sound climate policies, the SCC should continue to be used, refined, and updated as evidence accumulates on climate-related damages. Maintaining a robust SCC would help to ensure we do not discount the lives and well-being of future generations, who cannot argue the case themselves. If they could, they would likely argue that even a low risk of unacceptable costs warrants action. This is the same logic that guides expenditures around other threats to our national security, such as international terrorism.

Climate disruption is our asteroid. We do not know its exact trajectory, so we can't be sure our interventions are needed to prevent disaster. Future generations, looking back, may forgive us if it turns out we acted unnecessarily. If we instead fail to act when we should have, our children's children will be less charitable in their assessment.

This article has been excerpted from: 'President Trump's Climate Action Sells the Future Short'.

Courtesy: Comondreams.org

Source: <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/196322-Climate-change-and-the-future>

SINO-INDIAN TENSIONS BY WAQAR K KAURAVI AND UMAR WAQAR

As reported by Economic Times , China has for the first time announced “standardised” official names for six places in Arunachal Pradesh, days after it lodged strong protests with India over the Dalai Lama’s visit to the frontier state. The move was aimed at reaffirming China’s claim over the state. China claims the state as ‘South Tibet’.

India has dismissed the renaming and ; Union Minister M Venkaiah Naidu said “every inch” of Arunachal Pradesh belongs to India and China has “no business” to name any Indian place.

The current spate of hard shouting between India and China appears to be a reaction of Dalai Lama’s visit to Arunachal Pradesh; however it must be appreciated and remembered that Sino-Indian tensions are a product of years of uneasy relations and an un-demarcated 4000 km border between both countries and the fact that Indo-China war of 1962 resulted in total humiliation of India, when her forces were smashed and retreated like jackals.

Indian media regularly sounds loud anti-China rhetoric from the Indian establishment, opposition and mainstream media, blaming the Chinese forces of infiltrating the Line of Actual Control in the Ladakh/Aksai Chin region. Beijing on the other hand has remained cool and calm and has advised the Indian establishment to clear its position on the issue. The Chinese media has shown patience, however deliberate attempts by India to frequently showcase Dalai Lama in the disputed areas like Chinese South Tibet are now testing the resolve of Chinese leadership

Indian military preparations to deal with Chinese military might across the Himalayas is no secret. As reported by Shashank Joshi in the Interpreter in 2014, Indian response to Chinese military preparations has been the raising of the new 17 Corps, Indian cabinet gave the go-ahead for the raising of the 90,000 strong China-facing Corps in 2014. Its underlying purpose is to provide conventional deterrence against China, strengthening India’s hand in crises. The new corps will have two high-altitude divisions (59 Div at Panagarh and 72 Div at Pathankot) with their integral units.

India’s jingoistic attitude can be also be gleaned from analysts like Jaideep Mazumdar’s article from Aug 18, 2016, in Swaraja with the title ‘Indo-China Border’s Defences Ramped Up as India Displays New Confidence’. He states that all this marks a new and vastly confident attitude in India regarding China; the ghost of 1962, it can be said, has been buried by the Narendra Modi government and the diffidence that marked the

conduct of Congress regimes in their dealings with, or regarding, China has been justly shed.

Indian frustration with CPEC is also one major factor affecting Sino-Indian ties and the Indian establishment is mulling to include seats of Pakistani Kashmir into Indian legislature, basically a move to taunt China and make CPEC controversial.

The Chinese media has been sensitive to the issue of CPEC as well as the Sino-Indian border. Chinese Global Times commented on Dalai Lama's visit in following words, "The Indian media have continuously created trouble for the Sino-Indian relationship. India seems to be in the driving seat of the bilateral relationship. The Indian policy toward China can be fickle, while China's levers for balancing the relationship are much simpler and scarcer. Therefore, the Indian media and opposition should be balanced, so as to prevent them from enjoying privileges outside intergovernmental communications and negotiations."

Unfortunately, India has maintained a very strange relationship with all of its neighbors. Most of the time, this relationship has had been tailored to address the Indian anxiety derived from the past history of 2,000 years and, more recently, for building a false clout of its greatness. Indian establishment and media have blamed India's neighbours for most of the ills related to security and poor governance in the Union. However, the track record shows something reverse. Some analysts have even blamed India for fomenting tensions in the Chinese state of Sinkiang and Tibet. One must remember that the Indian establishment played a dirty game during the Beijing Olympics by involving the Tibetan dissidents when the Olympic torch passed through India.

On a historical note, the Indo-China conflict across the Himalayas dates back to British times when they arbitrarily demarcated the international border with China and vast swathes of bordering territory remained in dispute. As reported by Global Times, the controversy regarding South Tibet started from 1914, when British India and local Tibetan representatives unilaterally signed the illegal "Simla Accord" and created the "McMahon Line," a line the Chinese government has never accepted. The illegal deal ceded some 90,000 square kilometers of Chinese territory in South Tibet to British India.

China has been making efforts to solve the territorial disputes with India, but over the past decades, India has not only increased migration to the disputed area and boosted its military construction there, but it also named "Arunachal Pradesh," China's South Tibet, as a formal state of India in 1987.

Following the independence of both countries, the issue of the border dispute has been surfacing regularly and resulted in a major war in 1962. Pundit Nehru's forward policy in the Himalayas was effectively checked and rolled back by the PLA when the Chinese forces not only destroyed the Indian military capability in Aksai Chin and NEFA (current Arunachal Pradesh), but also set the tone of future political discourse in this dispute.

Global Times states that putting the Dalai Lama into its toolbox against China is another trick played by New Delhi lately. New Delhi would be too ingenuous to believe that the region belongs to India simply because the Dalai Lama says so. It is time for India to do some serious thinking over why China announced the standardised names in South Tibet at this time. Playing the Dalai Lama card is never a wise choice for New Delhi. If India wants to continue this petty game, it will only end up in paying dearly for it.

Our sincere advise to Indian establishment and head honchos of South block will be to stop interfering with their neighbors and solve their border disputes with China, Pakistan, Sikkim, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and even Bhutan through peaceful diplomacy, a geographically Indo centric South Asia does not mean that India should be the source of headache for all of her neighbours.

Source: <http://nation.com.pk/columns/25-Apr-2017/sino-indian-tensions>

SYRIA CHANGED THE WORLD BY ANNE BARNARD

ISTANBUL — The world seems awash in chaos and uncertainty, perhaps more so than at any point since the end of the Cold War.

