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PAKISTAN

RETHINKING THE NUCLEAR OPTION BY RIZWAN ASGHAR

“One nuclear war is going to be the last nuclear war -- the last war, frankly, if it really gets out of hand. And I just don't think we ought to be prepared to accept that sort of thing” —Lawrence Eagleburger

Let there be no doubt that more than 1.5 billion peoples of South Asia are facing the threat of nuclear annihilation, and the military establishment of both Pakistan and India are doing everything in their power to further exacerbate the threat. The strategic logic behind the pursuit of nuclear capability was that the spread of nuclear weapons would bring stability to the region or reduce the risk of major wars between Pakistan and India. However, the security environment has changed with the advent of non-state military actors. The critical realities of this changing strategic environment demand reduction of nuclear forces to the lowest possible level.

There are a number of ways in which nuclear defence postures of Pakistan and India are contributing to the global threat of a nuclear war. First, the rapidly growing stockpiles of nuclear weapons in South Asia present a unique opportunity for terrorists to attempt to steal nuclear weapons or weapons-usable materials.

Second, the continued existence of hundreds of nuclear weapons in the region increases the chances of their accidental or unauthorised launch as a result of false alarms from nuclear warning systems.

Third, both countries' inability to ensure transparency of all sensitive nuclear materials -- highly enriched uranium and separated plutonium -- has created a sense of uncertainty, making it almost impossible to keep track of all nuclear materials.

There is ample evidence of al-Qaeda's efforts to acquire nuclear weapons. The current leadership of the al-Qaeda will not desist from the use of nuclear weapons once it acquires capability. India's nuclear security measures are even weaker than Pakistan's, but the risk of nuclear theft in Pakistan is considered to be high.

In 1994, for the first time, the al-Qaeda attempted to acquire uranium in Sudan to construct a crude nuclear weapon. Jamal al-Fadl, one of al-Qaeda's founding members, testified in a New York court in 2001 that the former Sudanese president Saleh Mobruk

had helped Abu Khabab, al-Qaeda's chief bomb-maker, in acquiring uranium from South Africa. He even gave information about payment of \$1.5 million by the al-Qaeda in return for getting a container full of nuclear material.

In 1998, Osama bin Laden issued a fatwa that acquiring and using nuclear weapons for the defence of Muslims is a religious duty. After the US-led military operation in Afghanistan dislodged the al-Qaeda from Afghanistan, the group continued its efforts to acquire a nuclear device through its sleeper cells in a number of other countries.

Ayman al-Zawahiri said in an interview: "If you have \$30 million, go to the black market in Central Asia, contact any disgruntled Soviet scientist, and a lot of dozens of smart briefcase bombs are available." A few months after this interview, the al-Qaeda released a video in which it made public its goal to kill four million Americans.

The global nuclear security regime in its present state is not well-equipped to counter this kind of global threat. For example, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) failed to take action against al-Qaeda's nuclear activities during the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. Although Afghanistan is a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the IAEA showed little motivation to inspect undeclared nuclear activities. The IAEA inspectors have also miserably failed to detect secret and illegal nuclear activities in many other countries.

While the international community has finally realised that speculations about an extremist takeover should not be taken seriously, internal threats cannot be totally ruled out. Making a fair and reasonable evaluation, Pakistan and India should eliminate a large number of their nuclear weapons because they have become a security liability, not an asset.

Today, more than 46 countries have 1.6 million kilograms of fissile material in their possession. According to the United States General Accounting Office (USGAO), 128 reactor facilities worldwide have at least 20 kg highly enriched uranium.

The fissile material now available in the world is enough to make 62,500 plutonium weapons and 64,000 HEU weapons. If terrorists succeeded in acquiring or fabricating even one nuclear weapon, the world that we know will not remain for very long. But Pakistan and India are doing nothing to stave off this global threat. In fact, both countries continue to adopt military postures that enhance proliferation incentives. The reluctance on the part of both countries to ratify multilateral disarmament agreements like the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT) and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty further raises doubts about their commitment to nonproliferation objectives.

Complete information about the exact quantities of nuclear materials will never become available. Given the multifaceted nature of the threat, the only possible policy choice is to reduce the number of nuclear weapons to no more than 50 each for Pakistan and India. Such a small number of nuclear weapons is not only enough to maintain credible minimum deterrence but will also make the threat of nuclear terrorism less likely.

Both Pakistan and India should ratify the FMCT and enter into a bilateral agreement, banning all nuclear weapons testing. There is also need to build a regional regulatory authority with the mandate to monitor security standards for all nuclear facilities. These steps would go a long way in helping to ensure that Pakistan and India are responsible nuclear states and they can be brought into the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty fold.

The people of the world deserve a peaceful and secure future, and we must play our role to make that possible. Pakistan and India cannot afford to be on the wrong side of history. Otherwise, we are all doomed to nuclear self-annihilation.

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Source: <http://dailytimes.com.pk/opinion/01-Oct-16/rethinking-the-nuclear-option>

RESHAPING THE FOREIGN POLICY BY MUHAMMAD ALI BAIG

FOREIGN policy can be defined as the resistance offered by a state to the pressure coming from the international system. An efficient and pragmatic foreign policy of a state is the definitive bludgeon to secure international objectives and policy goals. Quite often, the foreign policy itself of a state depending upon the decision-makers significantly helps state in securing domestic as well as international objectives. Pak Foreign Policy has always been dominated by its leaders and they have decisively shaped their external relations overshadowed by their personality and motivation.

It is a reality that Kashmir and Khalistan movements are the matter of international concern, since oppressed Muslims of Kashmir and suppressed Sikhs of India demand independence from Hindu-dominated India. Independence movements in Kashmir and Khalistan are the result of Hindu orchestrated and state-sponsored terrorism. The right of self-determination was envisioned in the UN Charter in 1945, and it clearly gives the right of independence to Kashmiri Muslims and Sikhs of India. The Kashmiri Muslims made their choice to join Pakistan at the time of partition in 1947, but were deprived of their will and freedom by India.

India has been a historic usurper and a violent power when it comes to human rights and the rights of minorities. It is not a surprise that Indian leadership is in a continuous control of extremist Hindu organizations that are ruthlessly pursuing their objective of “Hindutva” and “Akhand-Bharat” (Greater India). The so-called Indian secular state is overshadowed by the existence of several extreme right-wing organisations. Operation Bluestar in 1984 was not aimed to remove alleged militants from Golden Temple but it was focused to fake Sikh identity and religion. It reflects Indian Hindu-mind that Indian Army’s Major General Shabeg Singh, who played a significant role in training “Mukti Bahni” to fight Pakistan, was killed along with Jarnail Singh Bhindrawale, for raising voice in favour of Sikh rights and freedom. The assassination of PM Indira Gandhi by her two Sikh guards was neither an individual nor an act of terrorism but it reflected the earnest desire of Sikhs to liberate themselves from clutches of extremist Hindus.

It is imperative for Pakistan to enhance its support for the troubled and distressed Sikhs of India who enjoy more religious liberty in Islamic Pakistan as compared to so-called secular India. The actions of Pakistan regarding Sikhs of India and Muslims of Kashmir have moral and ethical foundations and the abuse of human rights give Pakistan a just reason to help Indian Sikhs and Muslims. Sikh people made enormous struggle for India and it is on record that many soldiers in Indian Armed Forces come from Sikh families. But it is quite strange that they are still treated as second class citizen in all of India. Sikhs are a distinct nation by every definition of a nation and their demand for a

separate state is their natural right. Jarnail Singh Bhindrawale, a martyr of Sikh Independence Movement, clearly believed that Sikhs cannot live with Hindus who exploited and betrayed Sikh nation right through course of history.

Organisation for Minorities of India (OFMI), an organization which is responsible for bringing news about Indian atrocities towards Sikhs and Muslims has declared in its recent report that Indian Government has always sponsored violence against minorities using state-resources and apparatus. It is the moral and diplomatic obligation of Pakistan to help innocent Sikhs in India and Muslims of Kashmir from Indian butchers and their atrocities. The level and intensity of Indian propaganda against Pakistan can only be met with reciprocal proportionality.

— The writer is freelance columnist based in Islamabad.

Source: <http://pakobserver.net/reshaping-the-foreign-policy/>

PAKISTAN-INDIA: THE IMPERATIVE OF PEACE | EDITORIAL

In what has been an ambivalent set of claims and counter claims, Pakistan and India have locked horns over the veracity of the ‘surgical’ strikes that India claims to have supposedly conducted in Pakistan. Absurd as the Indian claim is considering the heavy fencing and surveillance of the Line of Control (LoC), some commentators have suggested that the intensity of the Pakistani reaction to this entire episode shows that it was not routine cross-border firing over the LoC as Pakistan claims it to be. It seems lost on them that the Pakistani reaction was in response to the political points that were scored in India over it, which was accompanied with the most virulent form of jingoism. In any case, Indian insistence of having conducted its alleged surgical strike achieves nothing but more hostility between the two South Asian neighbours, and with the act itself being nothing short of brazen aggression.

Amidst all of this belligerence on the part of India, Pakistan must be commended on its part for its measured restraint. While it is easy to pander to jingoistic sentiment to score easy political points, both the civilian and the military leadership have responded to the South Asian crisis in a mature manner. Hence, the statement by the Director General of the Inter-Services Public Relations Lieutenant General Asim Bajwa that “Escalation and warmongering do not suit anyone” is a continuation of the Pakistani policy of defusing tension and bringing India towards dialogue. Unfortunately, India’s hawkish reaction to the militant attack in Uri goes to show that militants continue to hold their veto towards any attempts at peace between the two countries. And while Indian Prime Minister Modi might be able to gain popularity by pandering to the jingoistic sentiment within his country, he would not be able to achieve lasting peace in South Asia unless he becomes willing to engage in meaningful dialogue with Pakistan.

Prime Minister of Pakistan Mian Mohammed Nawaz Sharif’s policy towards India from the start has been one of extending cordiality and improving relations. As absurd as it is to be happening in this day and age, Prime Minister Sharif has received opprobrium for such an approach from within Pakistan, with accusations ranging from him being not patriotic enough to understand the supposedly perpetual Pakistan-India ‘enmity’ to him putting his ‘business interests’ first by appearing to be willing to trade with India. Even the chairman of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Imran Khan has indulged in this point-scoring against Sharif. While none of these accusations merit a response, they have greatly limited government’s ability to take meaningful initiatives towards achieving peace.

If Pakistan and India want to move forward they would have to take concrete measures towards achieving mutual trust and cooperation. Solving some of the less contentious issues first such as the Sir Creek dispute can go long way in paving the way for

dialogue on other issues. Moreover, the two countries, instead of talking about revoking treaties, should sign more of them to address the various issues that they jointly face ranging from repatriation of citizens who inadvertently cross into the other countries' territory to mechanisms that would address acts of cross-border terrorism. Furthermore, the two countries should engage in trade, and to that end sign agreements that are mutually beneficial. It is trade that holds the key towards improving relations, because once moneyed interests get involved, they can act as the best guarantee of maintaining peace.

Source: <http://dailytimes.com.pk/editorial/03-Oct-16/pakistan-india-the-imperative-of-peace>

SAARC AND THE NEW HEGEMONIC POWER IN SOUTH ASIA BY HASSAM WAHEED

South Asia has been known to the world for two reasons: rapid population growth and the Kashmir dispute. These two problems have always affected the region's economic and social standards of living. The South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC) came into existence in 1985. SAARC was established to increase regional co-operation in all fields of life so that the socioeconomic problems of the region could be resolved. In this regard, some important steps have been taken. For example, the South Asian University has been established in New Delhi so that students from all member nations can study together and learn from each other's norms and culture.

Another significant thing was the charter of SAARC. In the charter, all unresolved disputes had been set aside by the member nations to avoid any kind of confrontation. The aim was to firstly enhance regional co-operation, and develop a kind of regional balance among all the member nations, and then gradually address and resolve all disputes. The motive and ambition behind SAARC were clear, and also organised in a way that if the member nations followed them in full spirit, it was expected that eventually most of the problems of the region would be resolved.

This year's SAARC conference was scheduled to be held in Pakistan. And it was expected that all heads of states of member nations would attend the conference, but it seems that the new rising tensions between Pakistan and India have sabotaged the conference. The new hegemonic leader of the region, one way or another, played a negative role in this regard. India not only cancelled its own attendance, it has also pressurised the weaker and smaller neighbours like Bhutan and Bangladesh to skip the conference. The fourth member of this hegemonic regional alliance is Afghanistan. Sri Lanka followed suit. It is clear that the SAARC conference is not taking place this year. The power games of the new hegemonic leader has made the situation worse for one of the world's poorest and most-populated regions.

Since the establishment of SAARC India's role has always remained a matter of concern. A decade ago, India's issues with Bangladesh and Nepal created problems. It is true that India is the most powerful member nation of the organisation, but that does not mean that India should always control the smaller member nations for its own interests in the region.

One must not forget that Pakistan would never accept India's hegemonic role, and there are certain reasons for that. For the last 69 years Pakistan's establishment has been criticised for its belligerent attitude towards India. But recently, the way the government

of India has reacted to the Uri attack is unacceptable, as it has blamed Pakistan without any strong evidence. Such an attitude does not bode well for the overall peace of the region.

Another important factor is the role of SAARC. For the last two decades, since its emergence, SAARC has not been able to make any significant impact; it could be said that SAARC has not been able to create regional harmony or equity. From day one, India has been trying to pressurise and monopolise the smaller nations, and in that background, there are some serious question marks on the effectiveness of SAARC. Rarely as in 2002 the SAARC summit proved to be fruitful. It was in that summit that the then president of Pakistan General Pervez Musharraf, regardless of tension between Pakistan and India, shook hands with the then prime minister of India. Things seemed to start to normalise after that handshake.

Now the future of SAARC is also on stake. It is time for Pakistan's policy-making institutions to decide on which side of the field they plan to stand. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which is supposed to be an economic game changer for Pakistan, is now becoming a source of a new regional dispute. One thing is clear: Pakistan's economic future is linked with CPEC, and it is integral for Pakistan to stand firm with the Chinese government to complete the project.

The future of SAARC lies in Pakistan's hand; one way to deal with the problem is that Pakistan should also boycott SAARC. Political implications of such a decision may be too hard to handle, and therefore, Pakistan must be pragmatic and wait for the right time. The need of the hour is to stand firm and try to develop new regional ties. The visit of Russian forces for a combined military exercise and Iran's willingness to be a part of CPEC are positive signs of stability of Pakistan's stature in the region. Other SAARC members like Afghanistan, Bhutan and Bangladesh should not be allowed to affect the regional or global significance of Pakistan. If Pakistan's economic future has been connected with China and CPEC, then a new strategic shift is essential to decide the new direction of regional politics.

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IMPROVING PAK-AFGHAN RELATIONS | EDITORIAL

For two neighbours like Pakistan and Afghanistan with such similar problems, there is no other option than to strive to maintain good working relations. Pakistan, despite the successes of Zarb e Azb, is unlikely to rid itself of the terrorist threat without the cooperation of the Afghan forces from the other side of the Durand Line. And Afghanistan, despite the backing of America, is unable to establish its writ, as several suicide attacks in Kabul and the recent security situation in Kunduz indicate. And yet, the strained relations between the two persist, benefiting no one but the terrorists.

Afghanistan, being a landlocked nation, requires access to trade routes that Pakistan is in a unique position to offer. The Afghan government is also under immense pressure to accept the repatriation of refugees from both the EU and Pakistan. In addition, the country's security situation makes for a difficult position to be in. The Afghan Taliban now holds more ground in the country than at any point since 2011. The Taliban onslaught in several provinces, some outside its traditional Pashtun region, shows that the organisation is nowhere near containment, let alone elimination. The TTP and its affiliates using Afghan territory as launching pads have created a security situation the Pakistan government can ill afford to let out of hand. Afghanistan's withdrawal from the anticipated SAARC summit is therefore disappointing, particularly because of its indication of the Afghan government's pro-India stance. . While Pakistan has no right to – and therefore should not – interfere in the internal matters of a sovereign nation, the Afghan government should be reminded that the resolution of a lot of our shared problems comes with a healthy and mutually beneficial relationship. The improvement of relations would be in the interest of both nations. There is a need on the part of the governments of the two neighbouring countries to resolve differences and improve relations.

Source: <http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2016/10/05/comment/improving-pak-afghan-relations-2/>

PAKISTAN'S NUCLEAR RESPONSIBILITY | EDITORIAL

While the Marshallese accusations against Britain, India and Pakistan for “not doing enough to halt a nuclear arms race” were rejected on Wednesday by the United Nations court, the facts can no longer be ignored. The irrevocable damages — to both local environment as well as human health — posed by the US nuclear weapons fallout at the Marshall Islands should sound an alarm for the international community with regard to all potential disasters that could ensue from any lapse in judgment.

In the wake of continual yet unchecked investments in nuclear materials by Pakistan and India might seem satisfied in its attempts to expand its own programme. Its leadership, thus, deserves a right to fully prepare itself against any external attacks on its sovereignty. Nevertheless, amid its passionate drive to outperform India in establishing greater securer borders, Pakistan should also pay heed to all calamities that could occur if its arsenal falls in hands of terrorists. The fact that Pakistan is still struggling against a prominent presence of terrorist groups further intensifies the vulnerability of its assets. Hence, the recently initiated collaboration between Pakistan and Belarus in the field of nuclear energy should be utilised by the authorities as an ideal opportunity to build upon its nuclear potential while securing lasting peace. Even if the military in Pakistan aspires to develop nuclear weapons, such endeavours should only be indulged with mere deterrence as the goal.

When Pakistan tested its nuclear technology in 1998, countries around the world slapped severe penalisations on Pakistan forcing it to rein in its programme. What further exacerbated its ‘pariah’ status in the nuclear arena were rumours about its provision of nuclear assistance to ‘rogue’ actors like North Korea and Iran. While Pakistan may be justified in its efforts to sustain its nuclear ventures, it should also consider clearing up such controversies. A reasonable first step could include initiating a comprehensive investigation of all perpetrators who helped share ‘sensitive’ intelligence with other countries. It is high time that Pakistan signed peace treaties that aim to minimise if not nullify investments in nuclear technology. In addition, the authorities — both civilian and military — should also refrain from engaging in heated rhetoric, especially when the discourse involves the usage of nuclear weapons. Not only do such comments stoke fears regarding its unreliability as a ‘radical’ state, they would also cause Pakistan to further lose ground in its struggle to gain membership to the Nuclear Suppliers Group.

Although US President Barack Obama would soon depart his office, his much-needed vision for Global Zero, setting forth a world free of nuclear weapons still holds great potential for peace efforts. Pakistan should also try to employ its nuclear standing to

best use for these initiatives as well. Establishing itself as a champion of peace would definitely require the country to shake hands with its estranged neighbours, and resolve all pending issues. However, if paying this small price guarantees Pakistan a positive accreditation amongst the global community, it should happily do so on an immediate basis.

Source: <http://dailytimes.com.pk/editorial/07-Oct-16/pakistans-nuclear-responsibility>

THE REAL CHALLENGE IS POVERTY | EDITORIAL

AMIDST the clamour of war this past week, the leadership of India and Pakistan at least managed to point in the right direction when talking about the challenges their countries face. That direction is poverty. Between them, India and Pakistan have the dubious honour of having the world's largest concentration of poor people. In both countries, close to 40pc of the population lives in poverty. Prime Minister Narendra Modi initiated the conversation when he asked the people of Pakistan to wage a war on poverty, illiteracy and infant mortality, "and let us see who wins". Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif responded saying that this challenge cannot be met with "blood and ammunition". It is surprising how true and welcome both statements are, and how sharp a reminder it is that the real challenges both leaders face are far bigger than what they see in each other.

