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Pakistan

THE US, PAKISTAN AND INDIA | EDITORIAL

With the current volatile situation in Indian-held Kashmir becoming a major headline in international media, the United States has expressed concern over violence in the valley, urging all sides to come up with a peaceful solution. US State Department spokesperson, John Kirby, further added that the US wishes to see the de-escalation of the tensions pertaining to the conflict.

The positive statement by the US government highlights the need to understand the intensity of human rights violations being committed by the Indian state machinery in the region. Ever since the killing of Burhan Muzaffar Wani, a militant commander, by Indian security forces, the people of Kashmir are continuously facing wrath at the hands of the local police and army officials. The number of killed stands above 60, and injured around 3,000 people. Despite directives from central government to use non-lethal force, and outrage by human rights organisations, there does not seem to be cessation in violence in Kashmir, causing a great deal of anger and mistrust in the people of Kashmir.

Recently, a Karachi based NGO, Never Forget Pakistan, promoted a campaign of photo-shopped images of celebrities such as Mark Zuckerberg, Shahrukh Khan and Amitabh Bachchan to highlight the plight of Kashmiris affected by pellet injuries. The campaign succeeded in its objective as major news outlets around the world highlighted the images. However, the important point here is: how long will the citizens of Indian-held Kashmir have to bear state atrocities without any feasible solution for long-term peace?

Bilateral talks between Pakistan and India since the 1972 Simla Agreement have largely failed, and even the legally binding UN Resolution 1172 was not adhered to sincerely. Although there was some progress during the Musharraf-Manmohan dialogue in light of then president General Musharraf's four-point formula during the mid-2000s, no considerable change occurred.

This is the core reason why Pakistan pushes for multilateral talks to end the Kashmir conflict as part of its new policy. The involvement of Kashmiri leadership has also become increasingly essential for the region as they play a pivotal role for ending the conflict. By preventing the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) and other Kashmiri groups from dialogue and harassing their leadership, the current regime in New Delhi is ignoring the bigger picture of a freedom movement in Kashmir, which has indigenous roots.

The US, in the context of its strengthened ties with India, and its long-standing relationship with Pakistan — notwithstanding its yo-yo status — could play a positive role in suggesting the initiation of bilateral talks, which would pave the way for normalisation of relationships between the two neighbours.

For peace in Kashmir, and the wellbeing of Kashmiris on both sides of the LoC, Pakistan and India must put aside their history of mistrust and enmity, and figure out a way to move forward. And it cannot be stressed enough that in the context of changing geopolitical realities of the world, it is imperative that there is a new beginning for the relationship between Pakistan and India.

Source: <http://dailytimes.com.pk/editorial/01-Aug-16/the-us-pakistan-and-india>

ENERGY AND ITS PROBLEMS BY SHAHID MEHMOOD

The writer is a freelance contributor.

Energy drives the world we live in. We use its different forms to power our vehicles, homes, computers. Without it, modern life would be incomprehensible. The lack of energy could be disastrous, and a real hindrance to economic growth.

Just take our country's case and what the lack of electricity has done to the prospects of economic growth. Economic growth and energy use are closely linked. Not surprisingly, the countries with the highest per capita income have also the highest per capita use of energy.

The close nexus between the use of energy and the economic prospects of a nation was first recognised by a brilliant economist, William Stanley Jevons, who wrote a book titled 'The Coal Question' in 1865. He viewed coal (a source of energy) as central to transforming the English economy from human to mechanical power, and helped usher in and drive the industrial revolution. Jevons asserted that "day by day, it becomes more evident that the coal we happily possess in excellent quality and abundance is the mainspring of modern material civilization... Accordingly, it is the chief agent in almost every improvement.... Coal alone commands this age-the age of coal".

What Jevons asserted in his book is backed amply by statistics related to the use and consumption of energy over time. According to estimates by Vaclav Smil, the total world energy consumption was hardly 20 exajoules in 1820. By the year 2000, it had reached a mammoth 550 exajoules (to understand the significance and scale of this number, consider that one exajoule equals one quintillion or 10¹⁸ joules, where joule is the basic unit of energy and work). The Energy Information Administration (EIA) estimated that by 2040, the world energy consumption would rise by another 46 percent.

By per capita consumption, the US (a high-income country) consumes more than 7000 units. Contrast this with Pakistan (a low-income country) where the consumption is 500 units per capita. These statistics only serve to confirm the close relationship between growth in income and energy use.

In the last few decades, though, it has gradually become apparent that the eulogisation of energy as the driver of the prosperity of civilisation has led us to be oblivious of its

pitfalls. As evidence mounted that the use of fossil fuels is contributing significantly to environmental and health disasters, it became apparent that this danger has been ignored for too long. At present, this aspect has assumed serious proportions as record warm temperatures and a warmer earth are instilling new uncertainties in our daily lives.

Moreover, the disastrous health consequences of polluted air have reached alarming proportions. But despite recognition of the problem, it is astonishing to realise that energy policies around the world contain little direction on how to contain this danger. Here we are not talking about mere lip service contained in the documents, but the fact that humanity is not paying the right price for polluting their environment. This is where most energy policies fail. Putting it in econ lingo, we are failing to rightly price the negative externalities of energy use.

These negative externalities have both social and economic costs. Oil spills, radioactive disasters like Chernobyl and dangerous emissions from transportation are a few examples. Perhaps the most damaging effect over time has come in the form of greenhouse gas emissions that have not only damaged the ozone layer but also caused temperatures to rise to record highs.

After realisation that there is a significant gap in estimating the true cost of polluting the environment, there have been attempts at ameliorating this shortcoming. One such effort by the National Research Council in the US resulted in a comprehensive study titled 'Hidden Costs of Energy'. What it found was that the major social and economic costs come from air pollution, of which sulphur dioxide is the main culprit. Another very interesting calculation in the same report is the estimated ratio of pollution to market price of a specific source of energy.

Coal comes out at the top in this category with an estimated ratio of 70. What this means is that if coal worth Rs100 is used for producing energy, it will produce at least Rs70 worth of harmful pollution. The dilemma, as pointed above, is that this polluting effect is never priced accordingly. At most, the charge would be around Rs10 or Rs15, but not more than that.

This calculation related to coal is an apt reminder to our policymakers whose future plans of energy production are heavily centred on coal. It is the most polluting and most costly source of energy. Per unit of production, coal emits 78 percent more CO₂ than natural gas and 27 percent more than oil. Studies in the US also indicate that sulphur

dioxide emitted by coal is responsible for 21 thousand premature deaths. Yet, our policymakers remain oblivious to this fact.

A confession of this failure to appropriately price energy's damaging effects came from Michael Graetz, former assistant secretary at US treasury. In his book, 'The End of Energy', he analysed energy policies from Nixon to Obama. His conclusion was that despite millions of pages of legislation, no policy properly accounted for the true cost of using energy. Another important point he makes is that the costs are not uniform and vary across regions and by the source of energy. Thus, a uniform pollution tax may not be feasible.

There are many advantages to be realised from the imposition of taxes on energy pollution. For governments, the biggest advantage will accrue in the form of additional revenues to the tune of billions. For the public, the advantages would come in the form of a clean air and less pollution-related illnesses.

Another, less discussed advantage will come in the form of a search for cleaner alternatives. The price system, if applied prudently, can be a great incentive towards directing resources to their efficient use. It was the skyrocketing price of oil in 1973 that led Western governments to seriously introspect over their addiction to fossil fuels, and began search for alternative, cleaner sources. Today, that effort has led to energy being produced through waste and algae.

Where does all this leave Pakistan? In terms of energy use and policymaking, we come nowhere close to having alternatives. Compounding this shortcoming is the lack of any concise policy that aims to price out pollution. The response to the environmental problems has been a typically Pakistani one: establish a ministry, add to the already burdensome expenditures and end up with little or no results. This is quiet disheartening and astonishing because the import of fossil fuels has been the biggest drain upon our forex reserves.

The disheartening aspect is that we've known this since at least the early 1970s, but there has been little effort to address this problem. Our efforts at finding and applying alternatives are some of the most inefficient in the world. Take the example of the much touted 100 MW solar power project, which has ended up producing only 18 MW.

What this shows is that environmental and health concerns do not garner much interest for our policymakers. We have a growing population which will consume more energy in the future. If our policymakers are eschewing Thar's coal to be our saviour, then let's prepare for an even more polluted Pakistan in the future.

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Source: <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/139390-Energy-and-its-problems>

THE LONG STRUGGLE FOR KASHMIR'S FREEDOM BY TALAT MASOOD

The visit of the Indian home minister to Islamabad to attend the Saarc ministerial meeting in connection with the forthcoming summit in November provides an opportunity to unfreeze the current gridlock between the two countries. This would depend on the minister requesting a meeting with his counterpart Chaudhry Nisar Ali and the prime minister. We are told that so far no such request has been made. The resumption of dialogue assumes greater importance in view of the prevailing situation in Indian Kashmir. The present stalemate has led the two countries nowhere apart from mutual recrimination and further heightening of tensions. Its worst fallout has been on the Kashmiris as eventually they are the ones suffering from Indian atrocities.

Apart from some muted statements from human rights organisations and a few editorials in influential newspapers, the world has remained indifferent to the sufferings of the Kashmiris at the hands of Indians. No Muslim country has raised its concern at the individual level and the OIC in its joint communique at its recent summit in Istanbul made a routine statement of support and expressed concern at the use of force and gross violations of human rights. The US, having close strategic ties with India, is unwilling to go beyond advising both countries to resolve their problems bilaterally. Russia values its strategic and historical ties with India and has backed its position on Kashmir. European countries consider it expedient to remain silent. Unsurprisingly, China, too, remains guarded in its support for Pakistan on the Kashmir issue and had advised earlier that it place it on the back burner.

It is thus apparent that it is the struggle and sacrifices of the Kashmiris for their rights that will ultimately make the difference. India's disregard for the people's wishes is untenable in the long term. Moreover, if Indian democracy has any credibility, then it is expected that voices will be raised from within India against state-sponsored suppression and gross human rights violations in Kashmir. As of now, there are only low-key expressions of concern within India. The resistance in the Valley has reached a level where it will not be possible for India to hide behind scapegoating Pakistan or countering it by diverting attention towards Hafiz Saeed or Hizbul Mujahideen chief Sayeed Salahuddin. They are the symptoms not the genesis of India's misplaced policies. Nonetheless, in order for the world to perceive the true nature of the current movement, it may be advisable for Pakistan's security establishment to rein in these elements. It should also ensure that the international community sees, through greater transparency, that Pakistan is only supporting the Kashmiri struggle politically and

morally, and that the current uprising is a genuine peaceful resistance against Indian suppression of the rights of Kashmiris and India's draconian policies. By adopting this approach, there are greater chances of soliciting international support.

The Americans and Europeans are allergic of seeing militant groups, which are alleged to be associated with the horrific Mumbai terrorist attack, parading on our streets. Pakistan cannot afford to use these militant organisations to pressure India any more. As experience has shown, these groups have proved to be equally harmful for Pakistan's internal stability. Both countries have a tendency to be influenced in their policy towards each other by the security conditions prevailing in Kashmir. It would be a folly to allow these militant groups to influence policy rather than the state leading from the front. Hopefully, Pakistan's security establishment will rein them in; otherwise the international community will get an excuse not to play its role in persuading India to pursue an equitable role in resolving the Kashmir dispute.

The Indian media is suppressing the news coming in from Kashmir and the government is hiding from accountability by applying draconian black laws. Free and excessive use of pellets that are internationally banned have blinded and maimed dozens of young protestors. These violations are a challenge for human rights organisations and the right thinking people of India. It is expected that the OIC, the UN and Pakistan will raise their voices against torture and other inhuman practices.

The stark truth is that as long as India remains in a state of denial about the conditions in Kashmir, there can be no progress in India-Pakistan relations or in the resolution of the conflict. Similarly, as long as Pakistan uses non-state actors as a pressure tactic, it will face an antagonistic India and little support from the international community.

The people of Kashmir are facing immense hardships but are courageously standing up to the Indian clampdown. There is a growing shortage of essential food supplies and medicines. The most encouraging fact is the community spirit that has manifested itself during this crisis and there is a lot of cooperation and sharing to mitigate the hardships. Apparently, certain centres for help have been established and people are using mosques for collecting food and other necessities of life that are in short supply.

The peaceful resolution of the Kashmir issue as a side benefit would significantly contribute towards Pakistan's counterterrorism strategy. The country would be able to devote more resources to countering terrorist organisations. More significantly,

Pakistan-India relations cannot move in the right direction unless there is positive movement on the resolution of Kashmir. At the same time, improvement in bilateral relations will have a salutary impact in finding a solution for Kashmir. This will also reduce the importance of militant groups within Pakistan that have been used to leverage the Kashmir cause. It would then be relatively easier for Pakistan to tackle these non-state actors with a positive outcome on our relations with India, Afghanistan, the US and the international community. Hostile relations with India directly impact our relations with the international community.

Finding a solution that satisfies all three parties — India, Pakistan and the people of Jammu and Kashmir — will not be easy. It will have to be a compromise that would meet the expectations of each party less than halfway. Moving towards a compromise would require India, the status quo power, to rethink its policy, which for the time being seems remote.

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PAK-AFGHAN TIES: CAN CPEC BE A CBM? BY IMTIAZ GUL

Negatives continue to dominate the Pakistan-Afghanistan conversation. The Afghan government remains unhappy with Pakistan over the Haqqani network. On August 1, it officially “regretted” the installation of a new gate at Torkham, accusing Pakistan of violation of centuries-long traditions, despite repeated assertions by President Ashraf Ghani and his colleagues that Afghanistan be treated as an equal, sovereign member of the UN and not be burdened by the weight of history and traditions. Stop repeated references to history, Afghan officials suggest but then bring up the history of the Durand Line when Pakistan talks of border management. On July 31, Kabul also expressed open displeasure over a Taliban delegation’s recent Beijing visit, asserting that China should not provide “a platform” to groups that are involved in the killing of Afghans. On its part, Pakistan, too, has been upset over the derailment of the Quadrilateral Contact Group’s peace efforts following the May 21 drone killing of Mullah Mansoor. Both China and the US, the other two members are also concerned about the literal standstill in the peace process. The terrorists on the other hand are having a ball of a time. They continue to pile misery on innocent non-combatants.

This context has thrown up numerous challenges to all those who would want at least the bilateral dialogue to formally resume. The Afghan ambassador in Islamabad, Omar Zakhilwal is among those who would like to push for some semblance of normal talks between the two countries. Despite noises and the formal regret out of Kabul over the Torkham gate, it was reportedly the ambassador’s initiative that helped extinguish the raging fires which also helped Pakistan continue the construction of the gate. Undeterred by the deteriorating relations, Zakhilwal believes that despite all odds, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) probably offers the best entry point for the resumption of the Pak-Afghan talks. A discussion and some understanding on offering a couple of CPEC alignments to Afghanistan could probably serve as a big confidence-building measure (CBM), according to the ambassador. He also underscores that India doesn’t have the advantage that Pakistan has, particularly now that it’s part of the CPEC. And its about time to turn this advantage into a real geopolitical opportunity.

