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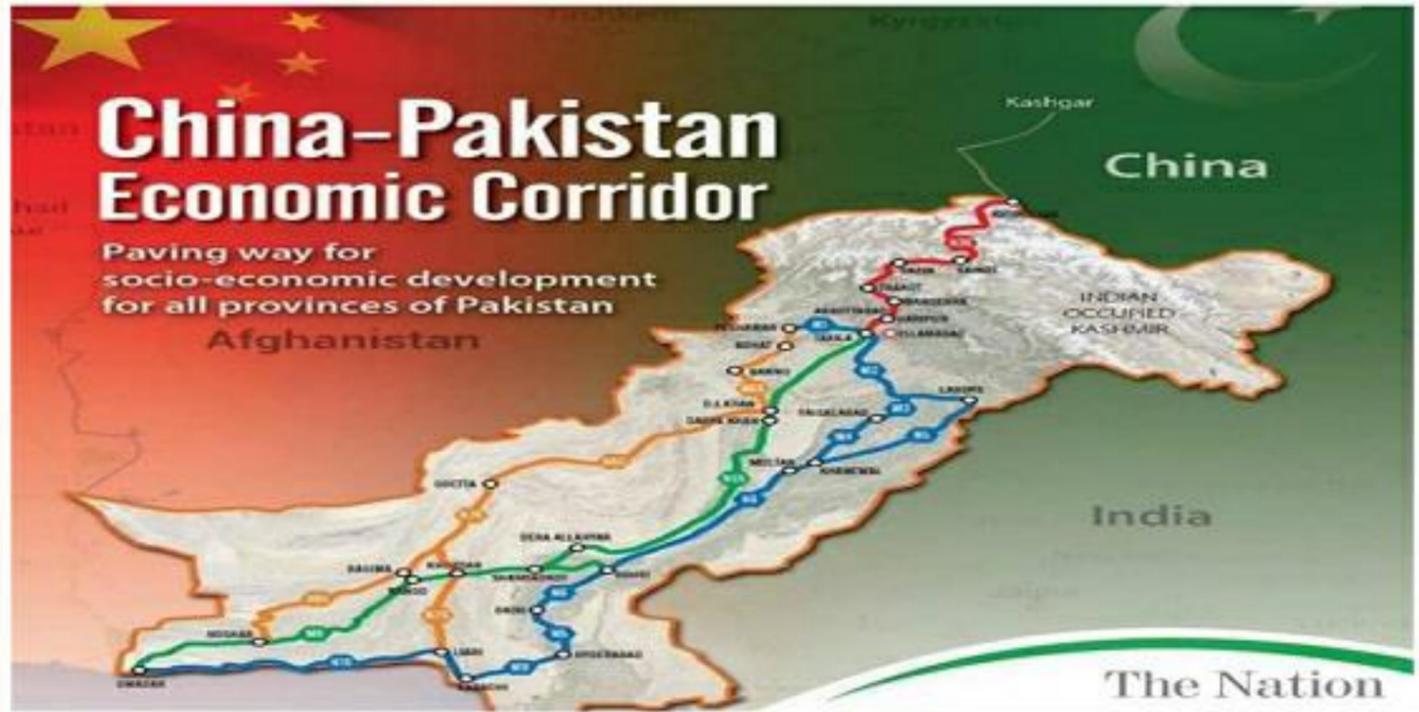
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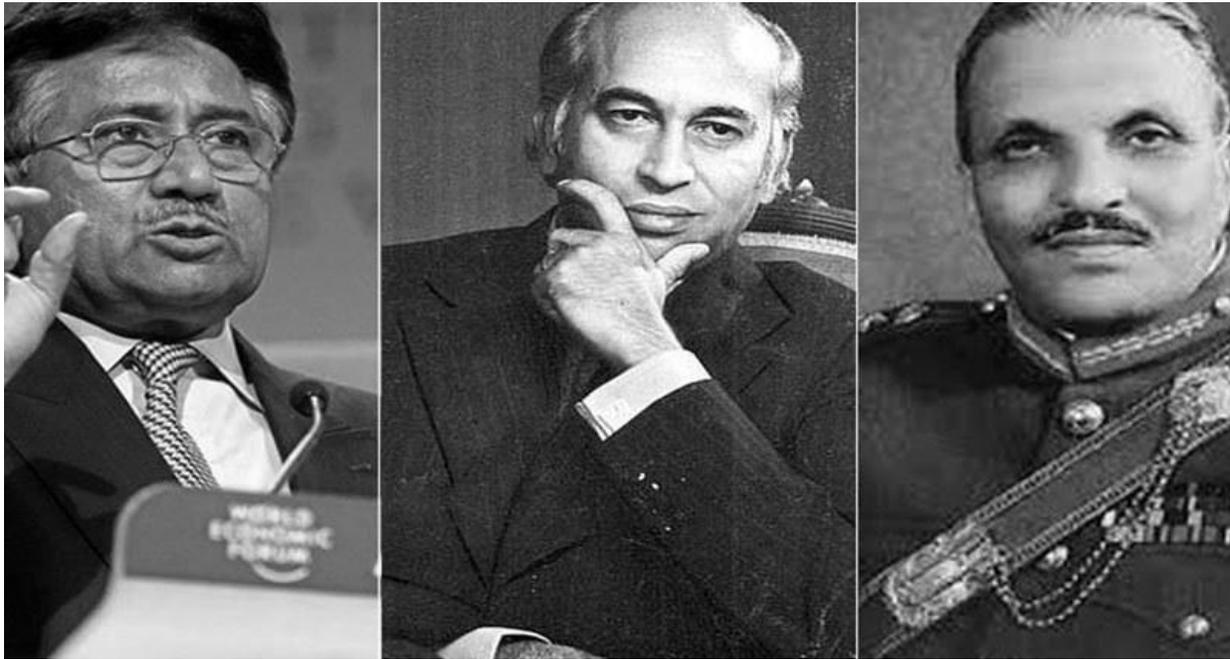
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From Bhutto to Zia to Musharraf, 'No Apologies' Should be Our National Motto | Akhtar Abbas



The All Pakistan Muslim League (APML) denies that former military ruler Gen (retd) Pervez Musharraf offered an apology over the 'murder' of slain Baloch leader Nawab Akbar Bugti. Perhaps the ex-army strongman felt that there was no need to offer an apology to begin with, or perhaps he was just being true to the image he projects — a straightforward, no-nonsense man of action.

Some people may see this attitude as his belief in the uprightness of his character; others may consider it to be an institutional legacy, but the truth is that this statement of his belies an attitude that those in power have always adopted: Iskandar Mirza, Ayub Khan, Yahya Khan, Bhutto, Zardari and all others before and after.

"No apologies" should be our national motto.

Back in the days when Ayub Khan defeated Fatima Jinnah in a scandalous election that saw the only unifying political figure of the time resigned to the backwaters of Pakistan's

politics, Khan was sure — thanks in no parts to pious bureaucrats like Qudrat ullah Shahab — that he was the ‘chosen one’.

He owed us an apology for dismantling the democratic matrix in Pakistan for all ages to come.

Before the partition of Pakistan, when our ‘dark skinned’ brothers were still with us, we treated them with an attitude that was both racist and contemptuous. History has much to say about it.

When a proposal to build public washroom facilities in the then East Pakistan was put forth, one of the decision-makers noted the futility of the cause, saying the same could be achieved with banana leaves.

Not only was the comment racist to the core, there was a sheer lack of concern for ground realities. The elder brothers then left us, with a bloody struggle that made Faiz Ahmed Faiz yearn for rains heavy enough to wash out all the bloodstains.

But an apology was never tendered.

When Zulfikar Ali Bhutto nationalised all industries, including educational institutions like FC college, that resulted in a sharp decline of educational standards, not to mention the collapse of several of those nationalised industries, he did not apologise to us.

He left with no words of solace to those who were affected by ‘Islamic Socialism’ or to the nation that bore the brunt of his decisions.

Also read: [A leaf from history: The prime minister is hanged](#)

Ziaul Haq may be forgiven for what he did during the ‘Black September’ affair in Jordan. Presumably he was just following orders. But when he became *the* order, he introduced a cottage industry of international *jihadis* in our homeland, oblivious of its implications to the society.

Thirty years later, we are still reaping the crimson crop of his ‘expedient’ harvest.

Ziaul Haq owed me an apology. He owed this nation an apology.

During the 80s when the Kalabagh Dam was a reality, select politicians decided to play a game of ‘Who wants to be a Nationalist?’

Just like when younger sisters in a house are languishing for marriage proposals, while the eldest one blocks the way, no other major hydro-electric project could come into play.

It's difficult to pin the blame on any one person, but ultimately the onus falls on all governments: from Benazir Bhutto's to Nawaz Sharif's, for failing to provide a solution — any solution — for Pakistan's national energy policy. Those who burn tires on the roads in protest against load shedding deserve an apology. An apology which never came and probably never will.

From military coups to failed policies, from political murders to systematic suppression of minorities, there is a long list of acts for which national leaders owe us apologies.

Musharraf, you think you were the best thing that happened to Pakistan. So much so that you almost believed that you and Pakistan are inseparable. No wonder 'Pakistan first' was your favourite slogan.

Your partial commitment to the war on terror, your clumsy handling of the Lal Masjid build-up and a hideous incrimination of an equally doubtful character like Iftikhar Chaudhry have left deep scars in the present memory of Pakistan.

The fact that you came up with the National Reconciliation Ordinance (NRO) and a sham referendum to extend your rule (not unlike Ziaul Haq) makes it hard to attribute any genuineness to you for the words you speak.

The Bugti killing is yet another incident which may have some merit in the eyes of decisions-makers, but time proved that ultimately it was the soothing hand of democracy that may quell the rebellion.

The list is inexhaustible. From military coups to failed policies, from political murders to systematic suppression of minorities, there is a long list of acts for which national leaders owe us apologies.

Funny thing about history is that it repeats itself, especially for those who don't learn from it.

Perhaps of all the crimes in our history, the one we have been most guilty of is failing to retrospect.

Perhaps what this country really needs is an apology.

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Democratising Pakistan? | Dr Ejaz Hussain



This last part of the article will explain the post-1985 (democratisation that engulfed electoral politics in the 1990s and 2000s. In particular, the means and ends of democratising Pakistan under General Pervez Musharraf will be central to the analysis. In addition, a critical view of the general elections in 2013 and the 2015 local bodies will also be taken into account to analyse future of democracy in Pakistan.

To begin with, in the post-civilianisation period, the 'Ziaist' military was able to institutionalise its rule in terms of the Eighth Amendment i.e. 58 (2)(b), which empowered the office of the president to dissolve parliament and provincial assembly at his discretion. In order to run the façade of democratic structure, ZiaulHaq appointed a compliant Prime Minister (PM), Mr Junejo, from Sindh. The latter, while not learning the art of working under a powerful military, adopted a different approach with regards to the appointment of ambassadors, government secretaries and even heads of intelligence agencies. The PM believed in austerity and, in this respect, on the floor of parliament, he vowed to "put generals into Suzukis". In addition, the PM differed over weapons' procurements and the Afghan jihad. From the military's perspective, such an approach was deemed detrimental to the armed forces' interests and Junejo's government was dismissed by President Zia in May 1988. However, before Zia could choose another pliant PM, he died in an air crash in August the same year.

In the following months, electoral politics were at their peak in Pakistan. To counter the popularity of Benazir Bhutto, the post-Zia military top brass cobbled an anti-PPP alliance called the Islami Jamhoori Ittehad (IJI). The army produced Nawaz Sharif who was part and parcel of IJI activism. Nevertheless, when the electoral results came out, they stunned not only the IJI but also its patron. The PPP won 93 against the IJI's 55 out of 205 seats. Though the military did try to factionalise the PPP in terms of engaging Amin Faheem, its efforts bore little fruit. On her part, Benazir Bhutto, as a result of her strategic interaction with the military top brass, chose to assume the premiership. Importantly, the former had a desire, if not design, to replace the 'super bureaucrat' president, Ghulam Ishaq, with a PPP-man but momentarily thought it rational not to create an issue since the president had good ties with the GHQ. However, within a couple of years, civil-military relations were ruptured. Ms Bhutto found the president to be authoritarian. The army viewed her intervening in 'internal matters' related to promotions, transfers, foreign policy etc. Hence, the president having operationalised 58(2)(b) dissolved the National Assembly (NA), on August 6, 1990, on stated charges of corruption, failure to maintain law and order, bringing harm to the country's integrity and meddling with civil services and the judiciary etc. As a result, the PM and her cabinet ceased to hold office forthwith. Subsequently, elections were held under a caretaker government in 1990. This time around the IJI won 105 seats against People Democratic Action's (PDA's) 45 out of 207 seats.

The PDA did not accept the results and alleged that the president and the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), along with the caretaker set-up, had played a conspiracy to keep the PDA- especially the PPP — out of parliament. Indeed, the Mehran Bank scandal further substantiated this. However, the president neither ordered an inquiry into the financial corruption related to the Mehran Bank nor called for re-elections. Hence, the president of the IJI, Nawaz Sharif, was able to form a government at the Centre. Though the PM walked cautious, he could not resist the power tussle initially with President Ishaq and ultimately the officer cadre over, for example, perks and privileges. Ultimately, his government was dismissed through 58(2)(b). Interestingly, the apex judiciary restored his government yet Sharif resigned, thus paving the way for fresh elections to be held in 1993 in which Bhutto's PPP grabbed 86 to the PML-N's 73 out of 202 seats. The PPP government now believed in privatisation, which created differences among various stakeholders including President Farooq Laghari who, while in strategic understating with the principal military, dismissed the Bhutto government in November 1996. Another caretaker setup was formed that held elections in February 1997. Expectedly, the PML-N won the elections massively (134 seats against the PPP's 19 in NA) with the result that it formed a government in the Centre and provinces. Though, as per norm, the PPP alleged the elections to be rigged, nothing changed. Being blinded by power, Sharif

crossed the red line by, for instance, interfering in the officer cadre and foreign policy domain. They had to pay a price: they were packed to Saudi Arabia through a military coup in October 1999. General Pervez Musharraf ruled the roost with the help of a compliant judiciary. For political legitimacy, Musharraf's team was able to factionalise the PML-N one way or the other.

Hence, the Pakistan Muslim League Quaid-e-Azam or PML-Q, led by the Chaudhrys of Gujrat, became the king's party. In addition, the military resorted to institutional measures to strengthen its hands. In this respect, a National Accountability Bureau (NAB) was established to arrest, punish and disqualify the guilty of holding public office and contesting elections. The chief beneficiary of this 'NABization' was the PML-Q whose members were cleared of corruption. Moreover, the National Reconstruction Bureau (NRB) planned the Local Government Plan (LGP) 2000, under which non-party local bodies' elections were held accordingly. The nazim system not only intrigued the civil bureaucracy but also helped Musharraf win the presidential referendum held in April 2002. In October 2002, general elections were held. Expectedly, the PML-Q got 118, PPP-P 80, MMA 61 and PML-N 19 (out of 342). Anti-PML-Q parties termed the elections as rigged. Nevertheless, the Q-League formed coalition governments with the MMA and MQM.

In October 2007, through the National Reconciliation Order (NRO), Musharraf was re-elected as president. However, the military man's re-election from expired assemblies was challenged in the country's Supreme Court (SC). The latter was dealt with on November 3, 2007 through another coup. On November 8, 2007, Musharraf announced that the elections would be held by February 15, 2008. The opposition parties, especially the PPP-P, pointed to the regime's bias towards the PML-Q and MQM. However, the PPP-P itself was criticised for the NRO. The Sharifs were allowed by the military to participate in the elections too. Resultantly, the PPP-P won 88 seats and formed a coalition government that completed its tenure by sacrificing a PM. The last general elections were held in May 2013 in which the PML-N outdid its rival parties. Interestingly, Imran Khan's PTI alleged the Sharifs to have rigged the elections in connivance with the judiciary. This led to the sit-in politics of 2014. A judicial commission ultimately resolved the matter. In 2015, the country went through electoral politics at the local level. The PML-N won convincingly in Punjab. In interior Sindh, the PPP carried the day. The MQM held sway in urban Sindh whereas the PTI stood out in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and parts of Punjab.

In conclusion, Pakistan has only experienced defective democracy where political parties lack internal democracy. The voter does not matter after the poll and military

produced politicians lack a democratic mindset. Pakistan's ultimate future lies in liberal democracy, pluralism and tolerance.

Source: <http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/opinion/02-Jan-2016/democratising-pakistan-v>

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In 2013, despite facing many challenges, Pakistani democrats celebrated the first ever completion of full constitutional term by the elected assemblies in the entire history of the country. They were also taking pride in the smooth transfer of power from the outgoing elected civilian government to the incoming one without intervention of the undemocratic third force. But the movers and shakers of the deep state were not amused by their “redundancy “ in the power politics. The unanimous passage of 18th Constitutional Amendment by the Parliament in 2010 that was regarded to be a glorious victory for both the smaller provinces and the federation turned out to be an affront to the undemocratic forces espousing “strong centre” which was synonymous with a strong control by them. But before it gets too serious let me share a joke to diffuse the tension a little bit. They say that once a tourist from the US was visiting the famous Taj Mahal in India. When the Indian guide had explained the unique history and intricate architectural characteristics of one of the seven wonders of the world he stopped talking to get the response of the tourist. The American tourist, after a brief pause, said that he was just wondering as to how could the Mughals build such a magnificent structure without American aid !