At the same time as this cross-border exchange of poignant words was going on, another reminder came from the World Bank to both leaders that it will take more than words to realise this ambition. In two reports released back to back, the bank painted a bleak picture of the state of poverty in both countries. In one report, for instance, it pointed out that growth rates in South Asia are the highest in the world, making the region a "growth hotspot", and the future looks even brighter. But for India, the World Bank added "gains have been uneven, with greater progress in states and social groups that were already better off". On poverty, the bank slid into its customary diplomatic language, saying "India faces the challenge of further accelerating the responsiveness of poverty reduction to growth", meaning its 7.6pc growth rates are not doing enough to help the poor. Pakistan's future growth is too reliant on CPEC-related spending, and poverty reduction is heavily linked to remittances, which face an uncertain future.

In essence, the report is pointing out that South Asia will remain desperately poor in spite of having the world's highest growth rates. The leaderships in both countries have a great deal to think about when it comes to this plain fact. Both countries spend far too much on their military capabilities and not enough on their citizenry, particularly the poor. And in large measure, poverty alleviation is seen by both as a byproduct of higher growth rates. Meanwhile, the poor are left to the mercy of forces beyond their control, such as droughts or uncertain remittances. The words exchanged between the prime ministers of two of the poorest countries in the world last week made for rather strange theatre. But if it is true that changing the subject is a good way to defuse tensions, then poverty is certainly the right topic to bring up at a time like this.

Published in Dawn, October 7th, 2016

FOREIGN POLICY WOES | EDITORIAL

THIS much appears to be a consensus among the country's political leadership: serious and peace-minded diplomacy needs to be put front and centre of the country's foreign policy. Be it a Senate resolution passed on Friday, another passed by a joint sitting of parliament or the comments of the special Kashmir envoys sent to foreign capitals by the PML-N government, there is a sense that unless urgent corrective steps are taken, Pakistan may slip towards international isolation. To be sure, Pakistan is not globally isolated. Even countries that have expressed unease about certain aspects of this country's overall national security policies have made clear that they want to continue to partner and work with Pakistan on several economic and security issues. Further, Pakistan does have legitimate grievances of its own. The state repression in India-held Kashmir, the interference by foreign countries in Balochistan, and the security threats emanating from Afghanistan are all serious issues that Pakistan can and must forcefully press on the global stage.

Nevertheless, a hard, honest look at Pakistan's international standing and security policies is called for. As political leader after political leader has stated in recent weeks, both in government and the opposition, Pakistan is being too narrowly defined globally because of a perception that self-defeating security choices are dominating the policy discourse. Putting trade and the economy at the centre of foreign policy and addressing all regional issues through diplomacy ought to be the way ahead. A Senate Committee of the Whole report has some sensible and practical suggestions that the government should seriously consider. There is also the matter of an unacceptable vacuum at the top of the foreign ministry with the continuing absence of a full-time minister. Served by a special adviser and special assistant on foreign affairs, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif is simply not in a position to give the foreign ministry portfolio the kind of attention it deserves. Not appointing a full-time foreign minister has been an enduring scandal of the present PML-N government.

Finally, there is the issue of institutionalising decision-making. Critical foreign policy and national security debates should not be left to a flurry of meetings, joint sittings of parliament and special gatherings. There must be an ongoing conversation in various forums — in the government, in parliament, between the government and the military leadership. Unhappily, the PML-N government does not appear to understand that or to believe in regular, institutionalised, structured debate and deliberations. Nor too do the various opposition parties in parliament seem to have the appetite or interest in a sustained dialogue with the government and state institutions. The current challenging environment for Pakistan externally may well subside, but if the country is to emerge

from it stronger, its politicians need to demonstrate a greater and sustained capacity for leadership.

Published in Dawn, October 9th, 2016

PAKISTAN'S PAST RELATIONS WITH THE US BY SHAHID JAVED BURKI

Pakistan's relations with the US have deteriorated significantly in the final years of the Barack Obama presidency. He feels that foot-dragging by Pakistan has not helped him to deliver on his ambition: to withdraw from the wars initiated by George W Bush. Islamabad could have done more to eliminate the sanctuaries in Pakistan's tribal areas from which various groups of dissidents have attacked Afghans troops, thus compelling the US to extend its stay beyond the timeline envisaged by President Obama. When Pakistan's relations were warm with the US,, the country served well America's several strategic interests. This happened first in the late 1950s and the early 1960s, when General Ayub Khan was president. Ayub understood that his country did not have the resources needed to build the kind of military he thought Pakistan required to serve its strategic interests. America was anxious to prevent communism from reaching into the heart of the Asian mainland. Pakistan's role in this enterprise would be to join a couple of defence agreements — the Central Treaty Organisation and the Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation. Pakistan became a member of both organisations and as a part of its commitment, allowed the Americans to develop a couple of bases in its territory they could use for their purpose. In return, Washington provided large amounts of military equipment to Islamabad. This association was terminated when India and Pakistan went to war in 1965. It was the pursuit of the US's strategic interest that, once again, pulled Pakistan into that country's orbit. This time, it was the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union that resulted in the wooing of Islamabad by Washington. Pakistan then was being governed by General Muhammad Ziaul Haq. Jimmy Carter made an offer of economic and military support if Pakistan would work with his country to expel the Soviet Union from neighbouring Afghanistan. General Zia rejected the US offer. Ronald Reagan, Carter's successor, was prepared to be much more generous. The terms of engagement were agreed and Pakistan was handsomely rewarded. Pakistan, with financial help from the US and Saudi Arabia, agreed to create a new fighting force to challenge the Soviet Union. These were the mujahideen who were motivated by instructions provided in scores of madrassas established in the refugee camps which housed some three million people. The fight against Moscow lasted for a decade; the Soviet Union pulled out its troops in 1989. There is a consensus among analysts that the defeat in Afghanistan resulted in the collapse of the Soviet Union and the demise of European communism. Its task done, Washington pulled out of Pakistan, citing the fact that the country's programme for developing nuclear weapons prohibited the US from aiding Pakistan. The third time Pakistan served the US's strategic interests was, once again, while Islamabad was being governed by a military man. President General (retd) Pervez Musharraf's coup against an elected prime minister did not sit well with the West. There was a widely held belief that the collapse of the Soviet Union had established Western liberal democracy as the only meaningful system of governance.

Accordingly, he was shunned by the West. Then, 9/11 happened and within a few hours, Musharraf heard from Colin Powell, US Secretary of State, indicating that Pakistan had no choice but to support Washington's "War on Terror." Musharraf agreed instantly.

Following the return of democracy in Pakistan, the degrees of freedom available to military leaders could not be had by those who came into positions of leadership via the electoral process. The civilian authorities had to keep in mind how the people felt about the countries with which Pakistan had developed close relations. While Islamabad seems to have frustrated Washington for several reasons, those in charge of making policy in the United States have not realised that the countries they are dealing with have their compulsions. They cannot accept America's strategic interests as the final determinant of policymaking in foreign affairs.

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Source: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1200182/pakistans-past-relations-us/>

CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS BY DR HASAN ASKARI RIZVI

Smooth civil-military relations hold the key to political stability and an efficacious management of external and internal security in Pakistan. Therefore, both the civilian leadership and the top brass of the military seek a friction-free relationship to devote fully to their exclusive domains of authority and work in harmony in the overlapping policy space or when they need to supplement each other.

The military's role has expanded in Pakistan not simply because of the long years of its direct and indirect rule that caused political and democratic discontinuity. There are other reasons as well. Pakistan developed as a security state right from the beginning because of external threat primarily from India and secondarily from Afghanistan. There was also a fear of internal collapse in the early years of independence. Therefore, the focus was on securing Pakistan against external threats and internal pressures. The key priorities were the enforcement of monolithic notion of nationhood, assertive centre and a strong military rather than democratisation of the political system. The military, especially the Army and the paramilitary forces, were summoned from time to time in "aid of the civil" for restoring civilian authority or to support it where it could not cope with the civilian task relating to political agitation, supplement civilian authorities in managing their administrative problems, natural calamities and man-made crises.

Civil military relations Dr Hasan Askari Rizvi

This practice goes on even today. The army and paramilitary are needed to hold elections, undertake census, provide security in Muharram, for reading electricity meters, managing government entities like Wapda, provide protection to staff administering anti-polio drug to children and making medical assistance and food available in the drought- or flood-affected areas, to name some civilian tasks undertaken by the three services, especially the army.

Yet another area that has expanded the role of the military is internal security. This includes terrorism, sectarian and ethnic violence and a nexus of criminality and politics in the post-September 2001 period. A number of successful security operations have been launched by the Army, the paramilitary forces and the Air Force for containing terrorism and religious and ethnic violence. This task is expected to continue for an indefinite period.

The frequent reliance of the civil administration on the military for handling civilian affairs has a strong political fall out to the disadvantage of the civilian authorities. All this provides the military with the experience of handling the civilian affairs. It also exposes the weaknesses of the civilian authorities and it creates the impression that the military can succeed in a task where civilian authorities fail. However, if the military can manage

an administrative task in an efficient manner this does not mean that it can also resolve the complex political problem. It is in this domain that the military often falters.

One major reason for the popularity of Army Chief General Raheel Sharif is that the Army has been successful in reducing internal terrorism to a great extent. As the Army has “delivered” on countering terrorism, the Army Chief and the Army have won much appreciation.

The critical appraisal of the political role of the Pakistan Military by Pakistani and foreign writers and analysts has identified at least seven reasons for the expansion of its role. We cannot discuss these factors here due to space problem. However, any attempt to limit the role of the military will have to address these issues. Some of these call for “restraint” on the part of the military and others emphasise “performance” on the part of the civilian leaders, institutions and processes.

Pakistan needs to learn from the countries that have rehabilitated civilian primacy after long years of the military’s ascendancy. This calls for redefining Pakistan’s internal and external security profile. If the issues of external security and internal violence and terrorism are not defused, the military stays central to state policies and state survival. It also requires a recognition on the part of the military top brass that “day-to-day” political management does not fit into their professional and organisational disposition.

Above all, an elected civilian government enjoys electoral legitimacy but it must also earn performance legitimacy. It must pursue socio-economic policies that give a strong hope to people for a better future. It needs to work towards reducing socio-economic disparities, be transparent in managing state affairs, and create a corruption-free, efficient and accountable governance within the framework of the rule of law.

In Pakistan, the civilian governments since 2008 have experienced crisis after crisis and these could not muster voluntary loyalty of the common people. These governments cultivated personalised loyalty by a partisan use of state resources and tolerating corruption in government.

Instead of creating a “credible and popular civilian alternative” the Nawaz Sharif government has spent more energy in outmanoeuvring the military. Some of the federal ministers have built their reputation for public criticism of the security establishment. The latest controversy caused by the news item regarding the discussion at a national security meeting in the prime minister house has adversely affected civil-military relations.

The Sharif government's complaint of losing a lot of space to the security establishment for the making of foreign and security policies relates more to the style of governance. Such a complaint was not heard that much when Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri, Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi and Hina Rabbani Khar were foreign ministers (2002-2013). Today, the Foreign Office lacks the unity of command. It has four poles of authority Sartaj Aziz, Tariq Fatmi, office of the Prime Minister and the Punjab Chief Minister. The latter manages relations with China and Turkey in an autonomous manner for Punjab-based development projects. Punjab has also obtained some loans from Chinese banks for its development projects. A divided foreign policy house is bound to demonstrate ambiguity in policymaking and management and leaves policy gaps.

Two issues are going to shape the civil-military relations in the next two months. How the civilian leadership handles the inquiry into who passed on the information of about what happened at the national security meeting? The Corps Commanders' Conference held on October 14 describes this information as "false and fabricated." The other issue pertains to the appointment of the new Army Chief in November. Any gross violation of the seniority principle will compound the current problems in civil-military relations.

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Source: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1201138/civil-military-relations-3/>

FACTORS IN PAKISTAN-INDIA TENSIONS BY IFTIKHAR AHMAD

In 1947, India and Pakistan, as one country, together struggled for independence from the British rule. In 2016, the two countries should respect each other and value each other's independence. Road to peace and cooperation starts from understanding self and others. One needs to judge oneself prior to judging others. There are always political and diplomatic tensions. Since bilateralism has failed, a third party intervention is necessary to address outstanding issues and disputes between Pakistan and India. Alternate approaches are necessary to build good neighbourly relations between Pakistan and India for the sake of peace and security in the region and welfare of the people on both sides of the border.

Cooperation and non-interference have to be the basic guiding principles for Pakistan and India to follow. Hegemonic attitude and approach would prove counterproductive and ultimately fatal. Continuous violations of the line of control, claims of surgical strikes, manipulation of SAARC, threatening behaviour and continuous blame game and labelling are not in any way helpful in making peace efforts successful. There is need for objectivity and to avoid gratuitous negativity that could be harmful and upsetting for both countries. The United Nations and the United States have a role to play to make peace in this region possible.

One of the problems faced by the Americans in pinning down a Pakistani paradigm of thought is due to the fact that there is a paucity of experts on Pakistan in the US administrations. Many of the so-called analysts were actually trained in India or Middle East; a few have ever visited Pakistan, and most cannot read and write Urdu. In the words of a US government official: "It is really difficult to find people who know anything about Pakistan in the government." The late ambassador Hal Holbrook was too busy to attend every briefing. The lack of empathy with Pakistani state of mind and affairs has been superimposed by a very 'American' referential state of mind.

The International Commission of Jurists (ICT) has explained how the United States government has confused counterinsurgency activities and anti-terrorism initiatives with a war paradigm. This has been confused by the usage of terms such as the "war on terror" that not only obscure a legal basis for definition and subsequent contextualisation in terms of policy framework etc.

Majority of Pakistanis who continue to live a peaceful, mundane existence, consisting of mixture of progressiveness, conservatism and traditional religious values, which is not a concept easily understood by the western mind. The presence of bearded men or veiled women is not a sign of extremism in Pakistani society per se, which has to be

understood by the US policy makers in its particular very 'Pakistani' socio-cultural context.

The US needs to act as a reliable partner in Pakistan's development in its own interest; a neo-con style engagement after achieving a tactical victory and withdrawing as in the case of Afghanistan previously will only present another head of the Pakistani terrorism hydra in due course. The US needs to be perceived in Pakistan as a more reliable partner to instill some confidence in a waning air of US-Pakistan cooperation. There are signs of public empowerment in Pakistan, and American policy echelons cannot just ignore the people. Leadership has to look for options to move out of crises and get rid of terrorism and extremism.

Concrete steps are needed for peace. Both Pakistan and India must show the will to do it. India needs to stop pretending to be a superpower, enough is enough. We all have to contribute to regional and international peace. The world leaders have to lead the peace process to settle outstanding disputes to reduce tensions. Stop state terrorism. Recognise people's right to self-determination. Respect human rights, ensure human dignity, put an end to politics of hate and deceit, stereotyping and labelling. The menace of terrorism has to be rooted out. Justice and peace are interrelated. The UN has a role to play; is the UN equipped to come equal to the task? Do leaders understand that prejudices and biases are roadblocks? Let us hope the UN would lead to fulfil aspirations of the people that look for justice and peace. Roadblocks have to be removed for a way forward.

The world needs a global culture that is embodiment of love. To reach for the sky together with humanity, shall we not seek bonds that bind hearts together? The question is what could effectively reduce political and diplomatic tensions where neighbours are enemy by circumstances and historical eventuality. The answer is consideration for others and empathy. In the international community you have to deal with the rest of the world that is much bigger than you. Every country/nation has its own interests, but they still have to work together with a sense of accommodation and harmony. Managing diversity is vital for leaders.

India needs to give up its habitual tricks and tracks and build good neighbourly relations with Pakistan for sake of peace and security and welfare of the people. It must work for regional peace, solve its own problems and stop interfering in other countries' internal affairs. That is the best prescription for reducing political and diplomatic tensions.

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THE MYTH OF PAKISTAN'S ISOLATION BY AHMED BILAL

Fact check

In the lives of nations, there is no friend, nor any enemy; it's just a need or necessity. If someone is dependent on another, he would go to any limit to have the need fulfilled and for this he would have to pay the price in terms of compromise in other matters. Or if two countries are interdependent, they maintain friendly relations because they both have a mutual need and would support each other in every other matter.

Having said that, Pakistan is not a victim of international isolation or loneliness as per the rhetoric put forth by opposition parties for point scoring in Parliament every other day. A true victim of isolation was Iran, who was not allowed to raise its economy, do trading, expansion, proliferate and many more severe restrictions following the Iranian revolution of 1979. If we really want to talk about international isolation we need to look at North Korea where people are not allowed to travel or leave the state, ruled by one party system and having their own version of communism. Their nuclear program and socialist system has made them isolated in the world; a byproduct of being shunned by the Americans. For North Korea though, they themselves do not want to engage with the world. Isolation works for an autocratic power growing from the inside.

Considering Pakistan's need in Islamic world, being nuclear power, regional position, strategic importance, Pakistan cannot be isolated. Moreover, China – our strongest ally and the biggest investor in Pakistan – cannot afford to make Pakistan isolated. The 46 billion dollar investment has gone to a whopping 51 billion dollars being used for various projects including major infrastructure development in the economic corridor. Despite all the arguments for equal distribution of the projects in CPEC, the nation as a whole agrees that this is the game changer for the economic prosperity of Pakistan.

Pakistan is also taking relations with Russia on friendlier terms. Both countries recently did their military exercises together to be ready to fight against a common enemy if needed in future. Russia has already signed CASA-1000 and is directly financing this mega energy project of transmitting power generation from Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to Pakistan.

Despite the fact that there is a deal on Chabahar port between Iran and India, Iran has just showed their interest to be a part of CPEC.

America would increase pressure on Pakistan to try and halt our rapid progress, but even they would never dismantle ties with us because they have their own

requirements. They still need Pakistan, as the US have always been wanting us to take action against Haqqani Network and needs our consistent support to play a major part to resolve issues related to Afghanistan on their behalf.

India appealed and filed a reference against Pakistan to declare it a terrorist state, whereas America refused to do so.

Pakistan's beleaguered relations with India do not mean that we are lonely on an international platform. We would have to stop looking at our policies and value through India's belligerently self-centered opinions. Talking about SAARC conference and the refusal of Bangladesh, India, Afghanistan and Bhutan to participate, one thing needs to be clearly understood that SAARC is not an internal issue of Pakistan rather it is a matter of all SAARC countries and their regional planning and stability. So every other country of SAARC is affected, not only Pakistan.

Yes, we are isolated in a way, but this isolation is more issue-oriented rather a fact of actuality for all intents and purposes. And for that very matter, the world resists on supporting us on Kashmir issue the way we deserve to be supported and US build pressure on us related to militancy and terrorism. Until and unless the world understands that we do not support militant groups and our armed forces take full action with zero tolerance against all such factions, we will remain under pressure on some issues. Without any doubt, Pakistan has to work on its internal policies to take action against extreme and militant groups who are an ultimate threat to Pakistan's image and sovereignty and destroy their safe havens. This would be taking step towards building a sense of belief in the minds of the world that we do not support such terrorists; and ultimately this would create a deeper sense of trust in Pakistanis and erase the suspicions that cause the world to harass us when we land at international airports especially in Europe, America and the UK. After eradicating militancy and terrorism, the major of all challenges, Pakistan would have to work on eliminating extremist radicals and fanaticism in the country.

