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Energy and Security | Raashid Wali Janjua

Energy politics and policy ambivalence have landed the country in a situation in which the future looks increasingly bleak, despite the rose-tinted projections of the national policy planners.

The Achilles' heel of our energy planning is that the energy mix is not suited to our monetary capacity and resources. Two factors are of crucial relevance: (i) the selection of a suitable energy mix, in sync with national resource endowment; and (ii) the desultory regulation of the crucial energy sector. The egregious neglect to tap into the cheapest energy sources has landed us in the quandary of an energy mix that is neither economically unsustainable nor productive enough to slake the energy thirst of an economy with vast unmet capacity. It does not take much wisdom to surmise that a net importer of oil – with over 60 percent reliance on thermal energy – cannot survive indefinitely.

It is time for us to galvanise our policy planners and regulators into taking bold decisions that are purely in the interests of the country. Altering our energy mix and improving our regulatory institutions has become an imperative necessity because of our unsustainably high circular debt. A country that refuses to develop its cheapest available natural resource, hydel power, while continuing to amass thermal power plants is on a suicidal path.

According to the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepa) and the Hydrocarbon Development Institute of Pakistan (HDIP), the current energy mix is 67 percent thermal, 29 percent hydel, 3 percent nuclear and 0.43 percent renewable energy sources. As per the data of the National Transmission and Distribution Corporation and the Planning Commission, the net national power generation capacity and the peak demand of around 28,000 megawatts will converge by the end of 2017, with a heavy reliance on imported gas. The projected hydel and thermal energy percentages of 35 percent and 58 percent by 2025 also appear tilted in favour of costly thermal energy.

Our reliance on thermal sources, despite possessing one of the most bountiful hydel resources is mindboggling. The political squabbles amongst the provinces, instigated by uninformed political prejudices and active lobbying against the vital dams, act as a deterrent to our quest for the most economical and efficient energy flow.

The cheap domestic sources of coal and water are being rejected in favour of expensive thermal options. Electricity generation through domestic coal would cost 3 US cents/kilowatt-hour (kWh), whereas a low-efficiency liquefied natural gas plant costs \$11/kWh.

Considering the current limitations of renewable energy – pending a major technological breakthrough in solar and wind power – our main reliance should be on coal and hydel energy. The construction of big dams like Kalabagh needs to be secured through a national debate, which is based on hard scientific reasoning rather than conjecture. The environmental debate about our coal potential needs to be moderated with the same parameters as that of our hydel potential. Instead of chasing the chimeras of technologically constrained alternative energy, our reliance should be on our abundant coal and hydel potential. Once they have sorted out the crucial problem of the energy mix, our national policy planners must focus on institutional reforms in the energy sector.

It is clear that Pakistan suffers not only from a resource deficit and the wrong energy mix, but also through lax regulatory policies that fail to ensure the optimal development and transmission of energy. Independent regulatory institutions like the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (Ogra) and Nepra are supposed to engender efficiency and fairness in the energy sector; yet, they have failed to achieve these objectives because of undue government interference. Instead of guarding the interests of private investors and the public, the regulatory apparatus tends to pass the cost of the government's administrative incompetence on to the consumers.

An apt example is the government's pressure on Nepra to pass the transmission and distribution losses along to the consumers. Instead of concentrating on the interests of the investors, Ogra and Nepra are constantly pressurised to kowtow to the government. Resultantly, this regulation discourages competitive investment, leaving the field open to government monopoly and private greed.

Some of the other issues hampering the energy sector's productiveness are the undeveloped banking sector, excessive re-lending rates in the public sector, high insurance premiums and interest rates. The discord between Nepra and Ogra must also be addressed urgently; a possible solution could be the merger of the two institutions. Reforming the pricing mechanism and removing delays in the investment cycle should be the goals for a truly independent and legally supported regulatory apparatus at the national level.

For a country already affected by climate change and water scarcity, the development of an energy policy suited to its economic capacity and indigenous resources is a national security issue that merits urgent attention.

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Source: <http://www.thenews.com.pk/print/101946-Energy-and-security>

Education in a Shambles | Express Tribune Editorial

Education is under attack in Pakistan. Not just from the terrorists who continue to target centres of learning based on misguided principles of piety. Education has been under attack in Pakistan for a long time in a determined and systematic manner. Lack of coherent policies and funds, and consistent apathy from successive governments have turned education into a privilege for some, rather than the basic right of all. Anyone doubting the veracity of this claim has to look no further than the figures presented in the Pakistan Education Statistics 2014-15 report.

There are more than 24 million children out of school in Pakistan. That is more people than the entire population of some countries. The number represents almost half of all school-age children in Pakistan. As ever, there are gender-based and geographical disparities. There are more girls out of school than boys. The highest number of out-of-school children is in Balochistan followed by Fata. Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa fares better than other provinces but there too 36 per cent of school-age children are counted amongst out-of-school children. The statistics only get worse. Between 30 per cent to 40 per cent of schools are without basic facilities like electricity, water, bathrooms and boundary walls. They only have a single classroom and the state of many school buildings are deemed “unsatisfactory”.

In short, the only good thing about this report is that it exists, which means that some attention is being paid at last to what can only be termed a shameful state of affairs. If Pakistan wishes to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals set by the UN and adopted by the National Assembly only recently, something must be done regarding our education system and fast. According to the Minister of State for Education, Balighur Rehman, the government is committed to making positive changes and is already making efforts to achieve excellence in education. Given our present predicament, it will be a long and arduous road, requiring genuine commitment as well as generous budgetary allocations to achieve even mediocrity in education. It is hoped that this report will prove to be the first step of that journey.

Published in The Express Tribune, February 29th, 2016.

Source: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1056048/education-in-a-shambles/>

Pak, US Agree on N Non-Proliferation Cooperation

Will cooperate on matters of security, Kashmir issue; US to build knowledge corridor for Pakistan, help in energy sector

Washington—Advisor to Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz and United States Secretary of State John Kerry Wednesday mutually agreed on cooperation in the regional and international security affairs including Kashmir issue and nuclear non-proliferation.

A joint communiqué of the strategic discussion between Sartaj Aziz and John Kerry has been issued. The declaration stated that Pakistan has central role in the reconciliation process.

Sartaj Aziz and John Kerry met on February 29 in Washington to convene the sixth ministerial-level Pakistan-U.S. Strategic Dialogue. The last ministerial-level Strategic Dialogue was held in Islamabad on January 13, 2015. This session built on Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's successful visit to Washington in October 2015, with the two sides reiterating their commitment to further strengthening the United States' and Pakistan's strong, multifaceted partnership across a range of critical issues, as exemplified by the framework of the Strategic Dialogue.

Both sides expressed their conviction that a robust, long-term bilateral relationship remains critical to regional and international security and prosperity. Both sides agreed that a strong, prosperous, and democratic Pakistan is an essential partner for the United States in advancing these shared goals. As such, the United States and Pakistan have a shared and enduring interest in Pakistan's continued economic growth and prosperity, increased bilateral trade and investment, education and social development, respect for human rights and rule of law, regional stability, and ongoing collaboration on measures to counter violent extremism and combat terrorism.

The two reaffirmed the importance of the Strategic Dialogue, which provides vision and direction for this bilateral partnership, and reviewed progress made in its six working groups, which represent core areas of joint interest and cooperation, Energy, Security, Strategic Stability, and Nonproliferation, the Defense Consultative Group, Law Enforcement and Counterterrorism, Economics and Finance and, Education, Science, and Technology. They also acknowledged the importance of sustaining cooperation on shared interests through U.S. civilian assistance, in line with the intent of legislation

known as the “Kerry-Lugar-Berman” act. Finally, they charged the Working Groups with continuing to meet according to a mutually determined schedule.

Secretary Kerry and Advisor Aziz reaffirmed their shared commitment to expand and deepen bilateral trade, investment and environmental cooperation. Secretary Kerry commended the steps Pakistan has taken to implement an economic reform agenda, which has advanced Pakistan’s macroeconomic stability and improved growth, including the government’s commitment to complete the set of home grown reforms that are being supported by the World Bank Group, the Asian Development Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and other multilateral financial institutions. Both sides affirmed that continued reforms will make Pakistan more economically competitive and attractive for foreign investment.

Both sides agreed that the modernization of Pakistan’s economy through better technology, improved business climate, entrepreneurship, enhanced worker rights, and opportunities for women will drive the country’s economic growth.

Secretary Kerry and Advisor Aziz applauded the reinstatement of the Education, Science, and Technology Working Group in June 2015 in Islamabad as an important mechanism through which to facilitate and emphasize the already extensive U.S.-Pakistan cooperation in these vital fields. Under the rubric of a new “U.S.-Pakistan Knowledge Corridor” and Pakistan’s Vision 2025 development plan, both sides committed to both expanding U.S.-Pakistan education cooperation and strengthening Pakistan’s education system, which serve as engines of economic growth and prosperity. Advisor Aziz reiterated Prime Minister Sharif’s commitment to double Pakistan’s education expenditures from two to four percent of gross domestic product by 2018, including by expanding girls’ access to education.

Secretary Kerry noted that the Education, Science and Technology Working Group met this week on the margins of the Strategic Dialogue Ministerial, and lauded the February 2016 Memorandum of Understanding between the Pakistan Higher Education Commission and the United States Educational Foundation in Pakistan, in which Pakistan will fund up to 125 additional Pakistani PhD scholars from Pakistan to study in the United States through the Fulbright program over five years.

Advisor Aziz praised the U.S. Merit and Need Based Scholarships Program for Bachelors and Masters level students studying at Pakistani universities, and highlighted Pakistan’s urgent need to expand its faculty in its higher education system in order to

provide quality education to its youth by training 10,000 PhDs by 2025 at U.S. universities.

The two sides agreed to explore initiatives to enhance the number of educational opportunities for Pakistani students in the United States at the tertiary level, including increased numbers of PhDs at U.S. institutions. The United States is committed to facilitating the legitimate travel of Pakistani students who want to study at American academic institutions. Both sides resolved to set up a sub-working group for following and monitoring implementation.

Both sides also acknowledged the 23 existing partnerships between U.S. and Pakistani universities, their critical contributions to cultural and intellectual exchange, and the importance of sustaining them long-term. Both sides also noted the June 2015 launching of the U.S.-Pakistan Centers for Advanced Studies, which established three cutting-edge partnerships in energy, water, and agriculture for academics, policymakers, and industry. The United States agreed to consider additional academic cooperation on Climate Change.

Both sides recognized the importance of civil society to the fundamental health and stability of all democratic societies. They also re-affirmed that International Nongovernmental Organizations (INGOs) and civil society organizations can contribute to Pakistan's national development goals and complement the work of the government. Secretary Kerry noted that any policy guidelines governing INGOs should be transparent and consistent with international norms. Advisor Aziz reiterated Prime Minister Sharif's commitment that these guidelines will be reviewed and implemented in consultation with all stakeholders.

The two sides reviewed the progress of their energy cooperation and that of the Energy Working Group since it last met in Islamabad in April, 2015.

Secretary Kerry and Advisor Aziz recognized the new chapter in U.S.-Pakistan energy cooperation, building on substantial cooperation to date that has already helped Pakistan add over 1,750 megawatts to its electric grid, facilitate private investment in the sector, and begin imports of liquefied natural gas (LNG). The U.S.-Pakistan Clean Energy Partnership, launched by President Obama and Prime Minister Sharif in October 2015, will facilitate new private sector investment in clean energy in Pakistan – particularly in hydroelectric, natural gas, wind, solar, and biomass energy sectors. Through these investments in power generation, transmission, and distribution, the

partnership aims to add 3,000 megawatts to Pakistan's electricity supply by 2020. Both countries agreed to prepare a roadmap for achieving this target in each of the aforementioned areas. Both sides acknowledged the success of the first initiative under the Partnership, the U.S.-Pakistan Clean Energy Conference, hosted in Washington in December 2015, and attended by leading energy firms and financiers.

Pakistan also thanked the United States for its support for facilitating U.S. private sector investment in energy projects through USAID and the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC). They appreciated OPIC's work with the Government of Pakistan and private investors to facilitate investment in Pakistan, through the financing of five wind power projects.

The two countries agreed on the need for effective action against all violent extremists, specifically underscoring that no country's territory should be used to destabilize other countries. The United States expressed appreciation for the sacrifices of Pakistan's security personnel and civilians in the fight against terrorism and violent extremism. Both countries reaffirmed their commitment to countering terrorism including by targeting all terrorists without discrimination. Advisor Aziz affirmed the Government of Pakistan's resolve to take effective action against United Nations-designated terrorist individuals and entities, including al-Qa'ida, the Haqqani Network, and Lashkar-e-Tayyiba and its affiliates, as per its international commitments and obligations under United Nations Security Council resolutions and the Financial Action Task Force. The United States and Pakistan committed to continue promoting peace, stability, and transparency in the region and to eliminate the threats posed by violent extremism and terrorism. The two sides looked forward to the upcoming Law Enforcement and Counterterrorism working group meeting where the United States and Pakistan will work together to further bolster the capacity of Pakistan's judicial and law enforcement authorities.—INP

Source: <http://pakobserver.net/2016/03/03/pak-us-agree-on-n-non-proliferation-cooperation/>

Is Pakistan's Problem Urdu? | Pervez Hoodbhoy

For Pakistan's founders, Urdu was to be the glue cementing together the new country. The pre-partition Muslim League rejected suggestions that English, Hindi, or Hindustani be the official language of undivided India. Instead, it wanted Urdu (Pirpur Report, 1938) because it was thought to be the carrier of Islamic culture. In 1948, Mr Jinnah addressed the students of Dacca University in immaculate English. He was emphatic: "The state language of Pakistan is going to be Urdu and no other language. And anyone who tries to mislead you is an enemy of Pakistan."

Mr Jinnah spoke little Urdu and did not read its script. East Pakistan rioted but he was unmoved; nation-building needs a language. With time Pakistan rid itself of the burden of Bengal. Its new leaders drafted a new Constitution of Pakistan (1973) which decreed that Urdu become the official language within 15 years. This did not happen.

Gen Ziaul Haq also thought that Pakistan needed the 'correct' official language. He wanted Arabic, but some of his colleagues and administrators dissuaded him. He consoled himself by imposing compulsory Arabic teaching upon schools.

Examine: Urdu in schools causes 'grievances', says Unesco report

Since that time our language obsession has continued. In September 2015, an irritated Supreme Court judge, Justice Jawwad Khwaja, gave Nawaz Sharif's government three months to implement "Article 251 in line with Article 5 of the Constitution". This would make Urdu mandatory for "official and other purposes". The ultimatum expired, English stayed.

Though not yet the official language, Urdu is Pakistan's lingua franca.

Eventually Urdu did come to Pakistan — naturally and painlessly. Today fewer and fewer people speak and understand English — far fewer in percentage terms than in India or Sri Lanka. For lack of viewership, local English-language television channels have closed down but there are dozens of Urdu channels and some Sindhi and Punjabi ones too. Though not yet the official language, Urdu is Pakistan's lingua franca.