But unfortunately the response of the protagonists in our story was not confined to mere expression of amazement about the aforementioned development of Pakistani democratic system. They decided to do something about it. And then we saw in 2014 the aggressive IK and TUQ led mob physically assaulting the Parliament, the Supreme

Court , the Prime Minister House and Pakistan Television in Islamabad under the guise of a “ sit in “ which kept shifting its goal posts from overthrowing the newly elected government to destabilizing it during the siege which continued for months. The public pronouncements by the mobocrat about the intervention of the “ umpire” to send the elected government back to pavilion by raising his finger did not materialize as all the political parties rallied to support the Constitution and Parliament but the pressure exerted in the process was enough to pave the ground for a soft coup. Consequently the military dominated apex committees took charge of the law and order situation in all the four provinces of the country for indefinite time. They have been in the driving seat in FATA for quite some time. The deep state that has been already calling the shots in resource allocation was able to expand its not so implicit control over not only the entire state security policy but also the major portions of the foreign policy. Another important side effect was almost a rupture of the case of high treason against the former military dictator General (retired) Parvez Mussharaf for abrogating the Constitution . Welcome to yet another era of controlled democracy in Pakistan !

The present crises in Sindh is clearly undermining the very structure of provincial autonomy that supposed to have been achieved under the 18th Constitutional Amendment. Rangers, a force under the command of the federal government and called by the provincial government to provide help in fighting terrorism have taking upon themselves to occupy the driving seat in running the province. Going far beyond their constitutional mandate they have started raiding government offices and arresting government servants and political figures on the charges of corruption without informing the provincial government and without initial involvement of NAB, a federal institution with the sole function of curbing corruption. It is pertinent to mention here that no one has raised objection to NAB’s actions in cases of the alleged corruption. But there are some dangerous aspects to the present stand off between the federation and the Sind government which has the support of the elected provincial assembly. If Rangers are allowed to raid government offices and arrest official without even informing the provincial government , this is a type of mini martial law that may not remain confined to Karachi and may spread to Lahore, Peshawar and even Islamabad .

The federal government, which is an extension of the ruling Punjabi elite, has decided to back the decimation of the provincial government in Sindh at the hands of Rangers. Now this is extremely alarming as allowing the use of state coercion for reversing of provincial autonomy that was achieved through constitutional processes can have dangerous fall out . Apart from deepening sense of alienation among the people of the smaller provinces it will also make the job of the shock forces of authoritarianism easier when they next time come to Islamabad for overthrowing the civilian set up. Then there

is the case of a former PPP federal minister Dr. Asim Hussain. He was arrested by Rangers under charges of corruption , financing terrorism and providing treatment to injured terrorists in his hospital. Again it was rightly pointed out by the PPP that investigation of corruption is the domain of NAB and Rangers have overstepped their authority by taking this case into their hands. Terror financing and providing treatment to injured terrorists are serious charges and the courts must look into these charges and proceed according to law. Every single Pakistani will support across the board action not just against terror financing but also action for implementing all the twenty points of NAP to eliminate terrorism. But difficult questions will be inevitably raised if the government will drag its feet on NAP implementation and single out a certain hospital owned by a certain political figure for its anti terror raids. Will the people not speak about a method in the madness? Or will they not ask ask as to how many hospitals have been raided to arrest people responsible for treating OBL or Mulla Mohammad Omar or hordes of Taliban? Last but not the least there will be question regarding IK's confession about treatment of Taliban in SKMH.

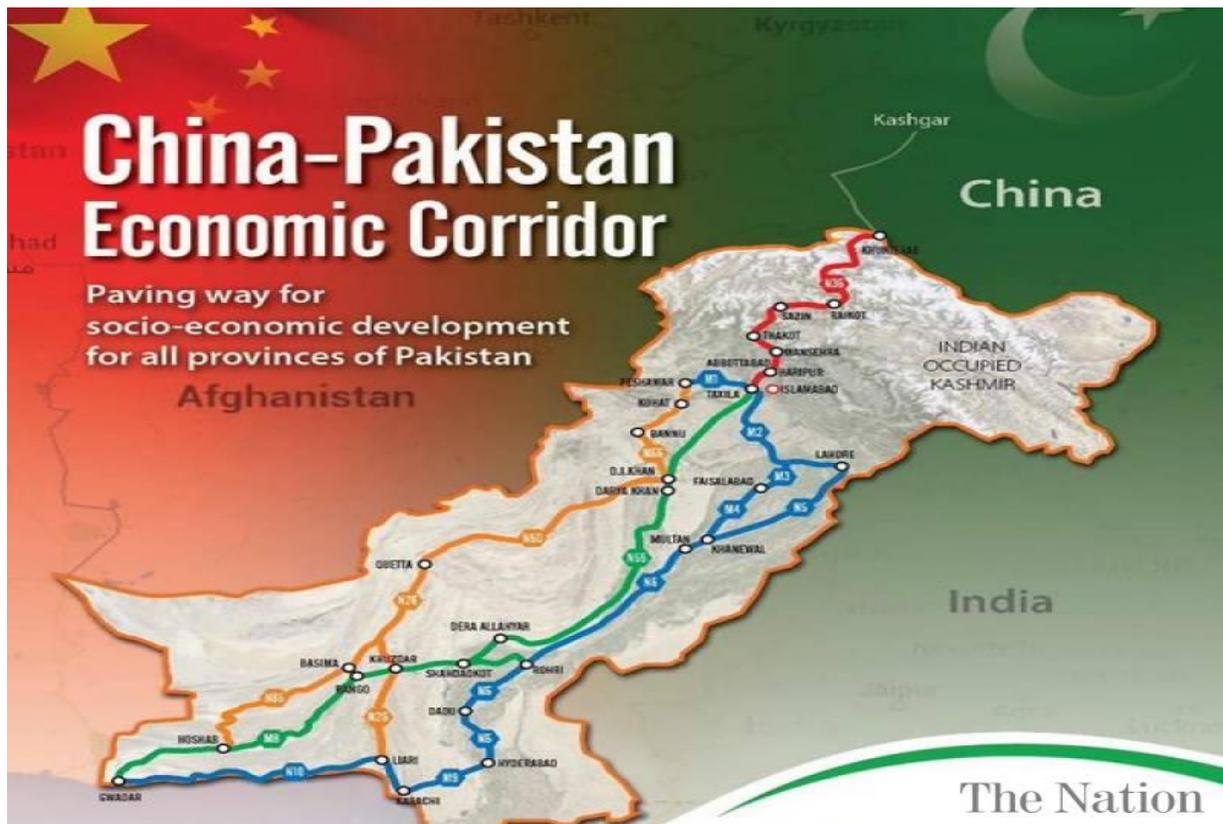
December 16 reminds us of the blunders committed by our ruling establishment (dominated by Punjabi elites) that led to the disintegration of the country in 1971. Pakistan opted for a federal parliamentary system after that in 1973 Constitution to avoid repeating that tragedy. But under a new bout of controlled democracy similar blunders are being repeated in FATA, Balochistan and Sind. Even PTI which is opposed to PML(n)'s stand on every thing under the sun is not shy of supporting its actions in Sindh. Is the lure of Takht-e-Lahore responsible for this myopia? But will the tyrannical oppression of smaller provinces under controlled democracy not undermine the federation?

Source: <http://nation.com.pk/columns/02-Jan-2016/federation-in-controlled-democracy>

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Pakistan is supposed to be a federation, where the federating units should have judicious share of national resources. Developmental projects are instruments for mobilizing economy and uplifting masses. They not only provide employment opportunities but can also result in national integration. The effect of development projects of national level can be gauged from the fruits that railroad construction has blessed United States with. United States, in its current integrated form, exists because of the rail-road revolution that connected one disparate end of the country to the other. It facilitated transport of raw materials from one end to the more industrialized part of the country. China is keeping its mammoth population in peace because of its massive investment in infrastructure. Infrastructure development, along with providing constant employment opportunities, also ensures equal economic dividends.

The dilemma with distribution of economic developmental projects in Pakistan is that they are always concentrated in some parts or regions of the country. Starting from partial policies of the Ayub regime, the injudicious distribution of developmental projects has never seen an end. The western-trained and western-hired economic and policy advisers of Ayub Khan believed in naked to the bones capitalism. 'Functional utility of

inequity' and 'social utility of greed' were two theories that formed the cornerstones of Ayub's developmental projects allocation. The first one asserted that by creating havens of development and concentrating all growth in narrowly defined geographical areas, the economic growth can be skyrocketed. The other naively believes that creating an artificial rich and luxurious class at the top ladder of economy will motivate competition and thus will result in increased economic activity. Thanks to these policies, we had the clichéd twenty-two families and these policies further bore their fruit in the form of transforming East Pakistan into Bangladesh.

Unfortunately the Pakistani state is persistent in its insistence on functional utility of inequality in allocation of developmental projects. CPEC, which China is interested in to elevate its eastern provinces of Xinxiang at par with other parts of the country, in terms of economic development, has provided a new tool to the advocates of concentrated development of parts of Punjab. The contradictions can't be more ironic, given that China has proposed this project to develop its underdeveloped areas while Pakistan is making case for depriving its underdeveloped areas of their due share in the project under the pretext of security and lack of economic activity. What is ironic, on a completely new level, is the argument from Pakistani state that since the underdeveloped provinces of Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa and Balochistan are insecure so we can't take up development in those regions. Meanwhile, China's main aim for CPEC is to fight militancy in the underdeveloped region of Xinxiang.

What is missed by the Pakistanis state in its jaundiced policies is that CPEC is not a project for facilitating already developed zones. It is meant for initiating economic development and carving out new economic zones. If this logic is accepted, then the western route of CPEC is the only viable route. No two cities of Pakhtoonkhwa are connected via rail and no motorway is laid in Balochistan. On 28th May, APC was called and it was decided that the western route will be developed before the eastern route. But the Pakistani state, in its usual reversal of motives, opted to mislead people of the smaller provinces through its cosmetic measures. While 667 billion rupees are allocated for Lahore-Karachi motorway, the highways which are being developed in name of CPEC in Balochistan, and were inaugurated by the PM, cost less than 30 billion rupees. The Lahore-Islamabad section has been completed at the cost of multi-hundred billion rupees while it already has GT road and a railway track.

Projects such as CPEC are bound by Constitution to be discussed in Council of Common Interests but even after two years, no such meeting has been called; and the

matter of disparate fund allocations to the two routes is hushed over and swept under the carpet. When Chinese President came to Pakistan last year and signed multiple MoUs, it was reported that out of 46 billion dollars' worth of projects, projects worth 45 billion dollars are going to be established in Punjab. The western route is reduced to a set of highways with no special economic or industrial zones.

The deliberate silence and secrecy over allocation of funds and the absurd claims of equal development of eastern and western route is going to further increase the mistrust among provinces. It's not only the right of small provinces to have its due share in such massive projects, but it is also incumbent upon the state to find ways to ward off extremist and separatist tendencies by investing in infrastructure and economic development of regions where it is needed the most.

Source: <http://nation.com.pk/blogs/04-Jan-2016/cpec-the-case-for-the-western-route>



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Undermining National Interests | Malik Muhammad Ashraf



Chief Minister KP Pervez Khattak, of late, has been trying to foment political controversy about implementation of CPEC, particularly the construction of three identified routes of the Corridor alleging that the federal government had reneged on its promise to work on the western route first and was focusing more on the eastern route which would benefit only Punjab. Speaking at a convention on CPEC at Peshawar on 2nd January, 2016, he said that KP was getting only 2 percent of the CPEC projects against its share of 13 percent and threatened that they knew how to get their rights and would go to any extent to get them. Imran Khan also has been talking in the same vein maintaining that KP and Balochistan would be the biggest losers.

As reported by the media, Pervez Khattak presiding over a high level meeting on 25th November, 2015, had accused the federal government of dishonesty and deception in fulfilling its promises regarding share of the province in CPEC projects and announced the launching of an agitation campaign against the federal government's decision to construct the eastern route first, saying that the KP government would withdraw its cooperation to the government on implementation of CPEC projects and also stop the acquisition of land for the purpose if the work on western route was not given priority.

I am afraid that the position taken by PTI, particularly the KP government, is against the ground realities and ostensibly seems a deliberate attempt to politicise the issue to create an embarrassing situation for the PML-N government. It also belies lack of

understanding of the decision making process in regards to projects under CPEC and determination of the routes of the corridor. Perhaps it would be pertinent for the benefit of the general public and the readers to briefly recollect what the Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal told the political leaders in a briefing after signing of the MoUs and agreements with China on the projects under the umbrella of CPEC. Giving an exhaustive presentation, he made it a point to clarify that the Corridor would be a network of roads that would connect Gwadar and Kashgar passing through all the four provinces and that immediate focus of the two countries was on launching the early harvest projects, especially in the energy sector. He further informed them that the working groups formed by China and Pakistan would decide on the exact locations of the economic zones along the Corridor and the areas through which this network of roads would pass after considering their technical aspects and feasibility.

It is a misconception on the part of PTI and KP government to assume that the government of Pakistan was solely responsible for deciding which project and route would be implemented first. The alignment of the Corridor, its routes and the prioritisation of the projects has been decided by the working groups formed by the two countries keeping in view the technical aspects and their feasibility as clearly indicated by the Planning Minister in his briefing to politicians. China being the investor understandably has a greater say in deciding the implementation of the projects with a view to ensure that money is productively spent to serve the interests of both the countries. This fact needs to be understood and accepted ungrudgingly.

The contention of the KP Chief Minister that the government was giving priority to the eastern route to benefit Punjab was also very misleading. Actually the work on western route started much earlier than on the eastern route. Frontier Works Organisation has already completed construction of 870 km stretch of the western route in Balochistan. On 30th December, 2015, the Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif inaugurated up-gradation of Zhob-Mughal Kot section of the Dera Ismail Khan-Qila Saifullah Highway and Qila Saifullah-Waigan Rud Road section of the Multan-Dera Ghazi Khan-Qila Saifullah Highway. The Zhob-Mughal Kot section is part of the western route. The foundation laying ceremony was attended by leaders of most of the political parties. Chief minister Balochistan Snaullah Zehri, speaking on the occasion, said negative propaganda about western route of CPEC must end and termed CPEC as positive stride towards economic development of the country. Maulan Fazlur Rehman maintained that CPEC addressed basic issues in the province and would help in establishing durable peace in the region. Mir Hasel Bizenjo and Mehmood Khan Achakzai also expressed similar views.

The launching of the eastern route which passes through Punjab and Sindh has been made in view of the immediate feasibility of the route as the existing network of roads and railway infrastructure in these provinces can help in its early completion and providing a good base to both the countries for working on other projects. The most important factor in this respect is that China wanted to start work on this route in view of its early harvest potential and immediate feasibility, as also revealed by the Finance Minister. The move is in consonance with the understanding between the two countries in regards to the prioritising of the projects and routes.

The logic of the Chief Minister KP that the province must be given its 13 percent share in the CPEC projects also sounds bizarre in view of the fact that it was not a matter relating to share of the provinces from the federal divisible pool necessitating the determination of the share of the provinces as per the NFC award. The issue relates to foreign investment and as explained to the entire political leadership by the Planning Minister, the decision making was to be done by the working groups formed by the two governments with due consideration to their technical feasibility. The foregoing facts amply prove that the KP government was making deliberate and well thought out efforts to sabotage the CPEC, in complete denial of the ground realities and the benefits that would accrue to all the provinces and the entire country.

Conceptually speaking, characterisation of the CPEC as a game changer, an epoch making step towards eternal strategic partnership between China and Pakistan, a catalyst to economic revolution in Pakistan and an engine to propel shared regional economic prosperity, is decidedly beyond reproach. And no person in his right mind can dare to contest these claims on any rational basis. For a resource-constrained Pakistan, direct foreign investment of US\$ 46 billion in the projects under the umbrella of CPEC, undoubtedly presents a best ever chance in regards to nullifying the effects of the missed opportunities of the past, embarking on the path of a sustained economic growth and changing the economic profile of the country geared to equitable sharing of the gains by all the federating units and the masses. For China also, the CPEC is a pivot of its strategy to revive the old Silk Route and gaining easy access to the Arabian Sea for expanding its commercial interests globally. It certainly promises a win-win situation for both the countries and the entire region.

Making the CPEC controversial is tantamount to undermining national interest for political gains. It would send wrong signals to the Chinese government and could affect relations between the two countries. Therefore, politicking on CPEC is totally wrong and must be avoided. The nation expects rational and visionary behaviour from the politicians to winch the country out of the quick-sand it lies embedded into.