Otherwise, we are well on our way to being a globalised international superpower. People need to think of Iran and North Korea before anyone declares Pakistan an isolated country.

Source: <http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2016/10/19/comment/the-myth-of-pakistans-isolation/>

GENDER GAP INDEX PUTS PAKISTAN IN SECOND-LAST PLACE BY MUBARAK ZEB KHAN

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has been ranked the second-worst country in the world for gender inequality for the second consecutive year.

According to the World Economic Forum's (WEF) Global Gender Gap Report 2016, released on Tuesday, Pakistan ranks 143 out of 144 countries in the gender inequality index, way behind Bangladesh and India which rank 72nd and 87th respectively.

Pakistan is also the worst performing state in South Asia and has been for the last couple of years, while Sri Lanka ranks 100th, Nepal 110th, the Maldives 115th and Bhutan 121st.

Declared worst-performing country in South Asia; only Yemen is ranked lower

The only country ranked below Pakistan is Yemen (144), while Syria is one place ahead at 142.

Pakistan ranked 112th in 2006, the first year of the report. Since then, its position has been deteriorating every year. Pakistan ranked 135th in 2013, 141st in 2014 and 143rd in 2015.

The report captures progress towards parity between men and women in four areas: educational attainment, health and survival, economic opportunity and political empowerment.

In its latest edition, the report finds that progress towards parity in the economic pillar has slowed dramatically with the gap — which stands at 59pc — now larger than at any point since 2008.

Iceland took the top spot for the 8th consecutive year, followed by Finland in second and Norway in third place. Several developing and emerging markets have also made it into the top 20, but the United States ranks 45.

Amir Jahangir, CEO of Mishal Pakistan — the partner institute of the WEF's Global Competitiveness and Benchmarking Network — told Dawn Pakistan was one of the few countries in the world that did not have woman as a federal minister; only two state ministers at the centre are women.

He further said the provinces of Punjab, Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, each also had only one woman minister in their cabinet, while Balochistan has no women in the cabinet.

The report notes that while Pakistan is making progress on closing the secondary education enrolment gender gap, and on women's estimated earned income, but this is partly offset by reversals on wage equality and female-to-male literacy ratio.

Pakistan's scores on the four pillars have not improved much from past years; its ranking in the Economic Participation and Opportunity and Education Attainment indexes have not changed since 2015.

On the Health and Survival pillar, Pakistan has moved up one rank from 125 last year to 124 this year. However, on Political Empowerment, Pakistan has been ranked 90th as compared to 87th the previous year.

In South Asia, Bangladesh and India are the top-ranked countries, having closed just under 70pc and 68pc of their overall gender gap, respectively, while the lowest-ranked countries are Bhutan and Pakistan, having closed 64pc and 56pc of their overall gender gap, respectively.

No country in the region has fully closed its Educational Attainment gender gap, and only one country, Sri Lanka, has fully closed its Health and Survival gender gap. However, the region is also home to one of the top five climbers over the past decade on the overall Index and on Educational Attainment: Nepal.

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Source: <http://www.dawn.com/news/1292347/gender-gap-index-puts-pakistan-in-second-last-place>

THE BITTER TRUTH BY SYED SAADAT

RECENTLY, the CSS written examination results were announced — apparently, only a dismal two per cent had passed. The poor result triggered many discussions across various media about the dwindling standard of education in the country. In a separate, but somewhat related development, the honourable chief justice recently commented on Pakistan's poor governance and how ours is a 'monocracy' in the garb of democracy.

The question is: do we really need extraordinary individuals in the civil service? Exercise helps make muscles stronger and more powerful; inactivity renders them limp and powerless. The same can be said of intellect. Even if able-minded, dynamic individuals join the civil service, the system is designed to blunt their cutting edge. The current system places a lot of focus on the politician (the temporary executive) and very little on the civil servant (the permanent executive). There is no need to have brilliant minds when all you are going to do with them is throw their potential away or leave them to rust indefinitely.

Mediocrity is most welcome in this country.

For example, civil servants in this country are hardly ever involved in policymaking. When it comes to town planning or development projects, it is generally the wishes of politicians that prevail. Prudent civil servants can continue to amass their offices with plans but, at the end of the day, the plan most likely to see the light of day will be the one that gets the nod from politicians. Political mileage is key.

Then comes foreign policy; the government also sometimes appears to be at sea on this front despite the fact that the prime minister himself holds the portfolio of foreign minister and also has the counsel of a couple of very senior advisers. Civil servants hardly have an input in foreign policy, they are mere paper pushers.

Pakistan Railways claims to have turned things around for good. Even if we are to believe their claim, does this so-called turnaround have anything to do with the intake of civil servants? The answer is a simple 'no' — the only thing that changed in the department from the previous government was the minister.

The new generation's able minds should consider joining the private sector, where they can generate valuable revenue for the country and create jobs rather than bask in the glory of so-called permanent government employment. Let them explore new horizons in science and technology. Let them study from the developed world and design indigenous development models for Pakistan.

Let them join the media, where they can report objectively. On second thought, this might not be a good idea; it would be hard to muzzle them at will. At the cost of a small digression, it is relevant to mention here that, irrespective of the outcome of the Cyril Almeida report, one thing is for sure: a lesser media group or a lesser journalist will think a thousand times before breaking any such news in the future. This, perhaps, serves the purpose of silencing the messenger — if not essentially shooting him.

Mediocrity is most welcome in this country; anything that is not run of the mill is unwelcome. One might well imagine how a government would deal with a civil servant who does not blindly conform. It should be kept in mind that, unlike media persons, a civil servant has no leverage to present his side of the story and any such objectivity would lead to immediate removal from service without anyone even taking notice.

The civil and military establishments do not need troublemakers in general. They have a proclivity for favouring troublemakers of a particular kind, and objective journalists or honest and upright civil servants do not fall in the latter category. The kind of troublemakers they prefer is perhaps best expressed, in all its absurdity, in a recent statement made by PML-N lawmaker Rana Muhammad Afzal during a meeting of the National Assembly's Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, when he asked, "[What] eggs is Hafiz Saeed laying for us that we are nurturing him?"

Lastly, the bitter truth. The falling standard of Pakistan's civil service aspirants is actually in keeping with our democracy — one that has the appearance of a monarchy. Such circumstances call for ushering in even more 'brain drain', as any individual who thinks analytically or has an opinion is actually a troublemaker in a monarchy. It seems that the youth are starting to get the gist of it, and now fewer and fewer capable people aspire to join the civil service.

Sadly, the balance (or imbalance) of power among state institutions is such that the civilian government is being run on an ad-hoc basis and, therefore, requires no vision. The government should encourage the youth towards other trades where they can more significantly contribute towards this country's progress, as reforming the civil service does not appear to be on cards any time soon.

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WORLD

THE US AND THE STATE OF WORLD POLITICS BY SHAHID JAVED BURKI

The “end of history” celebration by Francis Fukuyama in his best-selling book of that title turned out to be premature. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the end of European Communism did not mean that the world was going to opt for liberal democracy as the ideal form of governance. Competing ideologies arrived such as the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria and reformed authoritarianism in parts of East Asia. Governments in Africa continued to be dominated mostly by strong men. In Latin America elections brought populist governments to the fore. It was in South Asia, however, that liberal democracy advanced bringing into its domain countries such as Bangladesh and Pakistan that had deviated for years from the democratic path. India served as an example for the rest of South Asia.

No matter which of the two principal candidates contesting the presidential election in the US makes it to office, it is unlikely that the country will be able — or willing — to project itself as the example of political development to the rest of the world should follow. This inclination for the US not to play that role on the global stage became the official policy during the Obama years. The president was more interested in promoting democracy and good governance at home than projecting America’s political values abroad. He was inclined not to get involved in nation-building as was done by George W. Bush, his immediate predecessor.

Did this detachment from world political development influence global trends? This is not an easy question to answer. Global trends rest on many factors, of which the priorities of the US leadership is only one. That said, the findings of the Freedom House, a non-government organisation, are worth noting. This international watchdog was founded, among others, by Eleanor Roosevelt, the wife of President Franklin Roosevelt, some 75 years ago. In its most recent report, Freedom in the World, 2016, the institution has some dismal numbers. Over the past decade, the level of political freedom has declined in 105 countries and advanced only in 61. The last year was the worst yet, with 72 nations losing ground. Around the world, “press freedom declined to its lowest point in 12 years in 2015.” Also, in negotiations with China, Iran, Cuba, and North Korea, human rights were never a priority. Obama apologised to Argentinians for America’s Cold War acceptance of its ‘dirty war,’ but overlooked similar or worse abuses in anti-terror allies such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Were Trump to win, he would further set back the democratic experiment in several parts of the world. He

would undermine democracy by showing disrespect for democratic norms at home. In his many pronouncements, he endorsed water-boarding, a recognised form of torture used by the Bush administration in its effort to obtain information from captured terrorists. He disparaged freedom of the press, expelling from his rallies journalists who were critical of him. He undermined a free judiciary by declaring that a judge of Mexican origin could not be expected to handle fairly the case against the Trump University. He made fun of the religion of Khizr Khan and his wife who had lost a son in Iraq while fighting for the US. The way he spoke about the Khans further showed his contempt for the followers of a faith whose entry into the US he said he would ban once he moved into the White House. He expressed open admiration for Russia's increasingly authoritarian ruler, President Vladimir Putin. With Trump in the White House, it is safe to predict that the world's political development would suffer.

With America no longer the beacon of democratic light, some of the authoritarian systems of East Asia seem attractive. China has made impressive strides in moving forward its economy, alleviating poverty and reducing regional and personal income inequality. Vietnam also under the rule of one authoritarian political party is making impressive economic and social progress. This may not be the end of history but the beginning of an entirely new chapter. It is not certain whether America, its political values and the political system it has created will continue to attract many followers across the globe.

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INDIA'S ADMISSION INTO THE NSG WOULD BE CATASTROPHIC FOR SOUTH ASIAN SECURITY BY BEENISH ALTAF

There is a possibility of a special Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) plenary session in the coming months spotlighting the membership issue of the non-NPT states. Several dynamics could be weighed out in this regard: the criteria issue, the evolving global nuclear order, the south Asian strategic stability, the regional strategic environment all would have an impact on the South Asia's nuclear future mainly. Along with this the P-5state's guarding behavior and the global nonproliferation norms would also be questioned directly.

The constant NSG debate on the possible inclusion of non-NPT states is gaining momentum, with some opposing the membership, while others suggesting criteria to accommodate non-NPT signatories into the NSG fold. Since India and Pakistan have formally applied, India could not succeed in getting into the group in the recent plenary despite hard efforts by a few states. Without doubt, if India alone is allowed to become a member of the NSG while Pakistan remains outside, this would not only undermine global nonproliferation norms but cause countries like Pakistan to question the value of engaging with the nonproliferation regime.

Though Pakistan's ongoing political and diplomatic efforts are intended to create space for itself in the NSG, it does not qualify for civil nuclear trade in legal terms. While submitting its application for NSG membership, Pakistan outlined its credentials such as harmonization of its export control lists with those of the international export control regimes, its efforts to ensure nuclear security and safety, and its adherence to NSG guidelines. Thus, the induction of Pakistan would be a step towards strengthening the global nonproliferation regime.

Even though Pakistan wishes to be included in the NSG cartel on the basis of merit, it also wants to draw attention to the issue of discrimination in the group's membership. India is being treated on favorable terms, with laws amended and waivers granted to accommodate it. This despite the fact that India's diversion of nuclear material and equipment for the so-called peaceful explosion of 1974 was the prime reason behind the creation of the NSG. It was created to prevent the diversion of nuclear material from civilian trade to military purposes, with seven suppliers of advanced nuclear technology, i.e. United States, United Kingdom, Canada, France, Japan, West Germany, and Soviet Union, getting together to form a cartel to control nuclear technology supplied for peaceful uses. India violated its obligations with Canada, diverting plutonium from the Canadian-Indian reactor that was being run by U.S. heavy-water, which was provided purely for peaceful purposes.

If India is brought into the NSG and Pakistan is left out, it would be another act of discrimination based on short-sighted commercial and strategic interests. India has not fulfilled its major commitments given to the United States as part of the 2005 civil nuclear deal such as working for the conclusion of the Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty (FMCT) and separating its military and civilian reactors. Yet, it is again being considered for exceptional treatment. Contrary to its promise that it will work towards the conclusion of FMCT, India has not even considered unilateral moratorium to freeze its fissile material production. According to a recent report by the Belfer Center, India seems to have done the opposite, and expanded its fissile material production capacity. Instead of discouraging India, the United States and other major suppliers that have entered into nuclear cooperation agreements with it are pleading India's case for NSG membership.

In view of the strong opposition from several countries, it is likely that both India and Pakistan may not be accepted into the NSG in the immediate future. However, if the United States once again coerces the NSG participating governments, as it did in 2008, Pakistan would not have any choice but to review its engagement with the international nonproliferation regime, which is increasingly becoming a tool to serve only the interests of major powers.

After the India-specific NSG exemption in 2008, India reportedly began a massive expansion of its nuclear program, including military facilities. It is believed that since civilian facilities were supplied with foreign fuel, India had the option of using its indigenous stockpiles for military purposes. This seems to have helped India's bomb-making potential, and has disturbed regional balance. Pakistan should continue to take measures to ensure that strategic stability is maintained, without getting into an arms race.

The other option for Pakistan could be to start a diplomatic campaign to convince the NSG members of its needs and capabilities, and simultaneously highlight India's non-adherence of the promises made as part of the nuclear deal with the United States. Pakistan should continue nuclear cooperation with China, while also focusing on economic development to attract other nuclear vendors to explore commercial benefits in the country. Last but not the least, Pakistan can wait for a more appropriate time to secure membership, while it continues to pursue a normative approach to international nonproliferation efforts.

Though Pakistan desires NSG membership, it arguably applied this time mostly in response to India's application. From Pakistan's perspective, it could well have applied later, but standing up to discrimination is important. Indian entry into the "London club"

would be a destabilizing factor for South Asian security as Pakistan will be kept out once India gets in, and it will have negative fallout on the nonproliferation regime at the international level. Also, despite the eagerness of the United States, there are still some states opposing India's NSG induction, and the group takes decisions by consensus. Hence, for Pakistan, things would continue the same way, and the status quo would be maintained. The NSG should not walk away from its founding principles.

Source: <http://nation.com.pk/blogs/04-Oct-2016/india-s-admission-into-the-nsg-would-be-catastrophic-for-south-asian-security>

IRAN AND AMERICA: ESTABLISHMENT OF RELATIONS OR PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE? – ANALYSIS BY SAEED DAVAR

How relations between Iran and the United States can be changed? This has been among the most important questions with regard to Iran and the United States during about 40 past years. However, first we must see whether this change is necessary or not? Fundamental alterations in Iran during 1979 led to special developments in the Middle East. At first, Israel's presence in the region was challenged due to Iran's impact on political structures in many regional governments such as Lebanon, which in later years spread to Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and the Arab states of the Persian Gulf as well.

As a result, meaningful political changes took place in Iran's favor in this region, which increased the Islamic Republic's influence among regional nations that span a wide geographical expanse from Pakistan to South Caucasus and littoral states of the Persian Gulf, Yemen, and even some African states.

Despite global pressures put on Iran under the leadership of the United States, the country has been able to achieve an exciting level of scientific and weapon capabilities, even in the field of nuclear technology, and has been officially recognized as such by the world's nuclear powers. However, tensions between Iran and the United States are still far from over. At present, Iran is one of the main reasons why Syrian government has not fallen yet. It has also motivated Russia's military presence in that Arab country. Russia's military presence at an air base in the Iranian city of Hamedan actually humiliated Washington. In return, the United States has been the cause of most security, political and espionage problems and threats faced by Iran. Regardless of the problems that the United States has with some European countries, Russia, China and some Latin America states, it has had the most serious contention with Iran, which at times led to limited military confrontation between the two sides. As a result, the United States not only incurred losses on Iran, but also suffered serious blows from Iran, especially when it comes to humiliation of America.

Apprehension of American soldiers and impounding their boats in addition to downing or capturing US espionage aircraft have been good examples in this regard. However, such tensions cannot, and must not, continue through a logical process because both countries are able to affect many variables related to global security and energy and can have a destructive impact on the situation, taking into account that they themselves will be at loss in such a situation as well. The behavior of the two sides following the nuclear talks and the nuclear agreement known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) also shows that there is still a long way to go before a real thaw in the two countries' relations. The question, however, is that do Iran and the United States

have any ideal point for peaceful coexistence? Such a point can be certainly found, but the requisite to do this is to elevate the level of trust between the two countries and, before that, a change in behavior regarding mutual issues and decisions is mandatory.

Just in the same way that tensions between these two countries will create negative conditions across the region, realization of positive conditions can lead to peace and suitable changes. In line with its traditional interests following the Spanish–American War and according to the Monroe Doctrine, the United States has defined large regions of the world in accordance with its national security interests. At present, part of those regions also falls within the radius of Iran’s national interests as well, and this issue has increased friction between the two countries. In my opinion, positive changes in relations between the two countries are possible, but this issue requires certain developments, which can only take place in the course of time. There was initially no ground for official contacts between officials of Iran and the United States after the Iranian revolution in 1979, but at present, part of the measures that can complete this process have been taken and this process has even reached the two countries’ presidents. Therefore, both countries must recognize and accept each other’s interests.

Achieving this goal requires new understanding of relations. The two sides should use their capacities and show more resilience, especially with regard to management of tensions and overcoming crises, and both countries must recognize this reality. They must also avoid any behavior that may intensify suspicions. The two countries cannot ignore each other. As an Iranian, we must note that general measures taken by the United States have not helped build trust with Iran. Therefore, if the United States enters into negotiations with Cuba after 50 years of sour ties, it does not mean that 100 years must pass before reestablishment of political relations between Iran and the United States would be possible. I believe that the speed of rapprochement between the United States and Iran will be much higher due to Iran’s higher importance compared with Cuba, its geopolitical coordinates, its vast geographical expanse, the great impact it has on energy security in the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormoz, and its influence on major Arab countries of the region, including Iraq, Syria and even Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

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Source: <http://www.eurasiareview.com/03102016-iran-and-america-establishment-of-relations-or-peaceful-coexistence-analysis/>

THE SYRIAN TRAGEDY BY TALAT MASOOD

While one of the great human tragedies is currently unfolding in Syria, the Muslim countries in particular and the world at large remain oblivious. Syria, once the pinnacle of civilisation, is being destroyed and decimated by a civil war that is being fuelled by regional and global rivalries. The war has taken a horrendous human toll. A staggering 11 million people have been displaced which is fifty per cent of Syria's entire population. About 4.5 million refugees are located in neighbouring countries, majority of them in Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon. Nearly 250 to 300 thousand casualties have occurred that continue to add up every day, every hour, many of them children and from amongst the poor. What is worse the end of conflict is nowhere in sight and instead of trying to find a peaceful resolution major global and regional countries are fighting their own proxy wars. Russia is backing Bashar al-Assad and the US is siding with the Free Syrian Army that consists mostly of former service personnel that aim at overthrowing the government, Kurds and all those forces opposing the regime except the IS and other militant groups. Layered on this at the regional level, Saudi Arabia and Iran are engaged in a proxy war with the former opposing the regime and the latter supporting Assad not just politically but also militarily.