For that, Zakhilwal proposes that Islamabad should couch its narrative on Afghanistan in geoeconomics i.e., trade and economics. Why cant we say the new measures at the border are being undertaken to control smuggling and facilitate the legal flow of goods and people through multiple international crossing points? In Kabul, Afghan officials have continued talking about Torkham being an unnecessary provocation and of broken

promises (action against all anti-Afghan militants). They say that Pakistan being the bigger country needs peace more than any other actor. Afghans also insist that Kabul would recalibrate its views if it knows what Pakistan wants from it. Some of the grievances, it appears, stem more from mistrust than real factors. Tariq Fatemi, the adviser to the prime minister, for instance, told a recent gathering in Islamabad, comprising mostly of foreign diplomats and think tank members the following: “We are not merely going to connect Pakistan and China through the Gwadar-Kashgar motorway. Pakistan will build the Peshawar-Kabul motorway that will connect to the Kabul-Kunduz motorway, that will then get into [the central Asian nation of] Kyrgyzstan.”

Fatemi underscored that Pakistan would work for peace and stability not as a favour to Afghanistan but as a favour to itself because Pakistan recognises that there can be no peace in the country as long as there is no peace in Afghanistan. Apparently, no Afghan official was present in this public seminar. It appears that a lack of conversation has led to Afghan misgivings on the CPEC. Pakistan probably should have been formally more articulate about how it wanted to help extend the CPEC to Central Asia via Afghanistan. Despite statistically proven marked progress against non-state actors of all hues, Pakistan has yet to prove much more. Despite that, it continues to occupy an important role in the regional matrix as expressed by one of the most important US senators, John McCain, in his recent article, in Financial Times, after his visit to both Pakistan and Afghanistan. The US mission in Afghanistan is immeasurably more difficult without Pakistan’s cooperation in taking on terrorists that operate across the Afghan-Pakistani border at will.

Senator McCain went on to underscore the importance of enhanced Pak-Afghan and Pak-US cooperation as a strategic imperative. To achieve real progress, he underlined the significance of enduring US commitment to Pakistan’s stability and economic growth and also urged Pakistan to eliminate havens for all terrorist groups. This alarming situation requires all stakeholders to recalibrate their positions to turn the narrative somewhat positive.

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OVERCOMING REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ISOLATION BY IMTIAZ ALAM

Two important meetings in Islamabad are quite crucial for us to possibly get out of both regional and international isolation – if we make the right policy decisions. These are: the consultative meeting of Pakistan’s ambassadors, and the Saarc home/interior ministers’ conference in Islamabad prior to the Saarc Summit to be held in November in Pakistan. Are we really serious, even though incrementally, about initiating some changes in our otherwise maximalist security and isolationist foreign policies?

The most pressing matter before the foreign-policy selling diplomats is whether they are prepared to frankly tell the political and military leadership in Islamabad and Rawalpindi how embarrassed they feel befooling a much more informed world which does not buy our half-baked lies or understand the difference between what we pose to be and what we actually are. After all, there is a limit to diplomacy of deception and double-speak.

The main challenge before the Foreign Office and its diplomatic stalwarts is how to sensitise the rulers about excessive security agendas, and how difficult it is to reconcile that with a foreign policy aimed at averting regional and international isolation – the consequence of adventurous and confrontationist security agendas.

Ironclad security inputs have baffled the most delicate and even hawkish diplomats too much to speak out the truth about the fragility of their thankless job of defending the defenceless. The problem lies with our national security paradigm, which is the exclusive domain of our valiant men-in-arms – not elected leaders, economists and diplomats.

Our national security paradigm, living on borrowed times, is based on keeping eternal enmity with India; keeping Afghanistan in one way or the other as our exclusive reserve; aligning with the Saudis at the cost of our potentially much more rewarding relationship with Iran; flirting with the US in a transitory and troubled relationship based on the wages of fighting terrorism; and compensating our all security and foreign policy deficits by our sole reliance on China.

We still live in a Subcontinent plagued by cold and subliminal wars, the unending menace of terrorism and the perpetual instability of Afghanistan and AF-Pak border regions – now sandwiched in a two-front enmity. If the national security vision and

strategy tends to perpetuate this dangerous security environ, the result shall be regional and international isolation. And if we were to reverse this adverse environment in our favour, then domestic security, economic, political and consistently principled foreign policy imperatives must guide our security paradigm, which has to be based on Quaid-e-Azam's view: "friendship with all, enmity with none".

Indeed being a sovereign nation-state living next to two big powers – one of them to our east, another troubled neighbour in our north-west – and yet another neighbour potentially troubled with the rise of Deobandi/Wahabi/Salafi extremism, we cannot afford to be at ease about our security and integrity. However, Pakistan has been militarily secured by our well-groomed armed forces and nuclear deterrence.

Our sustainability depends upon economic viability, internal democratic cohesion and wider international acceptability. Extending national security agendas beyond legitimate national self-defence is self-defeating and has caused our current isolation. It is also pushing us towards becoming a state crumbling under its over-extended security burdens.

Like it or not, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's vision for south and western Asia for economic interdependence/cooperation and resolution of disputes through peaceful means is the best course available to take Pakistan out of its current predicaments. Diplomacy and political acumen can achieve even those miracles that cannot be imagined to be achieved by military means.

COAS General Raheel Sharif, who rejected Bonapartism and took on the terrorism threatening Pakistan, has taken the lead in ordering his forces not to let Pakistani territory be used against the legitimate government of Afghanistan. That needs reciprocity and can be ensured by the US-led coalition, China and other regional actors through reliable and solid mechanisms.

Gen Raheel Sharif has also given a most sensible call to bring an end to all proxy wars. Why not invite India to have a highest-level security dialogue to address respective security concerns and to bring to an end all kinds of proxy wars and ongoing subliminal warfare. And, in the meanwhile, both India and Pakistan can agree to start a comprehensive, uninterrupted and result-oriented dialogue without making progress in many areas hostage to respective 'core issues' – Kashmir and cross-border terrorism.

The Kashmir issue should be taken out of the trajectory of India-Pakistan inimical relations. It should not be treated as a territorial or communal dispute, but of people's legitimate right to freedom and self-determination whenever, wherever and in whatever manner they like to exercise in a peaceful manner and without coercion. This aim should not be endangered at any costs and for any ends. The political leadership and establishments on both sides will have to rise above their bellicosity and start thinking on out-of-the-box solutions – and there are ample of these that are doable (for example, the Musharraf-Manmohan Singh Formula on Kashmir).

Defining the mood prior to the Saarc moot of interior/home ministers, both the home ministers of India and Pakistan have tried to alleviate the prevailing jingoist atmosphere by vowing to avoid meeting each other on the sidelines of one of the most important meetings of the regional grouping.

Hindu communalist Shiv Sena has burnt the effigy of Shri Rajnath in Delhi while asking him to cancel his visit. The LeT and other such forces have announced demonstrations against the Indian home minister's visit to Islamabad – vowing to “break up” India.

If our governments are to be dictated by extremists on the fringe, then nothing can move on both bilateral and the Saarc fronts. For Saarc to move forward, both India and Pakistan will have to abandon the habit of holding it back at the altar of bilateral brinkmanship.

Saarc, a most needed regional grouping hamstrung by Indo-Pak bilateral enmity, requires its members to rise above their bilateral disputes to pursue its regional economic integration agenda, which includes a South Asian Economic Union. The home/interior ministers' meeting in Islamabad is to focus on the Saarc Visa Exemption Scheme (SVEC) to relax one of the most prohibitive visa restrictions on people across the region, between India and Pakistan in particular. The member countries of Saarc, except India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, have an almost free entry visa regime.

For over 15 years the South Asia Free Media association (Safma), a media organisation recognised by Saarc as its associated body, has been trying for free movement of journalists, people and information across the border. But its efforts have been frustrated, despite the decisions of successive Council of Ministers' meetings to grant

Saarc multiple-entry visas to 150 journalists from each country. Pakistan and India are yet to implement it.

Let's hope in this meeting they also include journalists in the special category of 'relaxed visa', if at all it is being relaxed. This is not how regional economic organisations are run. Learn from Asean and EU.

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Source: <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/139932-Overcoming-regional-and-international-isolation>

PAKISTAN AND THE SAARC MEMBER COUNTRIES | EDITORIAL

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation's (SAARC) Home Ministers' Conference being held in Islamabad has turned into a controversial affair as the Bangladeshi Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal is not participating in the summit. Instead, Bangladeshi High Commissioner to Pakistan, Tariq Ahsan, Deputy Secretary Home Affairs, and two other officials would attend the summit. Relations between Pakistan and Bangladesh have been strained ever since the Bangladeshi government started trials of Jamaat-e-Islami leaders for war crimes committed during the war of secession of 1971. While Pakistan should raise points on humanitarian grounds and condemn the actions of Bangladeshi government if necessary, it must also be realised that Bangladesh is a sovereign country, and repeatedly passing resolutions on its affairs not only leads to them falling on deaf ears but it also results in more friction and worsening of relations between the two countries.

However, the eyes of the world are on how Pakistan and India use the opportunity of the home ministers conference to reduce tensions and start a process of dialogue. The statement of the Indian ministry of external affairs ruling out the possibility of Indian Home Minister Rajnath Singh meeting with his Pakistani counterpart on the sidelines of the conference is lamentable at the very least, and it would only serve to heighten animosity and restrict the much-needed initiation of dialogue between Pakistan and India. The self-defeating attitude of both states needs to be done away with as they appear to be unwilling to engage with each other on their issues. Pakistan's insistence to talk about Kashmir is met with Indian intransigence to keep Kashmir out of the dialogue process, while Pakistan's reluctance to talk about Mumbai attacks and a refusal to entertain India's security concerns is seen by India as an act of belligerence. The Kashmir issue is the main bone of contention between Pakistan and India, and it must be realised by India that without its resolution lasting peace between the two states would be hard to achieve. However, Pakistan must also realise that India needs closure for Mumbai attacks, and for this Pakistani government must facilitate India in capturing its perpetrators. Hence, dialogue must take place on all of these important issues so that meaningful development can take place.

Trade holds the key in ensuring peace as vested interests tend to be the biggest guarantee in upholding it. This is the area that Pakistan and India, and SAARC countries in general must concentrate on so that prosperity and stability can take root in

the region. If history is any indication, trade would form the linkages among the people that would help in breaking the impediments that jingoism usually creates.

Trade reduces the importance of past conflicts, and gives the participating countries a stake in each other's security. For example, India and China have historically been hostile nations; however, their bilateral trade, which is estimated to be close to 100 billion dollars, now militates against conflict.

SAARC was established to promote socio-cultural linkages between member states and to facilitate each other's collective peace, security and prosperity. However, it is unfortunate that Pakistan at the moment has strained relations with Afghanistan, India, and Bangladesh — three of the eight member states. With the rest of the four countries, namely Sri Lanka, Nepal, Maldives, and Bhutan, Pakistan has relatively better relations. Despite the geographic proximity of all eight SAARC member states, the body has failed to develop into a strong and consolidated international organisation, which can have both political and economic power to implement its agenda of mutual harmony and economic growth. Hence, substantial steps must be taken in this direction so that the full potential of SAARC can be realised.

Source: <http://dailytimes.com.pk/editorial/04-Aug-16/pakistan-and-the-saarc-member-countries>

SECURITY CRISIS IN PAKISTAN | EDITORIAL

News of Pentagon not paying Pakistan \$300 million as reimbursements through the Coalition Support Fund for its role in war against terror should be a wake-up call for Pakistan and a moment of deep introspection. The refusal to pay \$300 million was because US Secretary of Defense Ash Carter did not tell Congress that sufficient action was being taken by Pakistan against the Haqqani network. Previously, Advisor to Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz had said that Pakistan is wary of a “blowback” if it moved too fast against militants, implying that Pakistan had to consider its limitations when making these policy decisions. While there is nothing wrong in going about the operation against militants in a systematic manner and sequencing it in a way that would make it effective, nevertheless, the state needs to realise that it is responsible for the difficult position it finds itself in right now. And as Pakistan’s name continues to be associated with militancy and terrorism, it must appear sincere in its efforts to eliminate this menace without distinction for groups that carry out activities outside it so that it can shed this negative image.

The military establishment has shown certitude in its fight against terrorism and many soldiers have embraced martyrdom in this fight. Moreover, the people of Pakistan have suffered a great deal from it, and not just in terms of violence and deaths, but also in terms of poverty and economic underdevelopment. Terrorism has impeded economic growth by preventing free mobility of labour as foreigners are reluctant to come to Pakistan or even invest here. Tourism, which could have been a booming industry in Pakistan, has not been able to develop on an international scale because of the tenuous security situation in the country. Facing crippling energy crisis, rampant illiteracy, and abysmal healthcare facilities, the state has to divert scarce resources to this costly fight, and continue to beef up its security apparatus.

All of this is not to say that funding for the fight against terrorism in Pakistan must be reduced as the country is indeed in a very grave situation and this fight needs to be continued. However, what must be mulled over is the past policies that led to this juncture. All those great games that were played by certain actors in the avenues of power, which were far grander than could be managed, have ultimately and ironically led to this security crisis. While it would be naïve to say that Pakistan did not face threats from external forces, whether they were in the form of support for ethnic independent movements or a crisis of isolation in the wake of reduced geopolitical significance, but an overwhelming fixation on these issues has led to the preponderance

of looking at everything from a securitisation lens. And this has resulted in excessive spending on defence and neglect on economic development so much so that the military's shopping list can only be serviced by foreign aid.

Now Pakistan must navigate itself out of the cycle of dependency that it has fallen victim to. Relations with the United States have been tense ever since the cancellation of the F-16 deal, and while there is much resentment in Pakistan over it, Pakistan cannot afford to diplomatically isolate itself from the US. In any case, Pakistan-US relationship has historically been one of vested interests, in which both were aware of being used by the other for their own objectives. For example, during the 1960s the US was aware that Pakistan was using its military aid not for the purpose of containing communism but to equip itself in case of a possible war with India, but the US continued to provide aid since it needed an ally in the region. Hence, wise choices need to be made now that would serve Pakistan's interests and space should not be given to impetuous decisions informed by a false sense of jingoism. Simultaneously, foreign support, which in the present case is in the form China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), must not be the sole basis of development, and Pakistan should also look inwards and address the underlying structural issues that have for long prevented from embarking on the course of peace and prosperity.

Only Pakistan can change its destiny and for that it has to be very smart about the choices that it makes. Starting now.

Source: <http://dailytimes.com.pk/editorial/05-Aug-16/security-crisis-in-pakistan>

FOREIGN POLICY: FOREIGN TO PAKISTANI DIPLOMATS? BY ASAD EJAZ BUTT

In the backdrop of the ongoing strife with Afghanistan over the alleged proxy wars, the souring relationship with the United States over the uninhibited prowess of the Haqqani network and like-minded groups in the north, and increasing bitterness with India over the slain Kashmiris, water disputes and the NSG membership, one can hardly find a country facing more external threats than Pakistan. The foreign policy representatives in the country are embattled on numerous international frontiers, and the war to strengthen and establish the country's narrative on international platforms is fiercer than ever before.

The foreign office of Pakistan has recently warned the Afghan government to stop the blame game, and fight mutual regional threats through cooperation and understanding. But with the ameliorating India-Afghan relationship, especially in the aftermath of the initial deliberations on the Chabahar agreement, the reversal in the deteriorating Pak-Afghan relationship seems quite unlikely. Likewise, foreign policy matters on the Indian front don't look too promising either; confidence building measures and strategic dialogues have either backfired or swiftly fallen into a forgotten past.

India's bid to join the coveted nuclear arms group was finally rejected last month after days of deliberation in Seoul, South Korea. "China upsets India's plans to join the Nuclear Arms Group," read one local newspaper in Pakistan. China has been cited as the main hurdle in the way of India's membership, even though a number of countries besides China — read, approximately 12 — were not satisfied with India's credentials as it continues to be a non-signatory of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

Pakistan was also denied membership for avoiding the terms of the NPT for a long time. Foreign policy thinkers, oblivious to the tasks required of the active functionaries of the state, are seemingly rejoicing the Indian rejection more than the expected dismay over the rejection of their own application. The India-centrism of Pakistan's foreign policy frameworks has not only been detrimental to the country's foreign policy aspirations but has also raised concerns over the attitude of the country's foreign policy authors and projectors terming their approach "passive" and "reactionary."