But the rise of Urdu, and the decline of English, have not weakened regional, tribal, or class identities. Baloch separatism is fuelled by inequitable distribution of resources and high-handed treatment by the centre. Sindh's grievances are over issues of water and land. Nation-building needs more than just a common language.

Ditto for building education. If we are to believe some of today's education activists, most problems will miraculously disappear if only we make the right choice of language — whatever that "right" choice means. But flogging the language horse will get us nowhere. The problem lies elsewhere.

Read: Ways to switch over to Urdu

About 30 years ago, my colleagues at Quaid-i-Azam University and I had explored the conundrum of language and education through a documentary film broadcast by Pakistan Television. It was part of a 13-part series *Rastay Ilm Kay* that took a critical look at the crisis of Pakistani education. Serious then, it is far more serious now.

Upon viewing a rare surviving copy of this documentary, I felt that time had come to a stop. Not a single argument or counter-argument has changed. On the one hand, our cameras recorded those who wanted education in Urdu and condemned English as a colonial remnant. They blamed it for creating social inequality, and argued that teachers with bad English skills force students to memorise blindly. The cameras also captured those who said that English provides a vehicle to carry us forward. A true debate!

Unless we wish to spend the next 30 years arguing the very same points, we must squarely face two basic truths — those that mere wishes cannot change. If these truths take us in opposite directions, then we must learn to navigate as best as possible.

First, English opens a window into the external world so wide that all vernacular languages, Urdu included, are tiny peepholes in comparison. In principle, all languages can carry the same content. But in practice they reflect very different stages of intellectual development. Nobody is more unreasonably proud than the French. But even they have grudgingly accepted their language's reduced status. English is now the choice of a shrinking globe, not the spearhead of aggressive colonialism.

Second, English cannot be a solution for Pakistan. Early learning happens fastest in the mother tongue, and only the tiniest fraction of Pakistanis speaks English at home. But even if English is decreed compulsory from the cradle onwards, there is insufficient language teaching capacity to make this work. Moreover Pakistan's different languages

encode distinct cultures with beautiful prose, poetry, and fiction in each. To lose this history would be tragic.

How terribly contradictory! Yet this bipolar conflict is generic to all former colonies. Using different mixes of bilingualism, and even trilingualism, managing conflict intelligently has enabled some to develop a better education for their young. Pakistan has not. Our students have ever decreasing ability to reason, low curiosity levels, and abysmal general knowledge. Why?

The real enemy of education in Pakistan is a regressive mindset, not language or financial resources. Critical thinking is actively discouraged, memorisation is encouraged. There is heavy presence of religious materials in all school subjects from history and social studies to biology and math.

So go ahead and change the language to the 'right' one. You might get a 10pc improvement at most. A parrot singing in Urdu or Sindhi understands no more than one who sings in English. The terrible authority of the teacher, sanctioned by tradition, weighs heavy upon young minds.

Here's an example — a real one. Some pre-engineering college F.Sc students came to see me the other day. For fear of retribution they asked me to keep their visit secret. Their teacher had told them in class that seven divided by zero was zero! Dissatisfied, they sought an explanation. Instead they were reprimanded for being cheeky. I am older and more qualified than you, said the teacher, and so I am right.

To conclude: no nation becomes stronger by having the 'correct' official language. Instead it gains strength when it addresses the real needs of its people. Likewise, education cannot be improved by flipping from English to Urdu or vice versa. Change can happen only when education is seen as a means for opening minds rather than an instrument of ideological control.

The writer teaches physics in Lahore and Islamabad.

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Source: <http://www.dawn.com/news/1243652/is-pakistans-problem-urdu>

The Economy and National Security | M Ziauddin

Very rarely have we seen economy being given much importance while formulating our defence and foreign policies. On the other hand, our economists have very rarely discussed in their debates the economic costs and benefits of Pakistan's strategic and foreign policy choices. For countries like Pakistan, the prospect of an unsustainable debt burden, unprecedented budget deficits, huge imbalances in international trade and capital flows, and high unemployment, have brought economics more into play in considerations of national security.

China and other Asian emerging economies are being seen enhancing their national security by using their growing economic prowess and their budding commercial links with the West as strategic instruments of development and foreign policy. Under the emerging new world economic order, Asia is being seen assuming greater importance as Europe is fast slipping down the pecking order.

Those who keep a close watch on global economy believe China had used trade to lock the US middle class into a mutually beneficial relationship that has acquired a political dimension and has shaped US-China relations over the past several years, reducing in the process, their mutual tensions. Power in the modern world is said to be based as much on economic competitiveness and political resilience of a country as it is on military capability. Therefore, Pakistan must ensure faster paced economic growth and generate the revenue incomes required to sustain equitable growth that is a growth that ensures affordable universal education, affordable health cover, affordable housing and affordable rail, road and air transport.

This is expected to enhance internal security, assure political stability and boost external security. To achieve this, Pakistan's economy needs to become more competitive and more globally engaged. Indeed, unless the economic well-being of all Pakistanis is assured, unless the financial health of the government improves, Pakistan will not be able to sustain itself as a secure state, in what has now become an increasingly interdependent globalised world.

Improved economic performance has been seen to have strategic consequences, enabling a country, whether developed or developing, to better engage the world economically, building new relationships of economic inter-dependence that would replace mutually agreed destructive tendencies between nuclear powers with mutually

agreed development bias, strengthening regional and global peace. Further, it will reduce social and economic tensions on the domestic front as governments find resources to invest in social, economic and physical infrastructure, boosting more equitable and efficient growth processes.

It has been observed over the past several decades that the long-term efficacy of military power of a country depends greatly on its ability to sustain it through an ever-growing economy. Indeed, economic power of a country guarantees its national security. Strategic thinkers believe security is achieved, not by military means alone but by the whole of the economy. A booming economy serves as an enabler of national security while an economy in tailspin serves as a constraint to national security. Soviets had armed themselves to their teeth but they are said to have lost the cold war in the market place.

Currently, economic relations between countries help define the overall nature of their relationship rather than anything else such as race, colour, religion or ideology. Take for instance Britain's decision to join China's new Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). This is a glaring example of one of the key realities of the new international economic order. Not only are geopolitics and geo-economics intimately linked, but the latter, it is said, will increasingly trump the former in the absence of outright war.

British enthusiasm about joining the AIIB is said to be motivated by the opportunity for the UK and Asia to invest and grow together. By signing up as a member of the AIIB, Britain is also becoming a player in a wider geopolitical and geo-economic game.

Geo-economics is said to be the principal focus of inter-state competition. China clearly sees the creation of the AIIB as one way of employing its growing economic leverage to achieve long-term geopolitical goals. It is believed that the creation of a new "Silk Road", linking Beijing to its immediate neighbours is not expected just to increase regional productivity and trade, but also serve as a concrete manifestation of China's strategy to develop economic links with Asia and the globe, reducing, in the process, the chances of regional and international conflicts.

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Source: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1059466/the-economy-and-national-security/>

Pakistan's Big Threat Isn't Terrorism—It's Climate Change | Sualiha Nazar

For decades, Pakistan has struggled to manage urgent crises, ranging from infrastructure woes to terrorism. While its policies focus on short-term conventional threats, a potentially devastating danger lurks in the shadows: climate change. As the impact of global warming continues to grow, the political and economic instability it brings will threaten Pakistan's security. The Pakistani government must prioritize its response to climate change in order to mitigate environmental threats and prevent future calamities.

Much like the government, the Pakistani public finds it difficult to prioritize climate change when the average citizen is deprived of life's most basic necessities. For the population, immediate and clear hazards to their livelihood trump long-term, still largely invisible threats. In 2007-2008, a Gallup poll found that only 34 percent of Pakistanis were aware of climate change, and only 24 percent considered it a serious threat.

However, this perception is changing as global warming starts to impact everyday life. Over the past several years, Pakistanis have witnessed, firsthand, the devastating effects of climate change. Catastrophic floods displaced millions, and severe droughts in Thar and Balochistan portend the damage global warming can cause. The frequency of those floods has increased over the last five years, due to melting glaciers and heavy rainfall. Karachi, Pakistan's most populous metropolitan city, suffered a heat wave so severe it claimed the lives of almost 1,200 people. These recent disasters could account for the change in public opinion from the 2007-2008 Gallup poll to the situation in 2015, when Pakistan joined the list of 19 countries where the majority of the population now considers climate change a top global threat.

Perhaps the biggest security threat facing Pakistan today is the possibility of climate change and environmental factors destabilizing Karachi, which is regarded as the country's economic backbone. With a population of approximately 17 million people, the city attracts almost a million migrants every year due to its vast pool of employment opportunities, per a report by Express Tribune. It is also Pakistan's main port city, and accounts for 42 percent of its total GDP. It generates about half of Pakistan's tax revenue, and houses its stock exchange, central bank, and the priciest real estate in the country, according to the CEO of real estate portal Zameen.com.

Karachi is also close to the Indus River Delta, where the Indus flows into the Arabian Sea. Due to rising sea levels, the delta is now almost at-level with the Arabian Sea. This

threatens the stability of the ecosystem because it leads to land erosion and increases the salinity of creeks flowing from the Indus, creating an inhospitable environment for aquatic creatures and mangrove trees that depend on fresh water. Sea intrusion can cause temporary and permanent flooding to large land areas, negatively impacting local ecosystems and fresh water supplies that villagers rely on for food security and drinking water.

The repercussions of climate change are exacerbated when combined with man-made modifications that have a drastic effect on the overall ecosystem. It not only upsets the balance of the environment, but also increases susceptibility to natural disasters like cyclones and tsunamis. Alarmingly, the area of Pakistan that is covered by mangrove forests has decreased from 400,000 hectares in 1945 to 70,000 hectares today due to land grabbing, rising sea levels, and the decreasing flow of fresh water into the sea. According to the World Wildlife Federation (WWF), the mangrove trees play a critical role in buffering the coastline from erosion caused by waves and storms.

In an interview with me in January, Dr. Asif Inam of the National Institute of Oceanography (NIO) said, “Mangrove trees cannot stop cyclones and tsunamis. Instead, they act as the first line of defense against these natural calamities, minimizing their damage.” Once home to a dense mangrove forest essential to the sustenance of the delta, 205 acres have been razed to make way for several coal-fired power plants. With the mangroves gone, the Karachi coastline is now more prone to natural disasters such as cyclones and tsunamis.

Last year, the United Nations conducted a drill simulating a major earthquake in the Indian Ocean. The exercise was based on a hypothetical 9.0 magnitude quake in the Makran Trench, where the Arabian and Eurasian tectonic plates meet off the coast of Pakistan, which could trigger a catastrophic tsunami. Tauseef Alam, the chief meteorologist who supervised the tests, warned that the disastrous tsunami waves could reach Karachi in one and a half hours and “wipe out the entire city.” As the sea line creeps closer to the city limits because of land erosion resulting from Mangrove tree deforestation, the danger to Karachi’s population increases.

In 2014, the United Nations released an assessment of what would happen to Karachi if it faced another Tsunami like the one it faced in 1945 that claimed the lives of almost 4,000 people. So far, no tangible evacuation plan exists, despite efforts to implement an early warning system to prepare the city’s residents in case of an emergency.

An additional strain to Karachi's stability is the Port Qasim Power Project, part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor program, currently in development along the coastline of the Arabian Sea. Though created to alleviate Pakistan's energy crisis, the project has wreaked havoc on the lives of people in close proximity to it, and damaged one of Pakistan's most critical ecosystems. Many Pakistanis living along the coastal belt rely on the ecosystem's stability for their livelihood, to farm and fish. Changes in the ecosystem, caused both by manmade developments and climate change, have displaced as many as 80 percent of the five million Pakistanis who once lived along the banks of the Delta. Climate-induced migration has spread across much of Pakistan, as droughts, floods, and sea intrusion disrupt local communities.

With sea levels rising, there is also an increased chance of trans-boundary migration. According to a report by Dawn, sea level rise is expected to produce 35-40 million climate refugees. These Pakistani refugees will have no place to go: migration to India will not be possible because of the tense political history between the nations, and Bangladesh will not be able to absorb the vast number of refugees as it suffers from its own low-lying coastal belt.

Dr. Inam of the NIO agrees that the danger is imminent unless drastic actions are taken. "Time for Karachi is quickly running out," he said. "Some parts of Karachi's Malir have already gone under water. And with the current rate of climate change, the economic hub of Pakistan has 35 to 45 years before it completely submerges into the Arabian Sea."

Karachi's stability is critical to Pakistan's security. As climate change increases the intensity of natural disasters and threatens economic stability, the fate of the metropolis could shape that of the entire country.

Pakistan runs on an agrarian economy. From 1949 to 1950, Pakistan's agriculture sector was responsible for 53 percent of the total GDP. By 1980 to 1981, this number had dropped to 31 percent; in recent years, it has fallen even further to 21.4 percent. Among other factors, experts blame the drop on increased floods and droughts. The decrease in agricultural contributions to national GDP have stunted the economic growth of the country. According to leading economist Ishrat Husain, the economy grew by 2.9 percent per annum in the last five years, but it could have exceeded a projected rate of 6.5 percent if flooding had not caused economic and human losses.

According to a report published by the U.S. Department of Defense, “climate change will exacerbate global instability, posing an immediate threat to national security.” Among other factors, the report identified strained water supplies due to melting glaciers as a factor that could trigger instability. Pakistan ranks as the sixth-most populous country in the world, and is already unable to meet the growing water demand. The flooding and droughts destroy billions of dollars’ worth of crops every year, increasing the rates of inflation and unemployment. In addition to the water shortage, the long-term damage to fields and crops will lead to food scarcity. If this trend continues, Pakistan will be unable to meet the demands of its population, which is growing by nearly 2 percent each year.

It is imperative that Pakistan makes climate change a priority. Failure to do so would jeopardize the country’s national security. Where water and food shortage catalyzes civil unrest and conflicts, it will also hinder the government’s ability to properly manage its resources.

Currently, Pakistan has allocated 58.8 million rupees to combat climate change, a commitment that must be increased. Since Pakistan is not financially secure enough to afford climate change implementation programs on its own, it needs assistance from foreign entities as well as climate change experts who can design comprehensive programs, bearing in mind the government’s limitations.

The historic Paris Agreement in 2015 provides hope for a global response to the threat of climate change. The agreement made it clear that the responsibility for climate change lies with all nations. The government of Pakistan, much like all the member countries, has an obligation to follow strict guidelines and adopt more intense and frequent reporting of their progress. Only by assessing the vulnerabilities and needs of the state and strengthening its adaptation at the local level can Pakistan fully pursue opportunities offered, especially climate financing opportunities, through the Paris Climate Summit.

Source: <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/03/04/pakistans-big-threat-isnt-terrorism-its-climate-change/>

Pakistan can Defend its Nuclear Arsenal: US Secretary of State

The United States has assured the international community that Pakistan is capable of protecting its nuclear arsenal.