The situation is highly complex but it is essentially the ruthless iron grip of Assad, spread over years that have created wide resentment across the country. In the past it was possible to put a lid on dissent, but now with the global media revolution it is becoming difficult for dictators to retain their grip. This is especially so when the government has such less to offer in economic benefits and there is gross underrepresentation of the majority in the power structure and governance. In Syria, the imbalance between the Sunnis and the Alawite minority in government and in the power structure is major cause for discontent. The Alawite being a sub-sect of Shia and hardly 15% in terms of population is supported by Iran, Iraq and Hezbollah of Lebanon and opposed by the rest of the Sunni Arab countries. Saudis, Turks and Qatar are openly supporting the rebels.

Indeed, it is a classic case of a state that is conducting its affairs that is doomed to fail. An unrepresentative coercive government that wants to thrust a minority rule over majority of its population. The regime has encouraged corruption to win over select groups for retaining power. More significantly, Assad pursues a foreign policy that is well beyond the capacity of the state to sustain. Relies heavily on external global and regional prop for his self-defeating domestic and external policies instead of adopting those that could have won him the goodwill of its people.

The IS is the most barbaric of the groups fighting in Syria that has committed the most heinous acts of mass killings, rape and torture on its adversaries and profess a highly convoluted interpretation of Islam. The situation could not be worse for the people of Syria that are under attack from either one or the other party. Adding to this witches brew is that apart from local fighters many are coming in droves from the Middle East, Afghanistan and even farfetched places to prove their loyalty to the IS or just for the taste of adventure.

Between the rebels, Kurdish forces and the IS they control two-thirds of the country and Assad forces are holding on to the capital Damascus, most of southern part, coastal region and the area adjoining the Lebanese border that all told constitutes one-third of Syria. The Al Nusra front has been gaining ground and elements of the Free Syrian Army that deserted and joined the rebels are caught infighting and have been unable to play a major role in the civil war. This is despite the full support they have of the Americans. It indicates that they were more a prop of theirs and not genuinely motivated as a cohesive entity under an accepted command or leadership. The IS originally captured large parts of Iraq and then subsequently expanded their influence in Syria. More recently, it has been losing ground to Assad's forces.

US and Russian efforts to work out a ceasefire has repeatedly failed and the recent attempt was shattered by the bombing of the UN convoy carrying emergency food supplies to the Aleppo region. As of now there are no indications of Russia and the US revisiting their policies, which unfortunately is working only to the grave detriment of Syrian people and is not serving the interests of two major powers either. It is likely after the elections the new American administration reassesses its policy. Chances of Saudi Arabia and Iran coming to a common understanding on dealing with Syria looks even more remote considering their current animosity and strategic divergence. Of the many challenges that this crisis throws up the most crucial is whether Syria can ever be united again. First, there is no party among the feuding lot that is likely to emerge as a clear victor. Neither is any leader among various factions, including the ruling party, that show promise of holding the country together. Even if there are individuals, who given an opportunity could be better choices, Assad like all dictators has deliberately suppressed alternative leadership from emerging. As Assad is in no position to reunite the country, either by force or through a peace accord among warring factions, which points towards continuation of the civil war with varying intensity. He is, however, likely to hold on to the truncated part of the country as long as Russia and Iran continue to support him. For Russia, Assad is the only remaining ally in the Middle East and for Iran Assad is a trusted partner. Moreover, foreign powers can only help to an extent countries have to rise to the challenge from within. Will Syria ever have that capacity only time will tell!

TOP UN COURT REJECTS MARSHALLS NUCLEAR CASE AGAINST PAKISTAN, INDIA

THE HAGUE: The UN's highest court Wednesday threw out a bid by tiny Marshall Islands to sue Pakistan for “failing to halt the nuclear arms race”, moments after rejecting a similar case against India.

“The court upholds the objection to jurisdiction raised by Pakistan based on the absence of a dispute between the two parties,” judge Ronny Abraham told the International Court of Justice in The Hague, and “cannot proceed to the merits of the case”.

The 16-judge bench at the ICJ however was also to rule later in the day in a separate decision on whether the Pacific island nation's David-versus-Goliath battle could continue against Britain.

The archipelago is seeking to shine a fresh spotlight on the global threat of nuclear weapons.

But in a majority verdict by nine votes to seven “the court upholds the objection to jurisdiction raised by India”, presiding judge Ronny Abraham said, and therefore the tribunal “cannot proceed to the merits of the case.”

The tribunal, set up to resolve rows between nations, found it lacked the jurisdiction in the case as there had been no prior recorded dispute or negotiations over the nuclear issue between the Marshall Islands and India.

The tiny Pacific island nation was ground zero for a string of nuclear tests on its pristine atolls between 1946-58, carried out by the United States as the Cold War arms race gathered momentum.

Initially in 2014, Majuro accused nine countries of failing to comply with the 1968 nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which seeks to inhibit the spread of atomic bombs.

But the ICJ already failed to take up cases against the other countries -- China, France, Israel, North Korea, Russia and the United States -- as they have not recognised the court's jurisdiction. Israel has also never formally admitted to having nuclear weapons.

The Marshall Islands has maintained that by not stopping the nuclear arms race Britain, India and Pakistan continued to breach their obligations under the treaty — even if New Delhi and Islamabad have not signed the pact.

The treaty commits all nuclear weapon states “to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament”.

Majuro is calling for nuclear powers to take “all necessary measures” to carry out what it considers to be their obligations under the treaty.

'Islands vaporised'

At a March hearing, Majuro's lawyers painted a vivid picture of the horrors seen after 67 nuclear tests were carried out on Bikini and Enewetak atolls.

“Several islands in my country were vaporised and others are estimated to remain uninhabitable for thousands of years,” Tony deBrum, a former Marshall Islands foreign minister, told the court.

The so-called “Operation Castle” tests in March and April 1954 were particularly devastating and resulted in massive contamination because of the nuclear fall-out.

“The entire sky turned blood-red,” said deBrum, who witnessed the explosion of the largest-ever US-built nuclear device called “Castle Bravo” as a nine-year-old boy.

Critics have argued however that the ICJ action is a distraction and that the islanders' real fight is with Washington, which carried out the tests in their backyard.

They contend that the case has no relation to the victims' claims for increased compensation, better health care and clean-ups to render the sites habitable again.

Experts however say the islands hoped the three cases before the ICJ will thrust nuclear disarmament talks, which have stalled over the past two decades, back into the spotlight.

Even if the case has no direct impact, the Marshall Islands' residents “perhaps feel that the more the difficulties with nuclear weapons are brought to the public consciousness, the better,” said Jens Iverson, assistant professor of Public International Law at Leiden University.

“They may hope that the world may become a safer place,” Iverson told AFP.

THE UN — A NEW SECRETARY GENERAL | EDITORIAL

The United Nations (UN) has chosen a new Secretary General to replace Ban Ki-moon at the beginning of next year. To the surprise of none but the disappointment of many it is a man and not a woman. The former Prime minister of Portugal Antonio Guterres was selected by the Security Council in a rare show on unanimity and unity. The result came after the sixth of a series of straw polls. Mr Guterres has a useful record in these troubled times as he spent a decade as the UN high commissioner for refugees — and refugees are arguably the greatest human problem faced by the world today, when more people are on the move or displaced since the end of Second World War. There remains a formal vote but it is likely that the decision will be sealed by acclamation.

Insiders were surprised at the sudden end to the process which was expected to run at least to the end of October — and at the successful candidate who would not have been expected to be a first choice for China or Russia given that he has a strong human rights record. In the end Mr Guterres got 13 of the 15 votes with two abstentions. For Pakistan this may be seen as a 'good' result. A man who is sensitive to many of the issues we face and has an understanding of them. Mr Guterres is seen as accessible by his staffers and he has said that he would continue to be a 'spokesman for the downtrodden'. The chances of a woman winning what is arguably the hardest job in the world after the American Presidency were never high, and the leading woman contender Irina Bokovo, the current head of Unesco, came fourth.

The UN Secretary General has to balance the titanic forces and currents that swirl in the Security Council, as well as present a face to the world that suggests that the UN is something more than a decoration piece on the global mantelpiece. We wish Mr Guterres well; he is going to need all the luck he can get.

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AMERICA RISING: INDISPENSABLE AGAIN IN ASIA BY JOHN LEE

China's aggressive militarism, declining economy, and stagnant leadership has renewed America's status as the welcome and indispensable force for prosperity and security in Asia.

The conventional wisdom in recent years has been that the United States, reeling from loss of prestige after the Iraq invasion and awash in the foreign policy uncertainty that it created, is overextended and exhausted and now fated to watch impotently as China takes its place. The thesis of American decline, first developed in the 1970s after the United States lost the Vietnam War, was back in vogue. America was not only fading but unable to prevent the arrival of a new Chinese superpower ready and eager to assume pre-eminence and leadership in a region dominated by the United States since the end of the Second World War.

When Barack Obama replaced George W. Bush in 2009, the United States was suffering its worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. At the same time, a rapidly growing China was a decade into "smile diplomacy" in an attempt to reassure neighbors that its rise to power would be peaceful. Putting the best face on these developments, U.S. foreign policy makers acknowledged that America's exhausted economy probably could not offer opportunities for the region that China's could, and that a continuing American presence in Asia, if nothing more, would act as a stopgap insurance measure in case China's peaceful rise morphed into something else.

When a new American president takes office in early 2017, he or she will not be shackled by this gloomy narrative which, in a few short years, has itself suffered what appears to be a fatal decline. The end of China's brief era of good feelings in favor of a more aggressive and acquisitive stance has changed everything. Few countries in the Pacific any longer trust in the peacefulness of Beijing's rise. China's inevitable emergence as an economic superpower is in question as it confronts an economy weighed down by heavy debt and wasteful investment, leading to the certainty of a structural (and not just cyclical) slowdown.

As strategic tensions between China and almost all of its neighbors worsen, once booming trade is slowing in the region. In response, many export-dependent economies are adopting ever more mercantilist trade policies; while in strategic and economic affairs, zero-sum thinking is on the ascendency.

Meanwhile, the American economy, given up for dead, has come back to life in a way that has not escaped notice. The shale energy revolution has made the cost of energy

cheaper for American-based firms, thereby improving the country's competitiveness and balance of trade. Indeed, Asia is now even more dependent on American innovation, capital, and markets than it was a decade ago.

Similarly, the region's willingness to welcome an American military presence is more widespread and urgent now than at any other time this century or the latter part of the previous one. A decade ago, many countries worried that a declining America would overplay its hand, the fear is now that the next administration might underplay Washington's hand as some believe President Obama has done too often. This means that the opportunities for a new administration to enhance America's standing in Asia and enlarge its role in the region are significant.

Since after the Second World War, rapidly developing East Asian economies—Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and, more recently, China—have all relied on a remarkably similar export-manufacturing development model to grow rich. It was a two-way street that benefited both parties. Asia's undeveloped countries made and exported products to consumers in advanced economies more cheaply, faster, and more reliably than could be done elsewhere. On the formula's other side, the developing economies received knowhow, innovation, and capital from firms like General Electric (GE) and Apple that established operations, often joint ventures, in Asia. American commercial giants invested in Asian industry and infrastructure and created millions of well-paying manufacturing jobs for the latter's young and growing populations. America and its consumers benefitted from the arrangement by applying downward pressure on inflation with people paying lower prices for goods.

As a result, East Asia captured a third of all global manufacturing trade, up from about 10 percent in 1970. More than two-thirds of all finished exports out of Asia end up in North America and Europe. Regional free trade agreements such as the one between China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations have made East Asia into a vast and integrated production chain that makes products for middleclass consumers around the world, but mostly in Western countries. An iPhone might be "Designed in California," but the parts and workmanship needed to produce one can come from a dozen countries throughout East Asia.

But this model for prosperity is hitting a wall in Asia. What has worked so well in the past will no longer be as effective for highly populated and poor countries like China, Indonesia, Vietnam, and Burma. In the 1980s, the combined population of exporting powerhouses of Asia—Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, and Malaysia—was just above 150 million. At that time, the population of their North American and European consumer markets numbered more than four hundred million. The

proportions of this equation have flipped; today, there are some two billion people living in developing countries making and exporting products to one billion consumers living in the advanced economies.

In short, there are too many producers making products for too few consumers, a fact illuminated by statistics that show that global trade may actually be stalling after the runaway years of the previous two decades. Global merchandise exports as a percentage of GDP increased from about 15 percent where it had stood for a number of years prior in the early 1990s to a peak of 27 percent in 2008. The figure has been falling since then to about 22 percent today.

More relevant to the region is that exports by volume have actually declined for every East Asian economy except Vietnam (which enjoyed a 5% increase) over the past year. South Korea, China, Japan, Singapore, and Taiwan, among other economies, have suffered decreases of between 5 and 17 percent. In other words, the global trading pie is no longer growing rapidly, meaning that there will no longer be generous slices available for the emerging millions of the middle class in Asia and elsewhere.

In response, we are now seeing more competitive, zero-sum economic responses such as the spate of so-called competitive currency devaluations in Japan and China. Not that doing this will work. Because production in East Asia is now a vast integrated network, precipitating a currency war by lowering the costs of one's exports through devaluation will only lower the price all Asian exporters receive for their products. And a devalued currency will make imports more expensive at the same time, hurting domestic households.

In addition, currency devaluation policies will encourage mass capital flight from Asia, with the likely exception of Japan, still a safe haven. This development has forced China's Central Bank to use hundreds of billions of dollars of foreign exchange reserves to stabilize the value of the Yuan.

All the while that this is happening, trading superpower China has changed the regional equation to the detriment of every other Asian exporter. It has managed to retain a significant share of intra-Asian intermediary trade at the low-cost and low-skill end. At the same time, China has increased its share at the high-cost and high-value added end. In other words, China is now competing with exporters in low-income countries like Indonesia and the Philippines and with firms in Malaysia, Singapore, Japan, and South Korea that target the higher end. It is a harbinger of things to come as intra-Asian trade becomes more competitive over time with regional economies implementing policies to

secure a larger share of the intermediary or processing trade at the expense of one's neighbor.

The next American president will not be able to wave a magic wand to resolve these economic challenges. But the next president should recognize that what the United States (and Europe) has long offered Asia—capital, innovation, and access to a huge domestic market— exceeds what large regional economies such as Japan and China can offer and is now more important than ever. The next president will have a more powerful hand than did President Obama and greater latitude in shaping the economic rules of the road in Asia.

America's economic leverage will likely be strengthened in 2017 because it is nearly certain that China will be obliged to deleverage its economy where debt grew from \$3 trillion to \$34 trillion between 2008 and 2015, a rise unmatched in both relative and absolute terms during any eight-year period in economic history. China is already undertaking the painful process of writing off bad debt and allocating a growing proportion of national wealth and new credit to prevent existing debt from defaulting.

This is much the same process Japan went through in the 1980s and 1990s and from which it still has not recovered. As China deals with its increasingly fragile economy, and as its prospects for economic dominance diminish, so too does the leverage Beijing wielded not long ago.

Although China will remain a large and important economic player in the region under any scenario, it will fall short of becoming hegemonic in its ability to determine the future of an economically ambitious region. When it comes to absorbing Asia's products, America has a consumption market of more than \$12 trillion. China absorbs less than a third of that figure. The United States is one of the top three sources for capital in every major Asian economy while China is not among the top eight sources for any country in Asia except for the weaker economies in Cambodia, Laos, Burma, and North Korea. And, finally, American firms are far more important than their Chinese counterparts and competitors when it comes to building regional capacities that involve technology, innovation, and know-how.

America's renewed influence to shape Asia's economic agenda is made plain by the eagerness shown by the regional economies to join the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade pact, President Obama's signature economic pivot policy in which, incidentally, China refuses to join. The TPP will undoubtedly bring net economic gains to Japan, Vietnam, and Malaysia even as it imposes higher labor and environmental standards, restricts and scales back protectionist practices in the region, strengthens intellectual

property rights that will reduce piracy and infringement, and prohibits currency manipulation policies. In contrast to the TPP, existing and planned trade agreements with China have roused regional concerns that they will offer China's pampered and protected firms another instrument through which to increase its footprint at the expense of other Asian firms and their employees.

If ratified by the time the next American president is inaugurated, the TPP will hand the new administration a ready-made instrument to level the playing field in the Pacific in ways that should ensure the adoption and enforcement of uniform standards of competition that will benefit all members as well as strengthen U.S. leverage at the expense of China. If the TPP is not ratified by Congress, as some expect, America will have shot itself in the foot. Even then, and so long as the anti-free trade sentiment evident in the current debates subside, America remains an indispensable economic power in Asia.

The notion that the region had to choose between economic prosperity by siding with China or strategic security by siding with America was never an accurate or realistic one. But the next American president will no longer have to enter into a hand-wringing dialogue about America's diminishing economic relevance in the Pacific, which is now yesterday's news.

Although America's economic credentials and importance have been reaffirmed, strategic issues continue to loom. China might be economically troubled, but its double digit growth in military spending has been coupled by provocative challenges to Japan's Self Defense Forces in the Senkaku Islands and the construction and militarization of artificial islands in disputed areas of the South China Sea in an effort to make "facts on the water."

American allies in Japan and Australia have responded in robust and unequivocal fashion. Given China's provocations, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has broken with Japan's postwar mantra and taken the unprecedented step to formally reinterpret the country's constitution that allows for "collective self-defense": the right to come to the military aid of allies and partners when Japanese interests are threatened. The Abe government has also cleared the way for Japan to export its impressive military technologies to like-minded countries in the region.

America's other great regional ally, Australia, is not sitting on its hands either. The relatively new Turnbull government released its Defense White Paper in February, the bulk of which was drafted by the previous government. The document expresses deep concern with China's activities in the South China Sea and the way Beijing wields power

more generally. In response, Canberra has committed to the most expansive upgrade in its military capacity in the air, sea, and cyber realms compared with any time in the country's peacetime history. The explicit goal is to ensure that Australia maintains its military superiority over any potential adversary in Southeast Asia and in the South Pacific region.

Consistent to the region's eagerness to affiliate itself with the U.S. economy, it is especially noteworthy that a key goal of Australia's modernization program is to achieve seamless interoperability with American forces in Asia. In military terms, this will make war planning and execution more efficient as well as allow the Australian Defense Force to become a force multiplier for both the Australian and American military. A major part of Australia's naval build-up is the construction of a new fleet of twelve submarines that will be the most advanced of any Asian power. Germany and France are vying to partner with Canberra to build the subs. But it appears that Japan has the inside track because that partnership would bring with it the installation of an American weapons system that would further integrate and solidify the U.S.–Japan–Australia trilateral strategic and military partnership for decades to come. The decision will be made in the second half of 2016. If the Tokyo partnership is consummated, then America and its two most important naval allies in the region will have become that much more bonded, lending weight to the prospect that the U.S.-led security system will manage the challenges presented by China's rise and the aggressive posture that has come to define it. If so, the next administration has a ready-made strategic and operational platform on which to advance a more effective military pivot to Asia.

More broadly, it has been clear for several years that there is a widespread desire for American leadership in Asia, more so than at any time in recent decades. The Philippines is welcoming American forces to Subic Bay a quarter of a century after the U.S. Seventh Fleet left. Old wartime enemy Vietnam is offering ever more of its port facilities to the U.S. fleet. Burma seeks closer military ties. Singapore has installed newly built naval facilities tailored to serve American warships even if as it pays lip service to a position of neutrality in the U.S.–China rivalry. Malaysia has upgraded strategic and intelligence ties with the United States. Further afield, the legacy of George W. Bush in terms of his strategic courtship of India continues to advance. Only Thailand, with its undemocratic government partially shunned by Washington, appears to be drifting away toward China's embrace. And also, there is North Korea.

All countries in the region, know there is no military balance in Asia without a fully engaged America, which is why they will lay down the welcome mat for the new president to pursue a more ambitious and active role in Asia.