Authoritarian-leaning leaders are on the rise, and liberal democracy itself seems under siege. The post-World War II order is fraying as fighting spills across borders and international institutions — built, at least in theory, to act as brakes on wanton slaughter — fail to provide solutions. Populist movements on both sides of the Atlantic are not just riding anti-establishment anger, but stoking fears of a religious “other,” this time Muslims.

These challenges have been crystallized, propelled and intensified by a conflagration once dismissed in the West as peripheral, to be filed, perhaps, under “Muslims killing Muslims”: the war in Syria.

Now in its seventh year, this war allowed to rage for so long, killing 400,000 Syrians and plunging millions more into misery, has sent shock waves around the world. Millions have fled to neighboring countries, some pushing on to Europe.

The notion that the postwar world would no longer let leaders indiscriminately kill their own citizens now seems in full retreat. The Syrian government’s response to rebellion, continuing year after year, threatens to normalize levels of state brutality not seen in decades. All the while President Bashar al-Assad invokes an excuse increasingly popular among the world’s governments since Sept. 11: He is “fighting terror.”

“Syria did not cause everything,” said the Syrian dissident Yassin al-Haj Saleh, a secular leftist who spent nearly two decades as a political prisoner under Mr. Assad’s father and predecessor, Hafez. “But yes, Syria changed the world.”

The United Nations Security Council is paralyzed. Aid agencies are overwhelmed. Even a United States missile strike on a Syrian military air base, ordered by President Trump in retaliation for a chemical attack on a rebel-held town, seems little more than a blip in the turmoil, the latest unilateral intervention in the war. Two weeks later, the Syrian government, backed by Russia, continues its scorched-earth bombings.

There remains no consensus on what should have been or could still be done for Syria, or whether a more, or less, muscular international approach would have brought better results.

The Obama White House kept Syria at arm's length, determined, understandably, to avoid the mistakes of the invasion and occupation of Iraq. And Western leaders surmised that unlike the 1990s civil war in Bosnia, the Syrian conflict could burn in isolation from their countries.

Moral or not, that calculation was incorrect. The crisis has crossed Europe's doorstep and is roiling its politics.

"We've thrown values by the wayside, but also not been able to act in our own interests, because we let things go too long," said Joost Hiltermann, a Dutch citizen who is the Middle East director for the International Crisis Group.

The conflict began in 2011, with political protests. Syrian security forces cracked down, and with Western support stronger in rhetoric than reality, some of Mr. Assad's opponents took up arms. The government responded with mass detentions, torture, starvation sieges and bombing of rebel-held areas. Extremist jihadists arose, with the Islamic State eventually declaring a caliphate and fomenting violence in Europe.

More than five million Syrians have fled their country. Hundreds of thousands joined a refugee trail across the Mediterranean Sea to Europe.

Images of crowds of desperate refugees — and of the extreme violence they had faced at home — were used by politicians to fuel fears of Islam, and of Muslims. That lifted far-right European parties already riding on resentment of immigrants, from Finland to Hungary.

The refugee crisis has posed one of the biggest challenges in memory to the cohesion of the European Union and some of its core values: freedom of movement, common borders, pluralism. It heightened anxieties over identity and culture, feeding off economic insecurity and mistrust of governing elites that grew over decades with globalization and financial crises.

Suddenly European countries were erecting fences and internment camps to stop migrants. While Germany welcomed refugees, other countries resisted sharing the burden. The far right spoke of protecting white, Christian Europe. Even the Brexit campaign played, in part, on fears of the refugees.

On Sunday, the anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim candidate Marine Le Pen — who wants Mr. Assad to stay in power — could win the first round of French elections. A German right-wing party has Chancellor Angela Merkel in its sights. In last month's Dutch elections,

the far-right party of Geert Wilders performed worse than expected, but shifted the political spectrum rightward, as the ruling party adopted its populist tactics, inciting confrontation with Turkey over immigrants.

The Syrian conflict exposed — and was worsened by — failures of the very systems the right rails against.

The European Union and the United Nations were set up in the past century, after devastating wars, to keep peace, prevent persecution, hold leaders accountable and provide aid to the most vulnerable. But confidence in them is ebbing when they are most needed. The Geneva Conventions on protecting civilians in wartime — never consistently enforced — are now openly flouted.

Mr. Saleh, the Syrian dissident, worries that “the Syrianization of the world” could get darker still. He compares today’s populism and Islamophobia to the mix of fascism and anti-Semitism in World War II.

“The atmosphere in the world is not going toward hope and democracy and the individual,” he said. “It is going toward nationalism, hatred, the rise of the security state.”

In the United States, as in Europe, right-wing extremists are among those embracing authoritarian, indiscriminately violent responses to perceived Islamist threats. White nationalists like Richard Spencer and David Duke, the former Ku Klux Klan leader, post adoring pictures on social media of Mr. Assad, who portrays himself as a bulwark against extremism.

Some in the West are pushing to normalize relations with Mr. Assad, hoping that will help the fight against the Islamic State and get refugees to go home. But without accountability or political reforms, those results are less likely.

In my decade of covering violence against civilians in the Middle East, mass murder by states has often seemed less gripping to Western audiences than far smaller numbers of theatrically staged killings — horrific as they are — by the Islamic State and its Qaeda predecessors.

It is hard to escape the sense that Western fears of Islamist terrorism have grown so intense that many are willing to tolerate any number of deaths of Arab or Muslim civilians, and any abuses of state power, in the name of fighting it.

The United States' own "war on terror" played a part in making violations of humanitarian and legal norms routine: detentions at Guantánamo Bay, the torture at Abu Ghraib and the continuing drone and air wars with mounting civilian tolls in Syria, Iraq, Yemen and elsewhere.

Then, too, Syria's war broke out when the global stage was set for division and ineffectiveness. Russia was eager for a bigger role, the United States was retreating, Europe was consumed with internal problems. Russia and the United States saw opposite interests in Syria, deadlocking the Security Council.

The crisis exposed the flaws of the United Nations system, which gives a Security Council veto to the World War II victors and privileges sovereignty with no provision for states that kill their people. The "responsibility to protect" doctrine, a legal justification for military action to stop states from massacring their citizens, was tried in Kosovo and Libya, with deeply disputed results, and died in Syria.