Foreign Policy Trials | I.A. Rehman



AS if the task of saving the Nawaz-Modi initiative from being derailed was not challenging enough, Saudi Arabia's aggressive drive to align Pakistan with itself is likely to test this country's diplomatic skills to the utmost.

While Pakistan can never be unmindful of its debt to Saudi Arabia, any step that ignores the present-day geopolitical realities, this country's national interest and the need to preserve Muslim world's unity will be unfair to both sides. It seems the latest developments in the Middle East are compelling Pakistan to reappraise its policy, in its entirety, towards fellow Muslim states.

Much water has flown under the bridge since the Quaid defined Pakistan's foreign policy as friendship for all, malice towards none, and special relations with the Middle East Muslim states. Quite a few Muslim countries did not take kindly to Pakistan's effort to assume, as the "largest Muslim state", the mantle of the Muslim world's leadership. While Pakistan's spirited championship of the North African Muslim countries' freedom raised its stock in the Muslim world its involvement with Middle Eastern defence pacts (MEDO to Cento) alienated the Arab nationalists.

Pakistan's dilemma has been compounded by its inability to choose between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

The decline of the Nasserites and the emergence of Saudi Arabia's King Faisal as the new voice of the religion-oriented Arab camp gave a boost to efforts to form a well-knit Islamic bloc in which Pakistan was assured of a prominent place.

During the Ziaul Haq regime the strategic understanding between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia was cemented with US financial and military investment in the Afghan jihad and Pakistan is still facing the consequences.

During these decades, the regional Muslim groupings — from Arab League to the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation — have been pushed into the background by individual Muslim countries' preoccupation with their national agendas. The richer Muslim states — eg Iran, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar — have been looking for closer economic cooperation with countries outside their regional associations and the OIC than with their fellow members in these organisations.

More significantly, the Saudi-Iranian rivalry spilled over from Lebanon to Syria and Yemen. These developments certainly influenced Pakistan's decision not to get involved with the conflict in Yemen even at the risk of annoying Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Meanwhile, the clash between Saudi Arabia and Iran has taken a serious turn. It is impossible for Pakistan to ignore these developments while dealing with the new Saudi demands for Pakistan's support.

Pakistan's dilemma has been compounded by its inability to choose between Saudi Arabia and Iran. While Saudi Arabia's help to Pakistan, especially in the areas of economy and defence and as one of the main importers of manpower from Pakistan, are fresh in the people's minds, the history of Pakistan's friendship with Iran cannot be ignored. The cordial relations with Iran under the Shah, from early 1950s to 1972-73, came under a cloud after the Khomeini revolution but have survived despite Pakistan's inability to come to Iran's aid during the US campaign against it and tension along the Balochistan frontier.

So far as the reported Saudi desire to secure Pakistan's support for the 34-member coalition against terror is concerned, Pakistan can legitimately point out that as the

country that has the longest experience of dealing with terrorism it should have been consulted before the coalition was formed and announced. Further, it is important that the coalition, that comprises mostly Sunni Muslim states, should not give the appearance of an anti-Iran front as this will divide not only the Muslim states, it will also cause dangerous schisms within each Muslim country. Thus, while offering the Saudis full moral support, Pakistan will be right in declining involvement in the coalition's military operations without prior consultation.

That Pakistan is extremely concerned at the Saudi-Iranian confrontation should be easily understandable on both sides. The question of mediating between the two brotherly nations is, however, quite complicated. The choice of a forum for mediation is not easy.

The first option perhaps could be the OIC but even if the organisation could find a way to take up a conflict between two of its senior members it will be hopelessly divided along sectarian lines and the repercussions in member-states would be extremely grave. Pakistan, in particular, cannot afford any worsening of already tense Shia-Sunni relations.

This dilemma should persuade the Muslim countries of the need to reduce their reliance on faith-based alliances. These groupings have not really delivered. They have not helped in forging unity in political matters and their plans to create institutions to promote closer links in the areas of trade, banking, information services, et al, have not progressed beyond rhetoric.

Moreover, the tendency to look at the world in terms of religious blocs has not only increased misunderstanding between Muslims and the rest of the world, it has also caused regression in the collective thinking of citizens of Muslim states. The way Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was chastised by the religious lobby for referring to the ideal of a liberal Pakistan and even deprived of the power to reply illustrates the point.

Thus, without interfering with efforts of organisations like Arab League, RCD and OIC, to become more effective, Muslim countries may start looking for broader, non-denominational forums for mutual progress and promotion of amity among them and with their neighbours. They may, for instance, revive the idea of an Asian Union, on the pattern of the European Union. The Muslim countries in Asia, nearly half of the total, will not be at a disadvantage in the Asian Union, which will include besides the Saarc countries, the Central Asian republics, China, and Japan. Closer economic relations among the members of the Asian fraternity could help the Muslim countries overcome

their sectarian differences or legacies of colonial period disputes. The idea of an all Asia forum may look far-fetched at the moment but it does command attention when we look at the causes of unaffordable conflicts between Muslim states.

Published in Dawn, January 14th, 2016

Source: <http://www.dawn.com/news/1232802/foreign-policy-trials>

A red banner with a textured background. On the left is a blue sign with a white border and a white circle at the top, containing the text 'JOB OPENINGS' in white. In the center, the text 'Need Job ?' is written in large, bold, white font. Below it, in a smaller white font, is 'Search Latest Pakistan's Government & Private Sector Jobs at jobiffy.net'. On the right is a green sign with a white border and a white circle at the top, containing the text 'REGISTER NOW' in white.

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Regional Issues: Pakistan in Perspective | Tariq Khalil



ATTACK in Paris was a horrible incident indeed, a tragedy not only for the French but also for the civilized world. Alas the French President reaction is knee jerk? Like in the follow up of 9/11 George Bush reacted when Afghan people were punished and the death toll has now over many hundred thousand lives. French Air Force bombed suspected IS sites but on ground the victims are innocents, since IS fighters already had slipped out of the area knowing the French reaction would be. As of today all Europe is in grip of terror and security alert.

A US Presidential candidate is mouthing fire against the Muslims, creating more chaos within US and saner elements are denouncing him to the extent White House has to issue a statement. Russia successfully, after engaging IS both from air and sea, changed strategic balance in ME and altered the global strategic scenario first time making USA feel left behind, isolated and searching for allies to support its policies. The fact remains the Russian offensive and aggressive diplomatic initiative, visit of Assad to Moscow caught USA totally unaware and in a strategically awkward position.

The IS claimed attacks in Jakarta after 10 years, in Turkey, in Afghanistan in Kandahar Nagarhar and at Pakistan consulate. Lifting of sanctions on Iran, and Saudi Iran tussle has a new dynamics affecting the region. Thus the global strategic landscape has not only changed also continue changing with new power centres emerging and possible new alliances and grouping is in the offing with India, China are in the centre stage. While Middle East is in a flux, IS still entrenched, Turkey Russia relations turning sour

after Russian air craft being shot down by Turkey Japanese Prime Ministers visit to India and massive capital investment on one side and Narendra Modi visit to Moscow culminating in to signing of multibillion dollar Defence deals. Modi's surprise stop over at Lahore reflects the demands of the changing global strategic scenario. The visit has been termed by Mr.Modi a goodwill visit. At Prime Minister level there is no chance and never a private visit.

The reaction of the establishment is yet not clear but as I assess military establishment do support peace with India but the question is at what price. Key issues remaining unresolved such visits end up as non starter. Both the countries have to come out of closet. Keeping their principal stand they must show flexibility to find an acceptable solution. But there are hawks on both sides who will try their best to put spanner. The aura of Mr. Modi has not faded the General Secretary of his own party while giving interview to Aljazeera TV once again declared Pakistan, India and Bangladesh one day will unite albeit through peaceful means, reflecting BJP aims are still unchanged.

Now conflicting versions are emerging about the visit. Never the less Pathankot Air Base attack once again apparently placed a spanner and Indian media left no stone unturned to malign Pakistan. Luckily both the Governments have taken a stand not to be derailed. India's claim, they have given apparently ample proof of Jash's involvement. This is being investigated and Pakistan resolve that it will not allow to derail the process and not to allow its soil to be used by non state actors is a good omen.

On Pakistan side latest resolve of both army and political leadership not allow fissures in the military and civil is a major shift and indicate the realisation of changing regional and global scenario. But why react, did we know all the banned outfits are masquerading throughout Pakistan, and who does not know local politicians and police officials pay homage to them. This is allowing raising fingers at Punjab and the noise ever increasing. It is time the N league at the center come out of the closet be more transparent on the National Action Plan and now Punjab need it maximum. While FC is employed in KPK and Balochistan and Rangers in Sindh, the Punjab, its police equally politicised, is also handed out to Punjab Rangers with police powers, at least in South Punjab. Some may feel the heat but stature of PM will be improved. The Federation needs it. Never the less, it is still to be ascertained the episode was not planted and planned by RAW as the foot prints show. Pakistanis are our own enemy and need no outside enemy.

The way CPEC has been made controversial is embarrassing both at domestic level and internationally. West or East routes all has to be made in next five years. Rejected at

Ballot box, these politicians have to survive and CPEC is one issue which will hurt Pakistan most. And then the pound of flesh they must get. So there it is all the howling and our media whose creditability has been tainted and other for the ratings give space to these politicians who otherwise carry no weight. In my earlier writings had indicated all efforts will be made to scuttle this project. On the Government side it is their responsibility to be transparent and instead of APC, s the government should use the platform of Parliament since it will have legal strength needed for the project and also the constitutional guarantees. Good that PM called a meeting to put spanner on this howling.

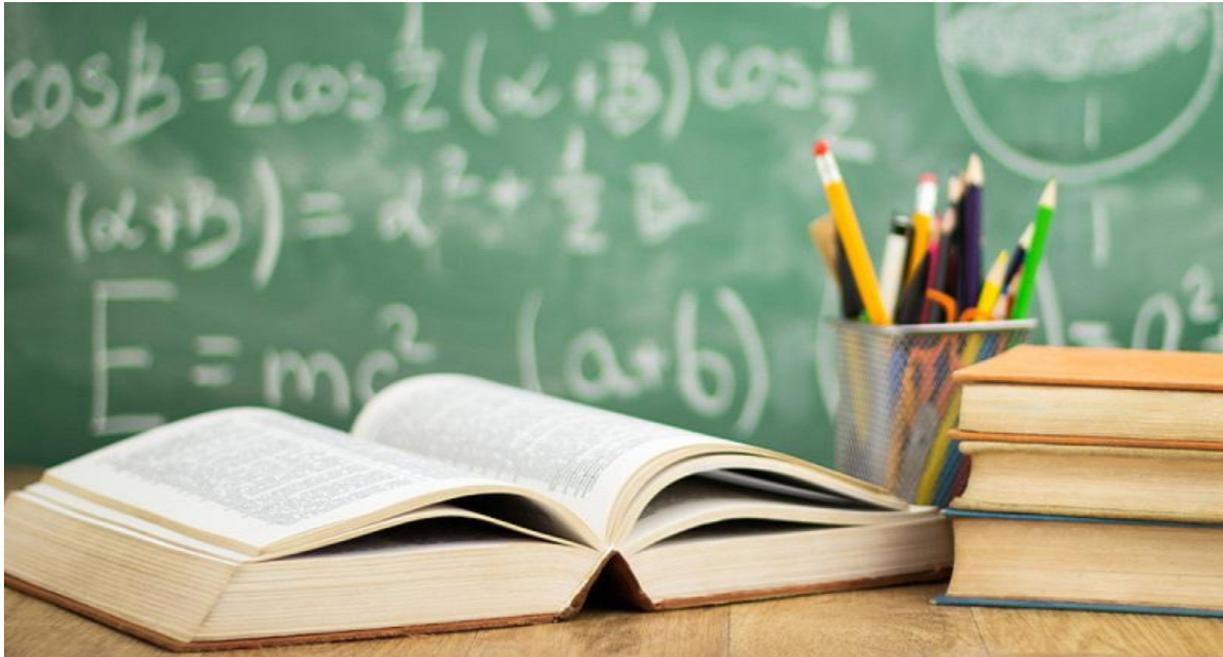
The fact remains, in the name of provincial autonomy, the subjects which even Zulfiqar Bhutto kept them with federation has been transferred to Provinces, resultantly, federation has to have one aim one direction, now there is complete chaos. Provinces are behaving like independent entities, not caring what is happening in the region and globally, countries after countries are mauled and disfigured with every passing day. Enemies of Pakistan are waiting in wings. Time has come; do not put this country at risk achieved by Quaid passing over the river of blood. Ask those who do not have soil under their feet. Middle East is in turmoil and all eyes are on Pakistan. Unfortunately, everyone has own interest first than the obligation these leaders owe to Pakistan, elected by the teeming millions. The threat is multi-directional, economic, political and strategic.

—The writer, retired Brigadier, is decorated veteran of 65/71 wars and a defence analyst based in Lahore.

Source: <http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=286483>

A red banner with white and blue text and icons. On the left is a blue icon with a white circle and the text 'JOB OPENINGS'. In the center is the text 'Need Job ?' in large white font, followed by 'Search Latest Pakistan's Government & Private Sector Jobs at jobiffy.net' in smaller white font. On the right is a green icon with a white circle and the text 'REGISTER NOW'.

Is Education Promoting Social Inequality and Marginalisation? | Prof Dr Hafiz Muhammad Iqbal



Can it just educate instead?

There is no denying the fact that education is considered a fundamental human right and an essential ingredient for individual as well societal development. Article 37 b of the constitution of Pakistan, given under the heading 'Promotion of social justice and removal of social evils', reads as follows:

The state shall "remove illiteracy and provide free and compulsory secondary education within minimum possible period"

Recently, the under the 18th amendment, a new sub-clause 25A, pertaining to Right to Education has been added which reads: "The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of five to sixteen years in such manner as may be determined by law". And what is that law? It either does not exist or not being implemented.

In addition to these constitutional provisions, Pakistan was also signatory to many international treaties and conventions which obligated it to provide equal access to education to all of its citizens without any sign of discrimination on the basis of gender, race, cost, creed or ethnicity. Two important international conventions are worth mentioning in this regard: the 1990 Jomtien World Declaration on Education for All

(EFA) and the Dakar Framework for Action 2000, which declared eight Millennium Development Goals to be achieved by 2015.

According to these MDGs, Pakistan was expected to achieve 100 per cent net primary enrolment rate by 2015 and 100 per cent completion/survival rate to Grade V by the same year. In terms of literacy, it was expected to achieve overall 88 per cent literacy rate for 10+ years aged population. To achieve steady progress in this regard, Pakistan announced three education policies in 1992, 1998 and 2009 and a number of development plans, including National Plan of Action 2001-2015, and Education Sector Reforms (ESR).

The current scenario

The target date to achieve these goals expired on 31st December 2015. It is high time to assess what progress Pakistan has made in this direction. Two points are worth consideration while assessing the progress of Pakistan towards achieving EFA and MDGs. These points are access to education and equality. Table 1 indicates the targets to be achieved by 2015 and actual attainment.

Pakistan was expected to achieve 100 per cent net primary enrolment rate by 2015 and 100 per cent completion/survival rate to Grade V by the same year

Element	Target	Achievement
Literacy rate	88%	58%
Net primary enrolment	100%	57% (5-9 years) 65% (5-10 years)
Retention	100%	About 92%

Table 1: MDGs targets and actual achievement 2014. Source: PSLM 2013-14

These figures clearly show that Pakistan has not only failed in achieving the targets set by itself, but is disappointingly far from achieving these targets in near future. If we analyse retrospectively, we find surprisingly that over the last two years, instead of going up word, literacy rate has actually declined. Table 2 indicates literacy rate in the year 2012 and 2014 with reference to various sectors and regions. Source: PSLM 2013-14

Area	Urban			Rural			Overall		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Pakistan:	81	66	74	63	36	49	70	47	58
Punjab:	82	71	76	65	43	53	71	52	61
Sindh:	80	63	72	53	21	37	67	43	56
KPK:	81	55	68	70	32	49	72	36	53
Baluchistan:	74	45	59	54	17	36	59	25	43

Table 2: Literacy rate of 10+ age population 2013-14. Source: PSLM 2011-12; PSLM 2013-14

A careful analysis of these figures and other relevant data reveals that except in KPK, literacy rate in all the provinces, both in urban as well as rural areas, has declined. Same is the case with female literacy rate. This shows the commitment and seriousness of political leadership and the impact of faulty policies pursued by them. Even in Punjab, where high fake claims are made at the highest political level, the situation has actually worsened. One of the reasons for failure to achieve developmental goals is that more than 7,000 primary schools only in Punjab have been shot down in the name of rationalisation and consolidation. Other provinces followed the same policy as well. But the more alarming element that is going to have tremendous and far reaching social consequences for the society is the quality of public education and multiple disparities being promoted because of ill planning and unequal distribution of resources.