The US Secretary of State, John Kerry, emphasised the need for ending the nuclear race in South Asia, at a news briefing with Pakistani officials recently. He reminded Pakistan that the US and Russia had reduced their nuclear weapons from 50,000 to 1,500.

Asked to comment on Secretary Kerry's statement, US State Department's spokesman John Kirby told a news briefing in Washington on Monday that this did not mean the United States suspected Pakistan's ability to defend its nuclear arsenal.

As a reply to Kerry's statement, US State Department's spokesman John Kirby told a news briefing in Washington, on Monday that the United States has confidence in Pakistan's capability to protect its nuclear assets.

"We have said before that we believe that the government of Pakistan can and does provide the necessary security that they need for that arsenal," he said.

Diplomatic observers in Washington say that the two statements do provide a window to the possible US strategy for dealing with nuclear proliferation in South Asia during the two-day summit, which begins on March 31.

Unlike it did with Iran, the US does not want Pakistan to shut down its nuclear programme. But it does want Islamabad to reduce the size of its arsenal, the observers add.

Adviser to PM on Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz, who represented Pakistan at last week's talks, however, insisted that Islamabad would not accept any unilateral curb on its programme. Any reduction must also apply to India and it must address the conventional imbalance between the two countries. He pointed out that Pakistan did not have the resources to match India's ever-increasing arsenal of conventional weapons and was forced to depend on non-conventional means to defend it.

At Monday's briefings, another State Department official, Mark Toner, also faced a question about Mr Aziz's declaration in Washington last week that Pakistan was hosting some Taliban leaders and could withdraw certain facilities given to their families to persuade them to join the Afghan reconciliation talks.

The US and Indian media flashed this statement as an admission of guilt and asked Pakistan to clarify its position.

"We have very serious talks with Pakistan" about the presence of "some Taliban forces" in the country, Mr Toner said. But instead of focusing on the allegation that Pakistan was sheltering Taliban leaders, the US official noted that their presence was "a very serious threat" to the country itself.

"As we've long said, no one suffers more from terrorist attacks than the people of Pakistan. So we're committed to helping them take that fight against the terrorists who are in their country, within Pakistan's borders," he said.

At the other briefing, Mr Kirby addressed another key point in Mr Aziz's statement that the stakes were high for the next round of Afghan reconciliation talks and their failure will significantly increase violence and insurgency this summer.

"We certainly share his assessment that there is and should be a sense of urgency around getting these talks up and running and, in this case, resumed," said Mr Kirby when asked to comment on Mr Aziz's statement.

"And I don't think we would disagree either with his assessment... we would — and the Afghan Security Forces would — have to prepare themselves for the potential for increased violence in the spring and summer months," he said. "It would be irresponsible if we didn't."

The Taliban had backed out of these negotiations. Kirby said that Taliban had the choice to either continue to fight or engage in a peace process.

Source: <http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2016/03/09/national/pakistan-can-defend-its-nuclear-arsenal-us-secretary-of-state/>

Gender Imbalance in Law | Reema Omer

Nearly a century after the Legal Practitioners' Act was amended to remove the legal bar on women from practising law, women lawyers and judges in Pakistan have come a long way. However, significant challenges still remain that impede women's access to positions of leadership in the legal profession.

The amendments to the Legal Practitioners' Act in 1923 were in response to the refusal of high courts in Calcutta and Patna to allow qualified women lawyers to appear in courts as they were considered "unfit for the duties of the legal profession".

Opposing the Bill, Maulvi Mian Asjad-ul-ullah from Bhagalpur Division, said in the legislative assembly such an amendment would be antithetical to justice, as "susceptibility to female charms" would make male judges and witnesses partial towards women advocates, and in the long run, women would "take the practice away from men". Another member of the legislative assembly, Khan Bahadur Abdur Rahim Khan from the then North-West Frontier Province, supported the bill because "the presence of ladies as barristers in court will make the judges and the barristers behave themselves".

Sentiments constituting similarly pernicious gender stereotyping are still being repeated in Pakistan almost 100 years later. For example, Maulana Sherani, the chairperson of the Council of Islamic Ideology, said last year that only women over the age of 40 could become judges as that is when "women no longer remain attractive or marriageable". Similarly, in a private conversation, a retired judge of the Supreme Court said that because of their "caring and sensitive nature", women lawyers were unsuitable for "hard legal matters" and if they are to practice, they should focus their practice on "softer" areas of the profession, such as family law.

The government doesn't see women's under-representation in the legal profession as a problem.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, such sexist attitudes have contributed to the near-exclusion of women from positions of authority and leadership in Pakistan's legal profession and the judiciary.

Pakistan is the only country in South Asia to have never had a woman Supreme Court judge (India, Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka have all had women serve in their highest courts), and only seven out of Pakistan's 120 high court judges (5.8pc) are women.

Even in the district judiciary, where women are appointed judges in greater numbers, the representation of women judges sharply decreases with seniority (and hence authority). In Punjab, for example, while 20pc civil judges are women, the figure drops to 5pc in senior civil judges. Similarly, while 7pc of additional district and sessions judges are women, the number of district and sessions judges, who have executive and judicial control over their districts, is only 2pc.

The Bar too shows similar gender imbalance. Since its inception in 1973, the 25-member Pakistan Bar Council, the highest regulatory body for lawyers in the country, has never had a woman member. Bar associations fare better, but there too Asma Jahangir is the only lawyer to have been elected as president of the Supreme Court Bar Association.

Yet, the government and the judiciary still do not recognise women's under-representation in the legal profession as a problem and reform is nowhere to be seen on their agendas. The Supreme Court's comprehensive National Judicial Policy, 2009, for example, highlighted a number of issues impeding the proper functioning of the judiciary. Gender disparity was not even mentioned once in the policy.

There are many reasons for women's under-representation in the legal profession. Some reflect the general obstacles and discriminatory societal attitudes towards women that permeate other areas of their professional and private life. There is, for example, now greater acceptance of women's education, but women as professionals are still viewed with suspicion.

Where women work, there is greater opposition towards women entering traditionally 'male' professions such as the law. And where women choose to practise as lawyers, the expectation often is that they will discontinue once they get married and have children. Similar to other fields, Muslim women from elite backgrounds are better able to gain acceptance and success than their counterparts from less privileged backgrounds or religious minority groups.

Some challenges faced by women lawyers and judges, however, are more specific to the legal profession, many of which hamper women's equal participation in the law not just in Pakistan but globally.

First, there are no clear criteria on the basis of which the Judicial Commission nominates candidates for positions in the high court and Supreme Court. In the larger context of sexism in the legal profession, such lack of transparency often works to the detriment of women.

Second, sexual and other forms of harassment continue to be pervasive in the legal profession. The judiciary and the Bar are largely unaccountable institutions and complaints of sexual harassment and other misconduct against lawyers and judges are rarely investigated.

And third, because of the traditional notion of the law as a 'male' profession, there is lack of will, even resentment, towards making any kind of accommodation for women lawyers and judges, from separate toilets in courtrooms, to maternity leave and childcare.

Article 25 of the Constitution provides that there shall be no discrimination on the basis of sex. The UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, which Pakistan acceded to in 1996, obligates states to take measures to ensure women's full participation in public life.

Beyond Cedaw, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted in 1995 at the Fourth World Conference on Women and endorsed by Pakistan, outlines that states must "ensure that women have the same right as men to be judges, advocates or other officers of the court" and "commit themselves to establishing the goal of gender balance ... in the judiciary, including, inter alia, setting specific targets and implementing measures to substantially increase the number of women with a view to achieving equal representation of women and men, if necessary through positive action".

As Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif finalises his government's National Women's Empowerment Policy, it is time the under-representation of women in the legal profession and judiciary is given due recognition, and steps are taken as a matter of urgency to remove discriminatory barriers keeping women from positions of leadership in the legal field.

The writer is a legal adviser for the International Commission of Jurists.

SAARC Diplomacy | Editorial

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), as the name states, is a group designed to increase the cohesion between all South Asian states and to tackle the region's common problems together. Yet for the residents of Pakistan and India, and arguably for many neutral spectators too, the summit is important because it gives the two nations a chance to practice some diplomacy and engage in dialogue.

In the opening days the Nepalese Prime Minister, K P Sharma Oli, gave a much-needed address on the problems faced by the region today; unpredictable weather patterns caused by global warming, ill-prepared government when it comes to natural disaster managements, and grinding poverty in large sections of the land. His solutions – focusing on intra-state cooperation and cultural exchange – were also the need of the hour. Alas the good work done by several groups and bodies under the SAARC banner will be – and already is – overshadowed by the 20-min meeting between Foreign Affairs Advisor Sartaj Aziz and India's External Affairs Minister, Shushma Swaraj on the sidelines of the summit.

The meeting did bear some positive fruit, although it still falls short of any meaningful exchange. Since the Pathankot attack bilateral talks are aimed at damage control, and this one continues that trend. Pakistan's stumped Pathankot probe would be allowed to visit India, so they can gather evidence, if any, and carry their investigations further. While the chances of some actual discovery that might lead to something concrete are slim, the gesture from both sides is what really counts at the moment. Post-Pathankot, anything that contributes to the beginning of an open –ended dialogue by legally empowered diplomats is a victory. And while such talks may not have been mentioned, the continued engagement and cooperation will make the path easier.

Another major development coming out of the summit is the agreement on the Indian Prime Minister's visit to Islamabad – where another SAARC summit is being held in November. The last blitz of a visit was more an icebreaker than anything else; this, observers hope, can lead to great progress if managed right.

Source: <http://nation.com.pk/editorials/19-Mar-2016/saarc-diplomacy>

Indian Nuclear Security Measures Weaker than Pakistan's: Report

A report examining nuclear security worldwide suggests India's "nuclear security measures may be weaker than those of Pakistan", but says the risk "appears to be moderate", while claiming risk of nuclear theft in Pakistan "appears to be high".

The Harvard Kennedy School report, "Preventing Nuclear Terrorism: Continuous Improvement or Dangerous Decline?", says it is difficult to judge whether India's nuclear security is capable of protecting against the threats it faces, though it is likely adversary threats in India are "less extreme" than those in Pakistan.

Putting Pakistan "at risk for nuclear theft", the report says: "Overall, the risk of nuclear theft in Pakistan appears to be high," citing "some of the world's most capable terrorist groups, an environment of widespread corruption and extremist sympathies" as risk factors.

The possibility of collapse of the government in Pakistan or an "extremist takeover cannot be entirely ruled out".

While there is "no clear trend, either upward or downward" regarding the level of risk for Indian nuclear sites, it highlights a trend "toward increasing risk" in Pakistan as its nuclear arsenal expands and the strategic doctrine shifts toward tactical nuclear weapons.

Stronger nuclear security?

"Pakistan has substantially strengthened its nuclear security in the past two decades," the report says, citing changes in organisations governing nuclear security, training, equipment and approaches to screening personnel, requirements for nuclear material accounting and control, approaches to strengthening security culture and "substantial changes in every other aspect of nuclear security covered in the survey" as reasons for the improved nuclear security.

Measures taken to secure Pakistan's nuclear weapons highlighted in the report include:
– Allotment of 25,000 troops to guard Pakistan's nuclear stocks and facilities by the Strategic Plans Division (SPD) – Equipment of sites with extensive barriers and detection systems – Separate storage of nuclear weapons components – although this may change as Pakistan shifts towards tactical nuclear weapons intended for rapid

deployment – Equipment of weapons with locks to prevent unauthorised use – Extensive cooperation with the United States to improve nuclear security

The report also highlights negative trends including: – Absence of recent US expressions of confidence – Shift towards rapid-deployment tactical nuclear weapons – A ‘probable’ increase in the number of locations as a result of an increase in the number of weapons

The report says Pakistan “must protect against almost overwhelming adversary threats” which include terrorist groups that have demonstrated “that they are willing and able to launch complex, well-coordinated attacks on heavily defended military targets within Pakistan”, as was the case in the 2014 attempted hijacking of a naval frigate by Al Qaeda’s South Asian affiliate “with the idea of using its anti-ship missiles to attack US naval vessels”.

The report quotes Defence Minister Khawaja Asif telling parliament ‘these people could not have breached security without assistance from inside’.

Corruption, it says, “can create additional opportunities for insider recruitment”.

However, despite a variety of negative US media reports on Pakistan’s nuclear security, “US officials from President Obama to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff have repeatedly expressed confidence in Pakistani nuclear security arrangements”.

It also says the US Defense Intelligence Agency Director “testified in February 2015 that improvements were continuing”.

“It is notable, however, that these statements of confidence have not been repeated at recent high-level US-Pakistani meetings — suggesting that the United States has concerns about some elements of Pakistan’s nuclear security approach,” it said.

‘Why 2016 will be pivotal for nuclear security’:

The report calls 2016 a pivotal year for nuclear security, saying “actions in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and elsewhere will affect the shape of the terrorist threat for years to come”.

The selection of a new US president may also impact nuclear security initiatives depending on whether or not he or she makes nuclear security a priority, it says.

US and Russia, the two countries with the largest nuclear stockpiles, may or may not find ways to “revitalise their cooperation” in this area after suspension of such measures following escalating tensions over Ukraine and other issues.

‘Ideal scenario by 2030’:

Pakistan and India capping their nuclear arsenals and agreeing to confidence-building measures or “other steps that greatly reduce the probability of crises that would lead to the dispersal of nuclear weapons to front-line forces” are among the report’s ideal scenarios by the year 2030.

However, Pakistan and India have continued to expand their arsenals and continue relying on “doctrines likely to lead to early dispersal of those weapons in the event of a crisis”.

Processes for better nuclear security have atrophied over time, the report claims, saying, “No genuinely effective new mechanisms for bringing high-level policy makers together to advance the field have emerged.”

Source: <http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2016/03/23/national/indian-nuclear-security-measures-weaker-than-pakistans-report/>

Terrorism: Why is Pakistan a Convenient Suspect? | Sadia Kazmi

The recent rise in the anti-Islamic sentiments specifically in the West warrants a close scrutiny of the pattern that is subtly taking shape in which almost every other “terrorist” turns out to be a “Muslim” and is somehow ultimately found to have links with Pakistan. Most investigations are even substantiated with facts claiming that the offenders have been born, trained or at least been given safe havens in Pakistan. Particularly in the backdrop of San Bernardino shootings in California, Pakistan has once again emerged as a country that is nurturing as well as propagating terrorist elements. Even though there still is a lot of ambiguity surrounding the investigation reports and controversial evidences but the question remains as to why Pakistan so easily gets zeroed in for the terror crimes.

Incidents of erratic shootings by locals are not a new happening by any means for the Americans. Such occurrences have been reported to be taking place in schools and public places since long but never have been termed as an act of terrorism. Usually the culprits are declared to be the victims of either some social pressure or psychological impediments, causing them to act in a violent manner. It surely makes one wonder then why if a similar pattern has been replicated with slight change in the personal profile of perpetrators in term of their nationality and ethnicity, the whole treatment meted out to the case is altogether different. In case of Bernardino shootings Western media was too quick to jump to the conclusion that not only was it an act of terrorism but that the terrorists had been directly in touch with the ISIS. However this proclamation was later refuted by the Western media itself and was replaced by another version which claims that the act of terrorism was carried out by a Muslim couple with Pakistani nationality and although did not have any linkages with ISIS but was nonetheless inspired by the same ideology.