All the while, China is becoming economically vulnerable and increasingly isolated. The tables seem to be turning in Asia—in part due to the inherent political and economic failings of a closed, authoritarian, and corrupt regime; in part due to the bluster and aggressive behavior of a rising power; and in large part because the countries in the region understand that their security, independence, and prosperity is best served by unity of purpose and unity with America in the face of a well-armed and increasingly aggressive neighbor. China's militarism, on one front, and diplomatic recalcitrance, on others, along with the inevitable flare-ups in nuclear armed North Korea have reaffirmed Washington's status in Asia as the indispensable nation.

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Source: <http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/article/america-rising-indispensible-again-asia>

VLADIMIR PUTIN'S OUTLAW STATE | NYTIMES EDITORIAL

President Vladimir Putin is fast turning Russia into an outlaw nation. As one of five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, his country shares a special responsibility to uphold international law. Yet, his behavior in Ukraine and Syria violates not only the rules intended to promote peace instead of conflict, but also common human decency.

This bitter truth was driven home twice on Wednesday. An investigative team led by the Netherlands concluded that the surface-to-air missile system that shot down a Malaysia Airlines plane over Ukraine in July 2014, killing 298 on board, was sent from Russia to Russian-backed separatists and returned to Russia the same night. Meanwhile, in Syria, Russian and Syrian warplanes knocked out two hospitals in the rebel-held sector of Aleppo as part of an assault that threatens the lives of 250,000 more people in a war that has already claimed some 500,000 Syrian lives.

Russia has tried hard to pin the blame for the airline crash on Ukraine. But the new report, produced by prosecutors from the Netherlands, Australia, Belgium, Malaysia and Ukraine, confirms earlier findings. It uses strict standards of evidence and meticulously documents not only the deployment of the Russian missile system that caused the disaster but also Moscow's continuing cover-up.

Ukraine's foreign minister, Pavlo Klimkin, told The Times last week that his government is determined to bring both Russia and the individuals who fired the missile to justice.

Some Western officials have accused Russia of war crimes, charges that could be pursued through international channels, even if Moscow blocks a formal referral to the International Criminal Court. New sanctions against Russia also should be considered. Mr. Putin will undoubtedly fight any such action, using his veto on the Security Council, but whatever his response, the United States should lend its support to Ukraine's quest for accountability.

There seems no holding Mr. Putin to account in Syria. For months he has pretended to negotiate on a political solution to a five-year-old civil war between his client, President Bashar al-Assad, and rebels backed by the United States and some Arab nations. But despite pleas from Secretary of State John Kerry, who has spent an enormous amount of time and effort negotiating two separate (and short-lived) cease-fires, Russian and Syrian forces, backed by Iranian ground troops, have continued the slaughter.

Over recent days, Mr. Putin has again shown his true colors with air attacks that have included powerful bunker-busting bombs that can destroy underground hospitals and safety zones where civilians seek shelter. On Sept. 19, Russia bombed an aid convoy, which like hospitals and civilians are not supposed to be targeted under international law.

On Wednesday, Mr. Kerry threatened to withdraw an American team from Geneva where the two sides had established a center to collaborate on a cease-fire. But that is likely to have little effect, and Mr. Kerry has few, if any, diplomatic cards to play.

President Obama has long refused to approve direct military intervention in Syria. And Mr. Putin may be assuming that Mr. Obama is unlikely to confront Russia in his final months and with an American election season in full swing. But with the rebel stronghold in Aleppo under threat of falling to the government, administration officials said that such a response is again under consideration.

Mr. Putin fancies himself a man on a mission to restore Russia to greatness. Russia could indeed be a great force for good. Yet his unconscionable behavior — butchering civilians in Syria and Ukraine, annexing Crimea, computer-hacking American government agencies, crushing dissent at home — suggests that the furthest thing from his mind is becoming a constructive partner in the search for peace.

Source: <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/29/opinion/vladimir-putins-outlaw-state.html?ref=asia>

FIGHT FOR THE ALAWITES: RUSSIA-IRAN RIVALRY BEHIND SYRIAN CIVIL WAR – ANALYSIS BY ALEXIS AMINI

Tehran and Moscow's disagreement over Assad's fate following the Syrian civil war should be seen as just one flashpoint within a broader Russian-Iranian competition over the Syrian Alawite community. Indeed, since a potential peaceful settlement would entail a confessional power-sharing system, the Alawites will occupy important political and institutional positions as a result of their considerable demographic weight. Thus, Russia and Iran are competing for influence over the Alawite community so that the representatives chosen to occupy those posts guarantee exclusively their respective Levantine interests. This analysis explores the dynamics of this little-known Russian-Iranian rivalry.

In the context of an eventual power-sharing agreement, Iran has to rely on the Alawite community instead of the Syrian Shias, since the former has more political and institutional top posts attributed to it as a result of its greater demographic weight. Thus, Iran will be more able to block any hostile legal measures from the Sunni majority aimed at reducing its Levantine influence. Given ideological tensions between heterodox Alawi Shiism and Iran's orthodox Twelver Shiism, the Alawite elites outside Assad's circle are anti-Iranian. Furthermore, fearing being toppled by a resentful Alawite community due to his increased reliance on Tehran's military support as the civil war grinds on, Assad is willing to guarantee Iranian interests in exchange for Iran's protection against any anti-Iranian Alawites. Therefore, despite the US-backed opposition's demand that Assad must leave office before any peace process is initiated, Iran wants the Assad clan to fill the top jobs attributed to the Alawites in any eventual power-sharing agreement.

Consequently, Assad's hold on power will be precarious since Washington and the rebellion expect anti-Iranian representatives to assume the top jobs reserved for Alawites. To prevent such an outcome, Tehran has to police the Alawite community and eliminate any anti-Iranian rival. For this task, the Islamic Republic has managed to coopt throughout the war a significant number of Alawites through the formation of the National Defense Forces (NDF). Once peace takes hold, those Alawite militias numbering 90,000 can act as Iran's enforcer over the Alawite community. Despite sharing the same anti-Iranian feelings as their brethren, the Alawites in the NDF are ultimately loyal to Iran since their newfound power relies on Iranian financial and military support. They can coerce other Alawites into supporting Assad and his inner-circle for the top jobs reserved to the community. Moreover, even if Assad is deposed, the NDF can still coerce the Alawites into choosing new pro-Iranian representatives.

That said, Russia wants to eliminate Iranian influence over the Alawites by attempting to integrate the NDF into the Syrian Arab Army, which is Moscow's proxy in the Syrian civil war. Indeed, Putin sees a peaceful settlement as leverage over the U.S. regarding more important issues pertaining to Russian national security, such as Ukraine. However, a Russian-brokered peace settlement can only serve as leverage if it reduces Iran's presence in Syria, a key US objective in the Middle East. As such, Iran's ability to prop up pro-Iranian Alawite representatives in a hypothetical power-sharing system through the NDF is an obstacle to be dealt with. Nonetheless, integration of the NDF within the SAA is an uphill battle since the local NDF commanders don't want to relinquish their newfound power conferred by Iran through its financial and military support.

Furthermore, since this Russian-Iranian competition over the Alawites intensifies when a lull in fighting occurs and a concrete peace effort is underway, Iran is attempting to spoil any cessation of hostilities between the pro and anti-Assad camps to divert Moscow's attention from disbanding the NDF to battling the rebellion. Such was the case during the ongoing Aleppo campaign when a ceasefire in early 2016 was observed by Russian forces while Iranian-backed militias and SAA units continued their ground offensive without Moscow's air support in order to force Putin to resume hostilities for fear of a successful rebel counter-offensive which the opposition might exploit in the hopes of obtaining better terms at the next round of talks. Therefore, Russian-Iranian competition was put on the backburner.

However, given that the Kremlin is eager to establish a dialogue with the United States on Syria, one that can extend to the Ukraine crisis, there's always a possibility that Russia might refrain from resuming hostilities despite Iranian provocations, in order to show the U.S. and the opposition that Moscow is serious about a peaceful settlement. Furthermore, in the event that peace talks do succeed to the detriment of Iranian interests, Tehran can't indefinitely rely on the NDF to pressure the Alawite community into choosing pro-Iranian representatives. As a matter of fact, there's a risk that Russia might succeed in distancing the Alawite NDF commanders from Iran by promising them more than just funding and weapons, such as offering them positions of power within the post-war state institutions.

Consequently, Tehran is looking to improve its Syrian Shia proxy, which it deems more reliable since it shares Iran's orthodox Shiism unlike the Alawites. Thus, Iran is trying to increase the Shias' share in the Syrian population. In doing so, the Syrian Shias will obtain more top political and institutional jobs as per the power-sharing agreement. To accomplish this, Iran is facilitating the granting of Syrian citizenship to foreign Shia fighters. Moreover, Iran is leading a conversion program to orthodox Shiism aimed at

the lower classes of the Alawite community who receive financial benefits after being converted.

This article builds on previous analysis found in Russia and Iran: United in Syrian Civil War, Divided in Peace

This article was published at Geopolitical Monitor.com

Source: <http://www.eurasiareview.com/14102016-fight-for-the-alawites-russia-iran-rivalry-behind-syrian-civil-war-analysis/>

DONALD TRUMP, THE WORST OF AMERICA BY CHARLES M. BLOW

Donald Trump has virtually stopped trying to win this election by any conventional metric and is instead stacking logs of grievance on the funeral pyre with the great anticipation of setting it ablaze if current polls turn out to be predictive.

There is something calamitous in the air that surrounds the campaign, a hostile fatalism that bespeaks a man convinced that the end is near and aiming his anger at all within reach.

As his path to victory grows narrower, his desperation grows more pronounced.

Last week a steady stream of women stepped forward to accuse Trump of some form of sexual assault, abuse or inappropriate behavior. Trump's response has been marked by a stunning lack of grace and dignity, let alone contrition or empathy, a response much like the man himself.

Instead, he is doubling down on sexism.

On Thursday, Trump said of the People magazine reporter who accused him of forcibly kissing her: "Look at her. Look at her words. You tell me what you think. I don't think so."

He said on Friday of the woman accusing him of groping her on an airplane: "Believe me, she would not be my first choice, that I can tell you."

He also said of Clinton, "When she walked in front of me, believe me, I wasn't impressed."

His response to these charges has been surprisingly — and perhaps, revealingly — callow. He has mocked, whined, chided, bemoaned and belittled. It's as if the man is on a mission to demonstrate to voters the staggering magnitude of his social vulgarity and emotional ineptitude. He has dispensed with all semblances of wanting to appear presidential and embraced what seems to be most natural to him

Furthermore, everything is rigged against him, from the media to the election itself. He's threatening to sue The New York Times. He says he and Clinton should take a drug test before the next debate.

These are the ravings of a lunatic.

Trump is back to carelessly shooting off his mouth and recklessly shooting himself in the foot.

It is sad, really, but for him I have no sympathy. He has spent this entire election attacking anyone and everyone whom he felt it would be politically advantageous to attack. Trump, now that you're under attack, you want to cry woe-is-me and have people commiserate. Slim chance, big guy.

The coarseness of your character has been put on full display, and now the electorate has come to cash the check you wrote.

Trump now looks like a madman from *Mad Men*, a throwback to when his particular privileges had more perks and were considered less repugnant. He looks pathetic.

He is a ball of contradictions that together form a bully, a man who has built a menacing wall around the hollow of his self. He is brash to mask his fragility.

But in a way, Trump was authentically made in America.

America has a habit of romanticizing the playboy as much as the cowboy, but there is often something untoward about the playboy, unseemly, predatory and broken.

For years, Trump built a reputation on shuffling through women, treating his exploits with jocularly and having too much of America smiling in amusement at the bad boy antics.

But he's not a kid; he's a cad.

And he seems constitutionally incapable of processing the idea that wealth is not completely immunizing, that some rules are universally applicable, that common decency is required of more than just "common" folks. He seems genuinely offended that he should be held to the same standards of truth, decorum and even law as those less well off.

Trump is in fact the logical extension of toxic masculinity and ambient misogyny. He is the logical extension of rampant racism. He is the logical extension of wealth worship. He is the logical extension of pervasive anti-intellectualism.

Trump is the logical extension of the worst of America.

With him you get a man who believes himself superior in every way: through the gift of fortune and the happenstance of chromosomes. He believes the rules simply don't apply. Not rules that govern the sovereignty of another's body, not rules that dictate decorousness.

And the Republican Party was just the right place for him to park himself.

When you have a political party that takes as its mission to prevent government from working instead of to make government work, a party that conflates the ill effects of a changing economy with the changing complexion of the country and is still struck by fever over the election of President Obama, Trump is a natural, predictable endpoint.

Furthermore, Trump is what happens when you wear your Christian conservative values like a cardigan to conveniently slip off when the heat rises.

11COMMENTS Trump is fundamentally altering American politics — coarsening them, corrupting them, cratering them. And America, particularly conservative America, has only itself to blame.

Republicans sowed intolerance and in its shadow, Trump sprang up like toxic fungi.

Source: <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/17/opinion/donald-trump-the-worst-of-america.html?ref=opinion>

AFGHANISTAN: A WAR WITHOUT END BY HUMAYUN SHAFI

The long-running war in Afghanistan tragically does not appear to be moving towards an early resolution. The informal contacts for peace talks between the Afghan government and Taliban in Doha, Qatar are seemingly mired in suspicion and opposing demands, and hence at the moment expectations from such contacts are low. America committed itself to the 'war on terror' in Afghanistan in October 2001, and now it is 15 years that the US is still engaged in Afghanistan. During this time peace talks did not get beyond initial contacts. The US and NATO must question themselves about the losses of entering Afghanistan.

The combat operations came to a formal end in 2014, yet the US and NATO have a military presence of 8,500 personnel comprising of trainers and special operation forces. The Afghan army aided by the US ground and air force is fighting resurgent Taliban forces, many a time in fierce battles. The Taliban are once again in a strong position in Kunduz, where earlier in September last year they were able to capture the city for about a week before retreating, of course taking with them large quantities of arms belonging to the Afghan Army. Now the Taliban have gained in seven of the 14 districts in the Helmand province, and threatening presence on the outskirts of Lashkar Gah.

On October 11 the Afghan army suffered a heavy loss of 100 soldiers, killed near Lashkar Gah. These soldiers surrounded by the Taliban for days negotiated a withdrawal. During the withdrawal the insurgents killed the retreating soldiers, and the Taliban took with them large quantities of arms and ammunition. This killing spree raged while the informal peace contacts were on in Doha. A new factor of the Islamic State group is emerging in Afghanistan especially in the Nangarhar province.

Unfortunately, the situation is made rather alarming with NATO countries losing a will to remain engaged in the Afghan war. Similar to the 1990s US and European allies are once again having an evasive attitude towards Afghanistan, an attitude of escape from its battlefields. The recently concluded international donors conference of 70 countries in Brussels organised by European countries displayed a lack of enthusiasm to help Afghanistan keep afloat in these days of insurgency. The conference pledged \$15 billion through 2020 for budgetary support, and another five billion in military aid. This amount is supposedly not enough to fund a war in a country that can finance only about 20 percent of the budget.

The alarming factor is that the aid is not linked to the requirements of the Afghan security situation. There are conditions to aid: Afghanistan will be asked to accept the

250,000 Afghan refugees and asylum seekers presently residing in Europe. The aid is linked to the compliance of benchmarks prepared in a similar donor conference in Tokyo in 2012, which included progress on fight against corruption and human rights, among others social issues. Hence Afghanistan is entirely relying upon aid to effectively control the insurgency, a task US and NATO forces could not really accomplish in all these years. The Afghan army is faced with many serious issues, like motivation, desertions and training to operate as an independent force.

There are no easy answers on how to bring the Bush era war to an end, and establish a meaningful peace that has evaded Afghanistan since 1979 or even earlier. US and NATO after their military engagement in 2001 used many a strategy to secure a lasting victory. The strategy of committing the army in large numbers could not really work; US and NATO committed 150,000 of their troops and air forces, but the foreign armies got entangled in the whirlpool of vast windswept mountains that added to difficulties in fighting an 'invisible enemy,' an enemy that was almost never seen by these troops.

Then a reconstruction strategy was tried under the banner of "winning hearts and minds" of the Afghan people; that did not work either. The reconstruction programme cost the US \$131 billion, and after accounting for inflation, this amount is larger than the Marshall Plan, the US plan for reconstruction of Europe after the World War II. The massive reconstruction effort had started in early 2002, proposed by the then US ambassador to Afghanistan, Robert Finn. The very first assessment of these programmes was rather discouraging, pointing at the strong possibility of failure of the reconstruction effort. Simply, there was no administrative structure, an army or a proper police force to secure the ground for such programmes. There was a sense of denial of the ever-growing insurgency that was hampering reconstruction efforts. In all these long years of fighting, the US and NATO countries never appeared to be in a winning position.

Unfortunately, the peace initiative was lost in October 2001; there is a school of thought that believes it was wiser to engage in negotiations with the Taliban in 2001 over an extended time period before the massive air strikes. September 11 to October 7, 2001, the day when US airstrikes started, was a very short period for meaningful negotiations with the Taliban. The main opportunity to peace having been lost in 2001, over a period of time, events became irreversible; all subsequent peace initiatives with the Taliban have not been of any significant consequence. From the way the events are unfolding there seems to have been massive miscalculations by NATO countries at the time of committing of their forces in 2001 regarding the capability of the militants to wage a long insurgency in the harsh Afghan landscape. One wonders who faltered while committing forces to Afghanistan. The Bush era wars in Afghanistan and in the Middle East now

seem to be endless engagements. Lessons from the Soviet ignominy and retreat from Afghanistan in 1989 were just a little over 20 years removed from 2001.

Surprisingly, all lose sight of the fact as to how much destruction and death wars bring, and how much mental pain is caused to unsuspecting citizens who either suffer in their homes or are forced to become refugees and live a life of insecurity and cruel uncertainty. One is sure that leaders who initiate wars are aware of the miseries caused to individuals living through a war. All the thoughts as to the sufferings were forgotten. Then what prompted the Afghan war in 2001 is really incomprehensible; it resulted in tens of thousands of humans losing their lives, many more getting injured, and worst, many incapacitated for life. The war has generated some four million refugees, mostly taking refuge in Pakistan. Life will never be the same for the refugees, people suffering through trauma, disturbing many family and societal bonds.

An 'end' to this war is seemingly a distant prospect. The current informal peace talks are an encouraging sign, but previous talks have seldom been successful, and in the 2008 talks, the Taliban demanded the status of a government, an 'emirate'. In 2001, the West failed to assess the capacity of insurgents in Afghanistan to engage in a long battle; the basic lesson from the Soviet Afghanistan war was lost. The US and NATO forces in Afghanistan fought on the very same battlefields that the Soviet Union was engaged in from 1979 onwards. Yet all the warnings and associated catastrophes of a military engagement in Afghanistan were ignored in 2001.

We in Pakistan have suffered enough due to the war in 2001 when democracy was missing from the country. This time the US and NATO find it difficult to exit from Afghanistan, and there is no viable exit strategy or even an immediate prospect of a peaceful negotiation and an end of a violence-free Afghanistan. After 15 years of sufferings there are just many unanswered questions on the necessity of starting the seemingly unending Afghan war that has assumed global proportions.