Pakistan is confronted with a multitude of problems including poverty, social inequalities, unemployment and extremism, to name the few. Although the reason for low quality of life of all the individuals and societies may not be attributed to illiteracy but still the basic literacy and numeracy are considered a crucial part of individual development. Without an optimum rate of education and literacy the real potential of individuals and the societies cannot be realised and the society cannot be put on the path of sustainable economic development. Experts believe that countries are under developed because most of their people are under developed, having had no opportunity of expanding their potential and capacities in the service of society.

In a developing country like Pakistan, where there is low economic activity, education is the only vehicle for upward social mobility of poor and marginalised people

Educationists and economists also agree that at least 70 percent literacy rate is important for states to reach the take-off stage for achieving economic and social development. With current literacy rate of about 58 per cent and primary enrolment rate

of 57per cent, the country cannot embark upon the path of social development. In the presence of wide spread disparities and multiple inequalities education can be a great leveller, provided people have equal access to quality education at all levels.

In a developing country like Pakistan, where there is low economic activity, education is the only vehicle for upward social mobility of poor and marginalised people. However, since the last two decades or so, education has stopped to play such kind of transformative role. Although education in Pakistan has always been very selective and elitist in nature, this character has become more pronounced of late. Unequal access to education has created multiple disparities. Similarly, low quality of education in public sector institutions, particularly in higher education institutions, has resulted in a competitive disadvantage for poor communities and consequently they are being further marginalised and excluded from the social and economic sphere of life. According to one government source social and economic exclusion has resulted in multiple deprivation of more than 50 per cent of Pakistan's population.

UN agencies have developed a new post-2015 agenda for progress and development of individuals and societies. Pakistan has participated in these preparations. The theme adopted for the post-2015 agenda, which covers the period from 2015 to 2030, is "Sustainable Development" and accordingly Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have been developed. Sustainable development entails that all sectors of society are included in the development process. If Pakistan wants to avoid failure in future and does not want to miss the chance of sustainable development, it has to abandon the policies of elitism, exclusivity and marginalisation. Instead, Pakistan will have to pursue such educational policies that would provide equal access to quality education to all, including women, rural communities and marginalised people to include them in the development process.

Source: <http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2016/01/30/comment/is-education-promoting-social-inequality-and-marginalisation/>



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What has the IMF Programme Achieved? | Khurram Husain



IN a recent conference call with journalists, the Fund's mission chief for Pakistan was asked what the ongoing programme has achieved now that we are entering its final few months. His reply focused on three areas. He said government borrowing from the State Bank has been brought down to nearly zero, and given how inflationary this borrowing tends to be, this is a big positive.

He also pointed to the elimination of many SROs, which the accompanying special report says have brought down the cost of tax expenditures (the amount of revenue foregone as a result of giving special exemptions to specific parties) by 0.9pc of GDP, a considerable amount. The power to grant special exemptions has also been limited to a few exceptional cases only, and will require ECC approval, making the decision a little less discretionary. Nevertheless the Fund's staff see "further need for rationalising overgenerous tax expenditures, which pose a considerable threat to the integrity of the tax system", meaning much of the job remains to be done.

In addition, the mission chief pointed out that coverage under the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) has increased to 5.14 million beneficiaries by the end of 2015, an appreciable increase. The BISP is a good programme and has undergone various levels of scrutiny after being vilified as a patronage machine in the year that it was introduced. An increase in its coverage is undoubtedly a positive development.

Next to the commitments that were made, the deliverables pointed to by the mission chief appear downright puny.

But despite these positives, one cannot help but feel disappointed by the answer. Consider some of the objectives spelled out in the earlier reviews of the facility.

Measures were promised that would “lower the deficit to around 3.5pc of GDP” in the last fiscal year of the programme, and “place the debt-to-GDP ratio on a firmly declining path”. The debt-to-GDP ratio is not on a “firmly declining path”, and whether or not the fiscal deficit will come in around 3.5pc of GDP remains to be seen.

The biggest failures appear to have been in the area of public-sector enterprises. Consider this commitment on PIA, given in the December 2013 Letter of Intent by the government to the Fund: “We will hire financial advisers by end-March 2014 to seek potential strategic private-sector participation in the company. We plan to privatise 26pc of PIA’s shares to strategic investors by end-December 2014.”

And consider also this commitment regarding Pakistan Steel Mill: “We have appointed a professional board and will hire financial advisers by end-March 2014 to prepare a comprehensive restructuring plan and seek for (sic) potential strategic private-sector participation in the company.”

Needless to say, neither of these happened. Today, at the start of 2016, PIA is no closer to having a strategic private-sector partner than it was three years ago, and they’re talking about dumping the steel mill on the Sindh government instead. What sort of a track record does the Sindh government have in running large commercial enterprises? Meanwhile accumulated losses at PIA have risen to almost Rs300 billion. The story is similar in the power sector. The Fund finds that the power sector is still accumulating arrears that progress towards implementing a multiyear tariff as preparation for private investment is still lacking.

In the power sector, the December 2013 commitment made by the government included a list of measures to improve monitoring of power plants, rehabilitation, and increase private-sector investment in power generation. At the end of the paragraph, they included this specific target: “The expansions are expected to generate additional 2000 MW by 2016.”

Yet, almost exactly a year later, a number of private power producers threatened to invoke their sovereign guarantees to ensure recovery of outstanding amounts owed to

them by the government as liquidity constraints continued to bite. In the year 2015, oil prices dropped precipitously, opening a window of opportunity to tackle the financial constraints that were hampering power generation ever since the price of oil spiralled in the middle of the 2000s.

Yet “power supply did not show any major improvement through most of the fiscal year” said the State Bank in its latest annual report in 2015. The financial constraints to power generation don’t seem to have been alleviated in line with the commitments made back in December of 2013.

The circular debt made a comeback, rising to Rs648bn by June 2015, after the government had started its tenure with a one-time payoff totalling Rs582bn in June of 2013. Out of this, Rs313bn was fresh accumulation, according to the State Bank. To offset this, the government resorted to imposing three different surcharges on power tariff totalling almost Rs2 per unit. The maximum tariff for electricity for domestic consumers is Rs17, so these surcharges represent an 11pc increase for consumers, brought about through a classic firefighting mechanism that requires no consensus-building exercise, like an open hearing or a debate in parliament.

One could go on and on, giving example after example. The government made strategic commitments at the start of the programme. They promised to take steps to ensure the circular debt does not return, that public-sector enterprises stop being a burden on government expenditures, that the tax base would be broadened to increase revenues without burdening existing taxpayers, that the State Bank’s autonomy would be enhanced to meet international standards, that an energy act would be passed to strengthen the power sector and so on.

Yet all we have today is an increase in the GDP growth rate of less than 1pc, and high level of reserves. Next to the commitments that were made, the deliverables pointed to by the mission chief appear downright puny. The Fund still has a few months to demonstrate its effectiveness as a catalyst for domestic reform, but the sad part of the equation is that the Fund cannot want reform more than the authorities do.

Published in Dawn, January 14th, 2016

Source: <http://www.dawn.com/news/1232800/what-has-the-imf-programme-achieved>

Pakistan & India

2015 — Good, Bad and Indifferent | Express Tribune Editorial



The nation was still in shock from the massacre at the Army Public School in Peshawar in December 2014 as dawn broke on January 1, 2015, the month when the National Action Plan was formulated in response, and which has defined much of the state of the nation since. As plans go, it was more wish-list than plan and has been indifferently implemented since, with some elements more difficult to tackle than others. In particular, the registration of madrassas and the cutting off of funding to banned or extremist groups has been only partially successful at best. There is still no overarching national counter-narrative to that espoused by extreme ideologues within, and some remain nurtured by the state rather than constrained, an indication that such ideological positions are close to the heart of parts of the establishment.

The year has seen a re-crafting of foreign policy and in particular a pivot away from but not out of the influence of Arab states. The fulcrum was the decision — even with the briefest of hindsight a correct decision — not to join the Saudi-led war in Yemen. To have done so would have fanned the ever-present flames of sectarian conflict, occluded the developing and positive relationship with Iran and would have found little favour with any of our allies, both old-school and emergent. China is the place where Pakistan is going to do its metaphorical shopping in the future — the real-time shopping will continue to be done in the glittering malls of the Gulf, but the hardcore business of regional and national economies is going to be defined by the Chinese.

” Terrorism took a beating in 2015, and since both the Karachi operation and Operation Zarb-e-Azb have rolled on, terrorist incidents have dropped markedly, and external mutterings of ‘failed state’ have fallen silent

Further evidence of relative indifference came in the form of Pakistan’s submission to the Paris climate conference, where a delegation of 25 handed over a single page that committed the present and future governments to very little. Pakistan may have a miniscule carbon footprint compared to developed industrialised nations, but it is one of the 10 countries most at risk from the effects of global warming. Regular flooding on a massive scale has already damaged agricultural productivity, bad news in a nation where almost half the population is to a greater or lesser degree food-insecure. Extreme weather events are increasing in frequency and ferocity the world over, and the heatwave in Karachi and Sindh that killed thousands must not be viewed as an isolated event. It will get as hot or hotter in years to come, and the country is woefully ill-prepared. We ignore climate change at our extreme peril.

Politically, 2015 saw a rattling of the dice. Overall the PML-N will judge that it had a good year. Having looked distinctly wobbly as the challenge from the PTI coalesced around the dharna before parliament in mid-late 2014, the PML-N has recovered well. For the PTI, it is both good and bad. It has both won and lost in by-election races and there is a sense that it has lost traction in terms of establishing itself as a party with a truly national footprint. For the PPP, it has been a dismal year. It holds its heartland of Sindh and little besides, with not much by way of optimism for 2016.

Terrorism took a beating in 2015, and since both the Karachi operation and Operation Zarb-e-Azb have rolled on, terrorist incidents have dropped markedly, and external mutterings of 'failed state' have fallen silent. The year is ending on a note of cautious optimism in respect of the single greatest impediment to national development — the quality or otherwise of the relationship with India. There has been a flurry of diplomatic activity both in front of the cameras and behind the scenes in November and December, culminating in the 'surprise' visit of Narendra Modi, who received the warmest of welcomes from Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. As years go, it could have been better, but it also could have been worse. We hope for better in 2016.

Published in The Express Tribune, December 31st, 2015.

Source: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1019066/2015-good-bad-and-indifferent/>



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Barely a week after Pakistan and India agreed to make a fresh start in their troubled bilateral relationship, terrorists struck again in a bid to derail the peace process. The target was the Pathankot airbase in India. There was something of *déjà vu* in this chain of events: such terrorism has also happened in the past every time something positive happened or was about to happen in Indo-Pakistan relations. Indian Prime Minister Modi had made a surprise visit to Lahore on December 25 to meet his Pakistani counterpart Nawaz Sharif. The bonhomie generated by this visit had raised hopes for the resumption of a meaningful dialogue between the two neighbours. Unfortunately, the enemies of peace in the subcontinent have struck again to halt the process.

Several terrorists, dressed in Indian Army fatigues, attacked the airbase on January 2, 2016. Pathankot is located close to the Pakistani border. It has top-line aircraft, including MiG-21 fighter planes and Mi-25 attack helicopters. Indian forces took four days before the air base was cleared. Seven Indian military personnel and six terrorists were killed. There was strong criticism in India as to how several terrorists were able to

enter such a high-security area, despite advance warnings received from intelligence, and even more about the lack of coordination and quick effective response against the terrorists. The Indian reports were that four terrorists had kidnapped the official car of a superintendent of police, more than 24 hours before the attack, in which they travelled to the airbase. In all, six terrorists scaled the boundary wall where floodlights were not functioning. The encounter dragged on for four days, though the terrorists were unable to reach the parked aircraft. The kidnapped police officer was later suspected as a possible accomplice in the attack. All of these failings reflected poorly on the efficiency of the world's fifth largest military power.

On January 4, a Kashmiri group, United Jihad Council, accepted responsibility for the Pathankot incident. However, Indian circles raised fingers against Pakistan and it was alleged that the terrorists belonged to the Jaish-e-Muhammad group (outlawed in Pakistan since 2002). It was also claimed that some cell phone calls made by the terrorists to numbers in Pakistan had been intercepted. The Indian news media as usual went to town accusing Pakistan of direct involvement in the Pathankot incident, and even named Pakistani airbases where these terrorists had allegedly received training for the Pathankot operation.

However, little evidence has been produced to substantiate these charges. On the contrary, there were several obvious loopholes in the allegations. It was difficult to understand as to how these terrorists were able to cross a heavily guarded border; and walked fifty kilometres carrying over 50 kilos of ammunition, 30 kilos of grenades and assault weapons. Similarly, it made little sense as to how they used the cell phone of the kidnapped Indian police officer which was then returned to him; and how they openly discussed their plans in the presence of Indian passengers in the car and then allowed them to go free. The Pakistan Foreign Office promptly condemned the terrorist attack, expressed sympathy for the victims and reiterated resolve to cooperate with India to completely eradicate the menace of terrorism. Nawaz Sharif next spoke on phone with Modi to assure him that Pakistan would trace the helpers of the terrorists on the basis of "leads" provided by India. This commitment of cooperation with India was reiterated at a high-powered meeting attended by the army chief General Raheel Sharif, the National Security Adviser and the DG ISI. The meeting expressed the confidence that the goodwill generated by recent high-level contacts between the two sides would enable them to remain committed to a sustained, meaningful and comprehensive dialogue process. Soon after the terrorist attack in Pathankot, the Indian Consulate General in Mazar-e-Sharif in northern Afghanistan also came under a terrorist attack on January 3, raising additional concerns in India.

Unlike the past, the Indian official reaction to the Pathankot incident was more restrained. Prime Minister Modi's first public reaction was that the "enemies of humanity" had struck in Pathankot. Home Minister Rajnath Singh said that India wanted good relations with Pakistan but if there was any terrorist attack on India, "we will give a befitting reply". In editorial comments, several leading Indian newspapers advised the government to "stay the course" and not serve the purpose of the attackers by stalling or suspending the peace dialogue with Pakistan. The attack was seen as an attempt to undermine the peace process. Indian government sources confirmed that "specific and actionable information" and details about the terrorists were being shared with Pakistan through the proper channel and India had pressed for stern action against them as a condition for any future talks with Pakistan. India has no doubt been shocked by the terrorist attack on a key Indian airbase. But to see matters in perspective, it needs to be recalled that a Pakistani airbase, Badaber near Peshawar, was also attacked by terrorists on September 15, 2015 in which over 43 people were killed, including 21 security officers and 14 terrorists.

The Pathankot incident was condemned by many countries. China stated that the attack might have been launched intentionally to disrupt the momentum in talks between Pakistan and India. A US State Department spokesman said that the US expected that Pakistan will take action against the perpetrators of the terror attack. John Kerry, the US Secretary of State, later phoned Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to urge Pakistan to cooperate in tracing the culprits, while hoping that the peace process with India would continue.

The barren narrative of the last 68 years of Indo-Pakistan relations suggests that both countries have to find ways to live in peace with each other. To resolve their disputes, the best way forward is dialogue and sensitivity for each other's concerns. It would be absurd to give a veto to terrorists in both countries who want to disrupt the peace. Both governments must also check the hate lobbies that are always looking for excuses to whip up popular emotions to keep India and Pakistan apart. Modi and Nawaz must show maturity and refuse to be provoked by such enemies of peace involved in periodic terrorist incidents.

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

Source: <http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=285428>

Looking Beyond Dialogue | Mohsin Raza Malik



Pakistan and India formally announced to initiate the 'Comprehensive Bilateral Dialogue' during Indian Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj's visit to Pakistan last month. It was decided that the so-called Comprehensive Bilateral Dialogue would include all the pillars from the previous 'Composite Dialogue' and the later 'Resumed Dialogue' besides the additional points. Now, the Foreign Secretaries of both countries are scheduled to meet in Islamabad on January 15 this month to discuss the modalities and schedule to carry forward the recently-agreed dialogue process. However, since India is awaiting a 'prompt' and 'decisive' action from Pakistan following the recent Pathankot terror attack, therefore now the future of this dialogue process hangs in the balance once again. As a matter of fact, primarily dependent upon the circumstances and the mood of the negotiating parties, the Pak-India dialogue process has been facing a sort of to-be-or-not-to-be question.

Aiming to resolve their bilateral disputes peacefully, the Prime Ministers of both India and Pakistan signed the historic Simla Agreement in 1972. In this agreement, both countries resolved to "put an end to the conflict and confrontation that have hitherto marred their relations and work for the promotion of a friendly and harmonious relationship and the establishment of durable peace in the sub-continent." This agreement paved the way for a long and complex dialogue process between the two countries. However, there has hardly been any major breakthrough so far.

Both countries could not devise the basic modalities, modus operandi and agenda for these talks for a long time. In 1997, for the first time, Pakistan and India formally evolved an efficient and systematic mechanism for negotiations in the form of the Composite Dialogue Process (CDP). It was an important milestone in the Pak-India dialogue process and set the basic modalities and a road-map for future dialogue between the two countries. Eight issues were identified, and the level at which they were to be addressed. However, in the absence of required degree of resolution and commitment on the part of both countries, the CDP could never be properly initiated. Among other things, the 1999 Kargil war and the 2001 Indian parliament are believed to be the two major spoilers of this plan.