Here it is also noteworthy that KSA where Tashfeen Malik practically lived all her life is not even being considered for its possible role in terms of her religious indoctrination and in turning her into a hardliner, if she was one at all. The investigations are focusing more on the brief time period she spent in Pakistan to pursue her studies and the Madrassah she attended here during her stay. Not just that but she is being looked into in more detail than her husband just because she did spend some time in Pakistan. One again Pakistan and its “terrorist sanctuaries” are being highlighted and underscored. This is quite understandable as the West wouldn’t want to place blame on its oil rich close ally and allow any kind of undue friction in their relationship. At the

same time this approach can effectively be used to put further pressure on Pakistan to “do more” in terms of curbing terrorist networks and extremist elements in and outside the country. Nonetheless it does put a big question mark on the credibility and sincerity of the West itself and its efforts to fight terrorism where it is deliberately resorting to pick and chose its area of operation instead of adopting a comprehensive and even handed policy.

Having said that one cannot deny that there are certain indicators which provide the West with an opportunity to look at Pakistan with suspicion. For instance the religious intolerance is widespread in Pakistan and for some reason was allowed to prevail and grow unnoticed for quite a long time. This menace has now penetrated so deep into the social fabric of society that rooting it out has become almost close to impossible. Despite various counter measures like operation Zarb e Azb, which even though had been quite successful; the real challenge still remains i.e. to change the mindset of the people. Only recently a huge protest was witnessed in Lahore against the arrest of a shopkeeper who was spreading hatred against a minority Ahmadi community. Hundreds of people who came out on the roads in his support are not terrorists but common individuals with hate mongering personalities and mindsets which reflects collectively at a national level. It is an unfortunate fact that this distorted manifestation of religion where minorities are openly being harassed and victimized is being considered an acceptable behavior and no religious leader issued any fatwa against such virulent acts. When a society itself has no qualms about coming across as intolerant and extremist then one really cannot blame outsiders for showing Pakistan in a negative light or dragging it in as a prime suspect in a terrorist incident. Despite the invigoration of NAP, the will to over ride writ of the state is quite strong. Unfortunately the state has a poor track record of dealing with such matters. Unless and until a firm stance is taken on this issue, Pakistan will stay vulnerable to bad propaganda.

This hate mongering itself becomes the basis for terrorism. There is a need to bring about change in the thinking of the individuals which can be done by revising curriculum in educational institutes. Along with operation clean sweep against terrorist elements there is a need to inculcate important moral values such as respect, love and tolerance for every human being irrespective of their caste, creed and ethnicity. Hatred against other communities should be condemned at every level and stopped and banned by force without discrimination. Last but not the least, writ of the state should prevail.

Source: <http://en.dailypakistan.com.pk/opinion/terrorism-why-pakistan-is-a-convenient-suspect/>

Educational Equations | Editorial

The equation is a fairly simple one. No teacher and no administrator equals no education at schools. To simplify things further, no education or grossly inadequate education in the public sector means a continued deprivation of the right to learn for millions in the country. Yet, while the problems of education have been extensively discussed and pledges made to achieve 100 percent primary enrolment within a few years, very little has been done on the ground to change the existing situation at schools even in the country's most developed province. A report in this newspaper, based on information collected under the Punjab Transparency and Right to Information Act 2013, over 2,600 schools in the province run without anyone to head them. About 182 of these schools are based in Rawalpindi and scores of others scattered in almost every other district in the province. Claims by the public information officer for Punjab that the number had fallen since last year were proved incorrect by the discovery that in the Jhang district there were now over 90 public high schools that lacked a principal compared to around 70 in 2013.

This information is not encouraging. Nor are the reports from Sindh, that over 2,500 schools remain closed due to lack of teaching staff. The chief minister of Sindh has ordered that notice be taken of this and also of the 1,100 other schools which have been declared unfeasible. A World Bank funded monitoring programme at the cost of \$66 million is to go in place to assess the position of schools running in Sindh. The fact that we lack the administrative ability to run schools efficiently is disturbing. The Punjab Teachers Union (PTU) has attributed the failure to place heads at schools to slow promotions and also pointed out that handing over schools to NGOs reflects governmental failure. In Sindh too, the situation remains disturbing. The claim by the current government that some 5,000 schools had been reopened since it came to power does not appear to translate into reality. Many of these schools barely run. We badly need to examine our education structure as a whole and find mechanisms to plug the gaps that make it so disorderly. First of all a basic political will and commitment is needed. It is essential, for multiple reasons, that we ensure that public sector schools are able to provide meaningful learning to pupils if we are ever to overcome our educational shortcomings. Appointing principals and teachers to schools would seem to be a basic step towards achieving this goal.

Source: <http://www.thenews.com.pk/print/109209-Educational-equations>

What can the IS Offer Pakistani Militants? | Umair Arif

In two words: nothing new. And this is exactly why its mass appeal and organised presence is very unlikely. Although I have always had serious reservations about the statements coming from the foreign ministry, I would side with them on this one. In order for a movement to be popular and organised, one needs to offer a unique aspect, either in terms of ideological appeal or material support. Coincidentally, the IS scores zero on both counts when it comes to Pakistan.

Let us break this down a bit. As far as I understand, the IS wants to implement a strict form of Sharia law as a pan-Islamic caliphate; it wants to wipe out various sects; it labels those who do not support them as infidels; it encourages jihad against the West; it makes videos of brutal killings and beheadings and uses social media for propagation. Those who are aware of the religious dynamics of Pakistan can very well see that all the points I mentioned about the IS are already present in Pakistan. Several organisations with such aims and objectives have been functional in Pakistan for well over a decade prior to the formation of the IS. In fact, the IS also has a serious disadvantage in that it is based thousands of miles away and thus, in no position to offer any kind of material support or create a consistent, reliable platform.

Another factor which the IS clearly lacks is that they split up with the main pan-Islamic militant movement, al Qaeda, which leads the jihadis of Pakistan and Afghanistan. After declaring their own caliph, they were not careful to denounce the widely-accepted jihadi Amir of the Afghan Taliban movement, Mullah Umar. Pakistan's jihadi landscape is occupied by these two main streams i.e., the Afghan Taliban and al Qaeda. The third and most important militant organisation is the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which operates solely in Pakistan and has a modus operandi similar to that of the IS, did not swear allegiance to Abu Bakr al Baghdadi. There were some random defections towards the IS in Afghanistan, but as a whole, the TTP did not fall for IS. The TTP also released a detailed document denouncing the caliphate of Abu Bakr, on grounds that there is no consensus amongst the jihadi Muslim organisations on their Leadership. Therefore, the extremely fertile jihadi grounds in Pakistan have already been occupied by the TTP, Taliban and al Qaeda. Then there are some state-sponsored jihadis like Jamatud-Dawa and Jaish-e-Mohammad, which fill in any gaps for additional jihadi urges. They are fully controlled and ready to be used for our foreign policy objectives in Kashmir, India and Afghanistan. Consequently, to enter these circles from thousands of

miles away and expecting the existing jihadis to denounce their leaderships which nurtured them, is next to impossible.

Moreover, the IS considers various sects as infidels. Does that sound familiar? We already have our own version of the IS in the form of Sipah-e-Sahaba and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, who have demonstrated their capability to create havoc in society with exceptional resourcefulness and expertise. What else can the IS offer to people with sectarian leanings? I think it can easily be considered amateur in this business, when compared to those who have been in this profession for more than 25 years now.

If we talk about the ideological appeal that IS has to offer in the form of the idea of the caliphate and implementing Sharia, then there is still way too much and far more credible competition. Pakistan has a presence of ideological carriers of the idea of a caliphate in the form of organisations such as Tanzeem-e-Islami and Hizbut-Tahrir. These groups present a very modern image of a caliphate as compared to the IS image, which kills muslims and non-muslims alike. Tanzeem-e-Islami has a presence from the 1990s and has been propagating a non-violent method of establishing a caliphate in the country. Hizbut-Tahrir has been chanting the slogan of a caliphate from 1950s, after its formation in Palestine. It presents itself as a pan-Islamic movement, has a deep ideological appeal, is non-militant, has a strong presence on social media and has been advocating the idea in Pakistan from the early 2000s. Both of these organisations have categorically rejected the IS caliphate and its tactics and have, therefore, side-lined this aspect of IS ideological appeal within the country.

Therefore, when people say Pakistan has a fertile ground for the IS to propagate, I would consider it a superficial argument at best. The correct argument would be that Pakistan has a fertile ground for the political idea of a caliphate/Sharia law, the support for militant jihad and support for militancy against sects. But all three notions are locally occupied. Moreover, the seat bearers have also openly rejected to entertain a member who has nothing new to offer in terms of resources or ideas.

Published in The Express Tribune, March 28th, 2016.

Source: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1073889/can-offer-pakistani-militants/>

PAKISTAN & INDIA

Pakistan, India in Bitter Contest to win Over US | Shafqat Ali

ISLAMABAD – Pakistan and India are engaged in a bitter contest to win over the United States amid the ever-falling trust deficit, diplomatic sources said yesterday.

Since the partition in 1947 and creation Pakistan and India, the two South Asian nations have been involved in four wars, including one undeclared war and many border skirmishes and military stand-offs.

The Kashmir issue has been the main cause, whether direct or indirect, of all major conflicts between the two countries with the exception of the 1971 war where conflict originated due to turmoil in erstwhile East Pakistan (now Bangladesh).

Apart from the wars, there have been skirmishes between the two nations from time to time. The countries were also expected to fight each other in 1955 after warlike posturing on both sides, but full-scale war did not break out.

The past few months have seen ups and downs in the ties – the peak coming when Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi made a surprise visit in December and the dip after the last month's attack on an airbase in Pathankot.

India believes Jaish-e-Mohammed was involved in the attack but Pakistan – after preliminary investigations – found no evidence against the JeM or its supremo Maulana Masood Azhar.

Pakistani authorities are in contact with the Indian counterparts to collect more evidence which might prove JeM links with the January 2 attack. Reports said some Pakistani investigators were already in India for the probe.

Washington has until now appreciated Pakistan's actions after the Pathankot incident but New Delhi wanted Islamabad to 'do more.' India has also been updating the US and complaining against Pakistan's alleged 'go slow' policy.

Yesterday, a four-member Pakistani delegation was in Washington to attend the sixth round of ministerial-level Pakistan-US strategic dialogue to be held today.

The Pakistani delegation is headed by Adviser on Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz and includes Minister for Planning, Development and Reform Ahsan Iqbal, Minister of State for Water and Power Abid Sher Ali and Interior Secretary Arif Khan.

The talks will take stock of entire gamut of bilateral relations between the two countries. The US delegation will be led by John Kerry.

The six segments of the strategic dialogue include cooperation in economy and finance, energy, education, science and technology, law enforcement and counter-terrorism, security, strategic stability and non-proliferation and defence.

It will be the third annual meeting since the present government has come to power. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's visit to the US in October last had given necessary impetus to the dialogue mechanism.

Earlier, Ahsan Iqbal said Pakistan kept informing the US of security threats and will also do so in future. He reiterated Pakistan was trying to bring peace in the region for which it was working with the US.

Official sources said the two sides could discuss the Pathankot attack apart from the scheduled agenda and Pakistan will try to convince the US about its sincerity to defeat terrorism.

A senior diplomat, engaged with the Pak-US talks, told The Nation, India had been sending bags full of complaints against Pakistan.

"For the time being the balance is in our favour. The US is appreciating our efforts against terrorism and also giving less weight to the Indian complaints. But there is a bitter war to win over the US," he said.

He referred to the recent F-16 jets deal which irked India. "But US did not lend an ear to India. On the Pathankot attack too the US seems satisfied with our efforts," he added.

Another diplomat said Indian lobby had been pressing the US to use its influence and force Pakistan to act against the JeM chief and other accused wanted by India.

“John Kerry is likely to discuss the Indian complaint box with Sartaj Aziz but there is no chance of a rebuke from Washington. Our ties with the US are positive and growing. At this point we are ahead of India in the war to win the US but their lobby is also strong. There is a tug of war,” he remarked.

Defence analyst Lt. General Talat Masood (ret'd) said the Indian criticism on the deal of F16s was unjustifiable as the New Delhi was continuously purchasing latest weapons and technologies from the world, including from the US.

He said between 2011 and 2015, India was the only country to import major weapons. “The war against terrorism is a global war and the Pakistan’s efforts are laudable. India should realise and appreciate the services of Pakistan against terrorism, rather than creating baseless propaganda,” he added.

General Masood said India was against the development and prosperity of Pakistan and had always tried to harm any step which can contribute to Pakistan positively.

Another defence analyst, Dr Mohammed Khan, said the Indian lobby in US congress was involved in propaganda against Pakistan. “US also has strategic relationship with India but Pakistan never opposed it. The US is deeply involved in Afghanistan. The US and NATO depend on Pakistan due to Pakistan’s geographical location. This is their need to empower Pakistan to get positive results in war against terrorism,” he added.

He said the International community acknowledged the efforts and sacrifices of Pakistan in the war against terror. “India wants to see Pakistan as a weak state but fact of the matter is that now Pakistan is successfully encountering the menace of terrorism. India is worried about this progress and development of Pakistan and crying like a baby,” he contended.

Published in The Nation newspaper on 29-Feb-2016

Source: <http://nation.com.pk/newspaper-picks/29-Feb-2016/pakistan-india-in-bitter-contest-to-win-over-us>

India and Pakistan — Prisoners of the Past | Talat Masood

Pakistan-India relations received a major setback after the Pathankot incident for which India blamed the Jaish-e-Mohammad to be the prime suspect for the attack. Narendra Modi, in a recent interview, remarked that talks between the two countries would remain suspended until there is progress from Pakistan on taking action against those responsible for the terrorist attack. No incendiary rhetoric followed the episode and India showed maturity to that extent. Pakistan, by registering the FIR against unknown persons, demonstrated its commitment to investigate and cooperate with Indian authorities.

Investigations, however, have slowed down as Pakistan claims that the mobile numbers provided by India, only one was active and they are investigating the others. At least this is the information made public. We do not know what else has transpired between the national security advisers (NSAs). Apparently, the two NSAs have been meeting but it is deliberately kept secret. A team from Pakistan plans to visit India to obtain further evidence to proceed against those responsible for the attack. If true, it shows both sides want to remain engaged and this gives a modicum of hope.

” India’s major campaign in the US Congress to block the sale of a meagre eight F-16s demonstrates how far it can go to let down Pakistan

Mirroring a similar pattern, India is taking too long in acting against those who are supposed to have masterminded the terrorist attack on Samjhota Express. The absence of concrete evidence that could be admissible in Indian courts is cited to justify the inordinate delay in pursuing terrorist-related incidents. Acceptance of any terrorist activity allegedly sponsored from across the border is considered to be the same as surrendering to the enemy country. Following up on such cross-border crimes with diligence is considered by both countries as capitulation and politics takes precedence over international and national legal obligations. The clear beneficiary of this vacillation is of course the militant group that gets away with murder. Pressure groups like Shiv Sena in India and the extreme rightist groups may be a small minority but exercise proportionally a much greater influence in such matters.