Pakistan's foreign policy has historically been clouded with myths and conspiracy theories. While this can be said for all policies — whether be interior, economic or legal

— the anonymity of the source from where the foreign policy emanates makes it a popular conspiracy subject, something that features quite frequently in Pakistan's political discourse. The speculations over who formulates the plan of action, and who wields the concealed power to call the shots have surfaced in discussions on media and platforms provided by state's legislative pillar regularly.

Among others, three sources have gained significant popularity and expert-backing over the years. The first that foreign policy is dictated by the military establishment of the country, and that the civilian political elite has little say in matters that govern the policy formulation and espousal; second that foreign policy is a collective draft of the major superpowers of the world, and is usually imposed on Pakistan like a number of prime ministers were in the past. Clearly, the first two narratives contradict each other, but more interestingly, the third one, in a rather ferocious display of indifference, dismisses the first two in furthering that there is no delineated foreign policy, and the foreign office works on the whims and moods of high-ranking officials — civilian, military or both.

There is a major constituency in Pakistan that believes in the third narrative that foreign policy is neither formulated locally nor is there any evidence of external involvement in the process. The fact remains that there is no delineated foreign policy in Pakistan, and the foreign office doesn't only work without a foreign minister, it does so too without an implementable and plausible foreign policy. The diversity and inherent contradictions within these foreign-policy related narratives is indicative of the fact that while any one of the narratives could be true, it is certain that the foreign policy initiatives lack transparency, consensus and a coherent sense of purpose. This is evident in our diplomacy failures of the past, and the fault lines have surfaced once again through the NSG imbroglio. A number of concerns loom over the NSG membership application and its subsequent disapproval. The very obvious ones include the need for the NSG membership now all of a sudden. Pakistan's foreign office has shrugged off allegations levelled by the opposition that the foreign policy, if it exists, is reactionary, and lacks the research and development required to identify and capture opportunities, some of which may not have emerged on the mainstream as yet. Pre-empting changes on the global political landscape, and aligning the diplomatic efforts and foreign policy tasks with the changing environment are essential competencies that need be exhibited by diplomats. However, with a nearly dysfunctional research and development wing, our foreign policy has failed us on a number of occasions. Why was the NSG membership, if as coveted as it now seems, not applied for in the past many years since the union's inception? If our foreign policy is not India-centric as Sartaj Aziz would infallibly maintain, the

applications should have been tendered a long time back. Over the last few weeks, considering the jingoism over the application leading to the ultimate denial of membership, it seems that there isn't a stronger tool to assert one's opinion and gain control over the international security policy than enrollment with the NSG. While it might not be too late for Pakistan, the negligence and inexplicable delay in tendering the application is going to rub it off in a bad way.

India already enjoys most exemptions provided by the NSG through the exemption instrument enacted in 2008. Therefore, it appears that India's NSG membership campaign was only to push the agenda and build ground for a potential permanent slot on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). However, since the rejection was a likely possibility, the Indian government had formulated a back-up plan that was to initiate a simultaneous bid for the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR)'s membership. As soon as the NSG membership got rejected, India successfully enrolled with the MTCR, widening its clout in the diplomatic circles, specifically ones that are involved with formulating an international security policy. As I write this article, India is a member of the MTCR and an implicit member through exemptions that provide an ostensible authority of the NSG expected to become a full-designated member by the end of 2016. On the contrary, Pakistan has so far resisted the urge to apply for the MTCR membership and their aspirations, if any spring up now, will only add to the opinion that their approach is reactionary and bears no resemblance to vigilance, prudence and professionalism typical of diplomats from the more developed countries of the world. The research and development wing of the foreign policy department needs to be activated immediately with a mandate to identify and build on diplomatic opportunities protecting the country on international frontiers and safeguarding its social, political and economic interests. The conspiracies surrounding the policy sources must be avoided to promote a coherent sense of purpose, and to build a policy of consensus that is clear, well-communicated, and is not confused by the stakeholders involved with policy formulation, espousal or advocacy processes.

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PRIVATISATION & THE SUPREME COURT BY KHALID ANWER

ON June 23, 2006, a bench of the Supreme Court headed by then chief justice Iftikhar Chaudhry struck down the privatisation of Pakistan Steel Mills by means of a long, rambling judgment. The court's action was to prove an extraordinarily expensive one for the nation. The losses of Pakistan Steel Mills are now approaching Rs400 billion. This is to disregard the hundreds of millions of dollars which were to be paid by the successful bidder.

Furthermore, the bidder had agreed to invest an additional hundreds of millions in order to increase the capacity of the steel mill from one to three million tons. All these losses have been absorbed by taxpayers in Pakistan because of that flawed judgment.

An interesting aspect of the judgment is that it pays lip service to the well-established principle of law that it is not the function of the judicial organ of the state to interfere in the policymaking domain of the executive. This is for the sound and compelling reason that democracy entails the acceptance of responsibility for one's decisions. When the executive takes incorrect decisions the Constitution provides that the cabinet is responsible to parliament, and parliament, in turn, to the nation. But when the Supreme Court interferes in the executive domain and causes a wholly avoidable loss of hundreds of billions of rupees to the common weal the question is, who is to be held accountable? *Quis custodiet ipsos custodes? Who will reimburse the public exchequer?*

"The Supreme Court's decision to strike down the privatisation of the steel mills was to prove costly."

It is an equally well-established principle of law that the judiciary in Pakistan (although not in Britain, the US or India) is only accountable to itself. This is in order to preserve the invaluable concept of the independence of the judiciary. It may be observed in passing that historically self-accountability has generally led to non-accountability.

We can commence by looking at some of the core findings of the court. The chief justice held that a number of incentives were given to the successful bidder which had not been disclosed in advance. These included: a) stock in trade worth about Rs10bn, b) the commitment of the government of Pakistan to clear the loan liability amounting to Rs7.67bn, c) the refund of Rs1bn paid as advance tax to the government, d)

responsibility was accepted by the government to meet the claim of the workers opting for a voluntary separation scheme (VSS) amounting to about Rs15bn.

Unfortunately, the official record reveals the opposite. The stock in trade was clearly disclosed in the financial statements dated Dec 31, 2005 which were provided to all prequalified bidders. The repayment of the loan advanced by the government was also clearly stated in Note-6 (in any event it is obvious that instead of being a concession this was an additional burden on the bidder because the loan had earlier been advanced to the steel mill by the Pakistan government at a concessional rate of interest. Calling it a concession eludes comprehension.)

The question of refund of taxes was, once again, clearly disclosed in the financial statements (in any event, it is obvious that since the sale was on an 'as is where is basis' any refunds to the company would be included just as the liability would be included.) The responsibility for VSS was also clearly understood in advance and set out in clause 9.2 of the draft purchase agreement.

Another (incorrect) criticism was that the Privatisation Commission had failed to mention that the company had recorded profits for the last three years. The criticism is all the more surprising in view of the fact that elsewhere the court had itself reproduced the public advertisement setting out the profits for the said years separately. Space constraints prevent analysis of other errors in the judgment.

On the basis of the above, the government approved the figure of \$464 million based on discounted cash flow valuation for 100pc of the shares. The share value on the above basis comes to Rs16.18 per share and the winning bid was for Rs16.80. Incidentally, the chief justice failed to comprehend that the said method does not require the separate valuation of land or other assets.

The privatisation was challenged by the union. It is no secret that employees in a government-owned establishment have their jobs secured, irrespective of their integrity, performance or competence. In fact, the concept of nationalisation can perhaps more aptly be described as bureaucratisation. Is anyone satisfied with the performance of bureaucrats? Why should the taxpayer be compelled to pay for the shoddy performance of the employees? But still privatisation is opposed by some who should know better.

The petition was dismissed by the high court but found a more favourable environment in the Chaudhry court. There are numerous passages in the judgment which seemingly suggest that the benefits of privatisation were viewed by it sceptically to say the least.

One of the most remarkable findings by the court related to its unilateral demand that bidders should have been made to furnish a guarantee for the purpose of making future investment with a view to raising its production capacity. This was neither a condition laid down in the bid documents in this case, or indeed in any other case of privatisation. If such guarantees are demanded then no company will be privatised.

We now turn to the final chapter of this rather sad episode. A review petition was immediately lodged. The review petition was not fixed for hearing for six long years. Finally, it was fixed for hearing suddenly and then dismissed on the ground that the counsel for the petitioner was not present. Left unremarked was the fact that a few days earlier the chief justice had personally granted the counsel for the petitioner (myself) a general adjournment since he was proceeding outside the country. That is how the case was decided.

After the retirement of justice Chaudhry, the court has moved on. During his tenure he was a dominating personality until the collapse of his moral authority after the Dr Arsalan scandal. His successors have shown wisdom in preferring judicial restraint in cases of privatisation. Let us not forget, the pitfalls of judicial adventurism are many while the rewards are limited to the generation of sensational media coverage.

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THE US, INDIA, CHINA AND PAKISTAN BY SIRAJ SHAWA

Those who have a common enemy are most likely to get along like a house on fire. More or less, that appears to be the *raison d'être* of US-India “friendship.” Developments taking place in China are widely considered the determinant of their mutual relationship. China’s rise is a major concern for both the countries.

China is the second largest economy of the world, while in terms of purchasing power it is the world’s top most economy. The GDP growth rate of China has been in double figures for decades although a slight slowdown hit it recently. Last year, its economy expanded at its lowest rate since 1990.

Recently, Beijing has taken “One Belt, One Road” initiative of which Pakistan is a major pillar. It envisions an artery of vast infrastructure network connecting China with Western Europe. Militarily, China has achieved highs that are well-nigh on a par with any world’s major power. China assigns a big chunk of budget to its defence sector, and has developed weaponry of high technology, which includes stealth air fighters, nuclear submarines, and a coveted missile system. Besides, China is a communist state, and is run without democratic principles.

China’s main focus seems to be its economy instead of securing regional dominance. It has pulled the largest number of people out of poverty in the world, and its per capita GDP has been raised from 155 dollars in 1978 to 7,950 dollars in 2014, according to the World Economic Forum. Although China has disputes with most of its neighbours, it nevertheless enjoys a good trading relationship with them. Notwithstanding the serious border dispute with India, China’s trade volume with New Delhi is more than \$80 billion. China’s second biggest trading partner was the Philippines in 2014 despite its acrimonious relations with Beijing due to a maritime dispute regarding the Spratly Islands.

The US currently exercises hegemony over some parts of the world. Chinese military modernisation is seen by the US as a threat that would put Washington’s interests in jeopardy, specifically in the Asia Pacific. China’s rise can imperil US plans vis-à-vis shaping regional politics in Asia. Moreover, in addition to China’s territorial claims on disputed Islands in the South China Sea, China is also building artificial islands that are another source of nervousness for Washington. The US considers itself a protector of Taiwan, and has deep military ties with the state, while on the other hand China labels

Taiwan as a rebel state, and claims absolute sovereignty over Taiwan. The immense economic growth of China and the rising US trade deficit with Beijing add fuel to the fire.

India also shares a border dispute with China. The other irritants include inter alia the Tibet issue, the Sino-Pak collaboration, and China's stance on the Kashmir issue. China's expansion in the South China Sea and its regional influence are also an annoyance for India. Chinese military support to Pakistan also upsets India. In addition to that, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor passes through Gilgit-Baltistan, which India claims is also a disputed territory, and has conveyed its reservation to China in this regard.

India being a huge economy with remarkable military capabilities, biggest democracy of the world, and last but not the least, having poor relations with Beijing serves as a solid pick for the US for containing China. Another giant in Asia bordering and at the same time challenging China would help cut down supremacy of the US's main economic rival.

In this regard, the US has approached India in the past as well, but recently, the two countries seem to have become as thick as thieves. The US-India Civil Nuclear Deal was signed in 2005, which cleared the way for civil nuclear co-operation between the two. In 2008, the Nuclear Supplier Group (NSG) gave India a unique waiver, exempting India from its rules governing civil nuclear trade owing to political pressure from the US.

Recently, India's bid to become a member of the NSG was vigorously supported by the US, although the very *raison d'être* of the NSG was the nuclear test conducted by India in May 1974. The US Secretary of State John Kerry wrote letters to member states that were sceptical of India's membership, asking them to grant India a smooth entry to the NSG. India, nevertheless, failed to get admission to the NSG, which would have been considered a milestone in its diplomatic history.

Moreover, during the visit of US Defence Secretary Ashton Carter to New Delhi in April, both the countries agreed to share military logistics, and signed the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement.

This growing intimacy between Washington and New Delhi is a cause of apprehension for Beijing. China is wary of supernumerary US patronisation of India, and its fears are

valid and reasonable. US-India joint military exercises off the Indian coast add to Beijing's trepidation.

The growing tilt of the US towards India is a source of disquietude for Pakistan as well. It is widely believed in Pakistan that India is involved in sponsoring terrorism in Pakistan, and that there are reasons to believe that India is engaged in stoking the insurgency in Balochistan and violence in Karachi. The US's endeavour to turn India into a mammoth is disturbing the balance of power in South Asia.

Making another great power in Asia will prove counterproductive. Instead of containing China, the efforts would provoke both Beijing and Islamabad. The US should not disturb the regional balance in South Asia, as it would make Pakistan more sceptical of US intentions, and on the other hand, it wouldn't even prove to be productive in containing China.

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PAKISTAN AND NUCLEAR REPORT CARD 2016: ASSESSMENT, INTERESTS AND COLLISIONS – OPED BY MAIMUNA ASHRAF

Nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament debates have received important considerations in the contemporary nuclear environment, that has resulted in a strategic shift of the paradigm in the global nuclear politics. However, the states that are party to the nonproliferation efforts see such advancements in lieu of their threat perception.

The efforts that took place to curb the spread of nuclear weapons have reinforced the impression that under the changing dynamics of global politics and regional/national security, challenges to nuclear non-proliferation are ineffectively addressed. The NPT review conferences, which have taken place every five years, have often failed to achieve a consensus on a final document regarding different issues pertaining to non-proliferation. Disagreement between Nuclear Weapon States (NWS) and Non-Nuclear Weapon States (NNWS) on nuclear disarmament/horizontal nuclear proliferation under Article VI of the treaty, which calls upon P-5 NWS to ‘pursue negotiations’ for ‘effective measures’ within the framework of the NPT, lingers on with no consensus in sight. Similarly, differences continue to persist in the interpretation and application of Article IV of the NPT on peaceful uses of nuclear technology.

Recently, the independent Arms Control Association (ACA) released a new study that measures the performance of 11 key states in 10 universally-recognized nonproliferation, disarmament and nuclear security categories over the past 18 months. The study, “Assessing Progress on Nuclear Nonproliferation and Disarmament, 2013-2016”, is the third in a series that gives grades to China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, the United States, India, Israel, Pakistan—each of which possess nuclear weapons—and North Korea—which maintains a nuclear weapons capability—as well as Iran and Syria, which are under investigation for possible nuclear weapons-related activities. The indicators used for the assessment are: banning nuclear-weapon test explosions; ending the production of fissile material for weapons; reducing nuclear weapons alert levels; verifiably reducing nuclear force size; assuring non-nuclear weapons states that they will not be subject to nuclear attack; establishing nuclear weapon-free zones; complying with international safeguards against the diversion of peaceful nuclear activities for weapons purposes; controlling nuclear weapons-related exports; implementing measures to improve the security of nuclear material and facilities; and criminalizing and preventing illicit nuclear trafficking and nuclear terrorism.