The "red line" incident in 2013 — the strikes threatened by President Obama but not carried out in response to a Syrian chemical attack that killed more than 1,400 people — added to the sense of impunity. Mr. Assad may not even have fulfilled his pledge to give up all chemical weapons.

The United Nations can do little but document war crimes as they become more routine.

Now, the Syrian conflict is threatening the very foundation of medical neutrality in war — a Geneva Conventions principle necessary to sustain global health efforts such as fighting epidemics — the British medical journal *The Lancet* and the American University of Beirut concluded in a recent paper.

They warned of the "weaponization of health care" in Syria, mainly by the government, with more than 800 medical workers killed in hundreds of attacks, doctors arrested for treating injured protesters, and medical supplies withheld from besieged areas.

"This will repeat in other places," Dr. Monzer Khalil, a health official in rebel-held Idlib, said a day after treating victims of the recent chemical attack. "If Europe and America are honest, to preserve the values they are defending, they should fight this oppression. There should be political pressure on the regime."

Anne Barnard is the Beirut bureau chief for *The New York Times*.

Source: https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/21/sunday-review/one-countrys-war-changed-the-world.html?ref=opinion&_r=1

XI-TRUMP RAPPROCHEMENT? BY S QAMAR A RIZVI

CHINESE President Xi has recently visited the United States. The first summit between the two leaders has been highly significant given the size and influence of the two nations at the global stage, and their growing competition over issues such as North Korean nuclear proliferation, East Asian maritime security disputes, bilateral trade and investment imbalances and the direction of the global economy. The meeting arranged between the two heads of states does release the signals that a degree of candid pacification of disputes between Washington and Beijing might be dealt with mutual understanding and cooperation. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson touted the first summit between the leaders of the world's two largest economies as a success and said Trump and Xi enjoyed "very frank, very candid" discussions that were "very positive." The officials signalled that the trading relationship between the two countries and North Korea's nuclear program were at the top of the agenda during the meetings, which took place at Trump's Mar-a-Lago estate.

"The two sides noted the urgency of the threat of North Korea's weapons program, reaffirmed their commitment to a denuclearised Korean Peninsula and committed to fully implement UN Security Council resolutions," Tillerson said. They agreed to increase cooperation and work with the international community to convince the [North Korea] to peacefully resolve the issue and abandon its illicit weapons programs.

As appeared that President Trump pressed for more economic punishment against North Korea for its expanding nuclear weapons program. Trump showed his strong reservations over China against building artificial islands in the disputed South China Sea and also questioned the 'One-China' policy relating to Taiwan. The two countries' common interests seem to have been expanding rather than shrinking, the joint statement said.

The highly anticipated US-China summit was upstaged by US missile strikes against a Syrian air base from which Trump said a deadly chemical weapon attack had been launched. It was the first direct US assault on the Russian-backed government of Bashar al Assad in six years of civil war. The swift action in Syria, particularly the timing is tantamount to conveying a message especially to defiant nuclear-armed North Korea and by extension, its ally China as well as other countries like Iran and Russia of Trump's willingness to use military force if deemed necessary.

China is pragmatically sided with Russia at the United Nations in opposing condemnation of Assad's government but has not become directly involved in the conflict. China's Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said that China opposed

the use of chemical weapons by any party under any circumstances but didn't comment on the US attack. "Currently, the world economy needs a strong engine to lead to stronger development and faster growth, it's inescapable responsibility for China and the United States to do this, rather than heading toward a trade war," Cui Tiankai, Chinese ambassador to the United States, said. With Trump's decision to quit the Transpacific Trade Partnership (TPP), Cui said China cannot take over the US role as the global leader who makes trade rules." I think this is a misleading notion, because international trade rules cannot be made by the United States or China alone, and rather, they should be made and implemented by all nations in the world," Cui said. As for the American experts, they also see a positive outcome of the latest Strategic and Economic Dialogue (SED) between the two sides. Experts say China is not likely to shake its non-market economy (NME) status under the WTO's rules. But the move still flies in the face of campaign rhetoric that suggested US trade policy would be trending in the opposite direction.

The expert view suggests military options against North Korea are much riskier than those against Syria. Today, the maritime dispute between the US and China has become the most driving issue in their complex relationship. The larger conflict, however, revolves around China's emergence as a major regional power and America's insistence on policing the Pacific affiliated area. Chinese President Xi Jinping has had repeatedly pointed out this system— evolved in the post WWII period— favours America and prevents Beijing from taking its rightful place as the dominant power in Asia.

And at a time when China's economy is slowing, President Xi seems to be under increased pressure at home to find other ways to demonstrate China's advances under his leadership. However, the Chinese Global Times, responding to the remarks of American politicians, said that although the bilateral relationship really has been on a "trend towards co-operation, there nevertheless remain sources for mutual suspicion, and still too many opportunities to slide into conflict". However, the sinusoid ally growing US-China relationship shows some signs of global cooperation. But the core future relationship scenario between Washington and Beijing largely depends on the accommodation the two sides offer regarding the handling of the key issues and the very possibility of endorsing the objectives and strategies of the two leading world powers in the region and world at large. And yet the most striking question arises: How could the seemingly US-China rapprochement— in the wake of astute Chinese entry into the Middle East, and given the ramification of a zero sum game indoctrinated by the US perceived strategic pivot to Asia(aiming at US's anti-China perspective); and Xi Jinxing's resolve that China is committed to moving on the path of peaceful development and will never give up its legitimate rights and will not trade key national

interests— be ever translated into real terms? And not surprisingly, the US Navy is expected to conduct sustained freedom of navigation operations to reassert its power vis-à-vis China's claims in South China Sea.

Trump is likely to put strategic pressure on regional allies, particularly Japan and Australia, to contribute more to multilateral efforts aimed at countering China's expanding maritime power. As for the global community, there is no shrouded truth about China's policy of peaceful coexistence richly reflected by Beijing's praiseworthy role of expanding peaceful development. At the global stage, China's soft power doctrine is getting an encouraging pace by slowly leaving behind hard-power US's role in global affairs.

— The writer, an independent 'IR' researcher-cum-analyst based in Karachi, is a member of European Consortium for Political Research Standing Group on IR, Critical Peace & Conflict Studies.