Similarly, in Pakistan one gets an impression as though some militant organisations have a veto and can conveniently operate independent of the state. This is not to overlook that Pakistan has its priorities in dealing with its internal threat. The most potent challenge is the TTP and the LeJ and it is heavily engaged with them and has made sufficient progress. In its sequencing it will probably take on the LeT and the Jaish. But in the meantime, it needs to keep a tight control over their activities lest they derail the peace process, harm Pakistan's national interest and give India and the West an opportunity to unleash their propaganda. There is so much weight given to these elements in both countries, that saner voices remain subdued.

Regrettably, instead of pragmatism and the prioritising of the interests of citizens, a combination of a false sense of nationalism and dogged obstinacy is driving Pakistan-India relations. The question is what will make these countries alter this behaviour. Can foreign pressure, a civil-society movement, media campaign or another major skirmish (if not war) bring about this change? None of these options seem plausible at least as of now. The Indian press and electronic media are very hawkish and their role, fairly negative. Some segments of the press and TV in Pakistan are no less hostile and feed on the negative sentiments of the public. A greater interaction between them and opening each other's channels would clearly help in modulating their tempers. Failing which, business as usual is likely to continue.

Pakistan has been insisting on the withdrawal from forward positions in Siachen. The Indian military's reluctance and even outright rejection seems odd considering the harsh conditions and casualties that keep occurring. If an agreement acceptable to both sides is reached and complied with, then India need not fear any party violating the undertaking. More importantly, a resolution of the Siachen issue will have a major symbolic value and perhaps incentivise India and Pakistan to move on other perennial issues. Improvement in relations between the two countries should also have a stabilising influence on Afghanistan.

India's major campaign in the US Congress to block the sale of a meagre eight F-16s demonstrates how far it can go to let down Pakistan. Ironically, it comes at a time when both sides are supposedly engaged in repairing the relationship. What is conveniently ignored is how minuscule this deal is in comparison to India's own weapons and equipment acquisitions. PM Modi during his visit to France last year had signed an agreement to buy 36 Rafale fighter jets for over \$6 billion. He has also finalised defence deals worth \$4.7 billion in Boeing spy planes with the US.

India, to justify these purchases, takes the plea that its military has to cater against China as well as Pakistan. But the reality is that over 70 per cent of its military assets are directed towards the Pakistani border. These protests are a reminder that New Delhi, under the cover of using China as its strategic rival, can have easy access to the latest and most sophisticated weaponry from the US, Europe and Russia. But when Pakistan justifiably purchases few F-16s, essentially to use its precision-firing platforms to combat terrorists, it must remonstrate.

The Indian foreign lobby has a major partner in the global defence industrial complex. With the fastest growing economy and major arms procurement, budget congressmen, senators and parliamentarians of the industrialised world develop a vested interest in supporting Indian purchases.

Washington is aware that there will be no adverse consequences on Indian security from this deal. Irrespective of India's perceived concerns, the US in its own interest is likely to maintain a positive relationship with Pakistan. Moreover, for American firms business comes first. In any case, the protest is frivolous as Lockheed and Boeing have been only too keen to sell F-16 and F-18, but India preferred the Rafale.

With these contradictory signals emanating from India, it is too early to assess how far the two countries can move towards developing a mature relationship.

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Source: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1057322/india-and-pakistan-prisoners-of-the-past/>

Getting Kashmir's Priorities to the Table | Dr Ghulam Nabi Fai

With India and Pakistan engaging in small talk, holding hands and contemplating (maybe) a discussion of their differences over Kashmir, there is an exigent need for Kashmiris to weigh in carefully and review again any opportunities to participate in such discussions as proprietors of their own nation. Most importantly, who will represent them at the negotiating table?

There is an urgent need now for Kashmiris to press upon India and Pakistan the importance of approaching this issue constructively rather than like some game of chess at a local parlour. The foolhardiness of repeating the same gambit over and over again eventually becomes costly as well as unsuccessful. The opportunity for real change is at hand.

The first challenge, as we know, is for Kashmir to get to the table. The second and equally important challenge is the ability of any agreement on Kashmir to be acceptable to the broad spectrum of the people of Jammu and Kashmiris in the Valley, Ladakh, Jammu, Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan.

Kashmir was at the table, at least in name, when late Prime Minister Nehru had an agreement with Sheikh Abdullah which is known as the "1952 Delhi Agreement". One may disagree with the political philosophy of Sheikh Abdullah but the fact remains that he was the most charismatic leader that Kashmir has ever produced. But even that powerful leader could not sell this agreement to the people of Kashmir. In fact the Sheikh later tried to distance himself from it and eventually was arrested. Kashmiris are still fighting for their rights.

India and Pakistan have had many agreements, like Tashkent, Simla, Lahore, etc. They failed because they didn't offer a seat at the table to the primary party i.e., the Kashmiri leadership. Likewise, India and the mainstream Kashmiri leadership have had multiple accords, like the Abdullah-Nehru Agreement of 1952; the Indira-Sheikh Accord of 1974; the Farooq-Rajiv Accord; the Mufti Sayyid and Modi Agreement, etc. They also failed because they sought to bypass another party i.e., Pakistan. Therefore, it is quite logical that the talks must be tripartite with India, Pakistan and those who represent the true voice of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. Real negotiations, not parlour games, are the key to resolving the conflict. The logistics of tripartite talks can be open to discussion but the principle cannot.

The demand of the people of Kashmir that the Kashmiri leadership should be included in the talks is not based on passion alone but on important principles long acknowledged by the international community. Yet they have been contaminated with this long history of failed talks and agreements that have not resolved the issue and that do not even meet the very minimum requirement of those principles. So much political posturing; too much absence of real intent.

It's interesting how problematic it is for the parties to agree that Kashmiris themselves have a stake in any talks about their future. In what kind of democratic process would this not be of prime consideration? The moral, legal and historical foundations for such a principle have been frequently raised by not only by Kashmiris but the world community, enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as the United Nations Security Council resolutions on Kashmir and still stand, yet they are continually ignored.

Aside from the matter of being included in the talks, the question of who represents the people of Jammu and Kashmir, what voice is heard, takes on the greatest significance. India and Pakistan should realise that they can impose any solution upon the people of Kashmir; the Kashmiri mainstream leadership can sign any accord with India; but the question arises, are they going to be able to sell these agreements to the people as was attempted by Sheikh Abdullah? The answer is big "NO".

The fact is that the relationship between India and the mainstream so-called Kashmir government, the principal negotiator in all previous attempts, is wrought with obstacles. The interests of the people are not represented. The financial links, the political pressures, the undue political influence certain figures enjoy within the current and past Kashmir administrations who regurgitate New Delhi policies and ambitions, the ever-present and intimidating military presence and what is threatened if you don't go along, and the careers at stake all inevitably taint the process. Decisions are being made on the basis of politics and power by remote and unattached absentee landlords instead of by real Kashmiris involved in real issues that have long been fundamental to the whole question. There's no getting down to the real nitty gritty of what is festering. When you can't speak out about a desire for freedom or independence, that's like a boil that just gets bigger and bigger. Perhaps history itself speaks the loudest. What has Kashmir been saying for all these years?

Those who have held privileged positions in Kashmir's "official" leadership while all this has been going on have at best been muted in their response, have not demanded that

India be held accountable, and have not demanded an authentic negotiation process that resolves real problems. They are like mothers who, when their babies cry, do not try to understand why they are crying. They simply shove a pacifier in its mouth. They have not stood up for their compatriots in their hour of need. They have not stood up for Kashmir. They lack sufficient credibility and trust to shoulder the task of representing Kashmir's true interests.

The people of Jammu and Kashmir have their own leaders who do not participate in government decision-making. They are on the streets struggling for the cause, under house arrest, or in jail, because they have had the courage to speak out for basic human and civil rights that the international community has long recognized. After almost seventy years of attempts by India to silence that collective voice, what has that accomplished?

The policy of India to assume proprietary rights over Kashmir and treat it as a disobedient stepchild who must be whipped into submission has characterized its relationship with Kashmir, through the presence of hundreds of thousands of troops and paramilitary on Kashmiri soil, the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, the suppression and persecution of those who talk about "azadi," and a constant reign of terror in which tens of thousands of innocents have been imprisoned, tortured, raped and disappeared in secret mass graves.

The repression of Kashmir's soul has not diminished the pain or the need for India to meet those face to face who have had nothing but a boot to the belly and a cane to the back. The voice of Kashmir not only remains as vibrant and shrill as in the very beginning, it is yet even stronger. It is time that India showed some honesty and forthrightness in its dealings with Kashmir.

It's time to end the violence. It's time to end the charade. It's time for Kashmiris to sort out their own affairs and determine their own future.

It's not about jobs or education or even money; it's about freedom and respect for the sovereign right of a people to choose their own way of life, their own leaders, and their own politics without interference from outsiders. The people of Jammu and Kashmir, irrespective of their religious background and regional affiliations, were given the right by the United Nations to decide the future status of Kashmir. That is a principle that was agreed by both India and Pakistan and endorsed by the world community. Perhaps

India may pretend that it can preempt that option unilaterally, but the people have not forgotten.

Analysis: Kulbhushan Yadav's RAW Move | Naveed Ahmad

Kulbhushan Yadav alias Hussein Mubarak Patel is a man the Indian media has been looking for. The arrested Indian citizen personifies counter-terror policy of Ajit Kumar Doval, India's National Security Advisor and a proud spymaster. For the opposition parties, Kulbhushan offers a good reason to attack Modi government's handling of the case.

Facts of the case remain that the man was found living with his wife, a son and a daughter with a genuine Indian passport but with a fake name, Hussein Mubarak Patel. Moreover, he was in possession of multiple identities. He was arrested from Chaman near Quetta.

Detained Indian spy confesses to RAW's involvement in Balochistan

His Indian passport with valid Iranian visa bears the number L9630722 while his residential address is said to be No 502B Silver Oak, Powai, Hiranandani Gardens. The Indian Express has confirmed the address to be correct.

The Iranians have not claimed that Kulbhushan's visa as Hussein is fake. When asked to comment during his solo press conference, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani denied the issue of RAW activities in Iranian Balochistan against Pakistan. Clearly, the visiting Iranian leader was taken off guard and embarrassed. However, the insult to injury worsened when Pakistani military asserted that the matter was on the table during the COAS meeting.

No media person is allowed to enter the seven-storeyed Powai building that is being constantly watched by plain clothed men from the Indian intelligence agency, especially the Detection Branch. Kulbhushan's parents and family have been residing there for over two decades. Interestingly, his father Sudhir Yadav has not pleaded son's innocence in a press conference since Islamabad announced the arrest. Sudhir remains inaccessible.

Pakistan summons Indian envoy over ‘RAW officer’ nabbed in Balochistan

Times of India quoted a former assistant commissioner of police in Mumbai Subhas Yadav that the picture on the passport seized by Pakistan was that of his nephew Kulbhushan Yadav.

Pakistani investigators believe that the man joined RAW in 2013 while Delhi admitted that he was commander (equivalent to lieutenant colonel) of Indian Navy who had opted to retire prematurely. To many, there could not have been a better cover story from the Indian side emerging many hours after Pakistan summoned its high commissioner Gautam Bambawale.

It's likely that Hussein alias Kulbhushan has visa and work permit on both passports with different identities. The travel document released by Pakistan is valid till 2024. Work permit on both passports expires in June. The Iranian permit reportedly allowed him to enter from Bazargan.

Pakistan claimed that the man was running a terrorist financing and training network and used to operate from Chabahar in Iran, Makran in Pakistan and adjoining districts of Afghanistan. The cover story of running cargo business in Iran's Bandar-Abbas and Chabahar ports makes perfect sense if Islamabad's version is to be believed. His task was to initiate a string of subversive activities on the Makran coast where not only Chinese are working on Gwadar port but Pakistan Navy and Air Force also have multiple facilities.

‘RAW officer’ arrested in Balochistan

In a first, India's ministry of external affairs confirmed that the person identified was a naval officer who opted to retire prematurely. The standard alibi in such cases is not to own a compromised asset. Delhi played the card to gain counsellor access which may not be granted any sooner. More bizarre is the swift manner in which the ministry of defense confirmed the identity details to the South Block. Those who know bureaucratic red-tapism in Indian bureaucracy will agree that the two ministries, often at odds, showed rare teamwork. May be the Modi government was long waiting to clarify about the missing spy.

Indian critics believe that it was a strategic mistake to own up a former military officer who had spilled the beans during the enemy custody.

Indian commentators suspect a high-level Pakistani mole in the Modi government who allegedly helped Islamabad 'concoct the story against an Indian businessman'. The analysts, mostly retired military men and former ambassadors, are asking for review of internal security within the bureaucratic and political ranks in Delhi.

The Indian media perplexed with the question as to why would a spy carry a passport. The reality on the ground is that the man's passport revealed by Pakistani authorities bears his 'Muslim name' and photo. The same is true for the Iranian visa. Seemingly, RAW acted with over confidence that it's easy to operate in Pakistan's south-western outposts, and did not resort to necessary precaution.

Balochistan has been long known to exist in a security vacuum where smuggled Iranian goods including petroleum product could be bought from local markets. However, the situation started to slowly change just before the Sui operation and killing of Akbar Bugti.

India police arrest ex-air force officer for spy links with ISI

The Indian opposition to Chinese presence in coastal development project and CPEC is public knowledge. Development of Gwadar marginalises scope of Chabahar port for Iran and India both which is being developed to alternately link Tehran and Delhi to Afghanistan and Central Asia.

Its consulate in Zahedan, near the Pakistan border, has been long accused of subversive activities in Balochistan. Indian consulates in Afghanistan too have been under close Pakistani watch. As back as in 2005, India was alleged to air anti-Pakistan and pro-Baloch resistance radio transmission from Afghanistan.

Prime facie, the documents available and circumstantial evidence support Pakistan's stance. The controversy is going to get more complex and last much longer.

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Source: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1074812/analysis-kulbhushan-jadhavs-raw-move/>

ECONOMY

CPEC: Symbol of Regional Integration | Dr Muhammad Khan

The concept of globalisation can well be defined as global interconnectedness, which is achieved through regional connectivity. The regional connectivity in turn is achieved through the development of communication network between two or more states and even within the boundaries of a state. In summary, the essence of globalisation is interconnectedness, achieved through world-wide, “Widening, deepening and speeding up” of communication. This entire process further integrates the world on all three aspects; the political, economic and social. Overall, the entire process can be interpreted as the ‘time and space compression’, where physical distances though remain same, but, squeezed through the construction and development of roads/highways, corridors and railways.