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WHY JUST COUNTING THE DEAD IN SYRIA WON'T BRING THEM JUSTICE

BY PATRICK BALL

Nearly 18,000 people died in Syrian government prisons between March 2011 and December 2015. My colleagues and I at the Human Rights Data Analysis Group (HRDAG) calculated this estimate for Amnesty International, which published the findings on Aug. 18. That's just a small fraction of the overall death toll from the Syrian war: Hundreds of thousands of people have been killed and millions more displaced by this five-years-and-counting conflict. But what does this catalog of shattered lives mean? How can we gather accurate statistics about the patterns of killings in Syria and use them as a tool to bring the perpetrators to justice?

The total number of violent deaths tells only a small part of the story. Beyond the magnitude of the horrors that have befallen Syrian civilians, it is even more important to understand the patterns of violence: Where in Syria is the violence worse? Are deaths decreasing over time or increasing? Does violence mostly affect urban elites or people in rural areas?

The fog of war is a convenient screen for those who commit mass violence, and even more so for those who apologize for the perpetrators. But careful documentation, meticulous forensic investigation, and rigorous statistics can help us pierce the fog to understand how violence works in conflict. Perhaps most importantly, real facts enable meaningful accountability, from historical memory to war crimes trials.

Over the last 20 years, rigorous statistical analysis of patterns of killing has helped bring mass murderers to justice in trials for crimes against humanity, war crimes, and genocide. For example, in the trial of former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic in 2002, I presented statistics about migration and killings in Kosovo in 1999. While we cannot prove with statistics that the violence was caused by actions of the Yugoslav government, the patterns make clear that the war's suffering could not have been the result of NATO's bombing campaign, nor could it have been caused by the insurgents of the Kosovo Liberation Army. The prosecutor used this argument to rebut the defense's deflection of responsibility, and to support the claim that Yugoslav government actions were the most likely cause of the suffering.

In human rights, survivors' testimonies tell us what happened — but statistics answer questions about how widespread or systematic the violence was. They provide the context so that the victims' stories can be understood as part of a wider framework.

Counting the dead

Real accountability requires real statistics. When a group reports that more than 250,000 people have been killed in Syria, it might mean many different things. The group might have a list of 250,000 individuals, identified by name and place of death. This is what nongovernmental organizations like the Violations Documentation Centre, the Syrian Network for Human Rights, and the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights do. The 2013 reports HRDAG wrote for the United Nations also provided counts of identified individuals drawn from several sources.

These reports have the advantage of knowing something about each death — cataloging the total number of casualties is as simple as counting the names on all the available lists and then figuring out which records are duplicate entries about the same people. However, the lists do not capture the full magnitude of the violence: If nobody reports a death, it's as if it never occurred. Of course, collecting details on the victims of violence in the midst of conflict is enormously difficult, and consequently many deaths are never documented.

That is especially true when it comes to the thousands of Syrians who have disappeared into government prisons. Our estimate that nearly 18,000 people died in Syrian government prisons includes the records of thousands of deaths of victims we can individually name, in combination with a probability model that enabled us to estimate the killed that cannot be directly observed. This allowed us to draw conclusions about all the dead — even when we had only some of the data.

Our calculation began by combining data from four Syrian NGOs: the Violations Documentation Centre, the Syrian Network for Human Rights, the Damascus Center for Human Rights, and the Syrian Center for Statistics and Research. We combined each NGO's list of deaths, identifying all the records that refer to the same deaths, called "database de-duplication." Then we identified the deaths that occurred while the victims were held by Syrian authorities.

With the records of deaths in custody, we used a technique called "capture-recapture" to estimate the number of deaths in custody that were not reported to our partner NGOs. I once explained this method by asking readers to imagine that they were trying to determine which of two rooms was larger:

"Our only tool for assessing the rooms' sizes is a handful of small rubber balls. The balls have the curious property that when they strike each other, they make a distinctive clicking noise. We take the rubber balls, throw them into the first room and listen —

click, click, click-click, click. Then we gather the balls and throw them into the second room — click. Which room is larger?

The second room is larger. The smaller room forces the balls together more closely than the larger room, so the balls have less room to bounce around, and they therefore hit each other more often.”

In the context of estimating total homicides in a conflict, the colliding balls represent duplicate entries of the same death across multiple databases. When multiple, independent databases report many of the same deaths, we infer that they may be close to covering all the deaths. But when they report lists of deaths that rarely appear in the other groups’ lists, we infer that there are many deaths that have not yet been reported by any project.

One way to spot a formal model — as opposed to a count — is that the former will come with what nonstatisticians sometimes call a “margin of error.” A probability model tells us what the most likely answer is, and what the probability is that given this data, the real answer lies within a certain range.

In the case of our report on deaths in Syrian government prisons, there is a 95 percent probability that the true value falls in the range of 13,409 to 18,713 deaths. This range tells us what the true number of people killed probably is, taking into account both the deaths that have been observed and estimating those that were not documented by the four NGOs that provided figures.

Probability models are particularly useful at answering the question: Is violence increasing or decreasing? In a study my HRDAG colleagues and I published last year, we showed that trends can be difficult to assess using only the data we can observe. For example, we compared the governorates of Hama and Homs from December 2012 to March 2013. In the figure below, the purple bars show killings that were observed by one or more of the human rights NGOs tracking deaths. The light blue portion of each bar shows the estimated total, and the black vertical line shows the confidence interval for each estimate.

In Homs, the observed data track the estimate of total deaths. In other words, the top of the purple bars goes up and down consistently with the top of the light blue bars. But in Hama, the observed total across the top of the purple bars drops between December 2012 and January 2013, while the estimated total increases. This means that there was a surge in unobserved killings in January 2013.

Why Just Counting the Dead in Syria Won’t Bring Them Justice Patrick Ball

If we treated the observed totals as representing the overall picture, we would have largely understood the pattern of violence in Homs. But our analysis of Hama would have missed the crucial surge in violence in January 2013. That's because events on the ground were changing at the time: A major military push by rebel forces started in mid-December 2012, but the rebels' offensive had mostly stalled by February. The increase in killings in January may have been undocumented because human rights observers were unable to adequately access the region due to the violence. Or perhaps as fighting intensified, secret executions of civilians also increased. What we can affirm is that something quite substantial happened in January, but it went mostly unrecorded.

If we want to get pattern analysis right, we need to use statistical inferences that include — as former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld might have put it — both the known knowns and the known unknowns. Accounting for the process by which data are generated — adding the known unknowns to the known knowns — is the central point of inferential statistics.

How statistics can serve justice

This is far more than an abstract intellectual exercise. Developing reliable statistics about mass violence is the first step in bringing justice to those guilty of mass violence.

Justice for mass crimes is not the simple story of holding a perpetrator accountable for his — and it is, generally, his — specific bloody deeds. War crimes and crimes against humanity are crimes of policy: Those responsible formulated goals, made plans, and gave orders that other people executed. Statistics can help shed light on how these policies played out in practice.

The root of the word “statistics” originally meant “knowledge about the state.” To understand how a state commits crimes, we need detailed statistics on the dynamics of the violence: Who suffered, where, and when? Who committed the crimes? If we don't know exactly who did it, do the patterns in time and geography yield clues? From these statistical patterns, can we infer the existence of a policy of deliberate action or criminal neglect?

Statistics played important roles in the recent trials of three former heads of state for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide, as in the Milosevic trial. Human rights narratives are fundamentally about the experience of the victims. But in cases that involve thousands of deaths over months and spread across a wide area, statistics can help to see the big patterns.

In the 2013 trial for the genocide conducted by former Guatemalan President José Efraín Ríos Montt, statistics showed that the probability of being killed by the army was eight times greater for indigenous people than for their nonindigenous neighbors. In the 2015 trial of former Chadian President Hissène Habré, statistics played a slightly different role. Analysis from government documents recovered by the Chadian truth commission showed that in the jails run by the secret police, prisoner mortality in 1986 and 1987 was hundreds of times greater than normal adult mortality in Chad. Worse, prisoners died at a rate up to five times greater than the death rate among U.S. prisoners in Japanese custody during World War II. (Mistreatment of American and British prisoners was judged a war crime by the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, and the total mortality among the prisoners was explicitly cited as one of the bases for that judgment.) In the Habré verdict, the judges cited the statistical analysis to rebut defense claims that the prisons were not especially unpleasant.

The Syrian civil war will eventually end, and if Syria is to turn to a more just and more democratic future, there will need to be some form of transitional justice. This process may include public acknowledgements of past crimes, criminal prosecutions, memorials, an official history written by a truth commission, or some combination of those steps. But all of these approaches depend on knowing the truth about the past. One part of that truth is the statistical pattern — the trends and magnitude of mass violence.

This work has already started with the courageous documentation done by human rights NGOs on the ground. To be just, to be proportional, to be legitimate, we need to be right, and rigorous statistics are a key part of being right about mass violence.

Source:<http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/10/19/why-only-counting-the-dead-in-syria-wont-bring-them-justice-hrdag-pattern-analysis/>

CONSTRUCTING INTERNATIONAL POLITICS BY RIZWAN ASGHAR

What is a threat? When does a threat become really threatening? And why do some threats take precedence over others in terms of being harmful to a state's security? These questions have dominated the theoretical debates in the field of International Relations (IR) for more than half a century. While no definite answers have yet been found, different theoretical approaches have been offering powerful insights into certain elements of this puzzle, particularly through a focus on the anarchical nature of the international system. For most of the 20th century, debates about the major sources of security threats to states became an axis of contention between realist and liberal scholars.

The debates were originally triggered by different conceptions of human nature but the question of the extent to which states' behaviour is influenced by the structure of the international system captured centrestage during the Cold War period. Does the distribution of military capabilities or the absence of a world government make states play competitive power politics? Is the Westphalian nation-state system inherently conflictual? These questions were also used by IR scholars and policy experts to predict future developments in global politics.

While divergent in nature, both the liberal and realist schools of international relations thought agree that anarchy is inherent in the international system. In addition, the lack of a central authority is keenly felt by both paradigms because it encourages states to generate a self-help system and act unilaterally.

Anarchy, the central fact of the international system, derives 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. Thus, 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.

In 1991, Alexander Wendt, professor of Political Science at the Ohio State University, revolutionised the field of IR by publishing a journal article titled "Anarchy is what states make of it: the social construction of power politics." Ever since the times of Machiavelli and Thomas Hobbes, IR scholars treated anarchy as a "structural constant." Wendt re-contextualised the whole field of IR by problematising the very concept of anarchy and questioned the theoretical foundations shared by all pre-existing theories.

What in anarchy is given and immutable, and what is amenable to change? Wendt asked this question to contend that anarchy is not inherent in global politics but a culture constructed from the social interactions of states. All variables of interest to IR scholars — military capabilities, international organisations, or trade relations — are important because of certain social meanings attached not to them and not because they are objective facts. Moreover, he argued that we should not treat identity and interests as given. They interact with one another, and give rise to new ideas and so on.

Constructivists contend that the intersubjectively shared ideas are as important as military capabilities in any empirical analysis. Realists stress 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 very difficult to achieve. States, subsequently, resort to employing different tactics to sustain the balance of power and achieve their desired strategic goals. In the constructivist account, social meanings are constructed from a complex mix of history, norms and the way different leaders understand state behaviour. Wendt said, “A fundamental principle of the constructivist social theory is that people act towards objects, including other actors, on the basis of the meanings that the objects have for them.” For instance, the nuclear weapons of Israel and North Korea can be equally destructive but they will have different meanings to the US that ultimately evoke different responses.

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. This 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 changed structure of the international system makes states redefine their identities and interests through a process of social interaction. Thus unlike realist and liberal theorists, constructivists do not hold identities and interests constant to understand how ideational structure determines the way all actors identify their position and interests in the international system.

This leads to a very interesting question of the “agent-structure problem” in international relations theory. Realist scholars define “international structure” in terms of the observable attributes of states as primary actors and how structure constrains the choices of state actors. On the other hand, constructivists believe that both actors and structure(s) 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.

Wendt believed that we could not treat identity and interests as 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.

There is little doubt that constructivist scholars have come to dominate many theoretical debates in the field of IR in the post-9/11 period. However, despite the strength of their arguments, the constructivist approach has not been able to emerge as a major challenge to the realist paradigm because it fails to take into account the problem of ‘uncertainty’ in international politics. Moreover, many of the claims made by constructivist scholars cannot be empirically verified or tested because of their abstract nature.

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Source: <http://dailytimes.com.pk/opinion/25-Oct-16/constructing-international-politics>

THE US PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION: A HOW-TO GUIDE

WASHINGTON DC: The American presidential election falls this year on November 8. The quadrennial exercise always takes place on the Tuesday following the first Monday in November, as spelled out in the US Constitution.

Here is a primer on the US election system:

The vote, by universal suffrage, is conducted in a single round in all 50 states and the District of Columbia (the city of Washington, which is not part of any state).

Voters choose among the candidates for president and vice president. The popular vote in each state determines the selection of a set of members of the electoral college, who pledge to support a given candidate.

There are 538 members of the electoral college, with the number from each state based on its population size.

A state has one elector for each of its members of the House of Representatives, and one for each of the state's two senators.

California — the most populous state — therefore has 55 electors, Texas has 38, and New York and Florida have 29 each. At the other end of the spectrum, lightly populated Alaska, Delaware, Vermont and Wyoming have only three electors each, as does the District of Columbia.

Members of the electoral college officially elect the president and vice president on December 19 in what is a mere formality.

The successful candidate must amass 270 electoral votes, an absolute majority of the 538 electors.

In all but two states, the candidate who carries the majority of the popular vote wins the support of all the state's electors. Nebraska and Maine use a split system, in which two electors are chosen by popular state-wide vote and the remainder are chosen according to the popular vote in each congressional district.

The winner-takes-all system in the states makes it extremely hard for a third-party candidate to prevail, although they can still have critical impacts on certain states and therefore on the national result.

Some states historically support the Democratic candidate election after election, while others are just as resolutely Republican. Candidates thus concentrate their efforts on about a dozen states prone to shift back and forth between the parties, often determining the final result.

The most important of these are the “battleground” or “swing” states with the largest number of electors, like Florida (29), Pennsylvania (20) and Ohio (18).

Americans on November 8 will also be voting for every one of the 435 members of the House of Representatives (who serve two-year terms) and for 34 of the 100 senators (who serve for six years). They also will be choosing governors in 12 states, and will be casting votes in a multitude of referenda and local elections.

Source: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1214031/us-presidential-election-guide/>

ECONOMY

IMF OUTLOOK: 'PAKISTAN'S ECONOMY TO BE ON NEW SUSTAINABLE COURSE'

ISLAMABAD: International Monetary Fund (IMF) Mission Chief to Pakistan Harald Finger has voiced hope that Pakistan's economy will set on a new and sustainable course, breaking from past cycles of near-crisis and aborted stabilisation programmes.

"With stronger buffers, improved sentiment, gradually recovering growth, prospects of more energy supply and additional impetus from the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, there is hope that Pakistan's economy will set on a new and sustainable course," he wrote in an article.

The IMF mission chief termed the completion of three-year Extended Fund Facility by Pakistan a notable achievement. "This is a notable achievement in itself, particularly so for a country that has had to resort to IMF support regularly and often abandoned its reform programmes before completion," he said.

He recalled that just three years ago, Pakistan's economy was running out of steam and resources, however, with the oil windfall and improving external sentiment, Pakistan was able to triple its foreign reserves buffer, through State Bank of Pakistan's foreign exchange purchases and foreign borrowing, which strengthened the country's shield against economic shocks.

A significant headway had been made under the programme, he said, adding a lot also remained to be done to put the economy on a more resilient footing and create conditions for more job creation and higher living standards for wide segments of society.

To make it a success, Finger underlined the importance of arriving at a consensus that economic reforms needed to be an ongoing process and difficult reforms that had been embarked upon needed to be completed.

"While a lot of progress has been made in strengthening Pakistan's economic resilience, more is needed to adequately prepare the country for future economic shocks," he wrote in the article.

He also emphasised the importance of continuously building the international reserve buffers given future debt repayment obligations and contingent liabilities, which would help to safeguard against risks to exports, remittances, oil prices and international capital flows.

Published in The Express Tribune, October 1st, 2016.

Source: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1191525/imf-outlook-pakistans-economy-new-sustainable-course/>

SCO & IMPERATIVES OF REGIONAL SECURITY BY MUHAMMAD MUNIR

THE enlargement of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is taking place at a time when the organization has matured and has made substantive achievements in promoting regional security and economic cooperation. With 15 years of experience, the organization has developed the requisite capacity to expand. The process of implementation of SCO Development Strategy Towards 2025 and formulation of SCO Convention against Terrorism, Anti-Drug Strategy of SCO Member States is the evident of its potential and prospective role it would be resuming after its enlargement with completion of the process of granting India and Pakistan SCO membership.

On July 10, 2015, the SCO decided to admit India and Pakistan as full members. India and Pakistan signed the memorandum of obligations on 24 June 2016 at Tashkent, thereby starting the formal process of joining the SCO as a full member, the process will take some months, by which they are expected to become full members by the next meeting at Astana in 2017. The new circumstances in which the enlargement of SCO is taking place are quite interesting and critical in the context of geo-political and geo-economic developments in the region. In the aftermath of drawdown of NATO and ISAF forces from Afghanistan in 2014, and substantial reduction in foreign economic assistance, the security and economic situation in Afghanistan has further worsened.

The future of Afghanistan will depend on the Political Settlement in Afghanistan. Any instability in Afghanistan will affect the regional security. Syrian Crisis and the South China Sea Situation are the two flashpoints of emerging World Politics. US relations with Russian and China are deteriorating every passing day. There is also shifting of alliances in the region especially Indo-US strategic partnership and improvement of Pakistan's relations with Russia. Many experts believe that India should economically integrate itself in the region.

Pakistan-India relations are passing through a difficult phase. There were improvements in their relations after the SCO Ufa summit but both countries were not able to resume the comprehensive dialogue. Being nuclear powers there is no other option for India and Pakistan except to resolve their issues by resuming comprehensive dialogue process. New circumstances demand for building cooperation to enhance their security. Both India and Pakistan should follow the 'Shanghai Spirit' that would help in enhancing regional trade, investment and connectivity. Pakistan and India's membership of SCO also requires them to have friendly relations. Peace and harmony is the prerequisite for ensuring development, technological advancement and bringing improvements in all sectors of economy. Since, both Pakistan and India want to strengthen their economies; therefore there is no room for tension and standoff in their bilateral relations.

Pakistan's full membership of SCO would be mutually beneficial for Pakistan and the SCO countries. Pakistan and SCO countries can play a critical role in stabilising Afghanistan; jointly fighting against forces of terrorism, extremism and separatism; and a promising and prospective cooperation in energy and trade cooperation. Pakistan's historical and cultural ties with Central Asian Republics; close strategic and economic ties with China and growing relations with Russia augment well for its profile as full membership of SCO. Military operation Zarb-e-Azb and CPEC are two game changer for regional peace and prosperity. Military operation Zarb-e-Azb and National Action Plan led to reduction in terrorism in the region. Pakistan has emerged as a success story in war on terrorism.

SCO has great potential in linking energy-surplus Central Asia with energy –deficient South Asia. The inaugurations of some of the mega projects such as CASA-1000 and Turkmenistan–Afghanistan–Pakistan–India (TAPI) Pipeline are positive developments. CASA-1000, a power project of \$1.16 billion, is currently under construction. It will allow for the export of surplus hydroelectricity from Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to Pakistan. Groundbreaking for the project took place on May 12, 2016 in Tajikistan and is expected to be completed by the end of 2018 and will provide 1,300 megawatts of electricity to Pakistan. Construction of TAPI started in Turkmenistan on 13 December 2015. The pipeline is expected to be operational by 2019. The pipeline will transport natural gas from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan into Pakistan and then to India.