In fact, the intention, sincerity and seriousness on the part of the negotiating parties always make a big difference while resolving a conflict through negotiation. Unfortunately, these basic elements have always been missing in the dialogue process between the two countries.

Similarly, In order to get the desired results in negotiations, relations between the negotiating parties should be based on mutual respect and trust. Observably, there has always been a considerable trust-deficit between the two countries. Both nuclear-armed South Asian neighbours have been quite skeptical about the sincerity of their negotiating partner. Both countries have been accusing each other of planning and sponsoring various acts of terrorism in their respective territories. At times, they have not even been on speaking terms with each other. The so-called CBM's have also utterly failed in bridging the trust-deficit between the two countries so far. In such a state of affairs, a meaningful and purposeful dialogue process cannot either be initiated or concluded successfully.

Chapter VI of the UN Charter deals with various means of pacific settlement of international disputes. Article 33(1) of UN Charter provides: "the parties to any dispute, the continuance of which is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security, shall, first of all, seek a solution by negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or arrangements, or other peaceful means of their own choice."

Negotiation, undoubtedly, is the oldest and most common method of settlement of international disputes peacefully. Generally, it is recognized as the first step towards the settlement of such disputes. There have been many international treaties that make a failure to settle a dispute by negotiation a condition precedent to judicial settlement or arbitration of international disputes. However, the success of negotiations always

depends upon the availability of an ideal and conducive environment. First, both parties should be comfortable enough with each other to sit together and discuss their issues exhaustively. Both parties should be cooperative and accommodating enough to understand each other's points of view. Besides this, if the subject matter of the negotiation is a somewhat complex issue, then this negotiation is very unlikely to achieve desirable objectives.

As a matter of fact, owing to its certain inherent weaknesses and drawbacks, negotiation is not considered an effective method for the settlement of international disputes. Therefore, when two parties fail to settle their mutual disputes through negotiations, a 'third party' is needed to positively intervene to help both parties reach a settlement. Under the UN Charter, 'mediation', 'conciliation' and 'good offices' are three methods of pacific settlement of international disputes involving third-party intervention. When two parties are unwilling to negotiate, or fail to negotiate effectively, third-party intervention has been found very useful and fruitful. This assistance may be requested by one or both of the parties, or voluntarily offered by a third party.

Conciliation is the process of settling a dispute by referring it to a third party which elucidates the facts and suggests proposals for a settlement. 'Good offices' is also a diplomatic method in which a third party, acting as a 'go-between', tries to create an environment conducive for negotiations, and helps both disputants come to the negotiating table. Mediation is another effective process through which a third party proactively endeavours to bring the disputants together and assists them in reaching a settlement. In this case, a third party not only provides its services but also actively participates in the talks process and makes positive suggestions for the ultimate settlement of disputes.

In recent times, we have just observed third-party intervention playing a positive role in initiating and advancing the so-called Middle East Peace Process. The active participation and extensive support extended by the US certainly has helped reach milestones in the Middle East like the Camp David Accord, Madrid Conference, Oslo I, Oslo II, Sharm-el-Sheikh memorandum etc. And now the UN has also accorded Palestine a non-member observer state status. Certainly, the Palestinians and Israel could not have reached an agreement through bilateral negotiations alone.

In 1966, the Soviet Union helped Pakistan and India conclude a peace agreement – the Tashkent Declaration. The recent Iran-US nuclear deal is another diplomatic success story. The so-called P5+1 countries have helped Iran and the US reach a framework agreement marking the end of a 12-year confrontation between the two countries. This

deal necessarily shows that sometimes extensive and sincere diplomatic efforts made by certain countries can lead to a settlement between such states that are considered each other's 'foremost enemies'.

Since inking the Simla Agreement in 1972, Pakistan and India have been trying to settle their 'outstanding disputes' through dialogue.

However, this dialogue process has miserably failed to resolve their mutual conflicts so far. The Kashmir issue has been the major source of confrontation between the two countries. Now, for a few years, cross-border terrorism has also become another major irritant between Pakistan and India. Regrettably, instead of resolving these issue through dialogue, both countries have started setting 'pre-conditions' for the initiation of this dialogue process.

Obviously, the current dialogue process will get both countries nowhere. In fact, a bilateral forum can hardly help both countries resolve their substantial issues, namely Kashmir and terrorism. The so-called bilateralism has already severely damaged the international character of the Kashmir issue. Therefore, now Pakistan should seriously think and look beyond the dialogue to settle bilateral disputes with India. For this purpose, third-party intervention, in the form of mediation or conciliation, should be sought. It is very pertinent to mention that the historic Simla Agreement also contains the provision for the third party intervention. Clause (ii) of the agreement says: "That the two countries settle their differences by peaceful means through bilateral negotiations or by any other peaceful means mutually agreed upon between them."

The US has been rendering a sort of good offices to make both countries come to negotiating table for a long time. A few days ago, the US Secretary of State John Kerry urged Pakistan and India to continue their dialogue even after the recent Pathankot terror attack in India.

Therefore, now the major powers, including the US, may be asked to formally and actively mediate between India and Pakistan to help them resolve their outstanding disputes. Similarly, P5+1 type multilateral initiatives can also be sought for this purpose. Instead of sticking to so-called bilateralism for another fifty years, Pakistan should seriously strive for alternative diplomatic means to settle its longstanding disputes with India. Indeed, Franklin D Roosevelt has very rightly said, "there are many ways of going forward, but only one way of standing still".

Source: <http://nation.com.pk/columns/13-Jan-2016/looking-beyond-dialogue>

Pakistan's tricky foreign policy balancing act | Kamran Yousaf



ISLAMABAD: There has never been a dull moment in Pakistan. Who would have thought that after harbouring hostilities for much of the year Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi would make a surprise stop in Lahore or that there could ever be strains in ties with brotherly Muslim countries in the Gulf?

But such has been the ride for Pakistan on the foreign policy front in 2015.

India

The biggest highs and lows of 2015 for Pakistan came from the dramatic turnaround in ties with India.

In space of just four weeks, the prime ministers of Pakistan and India met twice—first in Paris and then in Lahore. In between, there were secret talks between the national security advisers and formal talks between the two foreign ministers in Islamabad.

The flurry of meetings helped break the ice that had gathered for much of the year, especially after an attempt to hold bilateral NSA talks collapsed in August so spectacularly.

These meetings eventually led to the resumption of stalled bilateral dialogue to discuss all outstanding issues – Kashmir included. While the year ends on a high, one can't help but wonder: will this bonhomie created between Modi and Nawaz translate into more

meaningful actions on core issues or will this too suffer at the hands of mischief-makers and hawks. The question remains, who has the beef with peace in South Asia?

Gulf countries

If China is its all weather friend in the East, surely Gulf countries – Saudi Arabia in particular – are Pakistan's strongest allies in the West. But 2015 tested the strength of that friendship like never before.

As Saudi Arabia went to war against the Houthi rebels in neighbouring Yemen, it could have been forgiven for thinking that Pakistan would stand in its corner without question. But Islamabad surprised one of its strongest allies in the world by distancing it self from the conflict.

The move drew heavy criticism from Arab states with UAE's deputy foreign minister lashing out at Pakistan for 'betraying its allies'.

But by the end of the year it seemed that some amends had been made with Pakistan joining the 34-nation Saudi-led alliance against terrorism.

However, participation has been conditioned on abstaining from any action which would damage its ties with neighboring Iran or further destabilises Syria.

Iran

The other half of the balancing act that Pakistan pulled on Yemen was ties with Iran. Islamabad's decision to stay away from the conflict was firmly with a view on relations with its south west neighbour. And the decision was not remiss with Tehran.

With Iran soon to have sanctions lifted after successful nuclear negotiations with the P5, and ties with Tehran on the up, 2016 promises deliverance of many stalled promises and projects.

United States

For the first time in years, there was a hint of steady growth in Pakistan-US ties in 2015.

With Pakistan making efforts on the reconciliation process in Afghanistan and taking action against militant groups in its tribal belt, it more or less fulfilled two of the biggest demands from US in recent years.

As a result, 2015 saw the fewest drone strikes in the past seven years.

Elsewhere, US approved sales of almost a \$1 billion worth of weapons to Pakistan and was trying to have Congress clear a sale of eight F-16s. The CSF funds were also extended in a sign of improving relations.

One US official put this to 'better understanding' between the two countries on key issues.

China

While one may believe India and Afghanistan were the most prominent aspect of Pakistan's foreign relations, it was in fact China that was central to all of its policy decisions.

The year started off with a bang with Chinese President finally undertaking the visit to Pakistan, which the government claimed had been postponed due to the four-month long protest in Islamabad in 2014.

With Xijiping's visit came the multi-billion dollar bonanza in the form the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

The CPEC transformed the focus of the government on internal projects as it worked into a frenzy over a network of rail and road links which would China's impoverished western regions with Central Asia through Gwadar deep-sea port.

China also backed Pakistan's bid for membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation.

Don't be surprised if you see more Chinese arriving in 2016.

Russia

One of the key aspects of Pakistan's foreign policy has been a very delicate balancing act – almost like a ballerina dancing on a string.

This was most apparent in how Islamabad managed to build upon its ties with Moscow while retaining Washington.

The outgoing year saw an upward trend in their relationship and spearheaded by economic choices in the field of armament and energy. Expect more in 2016.

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

Economy

Economic Prospects for 2016



In its latest report, *Global Economic Prospects 2016*, the World Bank has warned of threats to developing economies, highlighting that there has been an increase in risks that could see growth remaining subdued in 2016. The report has talked about China's economic slowdown, which would affect other countries as well, including Pakistan, but also consists of several upbeat components that convey that while we have made progress, fiscal risks continue to be a challenge. Pakistan has benefited from falling oil prices that have kept inflation in check, also enabling it to reduce the interest rate to boost growth. Security concerns have lessened and that has boosted investor confidence. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and the "anticipated return of Iran to the international economic community" will further benefit the country.

But there are also words of caution, with the influential report stating that the gains of fiscal consolidation — achieved due to a variety of reasons — "may be lost if spending ramps up during the pre-election period". This is very likely to happen as governments tend to speed up spending towards the end of their five-year term. The report also added that sovereign guarantees associated with the CPEC could pose additional fiscal risks over the medium term.

” There are also words of caution, with the influential report stating that the gains of fiscal consolidation — achieved due to a variety of reasons — “may be lost if spending ramps up during the pre-election period”.
This is very likely to happen

Economists, as well as the central bank governor, have already highlighted concerns over the financial components of the CPEC, urging the government to come out with solid numbers that would clarify the country’s debt position after the project. No one denies that Pakistan’s public debt has ballooned in recent times and one of the ways to arrest its growth is through meaningful foreign investments — not just through the CPEC — and increase exports. While the increasing-exports-road may be a longer one and the situation is not helped by a global economic slowdown, improving the domestic business climate by easing tedious regulations and implementing long-term, meaningful policies could be a medium-term solution. Why is it that the government insists on the private sector following a regulatory process that ends up making it harder for businesses to conduct their operations? Why isn’t the private sector facilitated instead of hampered at every stage? Emphasising the importance of investment-friendly policies might sound cliched, but given the current state of affairs, it is time the government started paying heed to this advice.

Published in The Express Tribune, January 11th, 2016.

Source: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1025211/economic-prospects-for-2016/>



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Where is the Global Economy Headed? | Shahid Javed Burki



The year is still young but even in the first few weeks of 2016 strains are being felt by the global economy. What do they tell us about the future structure of the world economy? By far the most important feature in the emerging shape of the global economy is the reaction to the turmoil in emerging economies. Most of the larger ones saw a sharp reduction in their rate of economic expansion in the last quarter of 2014. What is at work is a change in relations among developed and developing countries.

Links among nations at different levels of development or those with different economic sizes work in both ways. They can pull as well as push. For a couple of decades — in the 1980s and the 1990s — economic strength of the developed world pulled emerging nations along with them. The latter expanded because of the growing markets for their products in the former. It was this link that was behind what is generally called the East Asian miracle. Rapid expansion of the economies of the Western world lifted the incomes of all segments. Those at the lower end of the income distribution scale saw significant increases in their disposable incomes. This led to an increase in the demand for basic consumption goods. They were mostly produced by the East Asians using their cheap labour. The result was the economic expansion the world had never seen before in its history. China, for instance, saw the size of its economy increase 32 times in the three decades between 1980 and 2010.

These links were not expected to last for long and they didn't. The delinking started with the Great Recession of 2008-09 that saw very sharp drops in rates of economic growth in rich countries. This affected emerging markets as well. However, one part of the impact was the result of the way emerging nations had financed their initial expansion. As developing nations responded to the increased opportunities in developed markets, they attracted investment capital from the world's financial markets. The positive signals from rich emerging nations were translated by both trade and capital flows. The overall result for emerging nations was positive. In the 1980s, emerging markets along with poor developing countries accounted for 36 per cent of the world product. In 2016, their share is 56 per cent, a massive gain of 20 percentage points.

A significant increase in the rate of growth that led to the increase in emerging nations' global share was financed from debt. It was borrowing from domestic banks that helped them to initially escape the worst of the Great Recession. From 2008 to 2015, corporate debt in these countries including the bonds they floated expanded from \$8.9 trillion to \$24.5 trillion. China accounted for a significant part of this. In some smaller East Asian nations, consumers also borrowed heavily. Such debt burdens could have been sustained and serviced had personal and corporate incomes continued to increase. That did not happen because of the sharp contraction in China's expansion. From 1999 to 2011, commodity price increases amounted to 80 per cent. This was fuelled by what was seen as China's insatiable demand. That demand collapsed leading to a 50 per cent decline in the commodity price index from its 2011 peak. Most of this reduction occurred in 2015 as China slowed down.

OPEC's approach to managing its oil resources didn't help either. The oil exporters led by Saudi Arabia decided not to reduce their output in order to maintain their market share. Riyadh wanted to push out the high-cost producers in the United States who were able to exploit new technologies such as fracking and horizontal drilling to significantly increase the country's oil and gas output. The OPEC policy succeeded up to a point but there was a cost associated with it. The drop in the price of oil reached the point at which Saudi Arabia was faced with a large and growing fiscal deficit. The Kingdom announced that it was contemplating putting Aramco, the national oil company, on the market. If Riyadh follows through, Aramco could be capitalised at more than a trillion dollars, making it the world's largest company. Its market value could be a multiple of that of ExxonMobil; its stated oil reserves are 261 billion barrels, or more than 10 times that of the American oil company. However, even a semi-privatised Aramco will not fully follow the dictates of the Saudi administration. An entirely new dynamic would thus be introduced into the decision-making process.

Saudi Arabia was not the only commodity producer that was deeply affected by the collapse of the commodity markets. For Brazil, commodities represent 45 per cent of exports (iron ore, soybeans, sugar) and about as much for Malaysia (oil and copper). The Great Recession had many ripple effects. Demand contracted sharply for developed countries leading to a significant slowdown in emerging markets' exports. This in turn brought down commodity prices, which slowed down the rate of economic growth in the developing world. In both the developed and developing countries, the non-rich segments of their respective populations suffered more. This had political as well as economic consequences. All sharp economic slowdowns leave long-lasting consequences. The one in 2008-09 will not be any different.

Published in The Express Tribune, January 25th, 2016.

Source: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1033426/where-is-the-global-economy-headed/>

China mulling trade route with Iran as Pak leadership bickers | Mian Ibrar



- Iranian president says there's only 36km difference between Gwadar and Chabahar Port; Iran would provide safer route to Chinese shipments
- Ahsan Iqbal says Chinese investors might opt for other countries if Pakistan fails to resolve domestic issues

While political parties and provincial governments continue to squabble for a bigger pie of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), China is seriously mulling a new trade route linking Xinjiang province with Iran's Chabahar Port bypassing Pakistan, *Pakistan Today* has learnt reliably.

During the recent landmark visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping to Tehran, the two countries agreed to enhance cooperation including in fossil and renewable energy, transportation, railways, ports, industry, commerce and services.

China, along with the United States, Britain, France, Germany and Russia, was among the countries that reached the agreement with Iran in July to curtail its nuclear activities in exchange for ending international sanctions.

Media reports said China has committed an immediate injection of \$51 billion into Iran, vowing to enhance bilateral trade to the tune of \$600 billion in the next 10 years. This would almost match China's immediate investment in Pakistan under the ambitious CPEC project.

A well-placed source in the federal government told *Pakistan Today* that intelligence reports submitted to Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif have warned him about the offer made by Iran.

“During the meeting with President Xi Jinping, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani asked his Chinese counterpart to adopt Chabahar Port rather than Gwadar which would be linked to a secure, beneficial trade route including a pipeline linking Iran and China,” the source said.