The Report Card assigned a Grade C to Pakistan. Pakistan's grade improved slightly since the 2013 report, due to progress on strengthening export controls and ratifying a key nuclear security treaty. The country updated its national control lists last year to make them compatible with those of the nuclear export cartels like the Nuclear Suppliers Group, Missile Technology Control Regime and Australia Group. In Pakistan's neighborhood, both China and India were given C+ grade, while Iran got a C. On nuclear security commitments, Pakistan got a B+ as compared to a B in 2013. The improved grade was because of accession to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material amendment this year. Physical security has improved in the recent years, due in significant part to US assistance across a spectrum of activities. This assistance includes the development of nuclear material accountability and tracking programs, advanced training by US national laboratories, and the development of personnel reliability and accounting measures. On the International Atomic Energy Agency's safeguard, Pakistan got a Grade B, although all of its civil nuclear facilities are under IAEA safeguards.

The report says that Pakistan's grade has been lowered because in October 2015, Aizaz Chaudhry publicly stated that Pakistan has developed low-yield, tactical nuclear weapons. Pakistan is believed to have deployed these weapons on the battlefield. The other nuclear nation in South Asia, India, developed and enhanced nuclear arsenal; aided by civilian nuclear cooperation agreements; triad of nuclear delivery systems; short, medium and long range missiles; SLBMs and nuclear powered sub-marine; developing BMD system and there are also reports about Hydrogen bomb. As encouraged and supported by US and allies like Israel – India is engaged in massive conventional and strategic military buildup.

Pakistan has played an active role in international nuclear mechanisms. It is noteworthy that four security summits have taken place so far and Islamabad has accepted US proposals for securing all vulnerable materials within four years. Several safety and security measures have been put in place as part of this commitment. Pakistan acceded to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material. Pakistan has undertaken some measures to protect its non-nuclear radiological materials. As part of that it has upgraded physical security at its nuclear medical centers. This measure is intended primarily to prevent the spread of material for making RDD ('dirty bombs'). Pakistan has also participated in the IAEA nuclear safety action plan. Additionally it has extended its cooperation in other areas with the IAEA to improve nuclear security.

The low ranking implies weak regulations, which despite Pakistan's efforts indicates a biased assessment. This grading of positions is the result of ignoring the efforts taken by Pakistan for compliance to global norms; their security and control measures; capacity to keep them safe; and their risk environments. Interestingly, it is difficult to empirically measure how effective material control is unless theft, pilferage or sabotage is reported. Pakistan's domestic commitments and capacity to prevent the theft of nuclear materials are fairly good in the region. Unlike India, Pakistan has an independent regulatory agency and robust domestic nuclear materials security legislation in place. Arguably, it seems that the global nuclear security is as strong as the weakest link in the chain which deserves a more realistic assessment as it is nothing more than a patchwork of agreements, guidelines and multilateral engagement mechanisms. It seems that the facts about a few states have been deliberately ignored to justify the allocated rankings.

Source: <http://www.eurasiareview.com/30072016-pakistan-and-nuclear-report-card-2016-assessment-interests-and-collisions-oped/>

CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS IN PAKISTAN BY RAASHID WALI JANJUA

The civil-military relations in Pakistani context have been bedeviled by a lack of mutual trust and understanding due to a host of factors. The colonial flavor of a socially sequestered military weaned more on a colonial as opposed to a democratic diet had to be sedulously tempered through a civilian leadership possessing adequate charisma and political gravitas. The above end could not be achieved due to early death of the founder of the nation, and the removal from scene of the remaining political titans of the independence struggle. The result was the advent of totalitarianism with praetorians ruling the roost for a better part of our nearly seven decades of national existence.

Why did all that happen? Some scholarly insights throw light on the delicate civil-military interaction. At the same time, as scholars like Laswell and Finer warned against a military proclivity for intervention in domestic politics that ultimately led towards a garrison state, others like Morris Janowitz and Peter Feaver recommended a strong civilian oversight over military policy formulation. Samuel Finer in his famous book, *The Man on the Horseback* warned of a military proclivity for power grab due to weaknesses of civilian institutions of governance and polity. In Pakistan due to a non-fortuitous concatenation of political developments the military assumed political power that stunted the growth of political leadership to the detriment of an already lopsided civil-military power balance.

In post-Napoleonic era the military-centric power paradigm, ideally tailored for war fighting, relied on the famous Clausewitzian trinity of people, military, and government, all yoked together to achieve the desired objectives by attacking the rival centres of gravities. Due to political and technological advancements in current era, however, the Clausewitz's classic confrontational paradigm has been challenged by scholars like Rebecca Schiff through her "Concordance Theory" of civil-military relations. According to her theory, smooth civil-military relations can be achieved through a cooperative relationship between the political elite, military and the citizenry. The strength in this age can therefore not be attained through confrontation but cooperation, be it the civil-military or the interstate equation.

The lack of political will and intellectual depth amongst the civilian component of national leadership has stunted the growth of the civilian national security decision-making institutions resulting in an expertise gap between the civil and military components of the decision-making matrix. The gap could only be bridged through

conscious efforts on part of politicians to acquire expertise and knowledge about military affairs through formal as well as informal education along with concomitant development of decision-making institutions. The need for a well-resourced national security directorate to provide institutionalised input for national security policy formulation is a case in point.

When in countries like Pakistan the public aspirations and the patriotic sensibilities of the military combine in face of palpably weak and apathetic governance the result is a national discordance upending the “concordance” theory of Schiff. That discordance sometimes assumes the hues of threats to democracy in countries with weak political institutions. In order to bring a much needed concordance and balance between three elements i.e masses, politicians and the military it is necessary to establish some kind of a control over the military.

The industrialised democracies through political evolution have developed two kinds of control over their militaries. The first is called “Objective Control,” a term coined in the US civil-military literature that means complete autonomy to the military in its professional sphere in return for complete obedience to the civilian government in political and national policy making spheres. The second is called “Subjective Control,” which means co-opting the military in civilian decision-making affairs as a hedge against military intervention in political affairs. The involvement and influence of Israeli military in civilian affairs is an example of Subjective Control where the head of the Israeli Defence Forces holds a cabinet seat during security crises.

In the USA, an Objective Control by professionalising the military through measures like Gold Water Nicholas Act post 1987 was established. The Gold Water Act reorganised the US military chain of command around the commander-in-chief (president), secretary of defence, chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff, and tri service combatant commanders in the field. Would Pakistan have its Gold Water Nicholas model through a reorganisation of its Higher Defence Organisation and having an efficacious chief of the defence staff heading three services? Would our ministry of defence and National Security Directorate be reorganised and resourced to be fully responsive and effective?

A time has come for a complete rethinking and reorganising of our national security system as well as a higher defence organisation in order to enable civilians to both develop an expertise in military matters as well as to exercise effective oversight through potent and functional national security decision support institutions. These

institutions include parliamentary committees, a properly staffed National Security Directorate, a reorganised ministry of defence, and a potent Joint Services Headquarters headed by a chief of the defence staff. The above may appear to be a tall order but is an idea whose time has come.

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THE PAK-IRAN RELATIONSHIP | EDITORIAL

Putting it back on track

The PML-N government has not won too many points, for some time now, on the foreign policy front. Things with India, Afghanistan and America have worsened and the foreign ministry, at times, has been an international embarrassment; strutting along directionless, without a dedicated minister, all this time. Yet, for the past few weeks, there has been a visible effort to mend ties with Iran, which is appreciated. The equation with Tehran, too, took a dip not too long ago, which makes this fresh initiative that much more significant.

The effort began to show late last month, when the national security advisor visited Iran for three days. Besides enhancing ties and improving border security, the two sides talked at length about the regional threat posed by IS. Then a few days ago the foreign secretary went to Iran. Once again, on top of politics and commerce, they talked about IS and terrorism. Now, the Iranian deputy foreign minister, Dr Seyed Mohammad Kazem Sajjadpour, has come to Pakistan to express similar sentiments. This means that the first step of the 'reset' – removing mistrust and restoring ties – has been successfully completed. Now both sides should build on the momentum and initiate joint business ventures – and complete half-done ones like IP pipeline – and build on a joint anti-terror policy.

Islamabad has done the right thing by reaching out to Tehran just as it is coming out of international isolation. Its value can be assessed by the beeline European companies and investment banks are making to its newly 'available' economy. Even Washington, which in the Bush Administration included Iran in the 'Axis of Evil', has decided to bury the hatchet and start over, no matter how much it upsets the Saudis and Israelis. Pakistan and Iran must now waste no time in building upon this new foundation.

Source: <http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2016/08/13/comment/the-pak-iran-relationship/>

PAKISTAN AFTER 69 YEARS BY MAZHAR ABBAS

After 69 years of Independence, we are still not convinced that a true democratic system is in place in accordance with the political vision of the Founder of the Nation, Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah.

Is it merely because of the long military regimes or undemocratic behaviour of our politicians as well? The biggest challenge today is to set our direction right and seek clarity in our political narrative.

It is an irony that the challenges which the Founder of Pakistan had pointed out in his very first address like constitutional rule, law and order and corruption, still are unmet.

Jinnah, in his address as the first President of the Constituent Assembly, said, "The Constituent Assembly has two main functions to perform. First, the very onerous and responsible task of framing future the Constitution of Pakistan, and second the functioning as a full and complete sovereign body as the Federal Legislature of Pakistan."

We mostly discuss only part of his historic speech, which relates to respect for religious belief and State functions, but, often ignored his guiding principles. He said, "The first duty of a government is to maintain law and order, so that life, property and religious beliefs of its subjects are fully protected."

He knows the challenges ahead so he had even termed 'bribery and corruption', biggest curses.

It is our dilemma that soon after his death, we did contrary to what he wanted us to do. Within six years, the very Constituent Assembly was dissolved in 1954, by the governor general, Ghulam Mohammad. Instead of calling for elections of the National Assembly, the provincial assemblies picked the National Assembly. It was the beginning of political discomforts between West and East Pakistan.

Had elections for the National Assembly held after 1954, the then Awami League (AL) had the better chance to win. Some 25 years later, when for the first time elections were held on the basis of one man, one vote, AL swept the polls in 1970. This time the majority party was deprived and as a consequence we lost half of Pakistan.

But, perhaps we have not learnt any lessons and despite historic verdict against martial law in Hina Jilani case, martial law was imposed after four years of civilian rule in 1977.

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's era remained controversial but within two years of his rule, the political leadership gave a unanimous Constitution, 1973 and thus fulfilled Jinnah's vision of framing the Constitution. It took 25 years, during which we saw two military rules in 1958 and 1968 as well political uncertainty from 1947 to 1956.

Politician gave the Constitution, but could not establish the true democratic rule of tolerance and good governance.

Yet, when politicians tried to sit together to find a solution and solved their difference in the backdrop of allegations of rigging in the elections, the military intervention resulted in the third martial law, despite political accord between the PPP and the Pakistan National Alliance (PNA).

Late, General Ziaul Haq's martial law brought an end to 'Politics of ideology'. 1970 and 1977 elections were contested on ideology like Islamic socialism or roti, kapra aur makan of the PPP and Bengali nationalism of Awami League. Even parties like National Awami Party (NAP), which represented left wing and nationalist parties on the one hand and religious parties like Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam and Jamaat-e-Islami.

Zia's 11 years corrupted Pakistani politics and encouraged family legacies, promoted ethnic and separatist groups. All this started with the execution of an elected prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

Not many people know that when Bhutto was deposed and detained, he had made PPP's senior vice-chairman, Sheikh Rasheed (Baba-e-Socialism) as the acting chairman. However, Sheikh Sahib himself advised him to name Begum Nusrat Bhutto as the acting chairperson. It was a political mistake as family emotions replaced politics. In 1985, political parties based politics received a setback when general elections were held on non-party basis and as a result families, biradris, caste, ethnic and sectarian politics emerged.

In order to counter PPP's popular appeal despite Bhutto's hanging forced Zia and his cronies to produce a leader from Punjab, after another Sindhi leader, despite being hand-picked, refused to run the affairs of the state on the whims of non-civilians. He was Mohammad Khan Junejo.

He was replaced by little known business family of Sharifs, who had suffered due to Bhutto's policy of nationalisation. Thus, a family was brought up in politics to counter another family, Bhuttos.

The political parties, instead of challenging this mindset, became part of the system. Today, these families have brought their third generation in politics like Bilawal Bhutto, Maryam Nawaz or Hamza Shahbaz and many others.

A power tussle between Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif, fully ignited by non-civilian forces through the Islami Jamhoori Ittehad (IJI) or the Mehran Bank scandal, further polluted our politics. On October 12, 1999, General Pervez Musharraf seized power through another coup after he was sacked by PM Sharif.

Like his predecessors, Musharraf too prolonged his rule and in a bid to get legitimacy, divided mainstream parties and allegedly made parties like Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) and PPP-Patriot during 2002 elections. For the first time, Imran Khan also surfaced as a politician after winning his National Assembly seat, after he support Musharraf from 1999 to 2002.

Rise of Imran was a positive sign as he had the reputation of 'Mr Clean'. But, it took him sometime before his party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) emerged as a political force. After the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, it was Imran Khan who emerged as a real challenger to Sharifs. His entry into politics also brought a new generation of youth into mainstream politics.

Imran Khan, who has initially challenged the politics of status quo and got massive support made a political blunder by accepting tested politicians of status quo into its ranks. But, with the Bhutto dynasty struggling and Bilawal still having to cover a long distance, Imran Khan still has an opportunity to challenge the Sharifs.

It also goes to the credit of politicians that after a tug-of-war for power between the late Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif for 10 years, both these leaders publicly accepted

their mistakes that they conspired each other and signed historic Charter of Democracy (CoD) in 2006. Another landmark decision of the politicians was 18th Amendment, which nearly settled the issue of provincial autonomy.

It would have been better had former military ruler General (ret'd) Pervez Musharraf "fallen" as a result of democratic struggle rather than his exit through the National Reconciliation Ordinance (NRO) or any compromise.

Credit must also be given to former army chief, General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani, for upholding democratic order and democracy was restored in 2008, though after Benazir Bhutto's assassination, sadly. After Kayani, the incumbent army chief General Raheel Sharif not only backed democracy but played a historic role through operation Zarb-e-Azb.

Thus, it is important that we must bury politics of blame-game, and there should have more transparency in our counter-terror policies as terrorism and extremism, along with corruption, are some of major challenges.

There is always a sign of hope and though slow, there has been progress and change in the mindset of civil and military leadership to make Pakistan a true democratic state, say in the next 30 years when we will celebrate our first centenary.

As Quaid-e-Azam, in his speech before the Constituent Assembly, said: "My guiding principle will be justice and complete impartiality, and I am sure that with your support and cooperation, I can look forward to Pakistan becoming one of the greatest nations of the world."

The writer is a senior columnist and analyst of Geo, The News and Jang.

Source: <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/142187-Pakistan-after-69-years>

PAK-INDIA FUTURE | EDITORIAL

On the surface Pak-India friction is back to very disturbing levels despite Nawaz Sharif's spirited outreach and Narendra Modi's occasional reciprocity; casting a long, dark shadow on the upcoming SAARC Summit in November. The unpleasantness between Ch Nisar and Rajnath Singh was unfortunate, leaving the matter of India's continued participation at the top level wide open. And the violence in Kashmir didn't help, of course, nor did Modi's comments about Balochistan. And Nawaz dedicating this Independence Day to Kashmir only showed that Islamabad will not shy away from replying Delhi's pressure with some counter-pressure of its own.