Email: rizvipeceresearcher@gmail.com

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THE NEW COLD WAR IN SYRIA BY HUSSAIN NADIM

If it was truly about Syria or defeating the ISIS, the mess that we see in the region today would have been solved relatively easier. The unfolding of recent events, including the US strategic bombing to 'save' human lives, is a classic Cold War era style of politics and continuation of proxy wars all over again. We have seen this too many times before, during the Cold War in Afghanistan, Korea, Vietnam and Latin America.

What started as a movement for democracy in Syria back in 2011 became entangled into regional power politics between Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Israel on one end, against Iran, Assad regime and Hezbollah on the other. Fast forward to 2017, the global superpowers, the US, Europe and Russia, are all densely involved in backing their proxies.

If it was about defeating ISIS, how long would it have taken for these global powers and Nato, with a military budget worth trillions of dollars, to wipe off untrained and ill-equipped ISIS fighters? The problem is not defeating ISIS, the global powers are locked down into an impasse over post-ISIS power structure in the region, meanwhile allowing time to ISIS to gain momentum, conduct propaganda, recruit militants and attack Western cities.

The global power 'politics' or hypocrisy is such that under the label of 'fighting' ISIS, regional powers have been putting their own interests first. Turkey, for instance, has been more inclined on bombing Kurdish forces instead of targeting ISIS fighters. Saudis have been aiding ISIS indirectly to thwart off growing Iranian influence in the region. Americans, on the other hand, are supposedly fighting against ISIS, yet supporting the Saudis at the same time.

The security emergency that the threat of ISIS has provided is helping both regional and global powers to reframe the post-ISIS power structure in their own favour. The tragedy for Syria and its people is that it is a country where global superpowers have unfortunately come in direct confrontation to one another over their 'national interests'.

The events in Syria reveal a lot about the global power structure and the international order. First, they demonstrate that despite all the advancement and progress of human society, the global South continues to remain under the hegemony of the North. Despite the entire rhetoric over decolonisation since the last Great War, the fact is that the Middle East and numerous other former colonies have remained under the shadow of superpowers' 'national interests'.

Post-WWII, the superpowers didn't have colonies, instead just their 'national interests' in regions as far as Afghanistan or Syria. Naturally, any movement for self-determination or against the foreign-sponsored rulers in those regions in the 21st century will be a direct threat to the 'national security' of such powers. The war as we see in Syria is, thus, really the war of foreign 'national interests' colliding with one another.

Second, the continued crisis in Syria reveals that the priority of global powers isn't to defeat the ISIS but to ensure that the 'right' power setup is arranged during the post-ISIS regional order. This securitisation of foreign policy has allowed swift increase in military and defence spending under the label of 'threat from the ISIS'. The innocent taxpayers have little clue that it's not their 'security' that is at risk but the security of 'national interest' somewhere in the rural Middle East that is under threat.

Third and very important is the obvious lesson that must be learnt, weakening down of institutions and governance setup through foreign occupation, bombing and destruction allows space to breed terrorist organisations. Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Sudan and now Syria all represent how the recklessness of superpowers have destroyed institutional structures, giving space for militant organisations, such as the ISIS to seize control.

As long as the crisis in Syria is not separated from thick Cold War politics, priorities not settled and 'national interests' of the foreign powers continue to dominate the strategy and discourse, Syria is going to tread the path of destruction, and on its way may even trigger a wider war that may not just be fought in the Middle East, but also on the streets of developed countries as we saw in Paris.

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RUSSIA, TRUMP, AND A NEW DÉTENTE BY ROBERT DAVID ENGLISH

Fixing U.S.-Russian Relations

In his first press conference as president of the United States, Donald Trump said no fewer than seven times that it would be “positive,” “good,” even “great” if “we could get along with Russia.” In fact, for all the confusion of his policies toward China, Europe, and the Middle East, Trump has enunciated a clear three-part position on Russia, which contrasts strongly with that of most of the U.S. political elite. First, Trump seeks Moscow’s cooperation on global issues; second, he believes that Washington shares the blame for soured relations; and third, he acknowledges “the right of all nations to put their own interests first,” adding that the United States does “not seek to impose our way of life on anyone.”

The last of these is an essentially realist position, and if coherently implemented could prove a tonic. For 25 years, Republicans and Democrats have acted in ways that look much the same to Moscow. Washington has pursued policies that have ignored Russian interests (and sometimes international law as well) in order to encircle Moscow with military alliances and trade blocs conducive to U.S. interests. It is no wonder that Russia pushes back. The wonder is that the U.S. policy elite doesn’t get this, even as foreign-affairs neophyte Trump apparently does.

MEMORY LOSS

Most Americans appreciate the weight of past grievances upon present-day politics, including that of the United States’ own interference in Iran in the 1950s, or in Latin America repeatedly from the 1960s through the 1980s. Yet there is a blind spot when it comes to U.S. interference in Russian politics in the 1990s. Many Americans remember former President Bill Clinton as a great benefactor to Russia as the country attempted to build a market democracy under then-President Boris Yeltsin. But most Russians see the United States as having abetted a decade of degradation under Yeltsin’s scandal-ridden bumbling. Washington, they believe, not only took advantage of Moscow’s weakness for geopolitical gain but also repeatedly interfered in Russia’s domestic politics to back the person—Yeltsin—who best suited U.S. interests. Americans’ ignorance of this perception creates a highly distorted picture of Russia’s first postcommunist decade.

Russia’s misery during the 1990s is difficult for outsiders to comprehend. After the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, Russia’s economy entered a sharp slide that would continue for over eight years. Although this decline is rarely referred to as a depression in

Western media, in fact it was much worse than the Great Depression in the United States—between 1929 and 1932, U.S. GDP fell by some 25 percent, whereas Russia's fell by over 40 percent between 1990 and 1998. Compared with the Great Depression, Russia's collapse of the 1990s was nearly twice as sharp, lasted three times as long, and caused far more severe health and mortality crises. The public health disaster reflected Russia's prolonged agony: stress-aggravated pathologies (suicide, disease caused by increased alcohol and tobacco use) and economically induced woes (poor nutrition, violent crime, a crumbling public health system) combined to cause at least three million "excess deaths" in the 1990s.