“The Iranian president said that there was a difference of only 36 kilometres between Gwadar and Chabahar but Iran would provide a route to Chinese shipments that was safer than Pakistan,” the source added.

The source said that the Iranian leadership gave President Xi Jinping a detailed briefing on its offer, detailing various possible routes from China to Chabahar.

“Moreover, Iran offered provide complete national unity and harmony unlike Pakistan where trade route is unsafe and it also lacks national unity,” the source quoted the intelligence reports.

The source said that national harmony and unity are two words very near and dear to the heart of the Chinese government and it is already concerned about the prospects of the CPEC due to instability and the scourge of terrorism that poses a major threat to the economic corridor.

It is pertinent to mention here that political bickering is increasing among the four provinces of Pakistan. Politicians are all trying to get major chunk out of the CPEC funding. Observers and analysts blame mishandling by the federal government for widespread concern over what they call an uneven distribution of resources among the four provinces.

According to the plan, not only has the Punjab government won the trade route, a major chunk of development and energy projects are being established in central Punjab, which have triggered a debate over the route.

“The Chinese government is largely concerned over the handling of the CPEC. They are unhappy over the fact that the federal and Punjab governments are only interested in energy projects, which the Sharif family wants to be completed before time. But no focus is being laid over the route construction and evolving harmony and unity over the trade route,” the source said.

The source added that China had already completed its part of the trade corridor but Pakistani government was way behind vis-à-vis completion of trade route on its side of the border.

The source said even the military leadership was also unhappy with the handling of the CPEC by the federal government.

“Everything in CPEC is being handled by the close relatives of the prime minister. Even federal ministers are kept out of the loop,” the source said, adding that it was a major reason that while the chief ministers of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh were asking for more shares, none of the federal ministers known for their strong loyalty to Sharifs come forward to defend the CPEC.

When contacted, Planning and Development Minister Ahsan Iqbal said that Iran had already shared its plans for establishing its own corridor with China.

“Yes, they are working on it. In his recent visit to Islamabad, Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif had also informed Pakistan about his government’s plans to develop a trade corridor linking Iran and China,” he added.

Iqbal said it was a world of competition and every country has the right to vie for its own advantages.

Asked whether the government feels threatened by the growing interest of China in the Iranian corridor, Ahsan Iqbal said that Pakistan does not feel threatened by Chabahar Port.

“Look, Gwadar provides the best solution to trade ambitions of China. But we have to resolve our problems very fast. Our politicians need to understand that if we keep fighting on shares, entire Pakistan can lose the benefits of CPEC,” he added.

Asked whether there were any chances that China might scrap CPEC for Chabahar, Ahsan Iqbal said China was a time-tested friend and it would never leave Pakistan in the lurch.

“The Chinese government would never leave Pakistan. But if we don’t resolve our differences, Chinese investors might opt for other countries rather than investing in Pakistan,” he added.

Tong Liang, a Chinese journalist based in Islamabad and covering the CPEC, was also of the opinion that there is no alternative to CPEC for Chinese government.

"Without any claim of authority as representing a Chinese official, I believe that no alternative of CPEC can be found. CPEC is not a transit corridor that can be replaced by any route that reaches the sea, it is an economic corridor that aims at boosting Pakistan's development as a modern and industrialised country," Tong said.

Source:<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2016/01/30/national/china-mulling-trade-route-with-iran-as-pak-leadership-bickers/>

What has the IMF Programme Achieved? | Khurram Husain



IN a recent conference call with journalists, the Fund's mission chief for Pakistan was asked what the ongoing programme has achieved now that we are entering its final few months. His reply focused on three areas. He said government borrowing from the State Bank has been brought down to nearly zero, and given how inflationary this borrowing tends to be, this is a big positive.

He also pointed to the elimination of many SROs, which the accompanying special report says have brought down the cost of tax expenditures (the amount of revenue foregone as a result of giving special exemptions to specific parties) by 0.9pc of GDP, a considerable amount. The power to grant special exemptions has also been limited to a few exceptional cases only, and will require ECC approval, making the decision a little less discretionary. Nevertheless the Fund's staff see "further need for rationalising overgenerous tax expenditures, which pose a considerable threat to the integrity of the tax system", meaning much of the job remains to be done.

In addition, the mission chief pointed out that coverage under the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) has increased to 5.14 million beneficiaries by the end of 2015, an appreciable increase. The BISP is a good programme and has undergone various levels of scrutiny after being vilified as a patronage machine in the year that it was introduced. An increase in its coverage is undoubtedly a positive development.

Next to the commitments that were made, the deliverables pointed to by the mission chief appear downright puny.

But despite these positives, one cannot help but feel disappointed by the answer. Consider some of the objectives spelled out in the earlier reviews of the facility. Measures were promised that would “lower the deficit to around 3.5pc of GDP” in the last fiscal year of the programme, and “place the debt-to-GDP ratio on a firmly declining path”. The debt-to-GDP ratio is not on a “firmly declining path”, and whether or not the fiscal deficit will come in around 3.5pc of GDP remains to be seen.

The biggest failures appear to have been in the area of public-sector enterprises. Consider this commitment on PIA, given in the December 2013 Letter of Intent by the government to the Fund: “We will hire financial advisers by end-March 2014 to seek potential strategic private-sector participation in the company. We plan to privatise 26pc of PIA’s shares to strategic investors by end-December 2014.”

And consider also this commitment regarding Pakistan Steel Mill: “We have appointed a professional board and will hire financial advisers by end-March 2014 to prepare a comprehensive restructuring plan and seek for (sic) potential strategic private-sector participation in the company.”

Needless to say, neither of these happened. Today, at the start of 2016, PIA is no closer to having a strategic private-sector partner than it was three years ago, and they’re talking about dumping the steel mill on the Sindh government instead. What sort of a track record does the Sindh government have in running large commercial enterprises? Meanwhile accumulated losses at PIA have risen to almost Rs300 billion. The story is similar in the power sector. The Fund finds that the power sector is still accumulating arrears that progress towards implementing a multiyear tariff as preparation for private investment is still lacking.

In the power sector, the December 2013 commitment made by the government included a list of measures to improve monitoring of power plants, rehabilitation, and increase private-sector investment in power generation. At the end of the paragraph, they included this specific target: “The expansions are expected to generate additional 2000 MW by 2016.”

Yet, almost exactly a year later, a number of private power producers threatened to invoke their sovereign guarantees to ensure recovery of outstanding amounts owed to them by the government as liquidity constraints continued to bite. In the year 2015, oil

prices dropped precipitously, opening a window of opportunity to tackle the financial constraints that were hampering power generation ever since the price of oil spiralled in the middle of the 2000s.

Yet “power supply did not show any major improvement through most of the fiscal year” said the State Bank in its latest annual report in 2015. The financial constraints to power generation don’t seem to have been alleviated in line with the commitments made back in December of 2013.

The circular debt made a comeback, rising to Rs648bn by June 2015, after the government had started its tenure with a one-time payoff totalling Rs582bn in June of 2013. Out of this, Rs313bn was fresh accumulation, according to the State Bank. To offset this, the government resorted to imposing three different surcharges on power tariff totalling almost Rs2 per unit. The maximum tariff for electricity for domestic consumers is Rs17, so these surcharges represent an 11pc increase for consumers, brought about through a classic firefighting mechanism that requires no consensus-building exercise, like an open hearing or a debate in parliament.

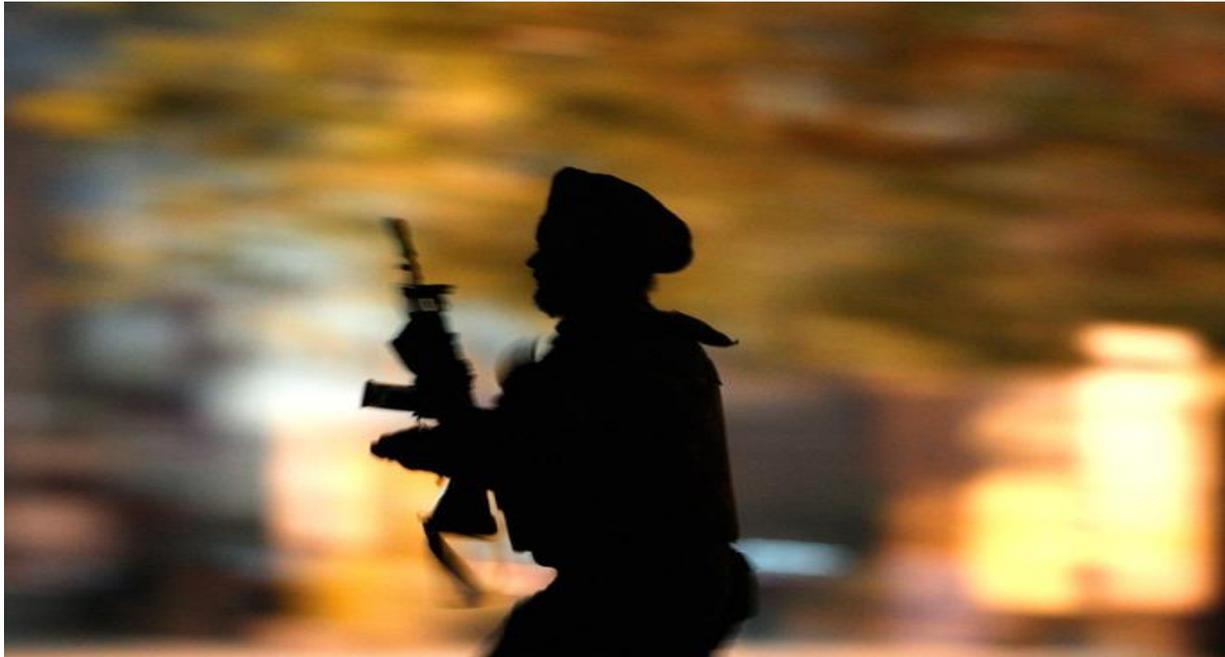
One could go on and on, giving example after example. The government made strategic commitments at the start of the programme. They promised to take steps to ensure the circular debt does not return, that public-sector enterprises stop being a burden on government expenditures, that the tax base would be broadened to increase revenues without burdening existing taxpayers, that the State Bank’s autonomy would be enhanced to meet international standards, that an energy act would be passed to strengthen the power sector and so on.

Yet all we have today is an increase in the GDP growth rate of less than 1pc, and high level of reserves. Next to the commitments that were made, the deliverables pointed to by the mission chief appear downright puny. The Fund still has a few months to demonstrate its effectiveness as a catalyst for domestic reform, but the sad part of the equation is that the Fund cannot want reform more than the authorities do.

Published in Dawn, January 14th, 2016

Source: <http://www.dawn.com/news/1232800/what-has-the-imf-programme-achieved>

ISIS, Terrorism and Global Security | Changezi Sandhu



TERRORISM is a despicable activity that has tormented the world for many decades with the purpose of spreading panic and violence in the society. It also compels people thinking that the ongoing system has failed to protect the fundamental rights of people. So, they opt to revolt and agitate through their unlawful activities. As a political violence, terrorism targets Government officials, civilians including men, women, children and old people indiscriminately. To accomplish their political objectives, these extremists and terrorists impede democracy and thwart government endeavours for political and economic reforms.

But unfortunately, there is not even a specific definition of terrorism. Due to problem of definition, there are nearly 5000 definitions and every state has coined its own definition on the basis of its national interests. Emergence of ISIS, TTP, Boko Haram and other insurgent groups is not a new phenomenon but terrorism is deeply rooted in history and as old as human history. The zealots were a Jewish group which emerged in AD 6, and targeted government officials to spread panic in the society and to push Romans out of Palestine. The struggle failed and nearly 2000 Zealots were executed, their struggle turned over to guerrilla war but finally, crushed.

A series of brutal and bloodiest attacks which recently jolted Paris is also not a new event after the WW-II. Many such attempts have been made in Europe. Christian Europe had to taste terrorism with its particular forms during the 15th century. The French Revolution of 1789 introduced the term "Terrorism" and at the time, it was linked with the states that were declared as "Enemies of the state". More developed pattern of state terrorism was used in Nazi Germany of Hitler and Soviet Union in 1930s and 1940s. Europe and North America had to face both destructive and creative impacts of the industrial and scientific revolutions in 1800s. President of France and Italy, the king of Portugal and Italy, the Prime Ministers of Spain and the Empress of Austria fell victims to terrorist attacks in 1890.

Anarchists also tried to kill German Kaiser and Chancellor. But actions of terrorist or anarchist groups differed from the modern day terrorists as they targeted only government officials and rulers rather than civilians. For example, Russian anarchist group known as the 'peoples' will' never planted bomb on public places, never kidnapped civilians and never used public as shield to pursue their objectives. After WW-I (1814-1818), major monarchies and world powers like Hungary, Austria, Germany and Russia gave way to ethnic, factional violence and terrorist actions. In the name of national self-determination, Eastern and Central Europe came under the terrorist violence.

1940s to 1980s, the cold war between the USA and Soviet Union and their allies painted terrorism with an ideology. Marxist Leninists also advocated terrorism in different manners for the justification of revolutionary movements. In short, the victory of subjugated and oppressed people is the cause of violence in third world countries while leg-pulling between international powers and their allies has become a driving force in the disturbance of law and order situation in the progressed states.

In current scenario, nearly 130 people were killed in Paris massacre on Nov 14 and ISIS had taken its responsibility. Now the question arises, what are the main reasons behind the attacks? And how can such attacks be avoided in future? An important factor appears to me, is Western foreign policy towards Middle East and their political and moral support to inhuman acts of different states on oppressed people who have been fighting for their basic right of liberty for many decades.

In historical perspective, West faced severe reaction of the fundamentalist Muslims and heterodox Muslim militancy because of its policies towards the Middle East. 9/11 incident was also an aggression against those policies. The rise of ISIS and its anti-western attitude depict the consequences of those policies, still going-on. Another major

factor that has been boosting terrorism in different shapes on different levels for many decades is international power support to barbarous, atrocious and brutal policies of different states on particular issues like support to India and Israel on Kashmir and Palestine issues etc. Paris incident may not have occurred if West felt pains of Kashmiris and Palestinian people who are also created human by God; whatever one may call them, does not matter.

I would not postulate any solution to get rid of the new wave of militancy because alliances, meetings and conferences on the issue are dramas to satisfy public showing seriousness. If international powers want to wipe terrorism out, they will have to bereft their aggressive attitude of their policies towards the Muslim world and major conflicts etc. West can only abolish terrorism with the help of Muslim world. So, they must reduce grievances of the Muslim world through normalizing their policies towards them and realizing that they are not perceived as inferior and terrorist and all of us have to combat the challenge together. When West changes its mentality, the Muslim world will also and when West feels sorrows and pains of the Muslims, definitely, they will also feel like that.

— The writer is freelance columnist based in Lahore.

Source: <http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=284279>

Middle East still rocking from First World War pacts made 100 years ago | Ian Black



IN an idle moment between cocktail parties in the Arab capital where they served, a British and French diplomat were chatting recently about their respective countries' legacies in the Middle East: why not commemorate them with a new rock band? And they could call it Sykes-Picot and the Balfour Declaration.

It was just a joke. These First World War agreements cooked up in London and Paris in the dying days of the Ottoman Empire paved the way for new Arab nation states, the creation of Israel and the continuing plight of the Palestinians.

And if their memory has faded in the west as their centenaries approach, they are still widely blamed for the problems of the region at an unusually violent and troubled time.

“This is history that the Arab peoples will never forget because they see it as directly relevant to problems they face today,” argues Oxford University’s Eugene Rogan , author of several influential works on modern Middle Eastern history.

In 2014, when militant Islamic State group fighters broke through the desert border between Iraq and Syria — flying black flags on their captured US-made Humvees — and announced the creation of a transnational caliphate, they triumphantly pronounced the death of Sykes-Picot . That gave a half-forgotten and much-misrepresented

colonial-era deal a starring role in their propaganda war — and a new lease of life on Twitter.

Half truths go a long way: the secret agreement between Sir Mark Sykes and Francois Georges-Picot in May 1916 divided the Ottoman lands into British and French spheres — and came to light only when it was published by the Bolsheviks.

It also famously contradicted earlier promises made by the British to Sharif Hussein of Mecca before he launched what T.E. Lawrence called the “revolt in the desert” against the Turks. It did not draw the borders of Arab states — that came later — but it has become a kind of convenient shorthand for western double-dealing and perfidy.

And it was undermined too by the Balfour Declaration in November 1917 — mourned for decades by Palestinians remembering how “his Majesty’s government viewed with favour the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people” when Zionism was a novel response to European anti-semitism and Jews a small minority in the Holy Land.

Looking ahead, officials in the UK Foreign Office are brainstorming anxiously about how to mark these agreements. It is far harder than remembering the First World War’s military anniversaries — Flanders, Gallipoli, the Somme — because while British and allied sacrifices and heroism can be celebrated and honoured, these were political acts that have left a toxic residue of resentment and conflict.