Yet there are also signs that, despite the confrontation (and the mutual need to stay one step ahead), both sides have realised that, sooner or later, they would have to sit down and talk about the core issues. Despite the Rajnath episode sections of the press in both countries deduced that the home minister was sent to prepare for top level talks, including a Nawaz-Modi meeting on the sidelines of SAARC. Otherwise they could have done what Dhaka did and simply sent their high commissioner. That also explains Dar sb's eagerness in pleasing the Indian finance minister – that is if he attends the SAARC finance ministers' meeting in about ten days' time.

In the meantime both sides can at least begin back-channel discussions on just how to go about discussing core issues. There will be difficulties, of course, so long as both define core issues in very different ways. This, exactly, was highlighted in the latest exchange, albeit indirect, between Sartaj Aziz and Sushma Swaraj; the former inviting Indians to talk on Kashmir and the latter wanting to put cross-border terrorism higher on the list. But the Indian government faces internal pressures of its own, with increasing demands for talking to Pakistan. SAARC could prove to be the watershed moment that finally gets both sides talking about what matters. Or it could be just another lost opportunity. It all depends on just how far both have realised the centrality of talks, on Kashmir as well as other issues.

Source: <http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2016/08/15/comment/pak-india-future/>

POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY BY DR NIAZ MURTAZA

POLITICAL geography examines how the nature of politics in specific geographies is influenced by local socio-economic factors. Applying this lens to Pakistan's immense and varied geography yields interesting insights into the factors influencing its politics.

It helps in analysing why parties with certain types of political bases dominate certain regions, eg, PML-N in Punjab, PPP in rural Sindh, and MQM in metropolitan Sindh. Analysts lament the stranglehold of 'feudals' over politics. However, 'feudals' or large land-owners today dominate politics in certain regions only and have been replaced by a wide range of other players elsewhere, including industrialists, traders, middlemen, and urban mafias.

Punjab, the biggest and most prosperous province, was once dominated by large landowners. The landlord-dominated Unionist Party won the 1937 elections there. Muslim League's win in the 1946 elections was also owed to their migration into its folds. But while even today the PML dominates Punjab politics, its current leadership bears little resemblance to its 1940s Punjab leadership.

Today, PML-N is led by large industrialists. Even its second tier is no longer dominated by landlords but traders, middlemen and other market elements. This enormous change in leadership reflects Punjab's huge economic changes. From being largely agricultural, its economy has today diversified to include large components of industry and services sectors. These dominate agriculture even if its value-added may still be larger today.

All actors practise patronage politics.

This economic change is transmitted into politics. Landlords have been sidelined politically, and industrialists rule. Even in the rural areas, especially in northern Punjab, it is not agricultural producers but middlemen who dominate economically and hence politically. While southern Punjab is still agricultural and 'feudal', so immense is the influence of northern industrialists that they now dominate southern Punjab politics.

Sindh is the second most prosperous province and has experienced huge industrialisation since 1947. However, Sindh politics is dramatically different than Punjab given its ethnic divide. Its industrialised urban regions are dominated by Mohajirs while its rural areas are inhabited by Sindhis. The lesson of global history is

that industry dominates agriculture economically and this economic dominance soon translates into political dominance too, as in Punjab.

However, this has not happened in Sindh due to the ethnic divide. Mohajir urban politicians representing its industrial economy are unable to dominate rural politics in Sindh. Overall, Sindh continues to be ruled by rural elements even though its industrial base is as strong as Punjab's. Rural Sindh's politics comes closest to the caricature of 'feudal-dominated' politics though in-depth analysis may reveal that players from smaller towns also have a major role in rural Sindh politics today.

Karachi is Pakistan's most industrialised, globalised and prosperous city and to the extent that economics affects politics, one would expect its politics to be more advanced in terms of reflecting issues-based, merit-oriented political patterns. But Karachi's politics is nothing of the sort and is dominated by lower-middle-class urban mafias. Thus, the most astonishing aspect of Pakistani political geography is that even the politics of its most modern and economically advanced region is so backward.

KP and Balochistan's politics is less settled, for the ruling parties there change frequently. More mountainous KP's rural landscape is different than that of plains-dominated Punjab and Sindh. KP lacks the large landholdings and consequently the large landlords that Sindh and southern Punjab have. Its politics is dominated by a more varied set of players, including smaller landowners, urban professionals, clerics and middlemen. Central Balochistan's politics is dominated mainly by tribal leaders while that of northern and coastal Balochistan, like KP, is dominated by a more varied set of players including mid-sized farmers, urban professionals and clerics.

Thus, Pakistani politics reflects different patterns in different regions, with very different types of actors dominating. But the common thread is that all actors, including landlords, industrialists, clerics and middle-class people, practise patronage politics. This reflects the fact that by the standards of advanced global economies, even Punjab and Karachi's economy is backward, producing low-end goods. Elites in such economies do not need much merit or high skills and consequently patronage rather than merit-based politics dominates there.

So strong is the influence of patronage politics that leftist politicians have abandoned Marxism and right-wing politicians' Islamic ideology to gravitate towards patronage-dominated centrist politics. Until Pakistan's economy graduates to a more advanced

status, its politics will not change rapidly. This should serve to dampen the false hopes of those who forever seek short cuts to good governance.

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GENDER BASED VIOLENCE BY MUHAMMAD SHAHID RAFIQUE

Gender Based Violence (GBV) is a universal phenomenon affecting all societies in one way or the other. Almost every woman, during her lifetime, has faced discrimination or fear because of her sex. The World Health Organisation estimates that at least one in every five of the world's female population has been physically and sexually abused at some time. GBV affects both physical and emotional health of women and has far-reaching effects on society on the whole.

Women in Pakistan live in a society that is predominantly governed by strict religious, family and tribal customs. Though there is realisation on the part of the government and civil society of ensuring women rights, treatment of the women remains more or less the same, and they continue to suffer unabated because of their gender. They face various forms of violence and discrimination in almost every aspect of their life.

The Gender Gap Index 2015 ranked Pakistan second from the last among 145 countries in terms of prevalence of gender based disparities. Published by the World Economic Forum, the Index measures national gender gaps in economy, politics, education and health. Second last position of Pakistan on the list reflects the miserable conditions in which women are living in the country.

Gender-based violence is one of the most pervasive violations of rights of women in the country. According to the official figures released by the ministry of human rights, 8,648 incidents of human rights violations were reported in the country between January 2012 and September 15, 2015. These included 90 incidents of acid burning, 481 of domestic violence, 860 "honour" killing, 344 rape/gang rapes, 268 sexual assault/harassment and 535 cases of violence against women. Another report by War against Rape released in July 2015 stated that four women were raped every day in Pakistan in 2014, a 49 percent increase in the number of cases as compared to 2013. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan recorded 987 cases of "honour" crimes in 2015 with 1,096 female victims and 88 male victims, out of which at least 170 were minors. The Acid Survivors Foundations conducted a study entitled "Situational Analysis" on acid violence 2015 in collaboration with National Commission on the Status of Women. The analysis revealed that from 2007 to June 2015, there were 1,231 victims of acid violence in the country, and 1004 acid attacks were reported. About 70 percent of the victims were women falling in the age bracket of 17-30 years. Sadly, GBV is on increase despite different government initiatives taken recently.

Major categories of crimes against women prevalent in Pakistan are murder, kidnapping and rape/gang rape. Honour killing and suicide remained the major categories as indicated in different reports. There are other types of violence prevalent in the country. These include marriage with Quran, watta satta, vani, swara, walwar, karo kari, burning of women, acid throwing and dowry related violence.

Gender based violence in Pakistan is a very serious problem. Gravity of the situation can be gauged from the above-mentioned data. Discrimination and violence in Pakistan is more a societal problem than legal. Society breeds discrimination, which often finds its manifestation in gender based violence. Legal framework is not supportive to women thereby aggravating the situation by leaving no breathing space to them, and many victims find it difficult to come out of the vicious trap of violence.

In Pakistan the underlying causes of violence are due to deep-rooted social and cultural values. Sadly, women facing discrimination and violence do not get a great deal of support from society and government. It is the duty of government to formulate gender-sensitive policies in collaboration with the civil society so that crimes against women can be minimised. Such policies will also help in changing the attitude of the people in the long run.

Source: <http://dailytimes.com.pk/opinion/17-Aug-16/gender-based--violence>

WE NEED A NEW FOREIGN POLICY BY NADIR MIR

Pakistan needs a foreign policy to serve the State and people. What passes for foreign policy has been serving the elite – dictator or elected, personal interests and not national interests!! Today Pakistan has a feeble foreign policy led by confused political elite. Recent blocking of India from NSG membership proves that India can be stopped, blocked, deterred when Pakistan takes prudent nationalist foreign policy initiatives. Similarly Indo-US nuclear deal, Indian memberships of UNSC and other global forums should be vehemently opposed by Pakistan in harmony with other nations. Kashmir cause needs to be globalised and taken to ultimate level of resolution.

Today US foreign policy greatly revolves around pre containment of China. This US Pivot to Asia and rebalancing affects the Middle East, Central Asia and South Asia. Washington also wants encirclement of Russia and to contain Moscow's proactive role under President Putin. Today in 2016, Modi's India with "Global India" aspirations is working on a tailored and suitably crafted Foreign Policy. Delhi is relentlessly working on two cardinal principles: (a) Projecting India as a Global Power. (b) Defeating or destroying Pakistan. Delhi is clear that to be a regional/global power is not possible till the Arch Enemy Pakistan is cut to size (further).

By contrast Pakistan's foreign policy was generally mediocre in the initial decades. Still Mr. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, arguably Pakistan's most famous Foreign Minister apart from dramatic, emotional oratory, cemented bonds with China. A true mark of state craft. The Real Decline started in the time of the Last Dictator. Allowing India to establish Consulates into Afghanistan was a recipe for Disaster. Inviting Afghanistan into SAARC showed the demented state of Foreign Office and Pakistan's elite. The democratic dispensation after the dictator were equally inept at foreign affairs. The choice of Hussain Haqqani as Ambassador to USA and aftermath speaks for itself.

Today the situation is even more pathetic. Today the foreign policy is simply absurd. Friendship with enemy India while friction with friends is hollow in the extreme policy. On the contrary, India is having a policy of covert confrontation with Pakistan. Its strategy is to encircle, isolate and Destabilize Pakistan. Disrupting CPEC Gwadar and assailing Pakistan's Nuclear Projects from the Western direction is part of enemy geo strategy. Pakistan should follow a policy of Cold Peace with India. It should seek Peace and Prosperity with the rest of the world.

Pakistan's Foreign Policy should aim at Cold Peace with India, which means the following: (i) It implies overall balance including geopolitical and strategic balance. (ii) Withdrawal of Indian security forces from Indian Held Kashmir. (iii) Mutual defence reduction agreement between India and Pakistan. (iv) It further necessitates closure of Indian terrorist consulates in Afghanistan and removal of Indian presence from Chah Bahar.

Pakistan's quest for Peace in Afghanistan is being blocked by India which is a spoiler. Delhi wants a second front against Pakistan with Kabul as the base. India's cold start from the East and hybrid/asymmetrical war from the West is part of the Indian strategy. After Pakistani Victory over non state actors, India is trying to use Afghanistan. However, Kabul is half state actor and faces resistance within Afghanistan. Pakistan enjoys leverage over Kabul – Delhi combined in Afghanistan and should use it. By the same token, Afghans are our brothers. We should cooperate, facilitate Afghan nation less its Indian sponsored puppets of Delhi. Pakistan's foreign policy should call for peace in Afghanistan based on: (a) Withdrawal of all Foreign Forces. (b) Closure of clandestine terror houses like Indian consulates. (c) Refusal to accept Indian takeover of Afghanistan from USA.

Since Delhi persists with its alliance strategy, Pakistan should plan its own alliances in the regions. This may include formalized or defacto separate alliances with China, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, SCO and Russia. At the same time, Pakistan should retain its old membership of the Western Alliance and maintain friendship with USA (despite hiccups and differences). Good relations with the Western world and amity with the rest of the World.

— The writer, a retired Brigadier, is Chairman Pakistan National Reform Movement.

Source: <http://pakobserver.net/we-need-a-new-foreign-policy/>

KEY ISSUES FACING PAKISTAN TODAY BY TALAT MASOOD

Pakistan's foreign and domestic policies face formidable multiple challenges. India is virtually on the warpath for our support of the Kashmiri resistance against Indian hegemony and atrocities. It has placed diplomatic exchanges on hold, while incendiary rhetoric from its leadership is on the rise. It refuses to discuss Kashmir but is willing to engage on a one-point agenda of discussing terrorism. Afghanistan is deeply resentful of our policy of harbouring the Taliban and its policy towards us is closely linked to its relations with India. Apparently we are the least liked country despite what we have suffered as a consequence of supporting the Afghan jihad against Soviet occupation. Ironically, Afghans have forgotten which side India was on at that time, but now it is considered Afghanistan's closest ally. Adding to our woes, the US finds our tacit support for the Haqqani network and presence of the Quetta Shura a serious breach of good faith. As a consequence, our assistance has been curtailed by \$300 million by an angry Congress. Americans, too, have short memories, as most of their present enemies in Afghanistan were at one time their closest allies. With Iran we have yet to develop a relationship that inspires confidence on both sides. It would require earnest effort at addressing political, economic and security-related issues before a durable relationship emerges.

Internally, the government is under considerable pressure from Imran Khan's politics of agitation for reforms and accountability. His party, however, is divided on what future line of action to take and its ability to dislodge the government is remote. At best, the protests will be distractive and have a nuisance value. It is in the backdrop of such fractious interparty politics that our national policies, both external and internal, are being framed.

Operation Zarb-e-Azb has made great gains, but the mopping-up operation continues and the rebuilding phase, which involves the complete demobilisation of jihadi groups, the reintegration of jihadists in the mainstream and the development of devastated areas in which the civilian government has a major role, is yet to mature. Economic development and political reforms are still awaited and should be given high priority by the federal government.

Through heavy borrowing and support from the IMF, the economy has stabilised, but absence of foreign investment and a drop in exports and remittances are not healthy signs. There is greater emphasis on getting assistance from abroad rather than creating

favourable conditions for generating wealth from within. Pakistan remains one of the most tax-burdened countries in the world and the primary reason is the government's inability to tax the rich. In these adverse circumstances, the government has to deliver on targets set for the CPEC and bring about a qualitative improvement in the energy situation by 2018. The successful implementation of the CPEC would in large part depend on how efficiently the government plans and executes its responsibilities and improves the overall security situation. It has been subjected to intense criticism for not doing enough for raising the Kashmir issue at international forums and in world capitals. While we should raise the profile of the Kashmir resistance, we should also take preventive measures against increased Indian activities both in the form of destabilising efforts and maligning us internationally on some of our imaginary and real weaknesses. A very obvious Indian response has been to become the champion for Baloch dissidents and whip up anti-Pakistan elements in Gilgit-Baltistan. In our principled support for the Kashmiris, we have in the past given sustenance to militant groups like the Lashkar-e-Taiba, which has seriously compromised our national position and provided an easy way for India to defame us and allowed it to twist the peaceful Kashmir struggle for propaganda against us. We have seen that the Afghan and Indian governments are providing sanctuaries to the TTP as a retaliatory measure for our perceived support of the Afghan Taliban and the Haqqani network, and what is troubling is that the US looks the other way as it keeps up with its policy of pressuring Pakistan. As tensions with India escalate, focus on curbing insurgency in Fata may weaken to the detriment of achieving peace. Pakistan's recent measures to manage the Pak-Afghan border have been positive and will prevent the flow of illegal trade, drug trafficking and crossing over of militant groups. Over the long term, this will help in building a sense of national identity. Regrettably, this has angered the Afghans for which there is no justification as these posts are manned on Pakistani territory.