Terrorism and extremism are serious threats to regional stability. Countering the transnational terrorist groups should be considered a shared responsibility of all regional countries. In this respect, the formation of Pakistan, China, Afghanistan and Tajikistan Quadrilateral Cooperation and Coordination Mechanism in counterterrorism is a right step. The high-level inaugural meeting of armed forces/militaries of member countries was held in Urumqi, Xingjian, China, on Aug 3, 2016. Under this arrangement, four countries would cooperate in counterterrorism situation evaluation, clue verification, intelligence sharing, counterterrorism capacity building, counter-terrorism joint training exercises & personnel training.

The new circumstances of SCO enlargement entail both challenges and opportunities. Solution to the regional challenges lies in creating a common vision and approach for strengthening peace, cooperation and economic integration. A regional approach should include mechanisms for resolving political disputes, creating economic interdependence, maintaining balance of power, initiating dialogue process and confidence building measures, increasing people-to-people contact and enhancing the role of regional organizations such as SCO. We should not only manage our disputes

but should also have the resolve to solve them through dialogue and other peaceful means. Let us focus our energies on peace and development by joining the mainstream of Asian progress and making 21st Century really an Asian Century.

— The writer is Research Fellow at Islamabad Policy Research Institute, a think-tank based in Islamabad.

Source: <http://pakobserver.net/sco-imperatives-of-regional-security/>

CPEC – AN OVERVIEW BY DR KAMAL MONNOO

CPEC was originally proposed by the Chinese Premier, Li Keqiang, during his visit to Pakistan in May 2013, with a project linking Kashgar in northwest China with Gwadar Port on the Arabian Sea coastline in Baluchistan. The initiative is also driven strongly from China's quest for Warm Waters. Mindful of the under development of its western provinces which are a soft belly and ongoing Uighur movement, China wants speedy modernisation of Xingjiang and of its other under developed provinces to bring them at par with its eastern provinces. For the accomplishment of these dreams, China needs access to warm waters in the Arabian Sea through Gwadar since this route to world markets is not only the shortest and cheapest, but also provides China with an alternative to the Strait of Malacca. CPEC envisages developing Gwadar into a free trade zone with a modern airport and as the largest deep seaport overshadowing Chahbahar and Dubai, in the process turning it into a gateway for China's one belt-one road initiative.

CPEC investments will be spread over 15 years with a total outlay of up to US \$46 billion: around \$35 billion on the energy front in an IPP (Independent Power Producers) mode and the balance will go to infrastructure development. Though CPEC cooperation will initially come in two main sectors (infrastructure development and energy generation) going forward, the scope will be extended to other fields of finance, science and technology, which would hold paramount importance in order to reap more social and economic gains for the mutual benefit of people of both countries. As projects under the CPEC gather pace, broader synopsis of the short-term and long-term plans for the Corridor also slowly begin to get unveiled. Both Pakistani and Chinese governments need to be careful on a number of risks to smooth implementation of their partnership framework. Much of these concerns on CPEC projects focus on the general lack of know-how on finances, public private partnerships and the extent of the benefit to both China and Pakistan, and then weighing them against each other.

Today, despite being the sixth largest country in the world on the basis of population, ranks 126 out of 140 in manufacturing competitiveness, 90 in innovation and technology sophistication, 150 out of 183 in per capita income, 147 in the human development index, 123 in education facilities, a lowly 44 on GDP's size, and finds itself heavily in debt. Without indulging in a blame game, the reality today is that more than ever before, Pakistan needs to be engaged, invested-in, and taken along both financially and technologically. With West closing its doors and suddenly turning exclusionary the choice for us has become quite straightforward – all roads lead to China! Naturally, with little options in hand, Pakistan at times appears almost over-eager to make CPEC

happen at any cost; even if that cost in some areas threatens to be unsustainable for the country's economic health in the long-run.

Everyone from politicians to bureaucrats to military hierarchy and some self-styled business experts are busy singing endless praises for China's generosity as if some divine windfall seems headed Pakistan's way, in the process making CPEC a sacrosanct initiative where even slight or rational criticism is being regarded as a sin. While not denying, even for a minute, China's long-standing friendship, its support to us in difficult times and its favor to put investment per se back on the center of our economic plate – especially at a time when most western investors are treating Pakistan as an investment pariah – the reality remains that at the end of the day CPEC is a business proposition and needs to be looked as such. Like the Chinese we also need to approach CPEC professionally and not emotionally. Basically, we need to learn from them how to corporatize economic propositions in order to overcome concerns on: prevailing lack of transparency, on-going political bickering (joint satisfaction of all provinces will always be the key to CPEC's success), a general public mistrust, and competence related operational hazards. Regrettably, misplaced perceptions, innuendos and politicization of CPEC seem to be taking root and unless (like in China) CPEC in Pakistan is also quickly put under professional control these emerging controversies carry the danger of undermining the entire program. The only solution is to give CPEC's decision making and its implementation control under an autonomous, non-political and professional Board.

Economic decisions and their outcomes cannot be frozen in a time warp. Fifteen years is a long time and local, bilateral, regional and global economic events will keep on evolving during this period. We needful to be mindful of the emerging developments around us and on the very likely possibilities of altered global equations and new partnership. Effectively countering India and at the same time maintaining a constructive relationship with the USA is going to pose a real challenge in the future. We need to convince India, Afghanistan and Iran that CPEC can work inclusively if everyone plays a fair role in it and can essentially benefit the entire region. India, which openly airs its reservations and negative sentiments about the CPEC should be engaged and convinced that like pre 90s, it is once again aligning itself with the wrong economic theme. India's economic progress only came when it shunned the closed socialist policies of the iron curtain and connected with the world. Today it is making the same mistake by opting to shun the Asian economic inclusiveness and instead allying itself with West's newly found mindset on pursuing exclusionary and protectionist policies.

However, to succeed amidst all these challenges the onus lies on us. When assuming a debt burden of as large as \$46 billion we need to ask questions like: what if oil and

energy prices crash internationally? How prudent is our choice of coal as the main fuel in a potentially \$34 billion investment proposal and what possible financial repercussions could we face say if the power tariff drops to a point that can no longer justify the returns being promised by us to our investors? How do we work and compete with China at the same time? How do we maintain a balance in our relations with the westerns economies who still represent the bulk of global consumption and account for our main exports – after all we do not want to end up being another North Korea with merely a singular friend?

Lastly, Chinese generosity may not last endlessly. Already their patience is running thin with what they regard the inability on the Pakistani side to keep CPEC non-controversial. This coupled with a deteriorating Chinese economy carries the potential danger of affecting CPEC if we fail to live up to the operational and financial discipline that China seeks in return. And for this reason alone we must act quickly to not only convince our Chinese friends that we have a sound CPEC management structure in place to judiciously use the allocated funds, but to also in-turn satisfy ourselves that a professional team is indeed in place to manage these investments prudently and sustainably. Failure is just not an option!

Source: <http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2016/10/06/comment/cpec-an-overview/>

DON'T MAKE CPEC CONTROVERSIAL BY NAZIA JABEEN

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is a very critical infrastructural project and the development of this economic corridor is a win-win situation for both China and Pakistan.

This project has tremendous potential of increasing economic prospects and activity in Pakistan as the pre-existing ports, Karachi and Qasim, cannot handle much more traffic and Gwadar will help accommodate the increasing domestic demand. It will also enable Pakistan to expand its interactions with Central Asian countries and Afghanistan as in the case of China.

It would also help Pakistan to counter Indian influence in the region, position itself as a major transit point connecting Eurasian region with South Asia and South East Asia and provide a much needed base to kickstart its economic growth.

The plan will help Pakistan to become one of the most strategically important countries in the region. This project will run through most of Pakistan starting from Gwadar in Balochistan and ending in Kashgar in western China, while passing through parts of Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces and Gilgit-Baltistan in northern Pakistan to reach the Khunjrab Pass and beyond to China.

Pakistan has prepared a plan to construct three corridors after active consultation with the Chinese authorities; these are the eastern, the central and the western routes.

The eastern route of the corridor originates from Gwadar, travels parallel to the Makran Coastal Highway eastwards (towards Karachi), and then after passing through parts of interior Sindh, and southern, central and northern regions of Punjab, it reaches Islamabad. From Islamabad, it extends to Haripur, Abbottabad and Mansehra districts of the relatively peaceful Hazara Division in KP—this part of the corridor will also run through Muzaffarabad, the capital of Azad Jammu and Kashmir—and reaches Khunjrab after passing through Diamer and Gilgit areas in northern Pakistan. The corridor will also run through the Pamir Plateau and Karakoram mountains. A link from Taxila through Peshawar and Torkhum will connect the eastern alignment of the corridor to Jalalabad in Afghanistan.

Regional connectivity with India through the eastern alignment is designed to be provided through the Hyderabad-Mirpurkhas-Khokhrapar-Zero Point link and the Wagha border, Lahore.

According to the western route plan, the economic corridor (highway and railway) starts from Gwadar and runs through some southern and eastern districts of Balochistan (Khuzdar and Dera Bugti, respectively), and some districts in South Punjab to reach D.I. Khan in KP. From D.I. Khan, it further extends to Islamabad and Abbottabad and from there onwards, the route is the same as in the eastern alignment. The western alignment will have an additional regional connectivity link to Afghanistan through Chaman and will connect with Iran through Quetta-Kho-e-Taftan link.

Pakistan faces several challenges in the implementation of the project including political unrest, a tumultuous security situation, administrative issues and opposition from the United States and India. The construction of the corridor has been defined by many as a strategic moment such that Pakistan has assumed the position of economic centre for the whole region. Terrorism is the biggest issue and it has remained no secret that India, through its intelligence agency RAW is trying its best to disrupt the project by supporting the terrorists and spreading unrest, especially in Balochistan. And now their cause is going to be aided by some so-called nationalist parties which seem to act on the tune of the opposing countries for financial gains to disrupt the project.

The Awami National Party is one such party that has recently made known that it is not pleased with the work on CPEC so it has decided to launch public protests against the project in smaller provinces. The party is again repeating the same mantra of old that small provinces are being deprived off from the benefits of the project. It may be recalled that the same party was also among those political parties who rigorously opposed Kalabagh Dam project that has resulted in massive power blackouts and consequently, hindered the growth of economy. Now the same people are trying to sabotage this great project for their seemingly vested interests and political gains. But it can be hoped that such nefarious designs would be shunned by the people of Pakistan who consider CPEC a real game changer that has started bringing economic revolution in the common man's life.

The argument that some parts of the country are being deprived of the corridor's benefits are totally baseless as in the longer term, all these cities will be connected to the corridor. It is quite unwise for such political elements to go after such a project that would realise the country's dream of economic independence as they would be themselves become the victims of their propaganda.

The CPEC has significant importance for a country like Pakistan, which has a struggling economy since long and is billions of dollars in debt to international financial agencies and western countries in the shape of loans.

This is a golden opportunity for the country and the government is trying its best to overcome all external and internal challenges to realise this dream project to reap rewards for the first time for its naturally important geographic position in the region. Failure is not an option for Pakistan as this is the opportunity that could make it economically independent and bring prosperity and stability. Although there are many external and internal challenges and factors, which are trying to sabotage the project yet the potential of the economic and strategic benefits would likely keep the administrators of the country determined to overcome all the challenges to materialise this plan in its true spirit to achieve the goal of a prosperous Pakistan.

Source: <http://nation.com.pk/columns/20-Oct-2016/don-t-make-cpec-controversial>

ANTI-GLOBALIZATION APPROACH: SOLUTION OR A STUPIDITY? BY DR GHULAM MURTAZA KHUHRO

If I tell you that traditional economists at the IMF, the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, Harvard and London School of Economics have gone obsolete, how will you react? Our old guards will definitely get infuriated, for they are trained to believe in and practice orthodoxy of these institutions. For them, such statement is equivalent to blasphemy. Their first reaction will be to ridicule such observation. How could the IMF be obsolete? At the most the IMF could be disapproved but it cannot be declared as archaic. And, who the hell is the writer to violate sacrosanctity and untouchability of these institutions. Is he a noble laureate or professor of Harvard?

Do our economists have ever thought of and tried to understand that why on earth US policymakers and banks opened up their doors to all and sundry including defaulters since 1999 till explosion of the financial crisis of 2008? Can you imagine to get a credit card or leasing facility or loan in Pakistan, if you have defaulted on any of such products and not settled such default? No, absolutely not, for your creditworthiness in the records of State Bank of Pakistan will reflect your default and all banks or leasing firms will be obliged to not allow a defaulter to enjoy a fresh credit.

So, what forced US policymakers and US banks to open floodgates of their sub-prime credits to even defaulters? Did they not know that such policy and practice will lead to creation of a bubble in asset prices and that bubble may burst? What happened to the regulatory, monitoring and rating agencies? What went wrong with internal and external auditors? If they all could not visualize the outcome of such policy that led to a whopping failure of capitalist financial system during 2006-2008, then it will suffice to say that all were either idiots or they were under some sort of trance to act so stupidly.

Fact is that they did not have any other option to cover up their failure in the arena of economy but, as the bad luck would have it, their foolish tricks to induce people to consume more to help boost failing economy and create a false sense of economic well-being resulted into a bigger disaster that they wanted to avoid.

Enigmatically, such policy was vehemently supported by official economists and the IMF. The IMF published (2) working papers and eulogised such policy as a signature one and sermonized even poor countries to follow the suit. When the IMF stood for such policy, ADB and other such institutions also held forth their spiritual devotees not to waste time and move fast to emulate such policy. This was the period when visionaries obediently but blindly followed the orders.

Do our economists know that why developed countries are failing to come out of continuous series of economic crises resulting into inequality, a decline in creation of gainful jobs, deflation and now negative interest rates? Could they help their spiritual masters when they need them most? Do our wizards know that why main tools of manipulation in the hands of central banks are no more available with them? Central banks manipulate money supply to control inflation and price stability but what they will do when even with generous QE (quantitative easing), 'helicopter money' and negative interest rates, they are far from achieving any modicum of their cherished objectives?

Interestingly, now ball has been thrown in the court of fiscal policy but the crisis is much beyond the potential of fiscal policy and fiscal policy alone would never be able to address the situation.

President Obama in his article published recently in Economist pointed out that economies with inequality are not sustainable. Yet he could not gather courage to denounce capitalist system rather termed capitalist system as 'greatest driver of prosperity and opportunity of the world has ever known'. However, with all his extravagant generosity, he writes in same article that, "More fundamentally, a capitalism shaped by the few and unaccountable to the many is a threat to all. Economies are more successful when we close the gap between rich and poor and growth is broadly based".

President Obama 'unintentionally' divulges his confusion when he tells American audience that, "How has a country that has benefited-perhaps more than any other-from immigration, trade and technological innovation suddenly developed a strain of anti-immigrant, anti-innovation protectionism?"

Answer is simple. Capitalism benefited a small percentage of the population the most in industrialised countries with spillover effects for others and created a system of inequality not only within respective countries but also globally as well. Capitalism cannot thrive without the system of inequality across the spectrum. Industrialised countries that became developed and advanced countries, inter alia, at the cost of poor, colonized and peripheral countries raised the living standards of their people to the level of unsustainability. It is getting increasingly obvious that their economic woes are directly proportional to the development of the backward and developing countries.

Hence, champions of free trade, globalization and market economy for last 200 years have somersaulted backwards. They are now finding it hard to practice the policy of free trade. They are increasingly adopting protectionist policies. They are committing same blunder which Brexiteers did commit a few months ago. A solution to their dilemma

does not lie in anti-globalization but, conversely, in the globalization of equitable global growth and development.

Source: <http://www.brecorder.com/articles-a-letters/187:articles/95924:anti-globalization-approach-solution-or-a-stupidity/?date=2016-10-23>

EASIEST PLACE FOR BUSINESS: PAKISTAN IMPROVES ON WORLD BANK'S LATEST RANKINGS

New Zealand edged out Singapore as the easiest country for doing business in the World Bank's latest rankings, while several emerging market countries improved the most by pursuing business-friendly reforms.

Pakistan was marked as one of the most-improved countries on the list.

In its annual 'Doing Business' report, the World Bank cited reductions in labour-related taxes and new regulations that make paying taxes easier as key reasons for moving New Zealand to the top spot from its previous runner-up position.

Macedonia broke into the coveted top 10, while Brunei had the biggest improvement, moving to 72nd from a rank of 84th last year as it made electricity supply more reliable, passed a new insolvency law and increased protections for minority investors.

The World Bank report tracks regulatory changes in 190 countries for businesses throughout their life cycle – from the ease of business start-up regulations and getting credit to property rights.

It said a record 137 economies made reforms to make it easier to start and operate businesses in the last year, with more than 75 per cent of the changes occurring in developing countries.

Kazakhstan rose to 35th place from 41st, with big weight given to its improvements in business start-up regulations, construction permits and power availability. Rounding out the 10 most-improved countries were Kenya, Belarus, Indonesia, Serbia, Georgia, Pakistan, United Arab Emirates and Bahrain.

This year's report tracked gender differences in scores for starting a business, registering property and enforcing contracts, finding discrimination that lowered the scores of 38 economies. Twenty-three of those had more procedures for women than men to start a business, and 16 limited women's ability to own and transfer property.

The 184th-ranked Democratic Republic of Congo, for example, requires a married woman to have her husband's authorization to incorporate a business, the study said.

The World Bank says better performance in the 'Doing Business' rankings generally equates to lower levels of income inequality and reduced poverty."Simple rules that are

easy to follow are a sign that a government treats its citizens with respect,” the World Bank’s chief economist, Paul Romer, said in a statement. “They yield direct economic benefits – more entrepreneurship, more market opportunities for women, more adherence to the rule of law.”

Most of the top 10 shifted around a bit, with Denmark staying in third place, Hong Kong edging higher to fourth from fifth, trading places with South Korea, and Norway rising to sixth. The United States, the United Kingdom and Sweden ranked slightly lower.

Somalia was rated as the hardest country to do business in the latest survey.

Source: <http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2016/10/26/business/easiest-place-for-business-pakistan-improves-on-world-banks-latest-rankings/>

ANALYSING THE TRADE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PAKISTAN AND INDIA BY AADIL NAKHODA

KARACHI: The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) consists of eight South Asian nations, namely Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Founded in 1985, the major goal of SAARC has been to promote economic and regional integration of the member states.

However, political tensions between two of the largest members, Pakistan and India, have plagued SAARC ever since its inception. Recent events on the Pakistan-India border have forced the cancellation of the 19th SAARC Summit scheduled to be held in Islamabad in November. With recently imposed restrictions on cross-border exchange of artists, exhibition of movies and participation in cultural activities, other economic activities such as import and export of goods between the two countries risk being curtailed as well. Political tensions and uncertainties have economic consequences.

The article will investigate what trade relations the two countries have enjoyed thus far to gain an insight into what possible effects derailment of their relations will have. Going back to 2004, when political tensions had receded, Pakistan and India embarked upon initiatives to increase trade and consequently improve regional integration. The following analysis is conducted using data from Trademap.org and COMTRADE.

Before 2004, there was minimal movement of goods between Pakistan and India. Although, India had awarded Pakistan the Most-Favoured Nation (MFN) status in 1996, the exports from Pakistan to India remained almost negligible for a number of years.

Pakistan's exports to India were \$84 million in 2003 and even at their peak in 2013, managed a modest \$403 million, after which they receded to \$312 million in 2015. On the other hand, the imports increased rapidly in absolute terms as trade relations moved towards normalisation. It increased from \$184 million in 2003 to \$2.18 billion in 2013. It was at \$1.96 billion in 2015.