China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), though conceived a decade earlier, but formalised into a treaty in 2014 is one such project which would initially promote interconnectedness between China and Pakistan, but has the plans and potentials for regional integration within South Asia and areas of Central and West Asia. As per the British geographer, Halford John Mackinder, who talked about the, heartlands and geographic pivots in his famous article, “The Geographical Pivot of History,” Pakistani geopolitical position fits into the definition of geographic pivot, connecting various regions of Asia, politically as well as economically.

As part of Chinese ‘One Belt, One Road’ strategy, the CPEC, once fully constructed would integrate India, Afghanistan, Central Asia and West Asia. Through India, other states of South Asia will be direct and indirect beneficiary of the CPEC. The economies of these countries would be connected to the other region of Asia and even with the global economy. This fact is very much known to India, but, its enmity and rivalry with Pakistan and China in the main factor, where it opposes the concept of CPEC.

Indeed, the CPEC is not a new concept, rather a continuation and expansion of the Karakorum Highway (KKH), constructed in 1970s through 1980s by Pakistan and China through difficult and very high altitude terrain. It is the same KKH which will be expanded to the level of corridor; the CPEC. Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), which India considers is part of the disputed state of Jammu and Kashmir has the right to develop and

economically grow. The CPEC will further enhance the opportunities for the economic and socio-political development of the GB and other areas, which so far remained backward, somehow. Why should, India oppose development of a community and area, just for the reason that, it has illegally occupied a major portion of the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

If India is so much worried over its disputed status, then it should come forward and resolve this dispute in the light of UN resolutions and as per the wishes of the people of Kashmir. As a major regional country, India should take initiative of resolution of issues and try to promote regional integration. Otherwise, there is dichotomy in the statements of Indian leaders. Indian High Commission to Pakistan said that, "India has no worry over the construction of Pakistan-China Economic Corridor as an economically strong Pakistan would bring stability in the region." The India External Affairs Minister, Sushma Swaraj said in statement that, "Government has seen reports with regard to China and Pakistan being involved in infrastructure building activities in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK), including construction of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. Government has conveyed its concerns to China about their activities in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir, and asked them to cease such activities."

India needs to correct its perception on the regional and bilateral issues through the prism of regional integration and prosperity rather through the mindset of rivalry and enmity. CPEC will boost the regional integration and economic prosperity, the benefits of which would be for all and India being a major economy will be the major beneficiary. If India can ask for a transit trade route for its economic linkages with Central Asia through Afghanistan, and is a partner of the TAPI, there should be no reason of India opposing the CPEC through political statements and promoting the terrorism along the route of CPEC. Pakistan otherwise has raised a security division for the physical protection of CPEC.

Apart from Indian, Iran should be made as one of the stakeholder of the CPEC. There has been an economic deal between China and Iran in January 2016. Since Chinese 70% oil transportation is either from Iran or other West Asian states and the African countries, all passing through the Strait of Hormouz. The huge hydrocarbons of Iran have their utility in the economically progressing countries; China being the biggest energy consumer and India being the second in Asia. The IP gas pipeline has potentials to be further extended to China and CPEC will be the best suited route as energy corridor. Besides, Iran, the Central Asian states have the huge potentials and reserves

for the contribution to sale in the international markets; China and India being the most energy needy states.

Indeed, CPEC is a project, which would be the initiator for the long-term regional integration, not between Pakistan and China, but in South Asia and various regions of Asia. This is possible only once the regional states; energy deficient and energy efficient correctly re-asses their future priorities. A well thought-out and deliberated economic integration would pave the way for a greater political integration and social prosperity; a step towards resolution of issues and to bring an end to the existing mistrust among the neighbours in wider Asia.

— The writer is International Relations analyst based in Islamabad.

Source: <http://pakobserver.net/2016/03/07/cpec-symbol-of-regional-integration/>

UAE, Saudi Arabia Lead FDI Revival in Pakistan

The UAE and Saudi Arabia are following in China's footsteps in channelling foreign direct investment (FDI) into Pakistan.

According to a *Khaleej Times* report, a major chunk of these investments are going into energy projects. As these energy projects go on stream, they will have a multiplier effect on the Pakistan economy.

Over several years, the whole country and the economy in particular was badly hit by energy shortages.

World Bank estimates show that prolonged outages of electricity and natural gas supplies to major industrial units in Pakistan had eroded the economy by a reduction of up to two per cent in the annual gross domestic product (GDP).

The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), the central bank, reported that FDI into Pakistan rose by 4.8 per cent during July-February period of the current fy-2016.

The net FDI inflow during these eight months was \$750.9 million as compared to \$716.2 million in the corresponding period of fy-2015.

The gross inflow of FDI during this period was \$1.3 billion, while the outflow was \$583 million, the central bank said. The outflows mainly comprised repatriation of dividends and profits earned by foreign investors.

The UAE came second only to China, with an investment of \$111 million.

Saudi Arabia committed \$105 million and Hong Kong \$101 million during the July-February fy-2016, the SBP said.

According to report, Ahsan Iqbal, minister for planning, development and reforms, who is also the key person on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects, informed Parliament that out of the total Chinese funding of \$46 billion, \$35 billion are commercial loans which will be invested in Pakistan by the Chinese private sector. The remaining \$11 billion are concessional loans.

The SBP also reported that credit takeoff by Pakistani businessmen has gone up but it was mainly used as working capital to raise industrial output. It is a good sign for the economy, with exportable surpluses getting bigger.

“At the recently-concluded Textile Asia Exhibition at Karachi, 400 foreign, mainly European, and 300 Chinese business delegates participated. Several of them expressed interest to invest in the Pakistani textile sector or doing much bigger business than their current operations,” Khawaja Arif Kapoor, one of the organisers and chairman of Pakistan Chemicals and Dyes Association, said.

Foreign fund inflows are improving and projected to go up in the coming months. This is indicated by the fact that February fund inflows rose to \$103 million – up from \$89.1 million in February 2014.

The amount may look small but it is significant considering low international oil prices which have hit demand for products in key export markets, reduced foreign trade volumes and lowered the level of investment funds globally.

Senior analysts in the capital market attribute this increase in FDI inflow to improving foreign investor confidence in the Pakistani economy and fresh efforts by the government to reduce the cost of doing business.

“We are now benefiting from the lowest commercial bank rates during the last 11 years. It means the cost of our products is becoming more competitive internationally, our exports will grow and benefit the economy,” Ashraf Mahmood Wuthra, governor of SBP, said.

He hopes the present easy monetary policy, which has brought down the interest rate to six per cent, and low inflation would help the economy and attract more FDI.

Khawaja Asif, minister for water and power, said: “More energy is the key to solve our economic problems. I am glad to see that a major part of the new FDI will go into generating electricity.”

Besides China, other foreign investors from the UAE and Saudi Arabia have also committed to invest in energy projects, finance minister Ishaq Dar said.

“Our growing energy demand has made Pakistan a big emerging investment destination. The investors are topped by Chinese multinationals, generating power and

doing infrastructure development,” Prof Iqbal said. “China, the biggest investor, has invested \$447.8 million during July-February fy-2016. It invested \$200 million in fy-2015.”

The SBP reports that capital investment in Pakistan included \$362.2 million in the energy sector during the first eight months of fy-2016. Investment in oil and gas exploration totalled \$214 million. Beverages attracted \$57.8 million.

Foreign investment into coal-fired energy projects was \$240.3 million.

The government and economists project that as work on projects included in the CPEC speeds up, FDI inflows, not only from China but also from other countries, including the UAE and Saudi Arabia, will go up. “UAE and Saudi companies are in negotiation with us, and we are close to announcing details of these projects,” Dar said.

Another vibrant area attracting investment in Pakistan is telecom-IT.

Anusha Rehman, minister for IT and telecom, informed Parliament that “FDI in IT-telecom rose to \$908 million in fy-15, up from \$160.8 million in fy-14.”

“We expect FDI to rise further in fy-16. After launching 3G and 4G technology, the number of mobile users rose by 26 million,” she said.

Source: <http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2016/03/22/business/uae-saudi-arabia-lead-fdi-revival-in-pakistan/>

Managing the Economy | Malik Muhammad Ashraf

Whether one is an avowed critic of the economic policies of government or an anodyne appraiser of their impact, it is hard to take an issue with the recent claims made by Finance Minister Ishaq Dar in regard to the state of the inherited economy and the success that has been achieved in addressing the maladies afflicting it. He has indeed given verifiable facts about the turnaround in various sectors of the economy, which have repeatedly been endorsed by some international lending and evaluating agencies as well as acknowledged by prestigious international publications.

Three years down the line the profile of the economy is quite encouraging. The fact that the budget deficit, which is considered as mother of all economic woes, has been brought down from 8.2 percent of GDP in 2013 to 5.3 percent in 2014-15 and is likely to be further pulled down to 4.3 percent by June 2016, speaks volumes about the efficacy of the macro-economic and structural reforms introduced by government during the last three years. Expansion in the tax-net, bringing down inflation to a single digit, increase in credit to private and agriculture sector, gradual enhancement in development funding, increased foreign remittances and the foreign exchange reserves touching the phenomenal level of 20 billion dollars are all credible indicators of the health of the economy. These factors coupled with the fiscal discipline not only helped in bringing down the budget deficit but also contributed to reducing the debt to GDP ratio from 64 percent of GDP in 2012-13 to 63 percent at the end of 2014-15, besides managing the debt issue amicably.

The rationale and the need for borrowing from internal and external sources including the IMF as well as raising money from the international financial markets, through issuance of Euro bonds explained by Dar is also quite convincing. The country, undoubtedly, was on the verge of default in regard to loans taken from the IMF by the previous government, and the PML-N government had no choice but to immediately seek Extended Fund Facility of 6.6 billion dollars to avoid the emerging disaster, which it was able to negotiate successfully. It also needed money for its developmental needs and other unavoidable expenditures. With persistent budget deficit, government performance had to resort to internal and external borrowing. However, the borrowing has been well managed as compared to the loans taken by the previous government, which have tremendously increased the debt liabilities of the present government, such as debt servicing.

The response that the Euro bonds received in many ways was a confirmation of the health of the economy and its ability to absorb foreign investments. For the five-year bonds investors came from all geographical regions; nearly 59 percent were subscribed in the U.S., 19 percent in the UK, 10 percent in other European countries, 10 percent in Asia, seven percent by hedge fund and one percent by insurance companies and pension funds. In respect of 10-year bonds, most of the money came from the U.S. This outcome was a result of the strenuous and consistent efforts of the economic managers of Pakistan to showcase a marked improvement in economic indicators and the success of the economic reforms introduced by government at all international economic forums. Nevertheless some naysayers have been incessantly criticising the floating of Euro bonds preferring the argument that the interest rates agreed were rather on the higher side and might in the end have debilitating impact on the economy in terms of cost of the loans that will have to be paid. These loans obtained at 7.5 percent and 8.5 percent though seem on the higher side but their impact is more or less offset by the overall percentage of 3.3 percent on all loans obtained by the government. Similarly, some circles are trying to do their utmost to rub in the notion that the CPEC would increase Pakistan's external debt substantially. I think those holding this view have not bothered to see the details of the MOUs and agreements signed between Pakistan and China. Out of 46 billion dollars nearly 34 billion dollars pertain to energy projects, which will mostly be in the private sector. These investments will not be responsible for adding to our debt burden. Furthermore, they are not taking into account the economic activity that the CPEC would generate and its productive potentials, which could grow to astronomical proportions due to the multiplier effect. This mega project is a lifetime opportunity for Pakistan and the entire region not only to address economic difficulties but also to put their economies on an irreversible path of sustained development.

An ideal and preferable situation for the managers of economy would be non-reliance on borrowed money. However, for developing economies like Pakistan, beset with a host of economic aberrations, it is nothing but a dream. Managing an economy is indeed an arduous and convoluted undertaking due to its linkages with myriad internal and external factors, which are sometimes beyond the control of government. Borrowing from internal and external resources is an indispensable imperative for economies like Pakistan. But what is important is that the money borrowed should be gainfully invested so that repayments could be made from the resources that are generated by those investments and the residual money can also be diverted to productive channels. Borrowing for the sake of repaying debts can put the economy under further strain. The economy of Pakistan is well on its way to a sustained development and in view of the future projections it can be safely inferred that Pakistan will be in a comfortable position

in the future to pay back these loans as well as to reduce its dependence on borrowed money.

The performance of a government in regard to its achievements or otherwise is needed to be judged with reference to the gravity of the challenges that it inherited to put things in proper perspective. Any out-of-context evaluation is bound to create a distorted view of the situation. Unfortunately, the sitting governments have the disadvantage of incumbency; it is a universal phenomenon. However, it is more pronounced in our land of the pure where people love to have a swipe at government policies and because negativity sells.

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WORLD

Afghanistan: Mysteries & Realities! | Iqbal Khan

TWO suicide attacks one each in Kabul and Kunar Provinces of Afghanistan and prompt claiming of responsibility by the Taliban could be another conspiracy to derail the upcoming direct talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban. May be someone else is acting as Taliban. Afghan conflict often throws up events that remain shrouded in mystery. Former DG FIA Tariq Khosa in his recent piece in a leading Pakistani newspaper, on February 22, titled “Power of the establishment”, has summed up some of the tumultuous happenings of yester years linked to the Afghan conflict. He revisits whisking away of Osama Bin Laden by Americans from Abbottabad, Raymond Davis saga, the Memo gate and briefly touches on the mystery that still surround these. He writes: “Nothing intrigues me more than the power of our security establishment.

The establishment has acquired the art of turning its strategic follies to triumphs. It is this deep state that has curtailed and trimmed democracy, ensuring the country stays rigged in favour of a small but self-aggrandising elite. And until that changes, democracy in Pakistan will remain imperilled”. Interestingly he also tends to take credit for his act of shying away from national duty: “The Registrar (Supreme Court) called me during the proceedings to say the court was considering my name as independent investigator in the Memo case... I received a court order on Dec 2 seeking my consent with respect to performing national duty as head of the commission”. Memo gate smacked of intrigue. I responded immediately and expressed my inability to undertake the assignment as head of the Memo Commission”. Instead of calling the shots on establishment, Mr Khosa should have agreed to investigate the Memo gate and brought truth before the nation. It is not fair to shy away when a demanding task is assigned and then years later come up with fairy tale narratives. To put an end to such speculative narratives, the Federal government should consider making public the findings of Abbottabad Commission report.

Disruption of second round of Murree peace process in July 2015 was a strategic setback for the Afghan peace process. Eversince, Pakistan has been doing its best to bring together vital nuts and bolts to jumpstart the circus. Hours before representatives of the Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG) were to assemble for the fourth round of

talks in Kabul, Chief of Army Staff General Raheel Sharif dashed to Doha and discussed the role of the Afghan Taliban's office in Doha. His meetings focussed on matters relating to regional security and facilitation of the reconciliation process in Afghanistan by Doha office, through Qatari leadership. Army chief's visit to Doha was part of Pakistan's efforts to persuade all Taliban groups to return to the negotiating table.