The success of our policies in all these areas, especially in matters of security, politics, diplomacy and economy, will determine how Pakistan will develop in the coming years. For this we need a well-coordinated national effort that can come about through the maximum actualisation of state institutions at the federal and provincial levels. We also need harmony and synergy between institutions, which is largely absent or weak at present. For this, a greater level of maturity is needed on the part of politicians and the military. Clarity in policies only comes about when national issues are debated and analysed by the cabinet, parliament, its various committees and on specific designated forums. High priority tasks such as implementation of the National Action Plan have failed to invoke the interest and commitment that these demanded. The PM's recent

appointment of General Janjua as his coordinator to monitor the implementation phase is reassuring, but we have to wait to see its impact. Sadly, with corrective measures being taken to streamline the functioning of madrassas in Sindh, religious parties are now up in arms as though these are entities above the law. Similarly, political parties are reluctant to shed their militant wings, especially in Karachi. The recent confrontation between the Rangers and the MQM bears sad testimony to the latter's inability to discard its old policies and adopt civilised, democratic practices and ethos. We have to find ways of solving these formidable challenges and recast our future. But this would require a capable leadership having vision and commitment to chart new pathways.

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Source: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1168678/key-issues-facing-pakistan-today/>

Economy

MONETARY POLICY | EDITORIAL

THE State Bank has hewed to a cautious stance in keeping the key discount rate unchanged in its latest monetary policy announcement despite furnishing a very upbeat assessment of the state of the economy. Inflation is down to “a 47 year low of 2.9pc” while growth has “touched an 8 year high of 4.7pc”, according to the central bank. Foreign exchange reserves are sufficient to cover four months of imports, while the fiscal situation is stable as “revenue collection exceeded expectations”. The bank says growth could well experience a “spurt” in the forthcoming fiscal year due to elevated project spending, whether through the PSDP or CPEC, improved energy supply and a better law-and-order situation.

On the surface, the bank says, things are well; but lurking beneath it all are risks of a serious nature. A continuing slowdown in China and the Gulf, coupled with uncertainties relating to the EU and Brexit complications, could weigh down future growth. The biggest risk would be an unexpected rise in oil prices. Given the narrow base of growth revival, and the continuing dependence of the economy on official inflows from abroad, these are hazards to be taken seriously. The bank also veers towards over-optimism in painting its constant liquidity injections into the banking system as a positive force, especially by claiming that they have “helped in a better transmission of monetary policy”. In fact, these injections are evidence of a dysfunction more than anything else. If they have played a role in lifting private-sector credit offtake, it shows that the bank has met with little success in urging the financial sector to move out of its addiction to government lending. The revival in growth that the bank is pointing out is real, no doubt, but it is important to bear in mind that it is built on generous levels of government spending and State Bank-sponsored liquidity provision. These are far from the foundations of sustainable growth, and the central bank ought to be clearer in mentioning that.

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Source: <http://www.dawn.com/news/1274493/monetary-policy>

GOODBYE TO THE IMF? BY HUSSAIN H ZAIDI

Has Pakistan's economy become strong enough to stand on its own feet without the crutches of foreign assistance? The federal government believes so in the wake of the International Monetary Fund's clearance of the last \$102 million tranche of a three-year \$6.4 billion Extended Fund Facility (EFF). Is the optimism, which is shared by the IMF as well, warranted?

Breaking the begging bowl once and for all was one of the promises of the PML-N in the run-up to the 2013 elections. However, within three months of its formation, the PML-N government was forced to knock at the door of the IMF for assistance. The preceding government had also gone to the multilateral donor in 2008. The current IMF programme started in September 2013. The EFF is designed for economies facing low growth and an inherently weak balance of payment (BoP) position as well as those suffering structural impediments.

The pre-poll pledges of the PML-N aside, Pakistan having gone back to the Fund was not surprising in the slightest. Given the state of the economy and the need to repay the government's obligations to foreign creditors, it was never a question of whether Pakistan would go back to the IMF but when.

A country's request for IMF credit signifies two things in the main: that the economy is in a critical condition and needs immediate injection of capital; and that – given the political and economic costs of the Fund's assistance – cash inflows from other potential sources are not coming through.

This is not to suggest that assistance from other multilateral or bilateral sources has no strings attached to it. However, because IMF conditionality is perceived to be tougher and politically unpleasant, its assistance is usually sought as the last resort.

A difficult balance of payment (BoP) position forced Pakistan to go for IMF assistance in 2013. At the end of June 2013, the net foreign exchange reserves available with the central bank had come down to \$5.5 billion from \$10.15 billion nearly a year earlier. The current account deficit and trade deficit made up 2.4 percent and 6.7 percent of GDP respectively. An economy running current account deficit and at the same time unable to attract considerable foreign direct investment finds it difficult to work off foreign debt and, ironically enough, has to go for external assistance thus accumulating more debt.

Is the economy looking up as the IMF programme approaches its end?

At the end of financial year 2015-16 (FY16), current account deficit was \$2.52 billion (0.9 percent of GDP). The two key components of current account balance are trade balance and remittances sent by nationals working abroad. Trade deficit at the end of FY16 was \$18.46 billion (6.43 percent of GDP). This means that, as percentage of GDP, neither current account nor trade balance has improved. Both exports and imports registered negative growth (8.6 percent in case of exports and 2 percent in case of imports) to reach \$22 billion and \$40.46 billion respectively.

Earlier in FY14, exports had surpassed \$25 billion for the first time in the country's history but subsequently fell in FY15 and further in FY16. Not only that, the export base continues to be narrow and exports are dominated by primary products and semi-manufactures. For sustained export growth, such structural constraints need to be addressed.

Remittances have registered substantially over the years to reach \$19.91 billion in FY16. On the other hand, FDI inflows have dried up. Between FY09 and FY14, the country received FDI of \$1.9 billion a year on average. In FY15, \$923 million was received as FDI, which rose to \$1.28 billion in FY16. Pakistan may present the most liberal FDI regime in the region but several factors, at the top of which is the precarious security situation, have held back FDI.

On the whole, the BoP situation has eased and foreign exchange reserves have increased. As on June 30, 2016, net foreign exchange reserves with the central bank were \$18.12 billion. But the recovery is precariously placed as it has a lot to do with lower oil prices, foreign assistance and remittances from Pakistani expatriates. Not surprisingly, external debt and liabilities, which stood at \$58 billion at the close of FY13, have gone up to \$69 billion (as on March 31, 2016).

Today's debt is a drag on consumption tomorrow. The higher the debt, the narrower is the fiscal space available to the government. Already, debt servicing is the single largest component of public spending, with external debt servicing accounting for 24 percent of GDP.

From the external sector we may move to the domestic sector. During FY16, economic output expanded by 4.7 percent compared with average growth of 3 percent between

FY09 and FY13. Fiscal deficit has been slashed to 4.3 percent of GDP compared with 8.3 percent in FY13. Tax-to-GDP ratio has gone up from 8.7 percent in FY13 to 10.1 percent in FY16.

Economic fundamentals, however, remain weak. Take the key indicators of savings and investment, which most economists believe are the real drivers of growth. Saving-to-GDP and real sector investment-to-GDP ratios for FY16 were 14.6 percent and 13.61 percent respectively compared with 13.9 percent and 13.36 percent in FY13 – thus showing only a marginal improvement.

As per World Bank data, Pakistan's investment-to-GDP level is one of the lowest among the developing countries and the lowest in South Asia: India (35), Bhutan (56), Sri Lanka (30), Bangladesh (27), Nepal (35).

Likewise, despite multiple levies, the share of taxes in the national income remains among the lowest in the world thus forcing the government to borrow from the banks.

It follows from the foregoing that on the whole the economy is beginning to look up. However, an economic turnaround is still a long way away and it is doubtful whether the economy will not have to go back to multilateral donors like the IMF.

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Source: <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/140473-Goodbye-to-the-IMF>

SEEKING ECONOMIC SOVEREIGNTY BY M ZIAUDDIN

Instead of doing what we should be doing to attain a degree of economic sovereignty we have been going around the world with a hat in hand. This, we have been doing since independence but have done nothing with the dole received other than let the rich pocket part of it and the other part going into buying costly arms. More of the same is not going to make us behave differently. The other way of extricating ourselves from this impossible situation is to emulate the economic models that were adopted by BRIC countries to come out of their appalling poverty. This would need a lot of belt tightening and that too for at least quarter of a century. And at the same time the rich rent seekers would need to share their loot with the exchequer.

Meanwhile, we must ensure that all citizens have access to education, healthcare and credit and be able to start an enterprise. If citizens are challenged by nature or face discrimination due to their gender or religion, the state has an active role to play in removing these obstacles. By providing full capabilities for all, a society unleashes the full potential of all its citizens. The provision of public goods by the state not only strengthens consumption demand, but also increases labour productivity by improving the qualification and health of the workforce. Tapping into the innovative genius, creativity, entrepreneurial energy and talent of all people unleashes the full inclusive growth potential of a society.

The economic predicament that Pakistan has been facing since 2008 is similar to the one we had faced in the decade of the 1990s. And like then the present crisis too is the direct result of the mismanagement of the economy during the preceding regime. And like the elected regimes of the 1990s, this time around as well the elected governments, both the previous one of Asif Ali Zardari and the current one of Nawaz Sharif seem to have continued with the policies formulated during the regime that had preceded them. That is why our economy is continuing to crumble. And that is why our dependence on borrowed resources continues to grow.

Throughout the 1980s and part of the 1990s one saw the dice heavily loaded against the majority as the nationalized banks were fleeced by opportunists in the name of development. The policy of 30-70 equity offered by the nationalized banks was exploited to the hilt by these opportunists to rob the nation red.

The bank's 70 percent equity would be used for importing machinery and investor's own 30 percent equity would be completely made good by indulging in over-invoicing the imports. And by floating shares of the upcoming manufacturing unit say at Rs 10 a share and then buying them back after fixing the market to depress the share price to half and less than half of its original price, these so-called entrepreneurs would make substantial profits even before the coming on stream of the unit.

And if it is an exportable goods producing unit, the investor would blatantly indulge in under-invoicing his exports making a killing in foreign exchange and stashing this loot in a foreign bank where he had already stashed the loot from over-invoicing the import of machinery.

Since our entrepreneurs try to keep every penny of their investment within the family they are forced by self-created compulsions to reduce the risk to their margins of profit by the vagaries of business cycles by maintaining more than two books of accounts while blatantly pilfering utilities like electricity, gas and water and stealing taxes by evading and avoiding their dues by bribing the collectors.

Some of these rent seekers enter politics with their billions and buy power using which they make more money to buy more power and in the process end up buying the law itself. When caught with their hands in the kitty, they simply buy the judges. In fact some judges were known to be in the pay of some of these filthy rich political families.

The big business has bought off most of the major political parties in the country by investing their dirty money in the election campaigns of their favourite contestants. These elections have literally gone out of the reach of even the upper middle classes what to talk of common man because of the huge amounts that one requires to fight them, no matter of which tier-national, provincial or local. It is only the most filthy rich that succeed in buying their way to these assemblies and thus acquire the powers to make laws that facilitate them to make more money at the cost of the country and the nation.

Since most of them are tax evaders and avoiders, they see to it while making the laws that they don't adversely impact on their profit margins. In fact they try to design the fiscal and monetary policies in such a way that they are ensured of ever higher margins of profit with each passing day.

Under this system even the middle classes in the country find it almost impossible to keep themselves from going under as the cost of education, health cover, housing and transport has virtually gone out their reach. Even the investment avenues that were available to them to protect their life's savings and make reasonable profits from them like the defence saving certificate and other such avenues have been rendered almost profit neutral perhaps to liberate even this small amount to satisfy the insatiable greed of the rich.

In Pakistan, the poor are subjected to heavy and harsh taxation to finance luxuries of elites enjoying free perquisites, benefits, including purchase of valuable State-owned plots in prime locations at throw-away prices. The way they waste and plunder taxpayers' money is no secret. The country is surviving on bailouts from the IMF due to perpetual failure of the ruling elite to tax the rich and the mighty that matter in the country. Revenues worth trillions of rupees have been sacrificed by governments - civil and military alike - since 1977 extending unprecedented exemptions and concessions to the privileged classes. Prior to the 18th Constitutional Amendment in April 2010, the federal and thereafter the provincial governments have shown little interest in collecting progressive taxes such as Estate Duty, Gift Tax and Capital Gains Tax.

No one has calculated how much tax loss Pakistan has suffered since 1977 on account of non-taxation of agricultural income alone. If we add total loss of revenue through various exemptions, non-taxation of benefits given to State Oligarchy and through Statutory Regulatory Orders (SROs) issued during the last four decades, the number comes to over Rs 100 trillion - this explains how unprecedented concessions to the rich has made the State poorer rendering every citizen of this country to enormous indebtedness. We would not have required any borrowing at all, if tax losses were historically not incurred.

Today, the rich enjoy wide-ranging exemptions and concessions, low effective tax rates and can engage in tax evasion with a degree of impunity, frequently in connivance with the corrupt tax administration. The consequence is low direct tax-to-GDP ratio, which has kept the overall tax-to-GDP ratio at extremely low levels in relation to other countries in the region.

"We as a nation have rejected poverty and the Indian nation seems to have embraced it." This was how the late economic genius of Pakistan, Dr Mehabul Haq explained to a curious group of visiting Indian journalists why as opposed to a seemingly 'shining'

Pakistan, India looked so 'drab'. This was mid-1980s when the good doctor as Pakistan's finance minister was interacting with the visiting journalists from a country groaning under what was called then the Hindu rate of growth of two percent while Pakistan was galloping at over 6 percent.

That Dr Haq was trying to conceal the actual reason for Pakistan's skin-deep prosperity of the 1980s with a rhetorical assertion did not fool many even as he uttered it. The 'shine' was indeed, a reflection of the first Afghan war related flood of dollar inflows. By the time this war had come to an end, our shallow show of opulence had consumed more than 50 billion unencumbered dollars that had flowed into the 'front-line state' between 1982-87 from the so-called 'free world' including the oil-rich Middle East. In addition, the then regime was consuming up, on the double, the physical and social assets and production capacities created mostly using borrowed resources during the Ayub and Bhutto regimes. But as the war neared its end there was nothing to show on the ground where all the billions had disappeared. Dr Haq, finance minister of the interim government of President Ghulam Ishaq Khan had to rush to the IMF for an emergency Band-Aid.

This entire scenario was repeated to the letter in the first decade of the current century as the second Afghan war related dollar inflows created another skin-deep prosperity in the country only to disappear by 2008 in a blinking of an eye as it could not last for even a couple of months in the face of financial upheavals occurring in far off lands. As in the closing years of 1980s, by the close of 2007 the country started suffering from massive load shedding. During both periods precious foreign assistance was wasted on consumption instead of using the comfortably wide fiscal space for introducing the much needed structural reforms to enhance national income, and add to physical and social assets.

Source: <http://www.brecorder.com/articles-a-letters/187:articles/78700:seeking-economic-sovereignty/?date=2016-08-24>

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT AS SOCIAL JUSTICE BY AHSAN IQBAL

Some vested interests are trying hard to manufacture a narrative against the PML-N government's progress on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). But this narrative is not going to stick because infrastructure development is one of the fortes of the PML-N government. Even the worst of our political opponents acknowledge this fact in their honest moments. Our political opponents are cognisant of the fact that they can't compete with us in the realm of infrastructure development. Therefore, they seem to have opted to undermine successes of our infrastructural projects and purport that 'infrastructure development' plays no significant role in the socioeconomic wellbeing of the poor people of Pakistan.