The trade deficit for Pakistan – the difference between the imports from India and exports to India – was more than five times the value of the exports from Pakistan to India in 2015.

Informal trade

Furthermore, researchers at ICRIER (Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations) estimate the value of informal trade between Pakistan and India

via third countries at \$4.71 billion, which is twice the amount of formal trade between the two countries. The informal exports from Pakistan to India are mainly in textiles and dry fruits, whereas informal exports comprise of jewellery, textiles and machinery parts. Pakistan maintains a negative list of 1,209 items, which cannot be legally imported from India. Both countries maintain a sensitive list (as is common with other SAARC member countries), which limits the provision of trade concessions on the enlisted products. Informal trade circumvents such restrictions on trade.

Trade composition

India exported \$263 million worth of vegetable products, \$340 million worth of chemical products, and \$837 million worth of textile products to Pakistan in 2015 through formal channels. On the other hand, Pakistan exported \$77 million worth of vegetable products, \$62 million worth of mineral products, \$61 million worth of textile products, \$20 million of base metals and \$14 million worth of medical instruments in 2015.

In terms of total value of goods exported from India, Pakistan ranked in the top five destinations for several products such as powdered milk, tomatoes, peas, coconuts, polypropylene, raw cotton, polyester staple yarn, synthetic woven fabric and imitation jewellery. Similarly, India is an important destination for Pakistani exports of fresh and dried dates, gypsum, portland cement, tanned leather, raw cotton, woven denim fabric, waste and scrap of different metals, and medical and surgical instruments.

More than 80% of the goods traded in both directions are either raw materials or intermediate goods. The share of consumer goods is minimal. Therefore, bulk of the goods traded between the two countries are primary goods and unfinished goods which require further conversion into finished goods within the trading partner before being sold as finished goods.

Barriers to trade

The analysis of tariff data from World Integrated Trade Solution (WITS) suggests that Pakistan imposes lower import-weighted average tariff rates on the imports of Indian products than the import-weighted average tariff rates imposed by India on the imports of Pakistani products.

The analysis of data on non-tariff measures from UNCTAD and World Bank suggests that India imposes higher technical barriers to trade on the imports of textiles and agricultural goods amongst other goods. Additionally, India has multiple certifying agencies involved in the process of implementing the non-tariff measures. It is likely that

procedural obstacles and administrative delays related to the implementation of non-tariff measures result in impeding the imports into India from Pakistan.

Pakistan has an expanding consumer market and multiple free-trade agreements are expected to be negotiated. According to the State Bank of Pakistan, the Consumer Confidence Index is at one of its highest levels. The private consumer spending is expected to increase by 7% in FY16 compared to growth of 3.2% in FY15. Planned infrastructure investments in Pakistan, too, are likely to promote industrial growth and will consequently lead to greater demand for raw materials and intermediate goods.

However, temporary restrictions on economic activities between Pakistan and India can have a long-term impact on the trading pattern between Pakistan and India as firms and businesses involved in trade between the two countries seek alternative options due to the escalating hostilities.

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Source: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1215385/analysing-trade-relationship-pakistan-india/>

EDUCATION

EDUCATION AS PROPAGANDA BY UMMAR ZIAUDDIN

Education, specifically formal education received at schools in controlled and regimented settings, is a tool of propaganda. Education received at schools does not only inflate phobias as Bacon believed through tales; but it also modifies human behaviour, influences thought patterns and shapes the entire world view of our children, impacting, among other things, their responses to social order. Nation-states, often rationalise and even at times define their nationalism, have used the system of education to romanticise the past and to manufacture consensus on fabrications, thus merging myth and reality.

In countries like Pakistan, where it is the state apparatus that pedals monopolistic control over education; it too becomes instrument of the dominant elite. Formal education is employed to teach children, in the name of discipline and patriotism, conformity to the dominant ideology. The managers of state sponsored propaganda in Pakistan, for instance, realised in the 1950s that citizens would more easily stomach political propaganda if gobbled through system of education. It was the time when ideology for Pakistan was being conceived and nurtured. Through education our schizophrenic ideology was fostered, minimising all space for dissent. Since the 1950s despite being poor in quality and deficient in its coverage; our education system has been a splendid source of propaganda keeping generation of pupils from developing critical thinking and asking uncomfortable questions.

We have rolled out generations of pupils, corrupting their impressionable minds, who remain averse to scientific principles; who continue to harbour misplaced ideas about “Pakistaniat”; who remain confused on the role of religion in one’s life and in the affairs of the state; who believe heroism is but what is instructed in crafted tales of battles and wars that we never won; who argue all non-Muslims (and its definition these days seems to incorporate other sects also) are enemies; and who believe the world continues to conspire against our country. Do we not have any shame for what we have done to our children?

Specifically in our context, the challenge to the state monopoly, in the form of radical departure, can only come from private enterprise. Private interests don’t just reduce the market share of the state but can also enlarge the space for dissent and alternative view. With private interests actively competing, periodically attacking and exposing the

malfeasance in the dominant state narrative, the propaganda system cannot work. Such critiques have been limited, nay, completely absent in Pakistan. That said, their ability to wriggle around state apparatus has been significantly curtailed due to set curricula of various regulatory boards in different parts of the country and their system of assessments. And schools, that chose to orbit in circles away from the rigidly control structures of the state, borrowed foreign models without making any concerted efforts to partner with the state in developing indigenous system of education.

The objective of the private interests, at any rate, was never to reform the state structures. They only chased short-term goals of profiteering, strictly working along the codes of gush-up gospel. In their crude sophistic drive, private schools only furthered, the cultural imperialism of the English speaking world, cultivating new prejudices and compounding the old ones. At best, the private sector served to cleave citizens into two opposing halves and created a new group that was separate from the rest, and fanned a superiority complex. Completely oblivious to state paternalism, the state for the most part, let the private schools go haywire on a number of fronts.

At the minimum, the role of education in schools is to better equip pupils for specialised instructions in chosen fields of higher studies and obtain gainful employment. Education, at maxima, should develop in children, the critical thinking, without assigning value on knowledge, disciplines or languages nor seeking to carve out identity on the basis of excluding others. It should usher our young scholars towards enlightenment; insusceptible to boundaries and directions. As Kant believed the motto of enlightenment was (and continues to be): Courage to know!

In Japan, The Fundamental Code of Education issued in 1872 pledged “no community with an illiterate family, nor a family with illiterate person.” By 1910, Japan had achieved full literacy. With second highest number of children out of schools, we might still be 100 years behind. We can only hope that the state atones for its sins in years ahead and redeems itself by devoting more economic resources, organisational capacity and social commitment to our children by introducing an integrative system of education taking on board the private interests – and jealously regulating them for our children’s sake. As it does, it should seek to set our children free on path of enlightenment, as free thinkers, not caged by dogmas and paradoxes – such that mould impressionable minds in accordance with popular narrative – churning out another generation of children who distrusts a stranger.

Source: <http://nation.com.pk/columns/03-Oct-2016/education-as-propaganda>

HIGHER EDUCATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY BY DR SABIHA MANSOOR

The issue of the declining standards in higher education and the low quality of our university graduates to meet employer's needs has once again been brought to the forefront in the Express Tribune (October 12, 2016) news item "Declining CSS results leave top recruiter scratching its head."

Further, "the appalling results of this year's competitive exam for civil services has been shocking for both the Federal Public Service Commission (FPSC), which is the top recruiter, and students." This year of the 9,643 candidates who took the written test of the Civil Superior Services (CSS) examination, only two percent qualified in the written test, and even fewer for the interview, the lowest percentage of successful students since 2011. The FPSC has initiated a review process of its own assessment scheme as well as approached the Higher Education Commission (HEC) to identify factors that are responsible for this failure.

A number of issues have been identified by both national and international educationists, researchers and evaluation studies. These include: unsuccessful education policies, focus on PhDs abroad and insufficient attention to professional development of faculty; narrow and outdated curricula as well as memorisation of textbooks; and difficulties in both reading comprehension and writing skills in English. The HEC has given a great boost to public sector universities in terms of human resource development, and physical and technical resources as well as funding. Efforts are being made to develop monitoring and evaluation schemes of higher education institutions, courses, faculty, and students learning outcomes, to enhance the quality of graduates they produce.

What then is ailing the state of higher education in Pakistan? And how can we cure this malady? Although I am not dismissing the efforts and recommendations of academic bodies in the past or present made with good intentions, I firmly believe that the most destructive factor in public sector universities is corruption and nepotism, as well as rampant negative politics by inefficient and power seeking faculty and staff. It is this evil element that leads to loss of good leadership, high merit teaching faculty and researchers, as well as successive failures of students. How can any qualitative improvement take place when some highly placed politicians, bureaucrats and legislators put pressure on university leaders to ignore merit in case of admissions of students and hiring of faculty and staff as well as their promotions? In this rather sensitive situation, many of the weak and unethical heads of higher education give in due to lack of moral courage to resist, or being power hungry want favors in return, such

as a second or third term in office. The first victim of nepotism in the education process is the university leadership.

The next victim is the highly motivated and qualified faculty that find no incentives in working hard, as their annual reports are many times written by senior professors with 16 years of education many of whom feel threatened by younger PhD faculty that are highly competent in both teaching and research. These hardened professors and senior faculty display severe resistance to change especially near retirement, and engage in all kinds of cunning strategies to oust them out, or make them resign, so as to pass on the mantle to their favoured colleagues.

The next victim is the lack of holistic development of university students who suffer as a result of mismanagement, incompetent faculty who either do not take classes, or are disinterested in the student benefitting from updated courses, learner centred approaches, and in preparing them for demands of the employment sector.

The final victim to suffer losses is the state itself. No matter how many education policies are made, this bitter harvest of jobless graduates would not only be a complete waste of public funds but would also lead to a growth of our young population that is bitter and frustrated, and which in turn would lead to further restlessness and crime. It is therefore extremely important for the state to purge the public sector universities of this menace of nepotism and corruption, and to make our graduates successful in all spheres of their personal and professional lives, as well as contribute to community and socio-economic development of Pakistan.

The writer is the former Vice Chancellor of the Lahore College Women University, and is a Woodrow Wilson Scholar

Source: <http://dailytimes.com.pk/opinion/18-Oct-16/higher-education-and-accountability>

THE CATASTROPHIC CSS RESULTS DR FAWAD KAISER

The national media is moaning the disappointing results of this year's competitive examination for civil services. In 2016, 9,643 candidates sat for the written test of the Central Superior Services (CSS). Sadly however, only 202 or 2.09 percent qualified, and the rest failed the test. This is the lowest percentage of successful students since 2011. In 2015, a total of 12,176 sat for the CSS written test, but only 439 passed, while only 377 qualified the interview. These successful candidates will undoubtedly play a crucial role in shaping the future of the country. Given the high stakes, the winners should form the crème de la crème of the country. But do they? And what about the 9,000 who failed, a good chunk of who have dedicated the most productive phase of their lives to this seemingly unachievable pursuit?

Similarly, 24,640 candidates applied for the written test in 2014 against 315 vacancies. Of them, only 233 managed to clear all tests. The despondency is understandable, yet it conceals just how deep the problem is in connection with candidates' proficiency in basic writing skills. In its 2014 report, the Federal Public Service Commission (FPSC) depicted a sorrow picture of competence of candidates, which is now consistently being mentioned in every annual report. "The standard of performance reflected that the majority did not know the strategies of making précis and reproduced the original language of the passage."

A number of myths surround the civil services and the CSS examination. Some believe that only those having an English medium background and high academic record can get into it, while some think that it is easy for students with professional qualifications such as engineering and medicine. In CSS examinations, understanding of concepts is tested. Therefore, instead of memorising, candidate's ability to understand concepts and writing is the main emphasis. I have long been interested in the idea of giving more weight to teaching conceptual analysis in developing writing and creative skills to my students. While securing overall competence of candidates in general knowledge and basic writing skills remains the overarching priority of CSS, abilities in the broader cognitive domains of candidates continues to decline, both here and in many other countries. Maybe the FPSC, which conducts the CSS examination, should take the lead to initiate a training course and be amongst the leading thinkers on this issue.

One of the lessons I draw from thinking about conceptual analysis is that what matters to the public does not always fit into the curriculum structure of the CSS examination. On the basis of the structure of the civil services examination, it is difficult to maintain that successful candidates are temperamentally and motivationally suited to the service they would be allocated at the completion of the written and academy training.

If we want to address the basic cognitive abilities and the desired personality attributes in CSS candidates and complex issues in society, we need to collaborate more. The average civil servant enjoys a rotten reputation, and Pakistan's bureaucracy is not entirely unknown for its red tape and a knack to stall even the most critical reforms. Yet given the lure of elite government services, which includes guaranteed job security, often-unbridled authority, relatively quick and assured promotions, diversity in work and non-financial perks, on average it is not a surprise that CSS examinations are expected to attract talent more from the rural than the urban middle class.

If there is so much at stake what then explains the absence of intelligent candidates from appearing and the presence of thousands of candidates who fail the CSS examination? Sure, a low-paid salary and perceived servility to the oft-inept politicians play a role in keeping some of the best brains away, but the FPSC is a comprehensive body that needs to review its reforms commission to suggest changes in organising a pre-CSS examination academy for aspiring students. It is not difficult to see how the examination keeps away suitable civil servants. The best and the brightest candidates are those working a fulltime job. Sadly, the inherent structure of this examination discourages full time job-holders from taking it. On the contrary, most other comparable competitive exams GMAT, GRE, CAT etc. encourage examinees to appear while working a job, which is why the best talent is lost to these examinations.

Besides pushing away the best brains, this examination lures too many could-have-been doctors, engineers and countless other professionals into its trap, laying waste to their potential during the many years of preparation, and, in most cases, renders the unsuccessful ones permanent underachievers, usually stuck in low-productivity jobs. Worse, a great many students from rural backgrounds rely solely on CSS examinations to make a career, entirely neglecting their education and alternative job prospects, only to find many years later that they are stranded with neither civil services nor worthy education. In many cases, they blithely bankrupt their families to spend on substandard coaching academies. But what makes the structure of examination so bad? It is this super-intensive, year-long examination cycle that makes it practically impossible for anyone working a full-time job to clear the ultra-competitive CSS examination, which admits less than one in 500 aspirants.

Also, the quick resumption of the next cycle means the aspirants are stuck in a quicksand for years. Educationalists would excoriate this inordinately long duration as a national loss. On top of that, the infamous, everything-under-the-sun, syllabus repels the best candidates. There is an urgent need for the FPSC to use all their political capital to implement the right mix of recommendations to strongly encourage full-time job-

holders to take the examination. This would serve two purposes: it would ensure better civil servants; and it would provide relief to the millions of aspirants who, at the peak of their productive powers, are doing nothing except spending their days failing to get better results in the CSS examination.

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Source: <http://dailytimes.com.pk/opinion/17-Oct-16/the-catastrophic-css-results-i>

REVITALISING CSS PERFORMANCE BY AISHA GHUMMAN

THE first competitive examination under the newly revised Central Superior Services (CSS) subject syllabi was held earlier this year. Out of 9,643 candidates who appeared in the competitive exam, only 202 candidates passed the written exam — the first in a series of rigorous testing which includes medical and psychological exams and interviews — resulting in an abysmal 2.09pc pass rate. The result led to a crescendo of criticism directed towards the Federal Public Service Commission (FPSC), with the commission's mode of work coming under intense public scrutiny.

Over the past 10 years, the FPSC has witnessed an unprecedented increase in the number of aspirants applying as well as appearing for the CSS exam. In 2006, 7,066 candidates applied for the exam and 4,125 candidates appeared for it. Those numbers rose to 20,717 applicants and 9,463 appearances in 2016. The number of candidates appearing for the CSS exam reached a peak of 13,170 in 2014.

As evident from above, although the general trend regarding applicants has been moving upwards, the number of candidates actually passing the written examination has always been erratic. The pass percentage in 2006 was 6.6pc, which decreased to 5.53pc in 2007, rose to 16.22pc in 2008 before it declined once again to 8.22pc in 2010. Another increase in pass percentage was witnessed at 9.7pc in 2011 and at 3.3pc in 2013, with a steady decline in pass rates after both these years.

As part of the recruitment process, competitive exams form the backbone of civil service and thus, good governance.

Therefore, if this trend is analysed objectively, popular opinion — that the FPSC is biased and deliberately discourages candidates from appearing for the examinations — does not hold merit. However, the pass/fail trend itself should not be ignored as it points to an alarming situation on various fronts, the foremost of which is the severe decline in education standards and the shrinking employment opportunities across the country.

Given these trends, civil society at large and aspirants in particular should then focus their efforts to address its underlying causes — especially the woes that beset Pakistan's failing education system. It is worrying that, instead, the FPSC is receiving the most flak for introducing much-needed and long overdue revisions in subject syllabi, its scheme and grouping of optionals/electives.

Since its inception as the Imperial Civil Service in the 19th century, the civil service (via bureaucrats) has acted as a linchpin in administering the everyday affairs of the

government and ensuring continuity of service delivery irrespective of political upheavals. As such, it is imperative that the civil service consist of the best, brightest and most competitive individuals who possess a passion for public duty. As part of the recruitment process, competitive exams then form the backbone of civil service given that the quality of Pakistan's future governance hinges upon it.

Over the years, however, the decline in the quality of new recruits has resulted in poorer governance. Politicising the service further weakened the institution, and bureaucracy was blamed for its perceived facilitation of malpractice by being hand-in-glove with corrupt politicians. This has tarnished the image of the once prestigious CSS to the point that the general public has become increasingly discontented with its performance.

The deterioration demanded that immediate steps be taken to arrest this downward trend, and the FPSC's change in CSS competitive examination modalities is one such bold step in the right direction. In the face of changing needs and demands of the day, it is necessary that the new generation of civil servants be equipped with the concepts and tools necessary for modern day governance.

An examination system that merely prefers individuals on the basis of the highest score in subjects such as sociology or journalism (considered the easiest in scoring) is not enough. The previous scheme of subjects unfairly favoured applicants with social sciences and humanities backgrounds. Looking at past scoring trends, the majority of aspirants — including professionals like doctors and engineers — opted instead for subjects such as history, languages and the law, while specialised subjects such as economics, public administration, political science etc were avoided due to tougher marking schemes.

Given the scenario, the new changes introduced to the structure and composition of the exam are, therefore, highly welcome. In fact, the FPSC needs to actively pursue various other necessary reforms such as overhauling the method of candidates' allocations to various groups and services. Since most of the groups and services require specialised knowledge — such as the Inland Revenue Service, Foreign Service, and Audit and Accounts Service — and others need specific skills and temperaments — such as the Pakistan Administrative Service and Police Service — it is imperative that allocation not be done solely on the basis of overall score, but keeping in view the personality traits and academic backgrounds of the candidates.

Additionally, the FPSC ought to conduct the written examination in two stages — a general exam to sift through candidates and a specialised exam to allocate candidates

to each service and group. Such a process would ensure the selection of appropriate professionals against each vacancy, increasing efficiency and improving service delivery. Also, any specialised training imparted to the candidates would then build on their already strong conceptual knowledge base, thus allowing for focus on practical applications.

Other reforms the FPSC should diligently pursue include pushing for increase in pay and incentives; vigorous work performance monitoring; and de-politicisation of the civil service, with increased accountability and transparency. A more rigorous and updated recruitment process will yield long-term results by attracting candidates who are passionate about public service, have the necessary knowledge and skills to deliver, and a purposeful drive to serve their country first and foremost.

The writer is a civil servant who has worked on CSS syllabi and other civil service reforms at the Establishment Division.

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