Faith in free markets, and admiration for the United States, fell sharply in Russia in the 1990s. The failures of "shock therapy," or the rapid transition to a market economy, made such alienation inevitable, as the rush toward privatization and slashing of the state led not to self-regulating growth and broad prosperity but to a pillaging of national wealth by rapacious oligarchs, who flourished under Yeltsin. Worse, American talk of a Marshall Plan for Russia proved empty, and U.S. aid—particularly in the critical first years of transition—was a paltry \$ 7 billion. Much of that was in the form of credits that came attached with strings requiring the purchase of U.S. goods or the hiring of U.S. consultants. Also hurting America's image were much-publicized cases of corruption on the part of some Americans, involving insider trading, money laundering, and similar scandals.

In 1993, hyperinflation and poverty led to protests, and the Russian parliament passed legislation attempting to block Yeltsin's reforms. Yeltsin responded by deciding to close the legislature and redesign the political system to concentrate power in his hands. This, however, was blatantly unconstitutional, and many deputies refused to disband. Some turned to violent resistance and were crushed by the army. The Clinton administration regretted the bloodshed but blamed it on the opposition, while ignoring the illegality of Yeltsin's power grab. And the United States supported Yeltsin again two months later, when a referendum on a "super-presidential" constitution passed in a rigged vote.

In 1996, there was more U.S.-assisted mischief on the part of Yeltsin. The worst incident was the "loans for shares" scandal, a crooked privatization scheme in which Yeltsin sold Russia's most valuable natural-resource firms to oligarchs by way of fraudulent auctions—a fraud that was matched by that of the 1996 election, when Yeltsin won his second term. The United States was again tarred by complicity, by winking at such electoral violations as state media working to elect Yeltsin or the gross violations of campaign spending limits, and even by sending U.S. advisers to help Yeltsin's stumbling campaign.

The Clinton administration tolerated Yeltsin's regime in part to gain Russia's compliance on global issues, including NATO expansion. But even this was shortsighted as well as hypocritical. George Kennan, author of the Cold War containment policy, warned that pushing NATO toward Russia's borders was "a strategic blunder of potentially epic proportions," which was likely to provoke an anti-Western backlash. Other experts, such as intelligence veteran Fritz Ermarth, issued warnings at the time over the United States' complicity in Russia's domestic corruption. "We have largely lost the admiration and respect of the Russian people," Ermarth wrote. "Think how [U.S. policy] must look to Russians: you support the regime's corruption of our country on the inside so it supports you in your humiliation of our country on the outside. One could not concoct a better propaganda line for Russia's extreme nationalists."

ALTERNATIVE REALITY ABOUT RUSSIA

Few Russians who endured this corruption and humiliation have much sympathy with U.S. anger over Russian meddling in the 2016 election. And with any perspective on the 1990s, it is hard to fault them. Yet such perspective among Americans is rare, in part because the Western media often adopted the Clinton administration's cheery narrative, downplaying negative phenomena as bumps in the road toward a democratic Russia. And despite subsequent revelation of so many scandals from the 1990s, Putin's "autocracy" is still contrasted with Yeltsin's "golden era of democracy," ignoring the fact that it was Yeltsin's team who perfected such tactics as 110 percent turnout in remote precincts, and whose oligarchs used their media empires as lobbying firms while brazenly buying parliamentary votes (to create personal tax loopholes). Many myths about the Yeltsin years persist. A recent National Geographic article by Julia Ioffe, for instance, attributes Russian growth under Putin to "tough economic reforms adopted by Boris Yeltsin" and describes Putin as "coasting on historically high oil prices and economic reforms implemented in the Nineties."

High oil prices, yes. But had Putin merely coasted on the policies of Yeltsin, there would have been little tax collected on the oligarchs' profits to pay for pensions, rebuild infrastructure, and create reserve funds. And there would have been no agricultural revival, because private land tenure would have remained illegal. In his first few years in office, Putin passed tax and banking reform, bankruptcy laws, and other pro-market policies that Yeltsin hadn't managed in a decade. Denying Putin credit in this way is typical. Paul Krugman recently argued in *The New York Times*, for instance, that growth under Putin "can be explained with just one word: oil." But note that in 2000, when Putin became president, oil stood at \$30 per barrel and petroleum accounted for 20 percent of Russia's GDP. But in 2010, after a decade's rise pushed oil over \$100 per barrel, petroleum had nevertheless fallen to just 11 percent of GDP, according to the World

Bank. Thus as oil boomed, Russian agriculture, manufacturing, and services grew even faster.

Krugman's fellow columnist Thomas Friedman similarly decried Russia's low life expectancy over a period "that coincides almost exactly with Putin's leadership of the country ... the period of 1990–2013," while blaming Putin for "slow gains in the life expectancy of an entire nation." In fact, the first half of this period coincides almost exactly with Yeltsin's leadership, when male life expectancy fell by over six years—unprecedented for a modern country in peacetime. Under Putin, both male and female life expectancy have made rapid gains, and their combined average recently reached 70 years for the first time in Russian history.

VLADIMIR THE TERRIBLE

Distaste for many aspects of Putin's harsh rule is understandable. But demonization that veers into delusion by denying him credit for major progress (and blaming him for all problems) is foolish. Foolish because it widens the gulf between U.S. and Russian perceptions of what is going on in their country, with Russians rating Putin highly because they value the stability and pride he has revived. Foolish because it encourages the illusion that everything bad in Russia flows from Putin, so that if only Putin were removed then Russians would elect another liberal like Yeltsin. And foolish simply because that is how American leaders look when they mock Russia's prospects, as former U.S. President Barack Obama did when he said, "Russia doesn't make anything. Immigrants aren't rushing to Moscow in search of opportunity. The population is shrinking."

In fact, Russia's population has been growing since 2010, and the country has one of the higher birth rates in Europe. Russia is the world's third-largest immigrant destination in the world, behind only the United States and Germany. And Russian products include the rockets that ferry U.S. astronauts into space. Both Obama and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton were given to careless quips about Russia. Both mocked Putin, and Clinton compared him to Adolf Hitler—a comparison that would be laughable were they not so offensive to Russians, who lost 26 million countrymen in World War II. It was also reckless, given Putin's broad popularity in Russia. But when confronted with this popularity, Obama replied, "Saddam Hussein had a 90 percent poll rating." He explained, "If you control the media and you've taken away everybody's civil liberties, and you jail dissidents, that's what happens." This view is deeply mistaken.