It is imperative for us to elucidate the importance of infrastructural development in the idiosyncratic context of Pakistan. Our government conceptualises infrastructure development as an integral component of our 'inclusive growth' strategy. Therefore, we are pursuing infrastructure development all across the country because it does not only spur economic growth, it also promotes social justice. In Vision 2025, we have stipulated social justice as one of our immediate priorities. The positive correlation between infrastructure investments and economic growth is a well-known economic fact. Construction of road networks on the western route of the CPEC has already started to positively impact the socioeconomic landscape in Balochistan. Areas which were considered inhabitable only few years ago are now showing strong signs of socioeconomic activity. Similarly, theoretical and empirical evidence suggests that infrastructural development enhances social justice. This provides us with the ideological foundation to pursue infrastructural projects. Predicated on our cynics' criticism of the projects we are pursuing, we can extrapolate that either they are unaware of these two economic channels or they are consciously denying them because it undermines their politics. In any case, I would briefly delineate the linkage between infrastructure development and social justice. The majority of the rural-poor households in Pakistan sell their labour power to sustain themselves. Their livelihoods depend on the agrarian economy. One of the biggest challenges faced by poor households in agrarian economies is 'interlinked factor markets'. That is, when an individual faces the same supplier in more than one market. In the case of agrarian markets in Pakistan, labour, land and credit are the main interlinked markets. Interlinked markets create conditions similar to monopsony and oligopoly and as a result the bargaining power of workers decreases. Thus resource-poor individuals end up locking

themselves in highly exploitative socioeconomic relationships. This also reduces the overall productivity in agriculture and leads to an increase in poverty in rural areas.

Redistributive land reforms can potentially end some of these exploitative socioeconomic relationships. But past experiences of land reforms in Pakistan show that elite capture is a likely outcome of these. Moreover, in the absence of well-functioning credit and land markets in rural areas, the positive outcome of land reforms would be minimal if any. Based on this calculus, the cost of land reforms would outweigh its benefit. Thus our government came to the conclusion that to end these exploitative socioeconomic relationships in rural markets, we need to come up with an alternative and effective strategy. Empirical evidence suggests that factor market interlinkages are more prevalent in isolated villages vis-a-vis connected villages. Therefore, we opted a strategy to end this isolation by connecting villages with towns and cities via extended networks of roads in rural areas. This is the most optimal way to end exploitative socioeconomic relationships in these areas given the constraints we face today.

Motorway and highway projects must be conceptualised in this context to fully grasp their socioeconomic potentialities. Once a motorway or a highway passes through a village, it induces the growth of link roads around that area. This brings more economic activity, information and employment opportunities to erstwhile isolated villages. In other words, networks of roads provide an 'exit option' to resource-poor households from exploitative interlinkages. That is, they can find an alternative employment in rural areas or they can move to other towns or cities. Thus exit options increase bargaining power of rural labourers. Consequently, this reduces both the magnitude and intensity of the exploitative interlinkages of labour, land and credit in rural markets, helping working families in the agrarian economy to improve their lives. Similarly, the PML-N government has prioritised working on energy infrastructure because power shortages adversely impact the lives of poor households. Unlike the affluent segments of our society, poor households cannot afford to privately provision their energy needs via uninterruptible power supply or standby generators. Moreover, working-class families are hit worst by power shortages in the industrial sector because demand for labour decreases when factories sit idle. Being cognisant of this, our government has pursued a policy of zero load-shedding for the industrial sector. Furthermore, our government has prioritised the upgradation of energy infrastructure. Today on average, power outages have significantly reduced for residential households as compared to 2013.

Democracy implies a right to mobility, both in the socioeconomic and spatial context, for every citizen. Given the colonial legacy of our country, social hierarchies are still prevalent in our society. These social hierarchies are most pronounced in social environments which are isolated. By providing networks of roads and communication to faraway places, we are trying to end their isolation by integrating them into the broader society and economy. The PML-N government has also pioneered the concept of the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT or metro) system for the cities of Pakistan. Academic studies by the London-based independent research institution, International Growth Center, show that the size of the labour market has increased by 33 per cent due to the introduction of the BRT in Lahore. This implies more economic activity and employment opportunities for low and middle income households. Therefore, in the context of Pakistan, infrastructural development is not merely an advancement of the physical landscape. It also improves the lives of low and middle income households. Unlike some of our political opponents, the PML-N government does not conceptualise the delivery of social justice via mudslinging at the opposition. Our government recognises that the task in hand is of a complex nature. We want to promote economic growth concurrently with social justice. Infrastructural projects initiated and completed by our government in the last three years reflect our commitment to inclusive growth in Pakistan.

Our political opponents disregard all these socioeconomic benefits attached with infrastructure development for their petty, short-run political gains. This reveals two very significant aspects about the politics of our opponents. First, it reflects their negative approach, that is, unconditional criticism and opposition of whatever socioeconomic initiative our government initiates just for the sake of criticism. Second, it shows that if our political opponents have to make a choice between the 'welfare of the people' or 'criticising our government', they would sacrifice the former for the latter without hesitation. The development of roads, bridges, public transport systems and energy infrastructure are public goods and irrespective of who commands political power, the people of Pakistan as a collective body are the real owners and beneficiaries of these projects. Contrary to acknowledging this, our critics frame infrastructure development as a 'waste'. This is tantamount to not only spreading misinformation but also doing a big disservice to the people of this country.

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WARNING SIGNS FOR THE ECONOMY | EDITORIAL

The country's finance managers have traditionally looked towards remittances to be the salvaging grace in times of falling exports, shrugging off any concerns over balance of payments. But what if both avenues of foreign exchange start recording a hefty drop at the same time? With the IMF's Extended Fund Facility having ended, the country is not due to receive any hefty amount of foreign exchange in the near future, pointing towards increased pressure on its current reserves. In the latest development, Pakistan's exports recorded yet another decrease in July, plunging seven per cent year-on-year, while imports continued to grow. At the same time, overseas Pakistanis sent remittances amounting to \$1.3 billion in July, a sharp 20 per cent decline with amounts coming from the UK, the US, and Saudi Arabia recording a hefty fall.

A State Bank of Pakistan official felt the drop was due to remittances being sent home ahead of Eid, which fell at the start of July, and fewer working days during the month. He downplayed concerns over Brexit and workers losing jobs in Saudi Arabia. At one level, these arguments do make sense. But it should be noted that the overall growth in remittances registered a slowdown in fiscal 2016, and there is no denying that there is added pressure since falling oil prices have held back spending from various governments. Job losses aside, pressure on remittances from workers and a downturn in the world economy, which has led global financial institutions to revise growth figures, will add pressure on Pakistan's favourite foreign exchange revenue source. When such news is coupled with already-falling exports, the future looks slightly hazy — even if you have over \$22 billion in your account. The oil supply glut will not persist forever and prices may recover to an extent. When they do, the import bill will increase straightaway. However, remittances may take longer to grow. Incentives for exporters, announced in the federal budget, are also unlikely to result in the increase Pakistan was hoping for. Structural concerns as well as competitiveness issues are likely to remain impediments for the economy going forward. These need to be tackled now.

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FUTURE OF AMERICAN POLITICS BY FARRUKH KHAN PITAFI

Hillary Clinton made history last week by becoming any major American party's first female nominee for the post of president. To think that America the torch bearer of Western values and women's emancipation never even saw a serious bid to elect a woman as president is mind numbing. A day before her acceptance speech, the first-ever African-American President, Barack Obama, spoke at length and then met Mrs Clinton on stage. In the audience, I watched these surreal events with a degree of amazement. In his speech, President Obama proved once again that there was no greater orator than him in American politics today. But three speeches stood out among others. General (ret'd) John Allen's and Cory Booker's speeches were noteworthy. I will discuss both later. But there is almost a consensus that the speech that stole the show was of the first lady Michelle Obama. Without naming Trump, this wonderful woman deconstructed the Republican nominee's worldview like no one else has.

I mentioned Cory Booker because here he is being tipped as the next best thing to watch. His name recently came up as the potential candidate for the vice-president's position. But it is being speculated that he will also run for president one day. His book *United: Thoughts on Finding Common Ground and Advancing the Common Good* is also worth reading.

General John Allen's speech is significant not just because he is a retired four-star general, but also because he came up with a strong message on defence and foreign policy. As he stood there shouting like a drill sergeant, it was plain that he was there to allay the fears of those who thought that the Democratic Party was soft on national security issues. His speech was a part of the broader theme on the last day of the democratic convention. But what theme? National security? Yes, but something more. Fighting terrorism, the IS in particular? Yes and something even more. What then? Of reclaiming the middle ground. Consider the talk of Khizr Khan, the man whose son fought and died as a soldier in Iraq. And the endorsement of Republican Women for Hillary. In doing so, the Democratic Party sought to fill the vacuum created by the serial kidnap of the Republican Party first by the Tea Party movement and then by Donald Trump. These two insurgencies have made the conservative movers and shakers of the party run for cover.

It was then not a coincidence that in his speech President Obama dwelled on the difference between Trump and Reagan, the man thought to be the cornerstone of conservative thinking in the party. As Trump busies himself in attracting more and more media attention by making ridiculous statements, democrats are painstakingly disassembling the Republican Party brick by brick. It is no wonder then that the conservative Republican ideologues like Bill Kristol and Robert Kagan appear more sympathetic to Hillary Clinton's cause.

But what happens when the old guard abandons the party? What will be the future of the Republican Party then? Will it cease to exist? Or will it split? And more importantly, what will become of the Democratic Party if it moves further to the centre to fill in the vacuum thus created? Finally, what becomes of the two-party system?

The answer of the first four questions depends largely on Trump's electability. If he wins — a prospect that troubles many in the US and abroad — the party then will have little choice but to redefine itself. However, if he loses — as seems probable — the party will be left with no moral compass except populism. The old guard will then have a chance to let the old one sink along with its Tea Party and create a new platform. Whether they try to do that is still not clear despite its likelihood.

And what happens to the Democratic Party? We have already seen Bernie Sanders' insurgency. Trouble is that it is only the Democratic Party that can unite a deeply divided country. So it will have to, simultaneously, convince the disaffected insurgents and continue its bid to occupy the middle ground. Is it even possible? Well, the party certainly has the capacity to do so. And on whether there is something new that can replace these two main parties, there is near-consensus that American politics will be dominated by a two-party system.

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WEST WON'T GO TO WAR OVER SYRIA BY ROBERT FISK

As armed rebels – “terrorists” in the eyes of the Syrian government – tighten their grip on the country, at one stage holding 60 percent of the land, government troops hit back, seizing control of the main roads and laying siege to major towns.

President Bashar al Assad, supported by Russia, accuses foreign powers of assisting his rebel enemies.

There are massacres by both sides. Some NGOs fear for the tens of thousands of civilians trapped amid the fighting, while Western powers threaten to strike at the dictator unless he abides by a humanitarian ceasefire.

Sound familiar? Of course. I'm describing Kosovo in 1998, the year before Nato launched its war against Slobodan Milosevic's regime in Serbia.

The Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) – assisted and advised, as we now know, by the CIA – was threatening to seize all of Kosovo, the Serbian province in which Milosevic's regime had long committed human rights abuses and ethnic murder against its Muslim majority. Milosevic accused Albania of sending weapons into Kosovo with the help of Western powers. All true.

The difference between then and now is that, in 1998, the Western powers were itching for a war with Serbia. Today, those same Western nations will do anything to avoid going to war with Syria.

For Albania, of course, read Turkey. For Milosevic, read Assad. For the KLA, read the Free Syrian Army, Jabhat al Nusra or the militant Islamic State (IS) or any of the other outfits which we either love or hate in Syria.

But it's worth remembering how much the humiliation of Bosnia was driving the West to war in Serbia. And it's not, I fear, by chance that a UN official (widely quoted and, as usual, anonymous) said this week: “Aleppo is the new Srebrenica.” Good sound bite; bad history.

Aleppo's tragedy is unique and terrible and totally different from the massacre at Bosnia's Srebrenica – the massacre of more than 8,000 Muslims by Christian Serb militia in 1995 while Western UN troops watched and did nothing.

In Aleppo, Sunni militias are fighting largely Sunni soldiers of the Syrian army, whose Alawite leader is supported by Hezbollah militiamen and Iran. Only three years ago, the same Sunni militiamen were besieging the surrounded Syrian army's western enclave of Aleppo and firing shells and mortars into the sector where hundreds of thousands of civilians lived under government control.

Now the Syrian government's forces are surrounding the Sunni militiamen in the eastern enclave of Aleppo and firing shells and mortars – and dropping bombs and explosives – into the sector where hundreds of thousands of civilians live under rebel control.

The first siege didn't elicit many tears from the satellite channel lads and lassies. The second siege comes with oceans of tears.

Since 2011, the West has been demanding the departure, overthrow or death of Bashar al Assad, blaming him for 90 per cent or 95 per cent, or – the latest figure I've heard – 98 per cent of the 300,000 civil war deaths, or 350,000 deaths or – again, the latest figure I've heard – 400,000 deaths. And before you dismiss this as a cynical game of statistics, let me add that I suspect the real death toll may be more than 450,000.

But if the West is correct, then Assad's forces have killed well over 400,000 of the dead – which is odd when the fatalities among the Syrian army alone come to well over 60,000 – a military secret, but a real statistic which the government does not wish to make public.

And if the West's figures are correct, then the rebels – including the horrific IS, whom we want to destroy, and the horrid Nusra whom we probably want to destroy, and the kindly Free Syrian Army and New Syrian Army and Syrian Democratic Forces, whom we like very much because they are Kalashnikov-toting “moderates” who want to destroy Assad – have killed, at most, only a few thousand of the war's victims.

This is absurd. There are no “good guys” among the Syrian warlords; yet still, despite all the evidence, we want to find them. At the same time, we can’t really work out who the “bad guys” are.

Of course, IS – or the “so-called Islamic State” as the BBC likes to refer to them, for they are neither Islamic nor a state – must be liquidated. But the American-supplied and reinforced Syrian Democratic Forces – which are never referred to as “so-called” by the BBC, even though they are neither a force (since they rely on US air power), nor democratic (since they are not elected), nor Syrian (because they are largely Kurdish) – must be supported.

Having thus divided the cult-like evildoers of IS from the groupuscules of “moderates” – be they old Dave Cameron’s 70,000 ghost warriors or just CIA clones – we are having problems with the Nusra Front.

Because they hate Assad, but they also kill Christians, blow up churches, chop the heads off their enemies and do other rotten things which make it hard to like them, even though they are financed by Qatar – one of our wealthy “moderate” Arab Gulf allies – as opposed to Saudi Arabia, which still unofficially supports the horrific IS. And it’s the Nusra rebels who are now besieged in Aleppo, along with 300,000 civilians.

Trouble is that our wealthy American allies – who may or may not be “moderate”, depending on who wins the presidential election – are going to have two candidates who will go all out over the next three months to demand once more the destruction of Bashar al Assad.

We will not only be told all over again that his government is responsible for almost the entire death toll of the Syrian civil war, but that he maintains the cruelest torture chambers in the world. Yet I promise you that the US presidential contenders won’t remind Americans that, until a few years ago, they were happily dispatching dark-skinned folk of the Muslim faith (including two Canadians) to endure the horrors of those very same torture chambers via a “security” agreement with the Syrian government. Rendition, I think it was called.