Pro-Palestinian campaigners have demanded Britain apologise for Balfour’s pledge — but that seems unlikely given that it was made in very different circumstances from today and cannot be undone. It and the other wartime agreements are likely to feature in statements and public diplomacy designed to generate a “more nuanced understanding” of the UK’s controversial historical role.

The focus on Sykes-Picot — famously based on drawing a line “from the ‘e’ in Acre to the last ‘k’ in Kirkuk” — is because of the argument that states have lost their legitimacy or cohesion in the bloody years of the Arab spring. Kurds in Iraq, autonomous since 1991, emphasise this, though they are the exception. Syria seems to be facing de facto partition but that is because of five years of vicious civil war, not because it is seen as an “artificial” colonial creation.

In fact, many historians insist — flatly contradicting IS propaganda — that the post-First World War Arab nation states have proved remarkably resilient. And it is wrong to portray the jihadi, as the Iraq expert Reidar Visser has put it , “as the implementers of

some kind of deep-rooted popular urge for pan-Arab and pan-Islamic unity that supposedly pulls the Syrian and Iraqi people towards each other.”

Still, perception is reality. In Rogan’s words: “The wartime partition agreements left a legacy of imperialism, of Arab mistrust in great power politics, and of a belief in conspiracies (for what are secret partition agreements if not conspiracies?) that the Arab peoples have held responsible for their misfortunes ever since.”

Palestine remains an open wound. “The period since the Balfour Declaration ... has witnessed what amounts to a hundred years of war against the Palestinian people,” wrote the American-Palestinian historian Rashid Khalidi . Yet no official British response to its anniversary is likely to go beyond affirmation of the need for two independent states for the two peoples who now inhabit the Holy Land, however contentious the past.

Recent events have proved as troublesome as past ones. Summer 2016 will see the long-overdue Chilcot report into Britain’s role in the 2003 invasion of Iraq — a prime factor behind the current mayhem in the region. As Toby Dodge of LSE has expressed it: the advances of IS were “not caused by a century-old legacy of Anglo-French colonialism” but by “the contemporary flaws within the political system” set up after the overthrow of Saddam Hussein.

And 2016 will see yet another awkward anniversary — the 60th of the Anglo-French invasion of Egypt, in collusion with Israel, in the Suez crisis of 1956 — a classic episode of western duplicity and high-handedness that is still remembered as the “Tripartite aggression” in Cairo and other Arab capitals.

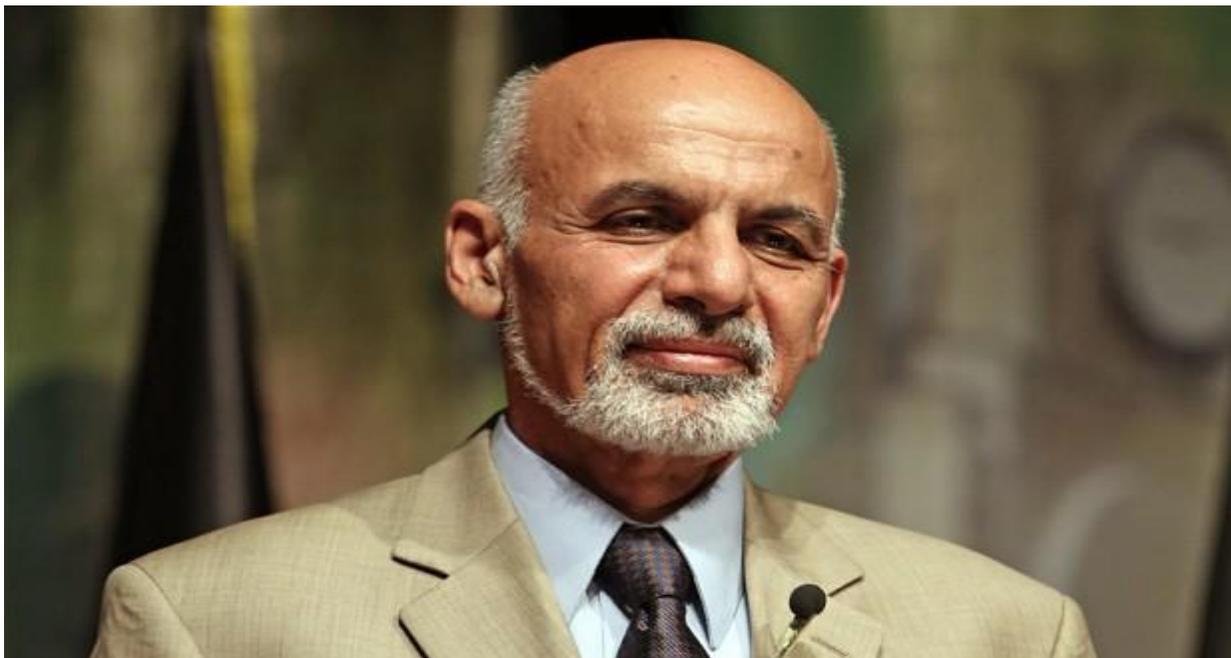
“As we approach these anniversaries, we need to acknowledge that history, and our place in it,” insists Tom Fletcher, a highly regarded former British ambassador to Lebanon. “But we also need to ensure that the role of the west isn’t used as an alibi for every problem of the region. If we were as cunning as some still think, we would still have an empire. In fact, we need to see more security, justice and opportunity across the Middle East — that’s a conspiracy we should be part of.”

—*By arrangement with The Guardian*

Published in Dawn, January 1st, 2016

Source: <http://www.dawn.com/news/1229930/middle-east-still-rocking-from-first-world-war-pacts-made-100-years-ago>

Can South Asia Make Nice in 2016? | Muhammad Akbar Notezai



Early this month, the fifth Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process Summit was opened by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Afghan President Ashraf Ghani in Islamabad, Pakistan's capital. Attending were the foreign ministers of ten countries – including all four of Pakistan's neighbors. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi was making his second visit to Islamabad this year, and was joined by Afghan Foreign Minister Salahuddin Rabbani, Indian Minister for External Affairs Sushma Swaraj and Iranian Foreign Minister Jawad Zarif.

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani had reportedly been reluctant to visit Islamabad given an upsurge in Taliban violence in Afghanistan and the derailing of the peace talks with the Afghan Taliban following the revelation of the death of Taliban leader Mullah Mohammad Omer, both developments severely straining bilateral ties.

However, according to Afghan media reports, China's ambassador in Kabul conveyed a message from the Chinese leadership, advising Ghani to make the trip. The Pashtun leadership of Pakistan also visited Kabul to convince Ghani to attend the conference. When Ghani did arrive, it was to an impressively warm welcome. Islamabad-based analysts believe that both the political and military leaderships of Pakistan are now keen to improve ties with Kabul, although skeptics say that it is Beijing that has been robustly pushing Islamabad to amend ties with Kabul ever since the announcement of China's \$46 billion investment in Pakistan.

Farooq Sulehria, a senior Pakistani journalist based in Sweden, told The Diplomat, “Civilians have no control over foreign policy, in particular Afghanistan and India-related policies. They cannot issue a press statement on their own. It is a shame that civilians have capitulated so comprehensively. If capitulation is tantamount to similarity of views, we can say that they (political and military leadership) are on the same page. But ‘to be on same page,’ implies having equal strength. This is clearly not the case. Civilians utter the mundane statements they are told to say in public.”

Afghanistan’s intelligence chief Rahmatullah Nabil, a favorite of American officials and a staunch critic of his government’s policies toward Pakistan, resigned in apparent protest at Ghani’s efforts to achieve a rapprochement with Pakistan.

India-Pakistan Tensions

Meanwhile, M.K. Bhadrakumar, in an article for Asia Times, noted that tensions between Pakistan and India and the two countries’ mutual suspicions of each other’s intentions pose a major hurdle to a political settlement in Afghanistan. Washington recently hosted Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Army Chief Gen. Raheel Sharif for in-depth discussions with them regarding Afghanistan. President Barack Obama has personally urged Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi at least twice recently to engage Pakistan in dialogue.

As a result, in a major breakthrough, India and Pakistan also announced that they were resuming a dialogue on outstanding issues. Modi followed up late this month with a surprise visit to Pakistan, where he once again met with Sharif.

“Sushma Swaraj’s visit to Islamabad was meant for the multilateral Heart of Asia conference,” observes Tufail Ahmad, who currently heads South Asia Studies at the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), adding, “Although she went for the multilateral conference, the main focus of which is to ensure the stability of Afghanistan by involving regional partners, both India and Pakistan utilized this opportunity for bilateral objectives.” He added that as in previous attempts to improve relations, the intentions are good. However, success will occur only when Pakistan stops supporting the Taliban and jihadists.

Tufail told The Diplomat that he expected these fresh attempts at a bilateral peace between India and Pakistan will meet the same fate as A B Vajpayee’s sincere peace

efforts with Nawaz Sharif and Pervez Musharraf, which ended in the Kargil war and 26/11 Mumbai attacks respectively.

Ali Arqam, a journalist for Newline Magazine in Karachi, noted that the Heart of Asia conference, with its emphasis on regional trade and cooperation, was followed by a visit by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to Turkmenistan for the groundbreaking ceremony of the long-awaited Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline project. “But,” he added, “news of attacks on Kandahar Airport and the Taliban capture of Khanistan, a district of Helmand province, are reminders of the hard realities on ground.”

Even as the Heart of Asia conference was underway in Islamabad, the Afghan Taliban reportedly killed scores in the Kandahar attack. Al Jazeera reported that at least 70 were killed. The attack took place just hours after the Afghan president arrived in Pakistan. Ghani told the media that he remained committed to a lasting and just peace within which all armed movements convert to political parties and participate in the political process legitimately. Pakistan meanwhile condemned the attack on airport in Kandahar.

When asked about the Heart of Asia conference and peace in Afghanistan, journalist Farooq Sulehria told The Diplomat: “There are two basic causes for the unrest in Afghanistan. First, the U.S. occupation. Second, interventions by neighbors, in particular Pakistan and Iran (and by proxy India). Nobody is serious, at present, about changing course. Such conferences have only served to gain time while the policies remain the same. Mullah Mansour Akhter was reportedly shot in Quetta recently. What does that indicate? A change in the Strategic Depth Policy? On the day of the conference, pitched battles were fought at Kandahar Airport between the Taliban and security forces of Afghanistan.”

With top American and Chinese diplomats also present at the Heart of Asia conference, both the U.S. and China are seemingly in accord on the peace process in Afghanistan. China has been playing a proactive role in influencing the Pakistani approach toward Afghanistan. It is also rumored that apart from Pakistan, China is the only country that has direct contact with the Taliban leadership. But after Mullah Omer’s death, discord among the Afghan Taliban has increased under new leader Mullah Mansour Akhter. Violent clashes between two rival Taliban groups in southern Afghanistan in November resulted in the death of at least 50 fighters. Meanwhile, the ISIS presence in Afghanistan grows. Anwar Ishaqzai, governor of southern Zabul province, revealed that a Taliban splinter group known as the High Council of Afghanistan Islamic Emirate that took part in the clash had joined up with fighters from ISIS. “The Taliban faction under

Mullah Rasool was backed by the ISIL and Uzbek fighters in the fight,” he said. “About 40 Taliban from Rasool’s group and 10 from Mansoor’s were killed in the fight.”

Source: <http://thediplomat.com/2015/12/can-south-asia-make-nice-in-2016/>

A red banner with a textured background. On the left is a blue sign with a white border and a white circle at the top, containing the text "JOB OPENINGS" in white. In the center, the text "Need Job ?" is written in large, bold, white font. Below it, in a smaller white font, is "Search Latest Pakistan's Government & Private Sector Jobs at jobiffy.net". On the right is a green sign with a white border and a white circle at the top, containing the text "REGISTER NOW" in white.

Need Job ?
Search Latest Pakistan's Government &
Private Sector Jobs at jobiffy.net

Putin Signs Document Declaring Nato A “Threat To The National Security” of Russia | Kurt Nimmo



Russia accuses NATO of violations of the norms of international law

Russian President Vladimir Putin considers the aggressive expansion of NATO as a direct threat to the national security of Russia.

In response to the threat, Putin signed an official document updating Russia’s national security posture on Thursday.

“The buildup of the military potential of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and vesting it with global functions implemented in violations of norms of international law, boosting military activity of the bloc’s countries, further expansion of the alliance, the approach of its military infrastructure to Russian borders create a threat to the national security,” the document states.

“The independent domestic and foreign policy conducted by Russia triggers counteraction from the US and their allies seeking to keep up their domination in global affairs,” it adds.

Prior to release of the document Russia moved to counter the expansion of NATO and its deployment of troops and equipment in Poland and the Baltic states by adding 40

intercontinental missiles to its nuclear arsenal. Russia also announced it would develop and deploy state-of-the art weaponry and equipment to its troops.

Russia and NATO ended cooperation following a referendum held on March 16, 2014 to integrate Crimea into the Russian Federation.

NATO's Expansion

Since its formation in 1949 NATO has expanded from twelve members to 28. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War NATO continued its expansion and added Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Albania, and Croatia to the alliance. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Macedonia, and Montenegro are currently recognized as aspiring members. Following the staged Euromaidan coup in Ukraine in 2014 installed Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk said the country was considering NATO integration. The US State Department and globalists connected to the Council on Foreign Relations and other NGOs have proposed expanding NATO to include “democratic states from around the world,” including Australia, New Zealand, Japan, South Korea, Brazil, Mexico, South Africa, and India.

In 2007 former New York Mayor and Republican presidential candidate Rudy Giuliani called for the expansion of NATO to include major allies of the United States such as Australia, Singapore, India, Israel and Japan.

NATO missions and operations include support for the ongoing occupation of Afghanistan and Kosovo. Since the 1990s the alliance has linked up with the Euro-Atlantic Partnerships Council, the Mediterranean Dialogue, and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative.

NATO continues to enlarge its agenda well beyond its original mission.

In December it issued a “cooperative security” statement that listed “terrorism, piracy, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and cyber warfare” as threats of concern to its “global network of security partners that includes over 40 countries from around the globe, as well as international organizations including the United Nations, the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the African Union.”

Source: <http://www.infowars.com/putin-signs-document-declaring-nato-a-threat-to-the-national-security-of-russia/>

An Eighth and Final Year | Andrew J. Bowen



President Obama enters his final year in office at a time of rising conflict worldwide and deepening uncertainty about the security of the U.S. homeland. Public confidence in his presidency remains static and low at a time when anxiety about terrorism is at its highest since 2001.

This public mood is in sharp contrast to his inauguration. Entering office in 2009, Obama seized on the desire to shift away from almost a decade of costly war in the Middle East and Afghanistan and refocus U.S. efforts to domestic challenges and to the Pacific, where America faces a rising geopolitical and economic competitor in China. In contrast to his Republican challenger, John McCain (a celebrated veteran with impeccable national security credentials) and his primary opponent, Hillary Clinton (who voted to authorize the Iraq War), Obama rode into power as the candidate who best understood the public's desire for a different course after his predecessor's extensive overseas adventures and commitments.

Skeptical of the utility of military force, Obama prioritized active diplomacy and multilateral engagement over military force to address global challenges. He narrowed both the scope of the "War on Terror" to Al Qaeda and its affiliates and the methods employed to so-called 'light footprint' options, including Special Forces and drones. When the President did employ military force (in Libya, in Afghanistan and against Islamic State), it has often been poorly thought out and executed.

The president also came into office having concluded that America's future is better served by investing in the Asia Pacific and in Latin America, instead of serving as the policeman of the greater Middle East. By taking a longer-term view, Obama was ill-prepared for the challenges of the present. Event after event in the Middle East seems to have caught him off guard. In favor of pragmatism over strategy, the White House became fixated how the media cycle viewed each action he took. As a result, Obama spent more time reacting to crises than pro-actively addressing them.

Out of Step with the American Public

At the end of his presidency, Obama finds himself out of step and out of touch with the American public. While the president has tried to argue that his approach in confronting threats is one that is steering the country on the right course, numerous opinion polls underscore how the majority of the public has lost faith in their commander-in-chief's response to national security challenges. Obama has failed to convince the public that his long-term bets, ranging from the Iran deal to climate change, are better bets than more robustly focusing on present challenges such as ISIL.

The majority of the candidates for the presidency in 2016 are more hawkish and more comfortable with taking a muscular position to advance America's national interests. From Hillary Clinton to Marco Rubio, their foreign policy remarks have focused on how they would more robustly address global challenges including ISIL and Russia. There's practically a bipartisan consensus that the next president will need to try to alter President Obama's current course.

The Final Year

In his final year in office, Obama faces the challenge of not being written off as a "lame duck" president as the American public focuses on who will lead the country in 2017. At present, the president and his advisors have given no indication that he's ready to divert course from his current policies beyond making small tactical adjustments.

If Obama can endure the low poll numbers, the president will likely resist making any major shifts in his foreign policy. Instead, the White House will focus on consolidating the president's major gains to date: the Iran deal, the Paris climate agreement, the TPP trade agreement and his opening to Cuba. These 'wins' are critical to his legacy and a validation of his foreign policy approach.