There is, of course, much to fault in Putin's Russia, and both Obama and Clinton were subject to nastiness from Moscow. But it is undignified and unwise for a U.S. president

to disparage not just a foreign leader but his entire country in the way that Obama did. The urge to answer taunts in kind cannot overpower regard for Russian public opinion, and so confirm the Russian media's portrayal of America as ignorant and arrogant. It seemed clever when Hillary Clinton pounced on Trump as "Putin's puppet." But apparently it didn't resonate much with ordinary Americans, who elected Trump, and neither does the pettiness and demonization of Putin resonate with ordinary Russians.

These ordinary Russians are the forgotten people—the hard-working teachers, doctors, and mechanics whose savings, careers, even health were destroyed by the catastrophe of the 1990s. They are the fledgling voters who saw their new democracy bought and sold by Yeltsin and his cronies, and the onetime admirers of the United States who longed for a leader to restore their pride in Russia after a decade of humiliation. Under Clinton, the United States treated Russia like a defeated enemy and capitalized on its weakness to expand NATO. Claims that this was merely a defensive expansion were belied by NATO's bombing of Serbia, a Russian ally, in 1999. Under President George W. Bush, the United States further intimidated Russia by abrogating the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, imposing punitive tariffs, launching a reckless invasion of Iraq, continuing to expand NATO, and further encircling Russia by cozying up to Georgia and Ukraine.

It is thus unsurprising that in 2008, Russia hit back, answering a Georgian strike in the disputed region of South Ossetia (which killed some Russian peacekeepers) with a crushing counterblow. For finally pushing back, Putin's approval rating soared to nearly 85 percent—the highest it would reach until Crimea's annexation in 2014.

HOW NOT TO PROMOTE DEMOCRACY

This is the Russia—and the Russians—that Obama inherited in 2009: prideful, angry, and in no mood for the sanctimony that came with the new administration's stress on democracy promotion. They had seen Bill Clinton ally with a corrupt Yeltsin to make a mockery of their new democracy. They had fumed as Vice President Dick Cheney faulted Russian democracy while praising that of Kazakhstan. And they heard their country criticized for interfering in the affairs of weaker neighbors, even as NATO was expanding right up to Russia's borders, and the United States was launching an invasion of Iraq in the name of democracy promotion that would set the Middle East aflame. Not surprisingly, the Russian media ever more frequently paired the term "double standard" with America.

Thus it may have been unwise for the Obama administration to pursue democracy promotion as brashly as it did, criticizing Russian elections and encouraging Putin's opposition. This carried a whiff not only of hypocrisy but of danger, too, appearing, as it

did to many within Russia, as a threat to destabilize Putin's rule. Democracy promoters may draw a distinction between policies aimed at advancing NATO and those aimed at advancing political liberalization in Russia and other former Soviet states—emphasizing that Obama enacted the latter but not the former. But Putin's skepticism was easy to understand given the West's record of undermining Moscow's allies, as in Serbia, Georgia, and Ukraine, and then seeking to anchor their new regimes in the Western political and military blocs. As a senator, too, Obama was an early supporter of Ukraine joining NATO, and preparations for Ukraine's integration with NATO continued throughout his presidency. Hillary Clinton also advocated a NATO "open door" for Ukraine, and then incurred Putin's wrath by pushing humanitarian intervention (which soon turned into regime change) in Libya. So her demand for "a full investigation of all reports of fraud and intimidation" in Russia's 2011 elections was most unwelcome. Michael McFaul, an expert on democracy promotion and longtime critic of Putin, was a particularly provocative choice for new Obama's ambassador to Russia in 2012.

Neither should righteous indignation at Putin's post-election crackdown prevent rethinking of the targets as well as the tools of American public diplomacy. Some fault the focus on Russia's liberal opposition, a small number of Moscow-centered activists who best reflect U.S. values. Many of them are discredited in the eyes of the Russian majority: for their earlier support of Yeltsin's regime, for their disparaging of the widely admired Putin, and for their reflexive backing of U.S. policies—such as NATO expansion—even when they clash with Russian interests. They appear, in a word, unpatriotic. They are earnest, articulate, and highly admirable. But even if they weren't stigmatized by Putin—or tarred by identification with the 1990s—they embody liberal-cosmopolitan values alien to most conservative-nationalist Russians. And while this makes them appealing to the West, it also makes them a poor bet as the focus of democracy-promotion.

Consider the case of Pussy Riot, the feminist-protest rock group, some of whose members were convicted of hooliganism in 2012 for staging a protest in Moscow's Church of Christ the Savior—profanely mocking not only Putin but also the Russian Orthodox Church and its believers. Both activists and state officials in the United States praised Pussy Riot and demanded their release. Yet basic decency—and regard for the values and traditions of others—would suggest that hailing Pussy Riot as champions of free speech was disrespectful of Russia. It was also insensible if the United States is interested in cultivating sympathy among Russians, some 70 percent of whom identify as Orthodox believers. Russia is a conservative society that viewed the years of Yeltsin's rule, and its onslaught of pornography and promiscuity, with horror. In polls, only seven percent of Russians said that political protest was permissible in a church, and only five percent agreed that Pussy Riot should be released without serious

punishment. Surely the sensibilities of ordinary Russians deserve as much regard as those of a minority of cosmopolitan liberals. And hectoring by the West will hardly ease traditional Russian homophobia. Indeed, the outcry on behalf of Pussy Riot likely strengthened popular support for the notorious 2013 law against “propaganda of nontraditional sexual relations.”

Russians see a double standard in U.S. judgments about their country—a prosecutorial stance that criticizes Russia for behaviors that go unnoticed in other countries. For example, The Washington Post has closely covered Russia’s anti-LGBT policies but has paid scant attention to the same in countries such as Lithuania, Georgia, and Ukraine, and when it has it has suggested that Russia is to blame for exporting its anti-gay beliefs. Since 2014, the Western media has similarly reported on Moscow’s alleged propaganda onslaught, while largely ignoring the brazen purchase of positive publicity by countries such as Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine. This is not the usual lobbying or public relations but the funding of ostensibly independent research on a country by that country itself—paying for upbeat election reports and other assessments by such groups as the Parliamentary Association of the Council of Europe.