During the fourth round, the QCG agreed to continue joint endeavours as part of their shared commitments to advance the peace and reconciliation process in Afghanistan. Now Pakistan is all set to host direct talks between the government in Kabul and Afghan Taliban, including other insurgent groups, by the first week of March. "The QCG member states invite Taliban and other groups to participate through their authorised representatives in the first round of direct peace talks with the Afghan government," post fourth round QCG communique said. "Pakistan has graciously offered to host this round of talks in Islamabad.

Earlier a two-member Afghan Taliban delegation, led by head of the group's political office in Qatar, had paid an unannounced visit to Pakistan as part of preparations for the formal resumption of direct talks with the Afghan government. Doha delegates held informal discussions with senior officials of the four countries. They had shared a list of their representatives who would attend the formal talks. This is the first time that Taliban's Qatar office is taking part in the peace initiative backed by both China and the US. When talks between Afghan Taliban and Afghan government took place under the Murree peace process in July 2015, Taliban's political office in Qatar had distanced itself from the process.

Pakistan is deeply interested in speedy resolution of the Afghan crisis. More delay in resumption of direct dialogue and attaching of pre-conditions could shake confidence of all those who want an end to the conflict. Unlike the previous round of talks, this time all Taliban groups are being pursued to come to the negotiating table. Taliban's splinter group, headed by Mullah Muhammad Rasool Akhund, has also been invited to join the negotiation process. In another major breakthrough, participation of former Afghan Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hizb-e-Islami in the peace process also appears certain.

As the resumption of peace process is round the corner, confusing signals continue pouring in from Kabul as to its genuine commitment to the success of the peace process. Though Afghanistan's ambassador to Pakistan Dr Omar Zakhiwal has stated that his government is committed to the quadrilateral peace process, ground realities

speak otherwise as some circles from within Kabul are trying to attach pre-conditions to the talks. Moreover, former President Hamid Karzai wants India to be added to QCG; and reportedly the US and India are discussing the ways and means to deploy some Indian troops in Afghanistan. While Americans are pondering over a figure of 3-4000 personnel for guarding the ongoing development projects, in his over enthusiasm, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has offered readiness to deploy around 30,000 soldiers. Pakistan has already conveyed to Kabul that any additional deployment of Indian troops in Afghanistan would be taken as crossing of redlines. Presently, 500 Indian military personnel are in Afghanistan, ostensibly to protect Indian embassy and consulates.

This type of environment is quite intriguing. Afghanistan should have been keen for restoration of peace and tranquillity in the country that has suffered so much and for so long because of turbulence and turmoil triggered by a host of factors. Earlier, Afghanistan and some of its friends in the West had been complaining that peace process was not moving ahead because of lack of required support by Pakistan. However, over the last two years, Pakistan has been making hectic endeavours to help forward movement of peace process. Pakistan's keenness has been widely acknowledged by the international community. Pakistan is deeply interested in speedy resolution of the Afghan crisis as unending conflict has badly damaged it in different ways including missed economic opportunities, deteriorating security situation and continued presence of millions of Afghan refugees that are adding to the socio-economic problems of the country.

In the presence of strong anti-dialogue lobby in Kabul and existence of fragile fault lines, one could neither be sure about continuity and sustainability of the peace process nor could accurately guess the timeframe for reaching an agreement. Though it would be an ideal CBM to announce a ceasefire as soon as possible, keeping in view the stronger combat worthiness of Taliban in the peripheries of urban centres and the approaching spring fighting season, one may have to wait for quite some time for such announcement without adequate political quid pro quo from the Afghan government. Time is on Taliban's side. Unless President Ashraf Ghani demonstrates political will by putting forward a credible power sharing formula, attractive enough to woo the Taliban side. While it is encouraging to see the Afghan government and Taliban talking directly, Afghans have a poor track record of reaching mutually acceptable truces; and still poorer showing with respect to implementing such agreements. Therefore, while the two sides may appear talking keenly, the burden of heavy lifting like "what to talk" and "how to talk" will fall on the QCC.

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Source: <http://pakobserver.net/2016/03/02/afghanistan-mysteries-realities/>

New Cold Wars | Karl Meyer

The essential key to addressing real threats to international security and peace, as well as to resolving smaller wars and regional conflicts, is to reverse the present trend toward cold wars with Russia and China. The world needs active cooperation among the United States, Russia, China and other influential countries, through agreement and cooperation within the United Nations framework. We need to return actively to the vision set forth in the United Nations Charter, and abandon the fantasy of unipolar world domination.

The possibility of war between nuclear armed powers is returning as a real threat to the security of people all over the world. Climate change, waste of limited resources, and the economic pressures of excess population growth on the carrying capacity of Earth are fuelled by military spending. These threats are felt first by the most economically vulnerable regions and countries. They also drive local civil wars and regional resource and territorial wars.

In our view, the expansionist exceptionalism of United States neo-imperialist policies is the principal driver in the renewal of Cold War hostilities among the United States, Russia and China.

To solve these problems will require agreement and cooperation among all affected countries, with strong leadership by the world's major powers. Given the present Charter structure of the United Nations, this means, at the very least, the five permanent members of the Security Council.

The policy fantasy that stands in the way of addressing major world problems cooperatively is the idea among ignorant or venal politicians that the United States can retain and expand the boundaries of 'sole superpower' domination that was achieved briefly after the collapse and dissolution of the Soviet Union. The most damaging foreign policy error of presidents Clinton, George W Bush and Obama, all foreign policy

novices, was that they yielded to entrenched bureaucratic military/industrial/Congressional/governmental establishment advice and pressure to take advantage of temporary Russian weakness, and the less developed military strength of China, in order to extend the military umbrella of Nato membership into Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

They pushed to ring the frontiers of Russia with new alliances, missile sites and military bases, and to extend military alliances and bases around the Pacific perimeter of China. These actions have sent a very aggressive and threatening message to the governments of Russia and China, which are getting stronger every year, and are pushing back.

A second harmful error of the Bush and Obama regimes has been their belief that they could take advantage of popular unrest and revolts in Middle Eastern countries to knock off dictatorial governments and, by aiding oppressed rebel groups, establish friendly client governments in these countries. They failed to secure a stable, reliable client government in Iraq, in fact brought in a government more influenced by Iran.

They are well on the road to a similar failure in Afghanistan. They failed miserably in Libya, and are failing in a terribly tragic way in Syria. How many successive tragic failures do U.S. policy elites have to experience before learning that they have neither the right nor the capability to control the future political development of these countries. Each country must sort out political and economic arrangements according to its unique balances of power and social context, without excessive outside interference. Those forces that have the strength and organisation to prevail do not intend to become subservient neo-colonial clients of the United States, once their temporary need for patronage has been resolved.

United States policy must stop poking and provoking Russia and China along their frontiers, and return to a strategy of seeking negotiated peaceful coexistence, and balancing of regional interests among the major powers, the United States, Russia and China, with appropriate respect for the interests of secondary powers, India, Pakistan, Iran, Brazil, Britain, Germany, France, Indonesia, Japan, etc.

This article has been excerpted from: 'Détente and the new cold wars'.

Courtesy: Comondreams.org

Source: <http://www.thenews.com.pk/print/101947-New-cold-wars>

Expanding World of Nuclear Power Plants | Editorial

ACCORDING to President of China National Nuclear Corp, his country has set an ambitious target of building around 30 nuclear power plants in countries along the One Belt and One Road initiative by 2030. Around 70 countries in total are already planning or developing their own nuclear power projects and it is estimated 130 more nuclear power units will have been built by 2020.

The world will need greatly increased energy supply in the next 15 years, especially cleanly-generated electricity. Electricity demand is increasing much more rapidly than overall energy use and is likely to almost double by 2030. Though there is also focus on solar and wind power but at the existing technological level exploitation of these resources at the optimal level is not possible. Oil prices are currently down but the phenomenon is not going to persist for long and it is understood many countries cannot sustain oil-based power plants because of higher costs involved in their operation. It is because of this and also due to environmental consideration that many countries of the world are now focusing more on nuclear power plants and these also include even oil producing countries and that the countries like Russia, South Korea, Japan and the United States are all exploring the global nuclear market aggressively. Presently, there are 437 operative nuclear power plants in ten countries of the world whereas 70 reactors are under construction, 183 are planned and 311 are proposed in different states. In this backdrop, it is encouraging that in Pakistan too there is realization to take advantage of this clean and dependable source of energy. Apart from plants at Chashma and KANUPP, two major power plants K-2 and K-3 are being constructed in Karachi and in all the PAEC has proposed to add over eight thousand megawatts of nuclear energy to the national grid by 2030. We hope the PAEC would look into a proposal once given by famous nuclear scientist Dr.A Q Khan to have small and independent nuclear power plants for every district or population centre.

SOURCE: <http://pakobserver.net/2016/03/05/expanding-world-of-nuclear-power-plants/>

US Presidential Race and Mideast – OpEd | Osama Al Sharif

The United States presidential race is attracting attention outside the US because of the stark contrasts between candidates, especially on the Republican side, over foreign policy and the increasing possibility that outsider billionaire Donald Trump could soon become the presumptive party nominee against the wishes of the GOP establishment. Trump has triggered heated debates over his audacious campaign promises to ban Muslims from entering the US, allow the use of waterboarding and more to extract confessions from Islamist militants and order the military to target terrorists' families.

Furthermore, Trump continues to attract independent voters through his anti-immigration rhetoric and his pledge to build a wall between the US and Mexico. In addition to these controversial statements, businesses fear that if elected he would wage a trade war on China and others that could lead to world recession.

His anti-Muslim rants have enraged American Muslims, liberals and even conservatives inside the GOP. Arabs and Muslims all over the world also fear that Trump's policies will deepen the divide between America and the Muslim world. His rivals in the race have distanced themselves from such positions, but it was interesting that while all re-affirmed their loyalty and bias in favor of Israel, Trump was the only candidate to say that he will try to be neutral in the Israeli-Palestinian struggle hoping that this will help him push both sides to reach a deal.

He later toned down his statement and bragged about how he was a close friend of Israel and Prime Minister Netanyahu. This happened after his opponents, Marco Rubio and Ted Cruz, lambasted him for choosing to be neutral on Israel, which they say is America's closest ally and the region's only democracy.

It is important to note that in spite of the ideological and policy differences between Democratic and Republican candidates, all agree on the unequivocal support to Israel. As the race reaches crucial stages this month, it will soon become clear if Trump will get the necessary number of delegates to win the nomination of his party or if Cruz will be able to deny him that; forcing the issue to be resolved at the party convention in the summer. Cruz is a staunch conservative and his views on world affairs are extreme. He, along with other Republican candidates, has attacked the Iran nuclear deal, saying that it will allow Tehran to build nuclear weapons. His view on fighting Daesh is also extreme

where he suggested that the US should “carpet bomb” areas under the militant group’s control.

Rubio, who remains the GOP establishment’s choice, has a more realistic approach to dealing with Daesh. He proposes joining forces with Sunni states to overrun the militant group along with increased US military involvement. Trump, on the other hand, is more general by vowing to intensify bombing the group and working with Russia to defeat them.

Trump’s position on President Assad is also vague. He said that he was against the occupation of Iraq, which he believes had cost the US trillions of dollars, destabilized the Middle East and handed Iraq to Iran.

On the Democratic front former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton appears to be on her way to winning her party’s nomination. Most polls show that she will defeat Trump if he was his party’s nominee. Pundits believe her foreign policy will be more hawkish than that of President Obama. She of course is a vehement supporter of Israel and it is unlikely that she would seek a confrontation with Netanyahu, in contrast to the early days of Obama’s presidency. She, on the other hand, may increase US military involvement in Iraq and Syria. But she will continue with other Obama foreign policies, especially the slow opening to Iran and coordinating with Russia over Syria.

Her rival, socialist Bernie Sanders has vowed to remain in the race until the Democratic convention later this year despite his difficult chances to clinch the nomination. If he is chosen as his party’s nominee, he too stands a good chance to defeat Trump in November, according to polls.

Sanders, an American Jew, has dedicated little time to speaking about foreign policy issues during the campaign. Some pundits believe he is a realist who will not lead America into new military interventions. On the issue of Israel/Palestine some critics believe he will be anti-Israel in the sense that he is driven by socialist values of justice and fairness.

He has not commented much on the issue but described it as “depressing and difficult.” It is worth noting that Senator Sanders was among those who boycotted Netanyahu’s Congress speech last year.

With the exception of Trump, US policy toward key regional issues is unlikely to change dramatically under either Clinton or Cruz. Both will adhere to their party’s declared

policies on Israel and Iran. On the war against Daesh both are expected to increase US military involvement. For the Arabs no candidate is showing readiness to address core issues that have troubled the region for decades.

A New Arms Race in the Middle East | Con Coughlin

IRAN'S decision to test-fire two ballistic missiles emblazoned with the legend "Israel must be wiped out" in Hebrew is not the sort of reassuring conduct one would expect from a country that claims it wants better relations with the outside world. Timed to coincide with US Vice President Joe Biden's tour of the Gulf states and Israel, the missile launches will not only be seen as an unnecessarily provocative act of aggression by countries like Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states.

They are also deeply embarrassing for the Obama administration, which is still trying to reassure its allies in the Gulf and Israel that its controversial nuclear deal with Tehran has ended Iranian attempts to build nuclear weapons – for the time being, at least. The fact remains that the real power in Iran lies with the Revolutionary Guards (IRGC), whose duty is both to defend and export Iran's revolutionary values throughout the Muslim world – with special focus on neighbouring Arab states.

Not only do the Revolutionary Guards control a significant percentage of the Iranian economy – including the country's vast oil reserves. They are also responsible for Iran's defence and security policy which, contrary to Washington's confident predictions in the wake of the nuclear deal, has led to a significant upsurge in Iranian meddling in neighbouring Arab states. The fear now among pro-Western Arab leaders is that Iran will embark on a military build-up funded by the estimated \$150 billion Tehran is set to receive as a result of the sanctions being lifted.

The missile tests will certainly be seen by many regional leaders in that context, particularly as many Western intelligence experts are convinced the missiles are being designed specifically to carry nuclear warheads. In addition to continuing to develop its ballistic missile programme, Tehran last month also concluded a deal with Russia to improve its missile defences. One of the more obvious failings of Mr Obama's nuclear

deal is that it allows Iran, a country which the CIA says once had an illicit nuclear weapons programme, to continue development work on its ballistic missiles.

But things are viewed differently in the Gulf. According to senior security officials I have spoken to recently in the region, there is no guarantee that Mr Obama's deal will prevent Iran from continuing work on its nuclear weapons programme. As one senior defence official commented: "We know the Iranians well, and we know they have no intention of giving up their ambitions to acquire nuclear weapons."

Not surprisingly, the Gulf states have now embarked on developing a multi-billion pound anti-missile shield of their own. If nothing else, Mr Obama's legacy to the Middle East will have been to initiate a new arms race. In Israel, too, intelligence officials take the same view about Iran's long-term nuclear ambitions, which no doubt explains Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's recent decision to cancel his proposed visit to Washington later this month.