The president will also likely focus on transitioning current conflicts to his successor. Obama will continue to doggedly pursue a low-resourced anti-ISIL strategy, barring a major attack on the U.S. homeland. He will hope that the Vienna talks on Syria will

continue to the end of his presidency and that his successor can bring them to a conclusion. If an agreement is reached, it would be a late-term validation in his view of his Syria policy. A settlement in Libya, too, will likely be kicked down the road.

In spite of these wishes, Obama may be forced to become a late-term wartime president. As his predecessors discovered, the final months of a presidency often hold surprises. The following foreign policy challenges may cause him to take actions in 2016 he never intended.

Afghanistan: The fragile security gains that Obama confidently assumed would hold are presently in tatters. Obama's concession earlier this year that he would have to postpone his timeline of withdrawal of combat forces underscored how fragile America's position in Afghanistan presently is. Entering 2016, the Taliban is now surging while Al Qaeda is building a deepening footprint in the state. If the current U.S. force commitment and Afghan security forces can't reverse these trends, Obama may be forced to invest more militarily in the conflict.

Syria: The civil war continues to tear at the region's stability and the Vienna negotiations look to last well beyond Obama's tenure. As intractable as the conflict is, the president has remained wedded to the belief that a deeper role for Washington would have only exacerbated the situation. However, if the Vienna talks fail or if Jordan or Lebanon's stability changes, Obama may be forced to take more action to support the armed and political opposition. If Assad continues to use chemical weapons, Obama may be forced to revisit his "red lines." The president also can't fully anticipate what his regional partners may do if the conflict drags on longer; let alone potential points of conflict with Russia in Syria. Europe's growing refugee challenge may also precipitate the need for a more robust response.

Iran: Tehran's ballistic missile test raises stark questions about the sustainability of the nuclear agreement. Members of Congress are already calling for keeping in place sanctions that are supposed to be lifted with the deal's implementation this spring. By proposing new sanctions on Iran for its missile program, Obama risks derailing his deal, but at present, he has no choice politically to stave off congressional action that could endanger the deal altogether. How will Iran react to such sanctions? Will Obama be able to keep the deal intact before he leaves office if Iran continues to try to game the deal? If the deal falls apart, will the president have to contemplate the use of military force on Iran's nuclear program? The Iran deal is far from secure and Obama will focus his last months in ensuring that this centerpiece of his foreign policy legacy doesn't fall apart.

Russia: Moscow poses a deepening challenge to the United States globally and Russia's intervention in Syria is partially a byproduct of a perceived decreased U.S. role in the region. Will the president be forced to confront Putin in the Middle East in 2016 as President George W. Bush weighed whether he should do the same over Georgia in 2008?

ISIS: The president sought to bring to closure his predecessor's intense focus on the "War on Terror." The killing of Osama Bin Laden in 2011 and his extensive use of the CIA's drone program to kill senior members of Al Qaeda "central" and its worldwide affiliates began building public confidence that the threat of Islamic extremism was on the decline. However, ISIS's emergence in Syria and Iraq and its growing worldwide brand caught the president off guard. The attacks in San Bernardino and in Paris illustrate how this group can either inspire or directly execute attacks in the United States and Europe. Obama's bet on employing a 'light footprint' approach to this challenge has not reaped many positive dividends so far.

As well, the U.S.-led air campaign against ISIS has yet to produce the results the president seeks. For example, the capture of Ramadi took seven months and much of the city remains in perilous condition. Mosul and Raqqa may or may not be captured by the end of his presidency. Obama has yet to fully address the global challenge that this group poses. He continues to underestimate the appeal of Islamic extremism globally. If there's an attack on the homeland or on U.S. interests by ISIS, Obama may be forced to take more robust military action against the group.

The president, then, faces a critical final year in office. Obama may think his legacy is best secured by doubling down on his current foreign policy wins. However, if he doesn't address these challenges, Obama may be remembered more for the inaction he took during his presidency than the actions he did take.

Andrew Bowen, Ph.D., is a Senior Fellow and the Director of Middle East Studies at the Center for the National Interest.

Source: <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/eighth-final-year-14795>

Iran-Saudi Arabia Conflict



Newton's Third Law of motion states that "every action has an equal and opposite reaction". It applies outside the realms of physics and most recently is seen in the aftermath of the execution by Saudi Arabia of a leading cleric, Sheikh Nimr al Nimr. Shortly afterwards, demonstrators in Tehran broke into the Saudi embassy there before the police took control and ejected them. The Iranians uttered dire threats to the Saudis, and around 40 of the demonstrators were arrested, but the ball was rolling and by the morning of January 4, relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia deteriorated to the point at which the Saudis broke off all diplomatic relations, and ordered Iranian diplomats out of the country within 48 hours.

The recent turn of events, precipitated by the execution of Sheikh Nimr, who many observers say underwent a legal process that did not meet all standards of what should constitute a fair trial, can have serious consequences for Pakistan. We have friendly relations with both Saudi Arabia and Iran, and are closely engaged with both countries, particularly in respect of meeting our energy needs into a far future. The one area that will now need delicate handling is that of the inflaming of sectarian fault lines within Pakistan. Sectarian tensions are easily provoked here and the country has seen much sectarian strife and conflict over the past many decades. There have been demonstrations, largely peaceful, in Pakistan since the execution.

The struggle for ascendancy in the region between Arabs and Persians is two millennia old and predates Islam, and that struggle continues today with both states using proxies to fight a war in Yemen. Pakistan cannot get drawn into this conflict despite the fact that we have good relations with Saudi Arabia, which has supported us in historical times of need. We must consider that Iran is an important neighbour and we need to foster healthy ties with it as well. We have to protect our own often fragile equilibrium in sectarian terms, and cannot afford to be seen to be favouring one side or another, at the same time as maintaining equitable relations with both. The consequences of this execution are already apparent, and arms-length diplomacy must be our default position.

Published in The Express Tribune, January 5th, 2016.

Source: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1021799/iran-saudi-arabia-conflict/>

The West Should Get Out of the Middle East | Jonathan Power



The year's first major atrocity: Saudi Arabia's beheading of 47 people, including an important Shiite ayatollah who led Shiite protests against discrimination by the Sunni majority, but who never committed an act of violence.

Even the Islamic State doesn't behead 47 in a day. Although beheading is swift, it strikes most of us as grotesque as well as medieval. The Saudis are aware of their image in the outside world but nevertheless persist, as if they want to tell the rest of the world: "Back off. Our Wahhabi morality is our morality. We are a belief system unto ourselves."

The Saudis exported the political convictions that have evolved out of Wahhabism to Afghanistan, with money for guns along with theology, first to fight the Russians, then to arm the Taliban, and later to allow themselves to "ignore" that the Taliban was giving refuge to al-Qaida.

Over the last three years rich Saudis have been allowed, through lack of policing, to effectively fund the Islamic State.

Saudi Arabia not only has a political and judicial system capable of repulsive acts, but it also has a foreign policy that the West should have no part of. Along with Israel it hounded the U.S., Russia, and the EU, unsuccessfully, to not make a deal with Shiite

Iran to curb the latter's nuclear program. Today, it opposes Iran on a wide range of issues, not least in its support of President Bashar al-Assad of Syria. Now, with the beheading of a respected Shiite imam, it has made a bid to be the unchallenged tough guy of all Sunni-majority countries in what looks seems to be becoming a clash of civilizations between the major strands of Islam, in defiant disregard for the admonishment of Mohammed himself not to kill fellow Muslims.

The West should remove itself from this imbroglio as quickly as it can. Imagine if some outside power—India? China?—had tried in the 16th and 17th centuries to directly intervene in the murderous religious wars between Catholics and Protestants that devastated Europe. They could have done nothing useful, and would have only stirred things up further.

Of course talking, cajoling, and negotiating make for useful input from outsiders. But providing guns to this or that side, bombing, and especially “putting boots on the ground” as in Iraq or “special forces” in Syria certainly do not.

The U.S. and Europe don't need Saudi Arabia like they used to. The surge in fracking technology has diminished the strategic value of Saudi Arabia and the smaller Gulf states.

Foreign policy is no longer aligned. Ten years ago, a combination of U.S. pressure and the shock of large-scale al-Qaida attacks inside Saudi Arabia itself convinced the Saudis and their neighbors to clamp down on jihadist activities within their borders. Yet today, such is their desire to overthrow Assad that they have, as Steven Simon and Jonathan Stevenson write in the latest issue of *Foreign Affairs*, “subordinated the suppression of jihadism to the goal of overthrowing Assad and hobbling his patrons in Iran. They are doing this by backing Sunni extremist rebels in Syria despite Washington's exhortations to stop.”

Moreover, the West no longer finds Middle Eastern countries as attractive an investment opportunity as it once did. Much of the region is becoming dysfunctional; even the more prosperous parts run large fiscal and external deficits, maintain huge and inefficient civil services, and spend heavily on subsidies. On nearly every indicator—infant and maternal mortality, education, and health services—they do less well than countries elsewhere with the same income levels.

The hopes since the 1950s for the ascendancy of a secular, technocratic, and Western-orientated elite that would bring their societies along with them have been eroded. Egypt is regressing. Saudi Arabia is hoisting itself on its own petard of extreme fundamentalism. The latest manifestation of the historic Shiite-Sunni quarrel—tragically triggered by the U.S./U.K. decision to overthrow Iraq’s Saddam Hussein—is coming to a boil.

Even if the West did believe politically that it should do something, it couldn’t militarily. The U.S. and its allies are capable of defeating a coherent nationalist state in warfare, but it cannot deal with “a transnational clash of ethnicities, turbo-charged by religious narratives.”

As in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Libya, it is in the chaotic aftermath of the conflict that outsiders run out of solutions as to how to stabilize the political and religious turbulence unleashed by war.

Europe and North America are not seriously threatened at home by these Middle Eastern conflicts. Since 9/11 there have been fewer terrorist attacks on American soil than there were in the 1970s. If the West does get more involved it will inevitably provoke more attacks. Saudi Arabia and its local allies and enemies should be left to work themselves out of their quagmire—without outside interference.

Source: <http://www.worldpolicy.org/blog/2016/01/05/west-should-get-out-middle-east>

Guess How Many Bombs America Dropped in 2015 | Micah Zenko



The primary focus—meaning the commitment of personnel, resources, and senior leaders’ attention—of U.S. counter terrorism policies is the capture or killing (though, overwhelmingly killing) of existing terrorists. Far less money and programmatic attention is dedicated to preventing the emergence of new terrorists. As an anecdotal example of this, I often ask U.S. government officials and mid-level staffers, “What are you doing to prevent a neutral person from becoming a terrorist?” They always claim that this is not their responsibility, and point toward other agencies, usually the Department of State (DOS) or Department of Homeland Security (DHS), where this is purportedly their obligation internationally or domestically, respectively. DOS and DHS officials then refer generally to “countering violent extremism” policies, while acknowledging that U.S. government efforts on this front have been wholly ineffective. The primary method for killing suspected terrorists is with stand-off precision airstrikes. With regard to the self-declared Islamic State, U.S. officials have repeatedly stated that the pathway to “destroying” the terrorist organization is by killing every one of its current members. Last February, Marie Harf, DOS spokesperson, said, “We are killing them and will continue killing ISIS terrorists that pose a threat to us.” Then in June, Lt. Gen. John Hesterman, Combined Forces Air Component commander, stated, “We kill them wherever we find them,” and just this week, Col. Steve Warren, *Operation Inherent Resolve* spokesman, claimed, “If you’re part of ISIL, we will kill you. That’s our rule.”

The problem with this “kill-em’-all with airstrikes” rule, is that it is not working. Pentagon officials claim that at least 25,000 Islamic State fighters have been killed (an anonymous official said 23,000 in November, while on Wednesday, Warren added “about 2,500” more were killed in December.) Remarkably, they also claim that alongside the 25,000 fighters killed, only six civilians have “likely” been killed in the seventeen-month air campaign. At the same time, officials admit that the size of the group has remained wholly unchanged. In 2014, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) estimated the size of the Islamic State to be between 20,000 and 31,000 fighters, while on Wednesday, Warren again repeated the 30,000 estimate. To summarize the anti-Islamic State bombing calculus: $30,000 - 25,000 = 30,000$.

Given there is no publicly articulated interest by Obama administration officials in revisiting this approach, let’s review U.S. counterterrorism bombing for 2015. Last year, the United States dropped an estimated total of 23,144 bombs in six countries. Of these, 22,110 were dropped in Iraq and Syria. This estimate is based on the fact that the United States has conducted 77 percent of all airstrikes in Iraq and Syria, while there were 28,714 U.S.-led coalition munitions dropped in 2015. This overall estimate is probably slightly low, because it also assumes one bomb dropped in each drone strike in Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia, which is not always the case.

Micah Zenko is a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations. This article first appeared in Politics, Power, and Preventive Action.

Source: <http://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/guess-how-many-bombs-america-dropped-2015-14846>

Will South Korea Rethink Its Nuke Policy? | Gordon G. Chang



On Monday, a “US official” speaking anonymously to Reuters, said the Pentagon was not thinking of reintroducing nuclear weapons to the Korean peninsula.

Earlier in the day, Seoul had suggested Washington was considering the possibility. “The United States and South Korea are continuously and closely having discussions on additional deployment of strategic assets,” South Korean Defense Ministry spokesman Kim Min-seok said.

By “strategic assets” the unnamed US official said the Defense Department was referring to nuclear-capable bombers. South Korean media had been reporting that Washington and Seoul were discussing the deployment of American B-2 bombers, F-22 fighters, and nuclear submarines to the Korean peninsula.

President George H. W. Bush in 1991 announced the unilateral withdrawal of tactical nuclear weapons from South Korea and other foreign countries, and today there is virtually no apparent support in the Pentagon for redeploying them.

As a matter of actual warfighting, basing nukes in South Korea makes little sense. Van Jackson of the Center for a New American Security points out the US does not need them in Asia because of its conventional military superiority over every other nation. Nukes also tend to exacerbate disputes, make American look aggressive, risk

encouraging others to deploy them, eat up resources better devoted elsewhere, and legitimize a class of weaponry that gives weak countries a battlefield equalizer.

Moreover, no one should want to put these destructive instruments anywhere close to where the North Koreans can grab or destroy them.

And with long-range, strategic platforms—like Ohio-class ballistic missile submarines that silently prowl the oceans, B-52s based in nearby Guam, or the stealthy US-based B-2s that can hit a target anywhere on earth—there is no need to actually bring a nuke onto South Korean soil.

Yet, despite everything, South Koreans continue to talk about the US adding nukes to its arsenals on the peninsula.

Why? North Korea's nuclear weapon program, which is advancing at a steady pace, is unnerving South Koreans, and as a result has eroded confidence in the US's ability to defend them.

In these circumstances, it is not surprising that the South Korean government has been caught conducting experiments with fissile material, such as enriching uranium and trying to reprocess plutonium, in violation of its obligations under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. The South has tried to hide its illicit activities from inspectors of the International Atomic Energy Agency, the UN watchdog, and without justification refused access to IAEA inspectors. The US thought it had convinced Seoul to give up its program, but South Korean technicians covertly kept up the effort nonetheless.

It is generally believed Seoul can develop a bomb in about a year's time. South Korean military officials say that they can do that in six months.

And someday they just might. "Suppose you have a dangerous neighbor with a gun," said Chung Mong-joon, a member of South Korea's National Assembly, in 2013 at a Carnegie International Nuclear Policy Conference in Washington. "You have to take measures to protect yourself. And being a gun control advocate isn't going to help you." As Chung said, "Telling us not to consider any nuclear weapons option is tantamount to telling us to simply surrender."

The US way of calming down the South Koreans is to fly B-52s over their country at times of stress. A lone B-52 on Sunday made a low pass over Osan Air Base, about 40 miles from Seoul, a message to a North Korea that had detonated a small-yield weapon

on Wednesday. The US Air Force also sent a B-52 over South Korea after the North's previous detonation of an atomic device, in 2013.

A fly-by with a single strategic bomber is better than nothing, but it is no substitute for an effective North Korea policy, which Washington has yet to develop.

The official talking to Reuters said reintroducing nukes might "escalate into an arms race, a very dangerous arms race, in the region," but the South Koreans know that comment ignores reality. The North Koreans are racing to build nukes as fast as they can, and Washington is stopping Seoul from doing the same. That American policy may not be sustainable for long.

Source: <http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/blog/gordon-g-chang/will-south-korea-rethink-its-nuke-policy>

A red banner with a textured background. On the left is a blue sign with a white border and a silver ring at the top, containing the text "JOB OPENINGS" in white. In the center, the text "Need Job ?" is written in large, bold, white font. Below it, in a smaller white font, is "Search Latest Pakistan's Government & Private Sector Jobs at jobiffy.net". On the right is a green sign with a white border and a silver ring at the top, containing the text "REGISTER NOW" in white.

Need Job ?
Search Latest Pakistan's Government & Private Sector Jobs at jobiffy.net