Americans rarely hear of such activity, even as alarm over Moscow’s subversion nears hysteria. A recent U.S. intelligence report on Russian meddling in the 2016 U.S. presidential election warned of “a Kremlin-directed campaign to undermine faith in the U.S. government and fuel political protest.” Yet a key culprit is the news channel RT (which has a miniscule share of the U.S. audience), on the grounds that it runs “anti-fracking programming highlighting environmental issues” and “a documentary about the Occupy Wall Street movement [that] described the current U.S. political system as corrupt.” In fact, unlike the 2014 Maidan occupation in Ukraine, which was actively supported by some U.S. and EU officials, Russian diplomats carefully kept their distance from the 2011 Occupy Wall Street protests.

DEMOCRACY PROMOTION

Another double standard, ignored by the U.S. media but noted overseas, was Obama’s denunciation in 2014 of the Crimea secession referendum that preceded the peninsula’s annexation by Russia. Rejecting parallels between Crimea’s secession from Ukraine and Kosovo’s 2008 secession from Serbia—which the West supported but Russia, along with Serbia, rejected as illegitimate—Obama said that Kosovo only seceded “after a referendum was organized ... in careful cooperation with the United Nations and with Kosovo’s neighbors. None of that even came close to happening in Crimea.” In fact, none of that even came close to happening in Kosovo. There was no referendum at all—just a vote by Kosovo’s Albanian-majority parliament. As for cooperation with the

neighbors, Serbia desperately opposed Kosovo secession; Bosnia-Herzegovina, Romania, and Slovakia still have not recognized Kosovo; and others, such as Bulgaria, Croatia, and Hungary, only agreed under Western pressure.

Such a factual error—belief in things that never occurred, yet are cited as legal justification to dismember a country—is worrisome regardless. It also highlights an illusion about the free, democratic choice facing countries in central and eastern Europe as they are tugged between Washington and Moscow. In fact, the freedom of their choice belies the powerful political and economic levers employed to pry these countries away from Russia. As noted above in the case of the Kosovo referendum, Kosovo’s neighbors were pressured by the United States and NATO to recognize the region’s secession from Serbia. In fact, carrots and sticks have been continually applied to the countries of eastern Europe to encourage the policies desired in Brussels, Berlin, and Washington, D.C. When eastern Europeans grew concerned about the higher than expected costs of joining the EU—or about the backlash that NATO expansion was provoking in Russia—accession was sweetened for political and business elites while the masses were sometimes sidestepped with popular referenda replaced by simple parliamentary votes. Occasionally Brussels and Washington pulled in opposite directions, as with the International Criminal Court—backed by the EU but opposed by the Administration of George W. Bush. In this, as in other cases, the countries of central Europe exercised their supposedly free choice under enormous political and economic pressure.

Nobody argues that joining the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union would benefit most countries more than the EU. (NATO is another matter, as the costs of Russian backlash now rival any security benefits from further expansion.) The point is simply to grasp the legitimacy in Moscow’s perspective—that expansion of the Western blocs is not an organic, democratic process but, rather, one engineered by the United States and its allies, and motivated as much by power as by principle. The West must also see the costs to the countries involved (and to its own alliances) in a payoff-driven, elite-centered process that shortchanges the concerns of majorities and is in key ways undemocratic. Long before the Syrian refugees crisis soured them even further, support for the EU in central Europe had already fallen because the costs were much higher than expected, whereas the benefits seemed mainly to reward a wealthy business elite.

As an example of this dynamic, consider the case of Moldova, where the EU has supported local pro-European parties to help this desperately poor country toward accession. Few in the West read much about the country until a spate of headlines last November, such as the Telegraph’s announcement: “Pro-Russia Candidate Wins Moldova Election.” Spinning this result in terms of geopolitics was misleading. The

election had turned largely on domestic issues, such as corruption and the economy. Ordinary Moldovans worried that EU accession would mainly benefit elites, and Moldova's pro-EU Liberal Democratic Party was reeling from a scandal in which party leaders funneled \$1 billion—half the reserves of the Moldovan National Bank—into private bank accounts. But just as in the cases of similar elections in Bulgaria and Montenegro, U.S. media focused on the struggle for influence with Moscow. Indeed, Montenegro casts all of these issues into sharp relief. This is a country whose secession from Serbia the United States encouraged—for geopolitical goals, to weaken the Serbian leader Milosevic—by backing the epically corrupt boss Milo Djukanovic. Now, a decade later, Djukanovic's Democratic-Socialist party exploits similar geopolitical tensions to engineer Montenegro's accession to NATO—a step of doubtful benefit to either the alliance or Montenegro, provocative to Russia, and one that buttresses a deeply corrupt, patronage-based regime. This focus on geopolitical threats, however, obscures the bigger socioeconomic one: pluralities or even majorities in many eastern European countries now believe that life was better under communism. Such alienation drives anti-EU sentiment in those countries and empowers demagogues like Hungary's President Viktor Orban—not some nefarious influence from Vladimir Putin but deep economic inequality and the manifest failings of European integration.

Western understandings of the conflict in Ukraine show a similar bias. Recall that the crisis erupted in 2013 when President Viktor Yanukovich balked at the EU's harsh accession terms and opted instead to align with Russia. And he was ousted in a revolt that America and the EU openly cheered. No matter how corrupt his rule was, he was elected democratically and had acted constitutionally in making his decision. (In fact, he was elected in 2010 because the previous pro-EU government had proved both corrupt and incompetent.) But in 2014, as the protests in Ukraine grew, the United States decided to abandon a power-transition deal that it had agreed upon with Russia, and instead supported the protests calling for Yanukovich's ouster, which essentially turned into a coup. But this quickly boomeranged, as the Russians concluded that if the West could support an unconstitutional seizure of power in Kiev, then they could hold an unconstitutional referendum in Crimea or support an unconstitutional seizure of power in Donbas. There was a compromise path, but treating Ukraine as something to be yanked from Russia's orbit—which raised the specter of NATO again as well as loss of their centuries-old Crimean naval base—made Putin's choice to hit back an easy one.