The problem now is that if Washington is not prepared to take Iran's continued acts of bellicosity seriously, there are plenty of Arab leaders who will. For the past two weeks Saudi Arabia has been hosting the Middle East's biggest-ever military exercise – Operation Desert Thunder. An estimated 20 Muslim nations have taken part in the exercise which is aimed at strengthening the ability of the Saudi-led coalition to defend itself against the growing threat posed by Islamist-inspired terror groups, such as Daesh.

But the possibility should not be ruled out that one day these same forces could be used to defend Arab regimes from the threat posed by Iran. In Yemen, Saudi Arabia is already fighting a proxy war against Houthi rebels backed by Iran, while Riyadh has made no secret of its determination to secure the overthrow of the pro-Iranian regime of President Bashar al-Assad in Syria. Yet if Iran continues with unprovoked acts of aggression, such as its latest test-firing of ballistic missiles, then there is a genuine risk that Saudi Arabia and its allies will become involved in a direct, and far more dangerous, military confrontation with Iran.

— Courtesy: The Telegraph

Source: <http://pakobserver.net/2016/03/15/a-new-arms-race-in-the-middle-east/>

Iran's Nuclear Deal and the 'Obama Doctrine' – Analysis | Amin Tarzi

The 2015 National Security Strategy of the United States recognizes the potential use of nuclear weapons and materials that pose a grave threat to national security by irresponsible states or terrorists. In the last decade and a half, two persistent nuclear proliferators have challenged existing international nonproliferation norms creating a potentially devastating security threat to the United States and many of its allies. This article will only focus on the Islamic Republic of Iran's nuclear threat.[1] First, I will briefly review the attempts made by the United States and its allies to decrease the risk of a nuclear-armed Islamic Republic of Iran. Then, I will examine the dynamics that improved the likelihood of the Obama administration concluding a successful deal with Iran and the consequences it will have on US-Iran relations.

The Path to the Nuclear Deal with Iran

During his initial presidential campaign in 2007-08, Barack Obama repeatedly declared his intention to improve US-Iran relations, and he followed through after taking office. However, President Obama took a different approach than his predecessors. Previous US-Iran engagements maintained the US-stated intention of changing the nature of the Islamic regime in Iran, seeking global improvement on a host of issues, and kept the threat of military force ever-present. After the experiences in Afghanistan and especially in Iraq, Obama moved policies away from forcing unsavory regimes through military power to fall in line with Washington's policies or interest. As such, Obama sought to assure not only the Iranian people but also its leadership that Washington's intention was not to alter the nature of the Islamic Republic, but to engage the leadership in Tehran through dialogue and multilateralism. He narrowed the topic to encouraging a behavioral change on the specific issue of nuclear fuel enrichment. The US president's policy approach to Iran's nuclear question is the best-applied example of what is now known as the Obama Doctrine.

No matter who was at the helm in Washington and despite Obama's demarches of goodwill, Iran's political climate was not receptive to any serious dialogue with the United States throughout the beginning of the Obama administration. At the time, the Iranian regime faced one of the toughest challenges to its legitimacy and its most serious existential threat; Perhaps, as existential as the early days of the Iran-Iraq war of 1980-88. While attempts for dialogue were made, the highly irregular 2009 presidential elections in Iran, the ensuing mass protests, and the reelection of Mahmud

Ahmadinejad slowed down and later reversed some of the initial constructive steps taken to resolve concerns on Iran's nuclear program. The exceedingly confrontational international approach adopted by Tehran during the second term of Ahmadinejad, along with increasing human rights abuses inside Iran, allowed the United States to gather a hitherto unseen multilateral coalition to bring political and economic pressure on Iran. As a result, all major powers in the United Nations Security Council agreed to impose the toughest, most intrusive economic and political sanctions on Iran while it struggled with harsh economic conditions and social unrest. This resulted in increased popular disenchantment with the regime. Furthermore, Ahmadinejad's relationship with Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei entered into an openly confrontational stage, endangering the very core of the Islamic Republic system established in 1979.

As tensions increased in the latter years of Ahmadinejad's second term, sentiments began to shift with regard to the West. It became more evident that there were more immediate threats to the system than the potential American-orchestrated regime change through soft power or military force. While Khamenei and his supporters continued to regard the United States as an existential threat to the regime, they calculated that change was necessary to survive. In Iran's presidential elections of June 2013, the supreme leader, learned from his ill-fated open support of Ahmadinejad. He did not endorse candidates whose ideas closely aligned with his own and did not undermine the election of longtime regime insider Hasan Ruhani. President Ruhani's political platform severed ties with the past and sought to engage the West with moderation to break the coordinated international sanctions, improve the country's economy, and, ultimately, improve the survival of the regime. With Khamenei's cautious blessing, Ruhani fully engaged with US on the nuclear topic by September 2013, initiated by his symbolic telephone conversation with Obama.

US-Iran Relations After the Nuclear Deal

For the United States, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), as the nuclear deal is formally known, has showcased the effectiveness of the core of Obama's foreign policy. Obama's foreign policy, mainly through multilateralism and diplomacy, demonstrates that sticky international problems can be resolved without military intervention. In this case, the Iranian ability to enrich nuclear fuel for military purposes has been diminished, and the United States averted another military entanglement in the Middle East. The JCPOA has limited Tehran's ability to enrich uranium beyond 3.67 percent or to produce weapons-grade plutonium for the next 15 years. Furthermore, Iran's breakout timeline has been extended from roughly 3 months to at least a year, if

Tehran should decide to renege on its obligations under the JCPOA. Thus, the United States, through an international partnership, has most likely averted the possibility of a military engagement with Iran over that country's possession of enough nuclear fuel for one or more weapons. This proved to be a victorious moment for the Obama administration.

Moreover, it is a bit problematic that the deal has not completely eradicated the capable threat but has only slowed it down. The JCPOA does not cover Iran's quest to enhance its technological expertise to produce more accurate and longer-range delivery systems for potential nuclear weapons in the future or to design warheads capable of accommodating nuclear devices. In October 2015, Iran tested a newer version of its Shehab-3 intermediate-range ballistic missile named Emad. If the Emad were capable of carrying a nuclear warhead, as suggested by observers, it would constitute as a violation of a UN Security Council Resolution. The Iranian authorities have indicated that Russia had begun delivery of the S-300 air-defense missile system to Iran, a prospect that Moscow halted during the nuclear negotiations.

Furthermore, the JCPOA has not completely improved relations with the United States. Fearing what Khamenei believes is the United States' soft power approach designed to undermine the nature of the Islamic Republic, he banned all contact with the US on any matter not related to the JCPOA and ordered against making commercial deals with US firms. In regional issues ranging from Syria to Saudi Arabia and dealing with ISIL, Tehran has adopted a more confrontational approach.

In conclusion, it is not certain what the future will be for US-Iranian relations. Iran will be expected to abide by the JCPOA. Beyond that, the future depends on several factors, the more immediate of which follow. The role Iran chooses to play in the Syrian conflict and in the war against ISIL will shape relations. Furthermore, both countries have upcoming elections whose results will foreshadow future relations. Elections on the parliamentary and Guardian Council elections will begin in Iran, however the majority of the reformist candidates have already been disqualified. The outcome of the US presidential elections will begin and could bring forth a more assertive, if not activist, US role in the Middle East dismantling the current hard earned progress.

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Source: <http://www.eurasiareview.com/16032016-irans-nuclear-deal-and-the-obama-doctrine-analysis/>

Trump Victory a Major Global Risk: EIU

LONDON: The prospect of Donald Trump winning the US presidency represents a global threat on par with religious militancy destabilising the world economy, according to British research group EIU.

In the latest version of its Global Risk assessment, the Economist Intelligence Unit ranked victory for the Republican front-runner at 12 on an index where the current top threat is a Chinese economic “hard landing” rated 20.

Justifying the threat level, the EIU highlighted the tycoon’s alienation towards China as well as his comments on Islamist extremism, saying a proposal to stop Muslims from entering the United States would be a “potent recruitment tool for militant groups”.

It also raised the spectre of a trade war under a Trump presidency and pointed out that his policies “tend to be prone to constant revision”.

Read: Clinton, Trump move closer to White House nominations

“He has been exceptionally hostile towards free trade, including notably Nafta (the North American Free Trade Agreement), and has repeatedly labelled China as a ‘currency manipulator’.” it said.

“He has also taken an exceptionally right-wing stance on the Middle East and militant terrorism, including, among other things, advocating the killing of families of terrorists and launching a land incursion into Syria to wipe out the militant IS (and acquire its oil).

“By comparison it gave a possible armed clash in the South China Sea an eight — the same as the threat posed by Britain leaving the European Union — and ranked an emerging market debt crisis at 16.

A Trump victory, it said, would at least scupper the Trans-Pacific Partnership between the US and 11 other American and Asian states signed in February, while “his hostile

attitude to free trade, and alienation of Mexico and China in particular, could escalate rapidly into a trade war. “

“There are risks to this forecast, especially in the event of a terrorist attack on US soil or a sudden economic downturn,” it added.

However, the organisation said it did not expect Trump to defeat his most likely Democratic opponent, Hillary Clinton, in an election and pointed out that Congress would likely block some of his more radical proposals if he won November’s election.

Rated at 12 alongside the prospect of a Trump presidency was the threat of IS, which the EIU said risked ending a five-year bull run on US and European stock markets if terrorist attacks escalated.

The break-up of the eurozone following a Greek exit from the bloc was rated 15, while the prospect of a new “cold war” fuelled by Russian interventions in Ukraine and Syria was put at 16.

Source: <http://www.dawn.com/news/1246255/trump-victory-a-major-global-risk-eiu>

Towards World War III | Sajjad Shaukat

Although the UNO-backed fragile ceasefire in Syria, brokered by major powers including Russia and the United States came into force on February 27, 2016, yet its violations continue, which could lead the world towards what some call the World War III in the wake of various negative developments. In this regard, rift has also been created between the U.S. and its close NATO ally, Turkey, when on February 10, 2016, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan lashed out at the U.S. over its support for Syria's main Kurdish group, saying, "The failure to recognise the Democratic Union Party (PYD) as a terrorist group is creating a 'sea of blood' in Syria. He explained, "The PYD, on which the U.S. relies to battle the so-called Islamic State (ISIS or Daesh) in Syria, is an offshoot of the banned Kurdistan Workers' Party."

Despite the insistence of America and France to observe the ceasefire, Ankara continued its massive shelling against Kurdish targets in northwest Syria. Meanwhile, Syria's opposition and rebels have accused the Bashar al-Assad's regime of attacking the rebel-held areas with heavy shelling, and its ally Russia of pounding two villages in the Aleppo province with air strikes. But both Moscow and Damascus blame the U.S.-supported rebels of violating the truce.

Besides, the Sunni-based militant groups, the CIA-backed al-Qaeda's affiliated outfit, Al-Nusra Front, and ISIS, which are in control of some areas of Syria are not subject to the truce agreement. These outfits, especially ISIS, which are fighting to topple the Shia government of Assad claimed responsibility for the recent terror attacks in Syria. And Moscow and U.S. and major European allies are accusing each other of violating Syria's ceasefire agreement.

In this respect, since September 30, 2015, there have been various developments such as Russian successful airstrikes on the ISIS targets in the northern Syria, its coalition with Iran, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon-based Hezbollah in support of Assad, and U.S. Defence Department's announcement to abandon the goal of training Syrian rebels. There is also the Russian President Vladimir Putin's clear-cut statement, indicating that Israel's Zionist regime is backed by the US for their 'fake war on ISIL'. In addition there is the first Vienna meeting on Syrian crisis, where the U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry agreed to keep Assad in power, and America's decision of sending 50 special forces to Syria to help in taking down ISIS terrorists. The creation of war-like situation

between Russia and Turkey after the downing of Russian fighter jet by Ankara, and demoralisation of ISIS terrorists and rebels who have fled, after the Russia-led coalition reoccupied several territories in Iraq and Syria, have clearly proved that despite Russian president's recent announcement to withdraw forces from Syria, there is no durable solution of Syrian crisis, and the country still remains a flashpoint of a dreaded World War III.

In this connection, the most alarming development is that the Pentagon has again announced to a train-and-equip programme for Syrian rebels who are fighting to topple Assad's regime. However, it is a deviation from the Geneva agreement, and shows the double game of the U.S. While Russia that is fighting a real war against the ISIS and wants to keep Assad in power cannot remain silent.

It is notable that during a visit to Italy's largest military cemetery of World War I, on November 14, expressing his grief over the November 13 terror attacks in Paris, Pope Francis called them a "piece of a piecemeal World War III... war is madness... even today... fought with crimes, massacres, destruction." Earlier, addressing the U.S. Congress, Pope Francis said, "No religion is immune from forms of individual delusion or ideological extremism... we must be especially attentive to every type of fundamentalism."

Setting aside the remarks of Pope Francis in the post-Paris attacks phenomena and the shooting at San Bernardino, California, like the drastic aftermath of the 9/11 tragedy, rulers and politicians of the US-led western countries, especially of Europe, including their media, have been misguiding their general public by creating paranoia against Muslims. They are propagating the so-called threat of Islamophobia. In one way or the other, Muslims are being persecuted in the U.S. and other western countries, particularly in Europe.

As regards the anti-Muslim policy, on January 18, 2015, while singling out only Muslim women, British Prime Minister David Cameron announced that Muslim women who fail to learn English to a high standard could face deportation from Britain. He also suggested that poor English skills could leave people "more susceptible to the messages of groups like Islamic State."

Earlier, Donald Trump, the Republican Party's nominee for U.S. presidential candidate had called for a ban on Muslims entering the United States.

On January 25, 2016, the EU's law enforcement agency Europol revealed that ISIS have set up special forces style training camps in Europe, as they plot mass casualty civilian strikes on the continent. And under the threat of ISIS, especially European governments and EU have been expelling the immigrants, particularly Muslims from their countries, while discouraging more Syrian refugees. On the other side, they are also trying to resolve the Syrian crisis, showing a contradictory policy. The U.S also got the assistance of its western allies (NATO) against Russia. Now, as a part of their ambivalent approach, American jet fighters and those of its western coalition are targeting ISIS terrorists in Iraq and Syria.

Nevertheless, it is due to the dual policy of the US-led western world that ISIS — the most dangerous terrorist group — is rapidly spreading its tentacles all over the world. On January 14, 2015, multiple blasts and gunfire killed seven people and jolted the Indonesian capital Jakarta. The ISIS claimed responsibility. On October 4, 2015, ISIS-affiliated militant outfit Boko Haram claimed responsibility for Nigeria's deadly suicide bombings, which killed 18 people.

Nonetheless, Western European countries are not willing to join Russia-led coalition against ISIS. So, if the double game towards al-Qaeda and especially ISIS continues by the US-led western countries, it will create more chaos in the Middle East, which affecting the rest of the world may culminate into a world war, also called "Clash of Civilisations" in Samuel P. Huntington's words.

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