Of course this hardly justifies the savagery that Russia has abetted in fighting over the Donbas. But U.S. and EU actions helped spark the conflict by treating Ukraine as a prize to be grabbed, rather than as a linguistically and ethnically divided country in which Russia has legitimate interests. Western policies recklessly ignored these interests and needlessly raised the stakes. As seen, some officials stressed a NATO

“open door” for Ukraine while the likelihood of rapid EU accession was exaggerated as well. Before the war, Ukraine had an annual income-per-capita of \$4,000, on par with Albania and Kosovo, and in corruption surveys it ranked below Russia and on the same level as Nigeria. Today, after an Association agreement, billions in aid, and three years of EU-mandated reforms, Ukraine is still a corrupt, bankrupt mess—highlighting how unprepared it was for EU accession, how heavily it depended on Russian trade and subsidies that are now lost, and how unwise it was for Western leaders to push an either-or choice on Kiev.

THE ART OF THE DEAL?

In the latest corruption surveys, Ukraine still ranks below Russia. Scandals erupt daily, with an economic drain greater than the conflict in Donbas. Ukraine’s pro-EU President Petro Poroshenko has a 17 percent approval rating, lower than the pro-Russian Yanukovich’s 28 percent on the eve of his ouster in 2014. Ironically, this means that the pro-Russian Yanukovich was the most popular Ukrainian president of this century. And in the latest poll finding, only 41 percent of Ukrainians still support the EU Association Agreement, the rejection of which sparked the Maidan revolution in the first place. It is trends like these, along with a right-wing turn in Western European states that erodes their patience and generosity with troubled eastern neighbors, that should trouble EU leaders. Instead, across the region, Europeans are on high alert for Russians spreading anti-Western news, supporting anti-Western politicians, and deploying an army of anti-Western internet trolls.

Yet for all the paranoia about Russian subversion, crisis is more likely to come from elsewhere, such as an unraveling of fragile Bosnia leading to a clash between Serbia and NATO. Or it could be Moldova, with the nationalist majority renewing a push to unite with their Romanian kin, thereby reviving conflict with the Russian minority. Hungary could leave the EU, delivering a critical blow to European unity. Or Ukraine could simply collapse of its own corrupt, bankrupt weight.

Yet Ukraine could also be where America and Russia begin repairing ties. The Russian economy is weak—incomes are down a third since 2013—and relief from Western sanctions is sorely needed. Europe, too, cries for the revival of normal trade with Russia. A deal between Russia and the West would build upon the stalled Minsk Accords. Moscow would withdraw from the Donbass and restore Ukraine’s eastern border, and Kiev would grant local self-rule to this Russian-speaking region. Russia would, in turn, get a commitment from NATO not to incorporate Ukraine, and Ukraine would get a treaty guaranteeing its territorial integrity as well as military aid. Kiev would

also gain major Western investments, while benefitting enormously from restoration of trade with Russia.

Purists will call such a deal a betrayal, as it would be a de facto recognition of the Russian annexation of Crimea. But the best is the enemy of the good. Moscow will not allow Crimea to be snatched away again, as it was in 1954, after nearly 200 years as part of Russia. And by democratic rights, it shouldn't—the fact is that a large majority of Crimeans want to remain with Russia. Ukraine, moreover, would benefit from peace and investment, instead of diverting more resources into conflict. Normal political and trade ties with Russia would also benefit Europe as a whole, helping to slow and maybe to reverse the current slide toward dissolution. Continuation of the status quo, by contrast, only exacerbates crisis.

WILL THE REAL VLADIMIR PUTIN PLEASE STAND UP?

A diplomatic breakthrough between Russia and the West on Ukraine—or on Syria, or other major issues—will also require firm agreement on non-interference in each other's domestic affairs: no more Russian cyber-intrusion in the politics of America and its allies; no more U.S. backing of domestic protest and rebellion in Russia and her allies. Such diplomacy would test the mettle of the Trump administration's foreign-affairs neophytes, but the greater unknown is Putin. A majority of the U.S. political elite believes that no deals are possible because Putin is irremediably hostile. Whether they attribute that hostility to ideology (an ingrained KGB worldview) or corruption (an illegitimate regime that needs a foreign enemy to distract its people from domestic woes), many American policymakers believe that Putin simply has no interest in peace with the West. In their view, he is bent on expansion and will gladly endure sanctions as the price of fomenting discord in the West.

Another group of policymakers is also skeptical of Putin, but do not blame him alone for the deterioration of relations. Many of these analysts opposed NATO expansion from the outset, for the same reasons that Kennan did—because it would become a self-fulfilling prophecy. These experts also criticize the United States' misadventures in Iraq and Libya, failure to respect Russia's red lines on expansion into Georgia and Ukraine, and petty demonization of Putin. Yet they mainly stand with the first group now in believing that containment, not cooperation, is what the West must practice, because Putin's recent actions threaten the postwar liberal order.

A third group of analysts—the realists, who make up a minority of the foreign-policy establishment—reply that Putin does not threaten the entire postwar liberal order but only challenges the post-Cold War U.S.-dominated order that consistently ignores

Russia's interests. They wonder how some can admit the folly of NATO's continual expansion and fault the many double standards in U.S. policy but not agree that America must meet Russia halfway. Like realists such as Kennan or Hans Morgenthau, who early warned against the folly of Vietnam, they are sometimes derided as weak (or Putin apologists) for cautioning against inflating foreign threats while ignoring the United States' domestic weaknesses.

These realists argue that the early Putin prioritized market economic reforms and good relations with the West, yet saw his open hand met by the clenched fist of the George W. Bush-era neoconservatives. And Obama, reset or no, continued efforts to expand the Western economic and military blocs that had started under Clinton in the 1990s. In other words, for over two decades, whether motivated by residual Cold War mistrust or post-Cold War liberal hegemonism, America has steadily pushed Western military and political-economic power deeper into Russia's backyard. If history teaches anything it is that any great power will, when facing the continued advance of a rival, eventually push back. And much as Obama-Clinton defenders dislike being reminded of it, any chance of America's post-Cold War power being seen as uniquely benign ended in Serbia, Iraq, and Libya.

It may be that both sides are correct—that two decades of ignoring Russia's interests have abetted Putin's embrace of a deep-seated anti-Americanism and that a new détente is impossible. Or it may be that Putin is not innately hostile, but rather a typical strongman: proud and spiteful, but not uniquely corrupt or cruel, and capable of embracing a cooperative position if he finds a partner skilled enough to forge a deal respecting both U.S. and Russian vital interests. The only thing not in doubt is that both America and Russia—indeed, Europe and the wider world—badly need that détente.

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