PARALLELS: And the parallels with Kosovo? Well it’s Hollywood. A movie. A simple plot.

In 1998, we had to go to war to save the Muslims of Kosovo from the Hitler of Belgrade. In 2016, we are going to be urged to go to war with the Hitler of Damascus – although whom we are supposed to save this time is less clear. The Kurds? The armed “moderates”? The Syrian people – millions of whom now live outside Syria? IS? Surely not the latter.

Or will we be saving Saudi Arabia and Qatar from disintegrating under the pressure of the war they have been stoking in their neighbourhood?

No, unlike 1998, we will not go to war for Syria. In Kosovo, we bombed from the air until Milosevic was told by Yeltsin’s Russia that he was on his own. But Putin’s Russia is not going to tell Assad he’s on his own.

And besides, we don’t have Nato armies waiting on the Syrian border to invade the country if Assad surrendered. We used to have the Turks. Remember them? Wasn’t Nato’s most powerful army just itching to move into Syria on our behalf? Not any more, it’s not. And we all know why.

We can also forget “red lines”. Both sides in Syria have, I suspect, used gas and we didn’t go to war, even though we put all the blame on the regime. But we didn’t go to war for the Kurds when Saddam gassed them in 1988 – it became one of the smaller excuses for the Blair-Bush invasion of Iraq 15 years later.

And after suggesting the Russians have just dropped gas in Idlib province, you can be sure we’re not going to war with Moscow.

So amid the anguish of Syria’s people, let’s not offer more lies to the Arabs. We are not going to save Aleppo, even if the Assad government forces the rebels there to surrender (as they did in Homs, with scarcely a whimper from us). And I don’t think we are going to destroy Assad – indeed for several months before the US elections reached their climax, the “Assad-must-go” routine mysteriously faded away.

Yes, it’s time we stopped lying to the people of the Middle East. And it’s time we stopped lying to ourselves.

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US PIVOT-TO-ASIA STRATEGY TAKES DANGEROUS TURN BY SULTAN M HALI

We live in interesting times

Barrack Obama's "pivot-to-Asia", a major policy shift first outlined in 2011, was structured at rebalancing Asia. The question is: rebalancing in whose favor? It is obvious that the US is apprehensive of the rise of China, doubts its peaceful intentions and intends to increase US presence in Asia to checkmate China. To support its intentions, sometimes US think tanks are called upon to make recommendations based on their studies. The study by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), a leading Washington think tank, has called for America to flex its military muscle in the region by deploying extra nuclear attack submarines and developing advanced long-range missiles. CSIS also recommends exploiting the US undersea advantage; and augmenting space, cyber, and electronic warfare capabilities.

The US has meddled in the South China Sea disputes, which are destined to be resolved in accordance with the DOC (Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea) yet it goaded the Philippines to seek arbitration for the dispute at the International Court of Justice The Hague. The one sided and controversial arbitration resulted in Philippine's favour hence it is being touted by the US but has been rejected by China which seeks solutions in light of the DOC and UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Law of Seas) to which China is a signatory but the US is not.

It is not a quirk of fate that the Philippines has allowed the US to resume hosting military forces at the Subic Bay base for the first time in almost 20 years. The Philippines' Supreme Court recently endorsed a bilateral security cooperation agreement that will station US troops and weapons on a rotational basis at five Philippine military airfields and two naval bases. In recent years, Washington has been moving more troops and military assets into the region and strengthening security alliances with a number of ASEAN members.

If that were not enough, South Korean government officials sought to flaunt the need for deploying the US missile defense system, called Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD), in its territory despite oppositions and controversies at home and abroad. President Park Geun-hye told a meeting with her senior advisors that the THAAD

deployment would be a defensive measure to protect her country from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)'s nuclear and missile threats. Park said the US interceptors will neither target any third-party nations nor infringe on security interests of any other country.

North Korea's missile program is being used as an excuse to deploy THAAD missile defense system in South Korea, which is a serious threat to the peace and stability of East Asia. The THAAD, developed by the US-based defense company Lockheed Martin, is designed to shoot down missiles at an altitude of 40-150 km using a hit-to-kill approach. It comprises six mobile launchers, 48 interceptors and a radar and fire control system valued at about 1.5 trillion won (1.3 billion US dollars).

The Seongju County, some 300 km southeast of the capital Seoul, has been designated as the deployment site for the THAAD system. The decision enraged local residents, with some writing in blood to express strong opposition to the deployment of the THAAD, whose X-band radar is known to emit a super-strong microwave detrimental to the human body.

The decision by South Korea to toe the US Pivot-to-Asia Policy has caused serious concerns amongst South Korea's neighbours. China and Russia have expressed strong opposition to the THAAD deployment on the South Korean soil as its X-band radar can spot Chinese and Russian territories far beyond the DPRK.

The AN/TPY-2 radar can detect targets up to 600-800 km with a terminal mode, which South Korea plans to adopt, but it can be converted at any time, and takes less than a day to change, into a forward-based mode that ranges as far as 2,000 km because the two versions have the same hardware.

The THAAD battery will be operated by the US Forces Korea (USFK) and the radar operation will not be made transparent.

Pyongyang has slammed South Korea for its decision to deploy THAAD, saying that Seoul was "kowtowing to the U.S. brigandish demand." By doing so, the South Korean government "sold off the destiny and interests of the nation and harassed regional peace and stability," a spokesman for the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of Korea said in a statement carried by the state-run news agency KCNA.

The DPRK on Monday vowed to take physical countermeasures against the THAAD deployment in South Korea, threatening “merciless retaliatory strikes to reduce South Korea to a sea of flames.”

Rhetoric aside, it is a serious development, which unnecessarily endangers the region and must be taken cognisance of.

China has urged the US and South Korea/ Republic of Korea (ROK) to halt the deployment of the US anti-missile system in the ROK. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said deployment of the THAAD in South Korea will adversely impact the situation on the Korean Peninsula, regional stability and bilateral ties. When meeting with his South Korean counterpart Yun Byung-se on the sidelines of an ASEAN foreign ministers’ meeting in the Lao capital, Wang said the deployment of the advanced U.S. missile defense system will jeopardise mutual trust between the two countries. He urged the South Korean side to seriously address China’s concerns and think twice over the THAAD deployment. The THAAD deployment would gravely damage the strategic balance in the region as well as the strategic security interests of countries in the region including China, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lu Kang told a routine press briefing.

The move also contravenes efforts to maintain peace and stability in the Korean Peninsula, he said, reaffirming China’s strong opposition to it.

Besides strategic, there may be political considerations too. The ruling Saenuri Party was shockingly defeated by the main opposition Minju Party at the April 13 general elections as public dissatisfactions mounted with a soaring unemployment among college graduates and a widening income inequality between the rich and the poor and between the regular and irregular workers.

According to a local pollster Realmeter, Park’s support rate continued to fall to 33.1 percent in the first week of this month after emotional disputes among people in the country’s southeastern region, a traditional home turf for Park and the Saenuri Party, to build a new international airport in their hometown. To recover the lost support from conservative voters, Park may have sought to attract public attention into security issues by hurriedly announcing the THAAD deployment decision. According to analysts, Park is forecast to make an active use of the THAAD deployment as an engine to bring together her conservative supporters. South Korean citizens, politicians and news organisations are raising a dissenting voice over the decision between Seoul and

Washington to deploy THAAD in their homeland. Villagers living in the site where one THAAD battery is scheduled to be installed by the end of next year continue their protest against the US missile defense system, while civic group activists and student groups who advocate peace and stability rally against the U.S. weapons program. Opposition lawmakers call for the retraction of the THAAD deployment decision, and in several TV programs, panelists are divided over pros and cons of the installation, which reflects the nationwide split between people over the untested, environmentally hazardous US anti-missile system. ROK opposition leaders have opined that the THAAD deployment was a decision causing more losses than gains from the perspective of national interests, calling for the issue to be re-examined and made open to the public debate.

On July 8 when Seoul and Washington announced the THAAD deployment decision, stocks in South Korean companies which heavily depend on Chinese consumers and tourists lost a deep ground. On the day alone, over 3 trillion won (2.6 billion US dollars) of market value was wiped out from stocks in cosmetics, tour agencies and so on. Cheong Seong-Chang, a senior researcher at the private Sejong Institute, said that the THAAD decision would cause a drop in Chinese tourists visiting South Korea, a cooling in the popularity of the so-called Korean Wave and the possible boycotting of South Korean products in China.

The US should think deep and reconsider. Its Pivot-to-Asia strategy is causing more concerns than comfort. The US itself would never approve of any other power snooping around its territorial waters and inciting its neighbours to raise tension. In a way it is lucky that it is dealing with China, which has no hegemonic designs but there are limits to one's patience.

Source: <http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2016/08/04/comment/us-pivot-to-asia-strategy-takes-dangerous-turn/>

THRUST OF THE THIRD WORLD WAR BY JALEES HAZIR

Terrorists targeted Quetta a day before President Putin and President Erdogan met in St Petersburg this Tuesday, sealing the fate of US designs on Syria. Don't let media obfuscation mislead you about the global significance of their historical handshake and how it is connected to the charged-up US-led war against Afghanistan and its neighbors. Hit hard by the prospects of Turkey slipping out of his dirty hands, Uncle Sam is zooming in his demonic gaze on Pakistan with a sharper focus.

Even our clueless Prime Minister has been shaken out of his royal slumber to declare that our country is in a state of war, though he is too lost in the hollowness of his meek rhetoric to spell out clearly who we are at war with. The military leadership is clearer about what's going on and its bold actions speak louder than any fancy words. The army chief was in China last week to launch the Quadrilateral Counter-Terrorism Cooperation Mechanism with his counterparts from China, Tajikistan and Afghanistan.

It was reported that the participants agreed to establish the QCCM to coordinate and provide mutual support for all aspects of counter-terrorism including intelligence sharing, capacity building, joint training exercises and personnel training. Given the recent terrorist incursions in Chitral bordering the Nuristan and Badakhshan provinces of Afghanistan wedged between Pakistan and Tajikistan, the QCCM makes even more sense.

Actually, it's really not a long shot to imagine that soon this counter-terrorism alliance will be joined by Afghanistan's other immediate neighbours; Iran, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. In fact, it would be quite natural for it to be eventually expanded to include the nearby Russia-Kazakhstan-Kyrgyzstan counter terrorism nexus as well. There are many overlapping synergies nudging things along this direction and Pakistan would do well to actively pursue this course.

After all, such regional cooperation is necessary to bring an end to the US-occupation of Afghanistan, which is a pre-requisite for stabilising the region. It is no longer a secret that besides running its trillion-dollar drug-trade racket through sponsored warlords, the US uses its foothold in the occupied country to spawn terrorist proxies and host militant mercenaries from the region and beyond. They are herded under sponsored brand-names and played like pieces on a chessboard to destabilise countries in the region.

Haven't we seen that in Syria and in Libya and Iraq before that? Haven't we seen similar armed agents of chaos at work in Ukraine under neo-Nazi banners? Don't we know a thing or two about Boko Haram in Nigeria and Al-Shabaab in Somalia? Can we ignore the linkages and spill-overs? How members of a rotating cadre of terrorist proxies are herded across borders to become part of ever-changing brand names, like hounds following the scent of dollars and weapons? How they are trained and armed?

Let's not mistake it for a minute: the Third World War is not a possibility. It is underway as we speak. From the South China Sea to MENA to South America, Uncle Sam is on a rampage, using every hybrid weapon of war from its bottomless dirty bag. Whether the world-wide war escalates to nuclear proportions, and be the end of most of us, will depend on many things, but one thing is clear: the war to end the blood-drenched tyranny of the US-led imperium is raging all over the globe.

There has been no direct confrontation between the giants on both sides so far. But given the US-belligerence on one hand and the resolve of both China and Russia not to back down on the other, independent observers don't rule out the possibility. Let's not mistake it: The US and the cabal it leads are the aggressors, using every dirty trick in the book to undermine and subvert the states of Russia and China and all those wishing to integrate into their orbit of win-win multi-polarity. The CPEC is a potent threat to their barbaric hegemony.

The US-led unipolar cabal thinks that it could bring down the core of multipolar power without a direct military confrontation, though the fronts are being readied in Ukraine and Eastern Europe to directly attack Russia and in the South China Sea to target China. But the tables are turning, and turning fast.

Turkey is rapidly warming up to the China-Russia multipolar vision. Iran is already an important member of the emergent bloc. The Central Asian states are realising the centrality of China and Russia in their partnership for security and trade and the shady role that the US is playing in the region. Pakistan is cutting the last strings of its toxic relationship with the US.

Pakistan's role in the region is crucial. It is the zipper state as geopolitical analyst Andrew Korybko calls it, a country that could finally tip the balance in the favour of the emergent bloc by zipping together the regions of Central and West Asia and the Middle East with China and its closest multipolar partner Russia. The inclusion of Pakistan

would create a feasible geographical expanse for the vision of a multipolar win-win order to become operational as a working model for the rest of the world to follow, a model of peaceful mutually beneficial cooperation, trade and co-existence.

The countries in the region must join hands for security against a menacing dying empire and create an empire-free space for win-win trade, a geographically contiguous territory that is consciously guarded against imperialist actions and policies that have brought ruin to humankind; turning beautiful cities to death-filled rubble, killing children and other innocents, throwing peaceful societies in the well of blood-soaked chaos and wrecking them with engineered violence of every hue.

If we come together as friends, we won't really need anyone else to turn the world around. Countries would stand in queue to join the multipolar bloc and link up with this geographical empire-free expanse where gold doesn't turn to dust, where babies get their fair chance to live and bloom and where diverse societies learn to coexist and develop in harmony instead of getting bombed back to the stone-age for being different.

Source:<http://nation.com.pk/columns/11-Aug-2016/thrust-of-the-third-world-war>

IS RUSSIA PREPARING FOR NUCLEAR WAR

US intelligence says Putin is building dozens of underground bunkers capable of withstanding atomic blasts

In yet another troubling sign for America's tense relations with Russia, US intelligence officials say Putin has begun construction on new nuclear-proof underground bunkers.

Russia began building 'dozens' of underground bunkers across the country several years ago, the Washington Free Beacon reported citing US officials.

The US and Russia have been working together to get rid of their nuclear weapons since the end of the Cold War, but the revelation coupled with Russia's recent surge in missile production suggests they are preparing for conflict.

'Russia is getting ready for a big war which they assume will go nuclear, with them launching the first attacks,' Mark Schneider, a former Pentagon nuclear policy official told the Free Beacon. 'We are not serious about preparing for a big war, much less a nuclear war.'

Few details about the new nuclear bunkers have been released, but Russian state-run media says they are being built in Moscow as part of a new national security strategy.

Russia built several similar underground bunkers during and right after the Cold War both in Moscow and in the Ural Mountains.

Russia's new nuclear defence strategy is reportedly costing the country billions, and there are questions about whether some of that money may have come from US aid.

Military experts say the US may respond to the new threat by developing deep-penetrating nuclear weapons that would reach the depths of the new bunkers.

The news of the new bunkers comes as one senior Army official issued a warning about Russia's 'alarming' nuclear rhetoric.

'It is clear that Russia is modernising its strategic forces,' Army General Curtis Scaparrotti said recently.

'Russian doctrine states that tactical nuclear weapons may be used in a conventional response scenario.

'This is alarming and it underscores why our country's nuclear forces and NATO's continues to be a vital component of our deterrence.'

Courtesy: Daily Mail

Source: <http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2016/08/16/foreign/is-russia-preparing-for-nuclear-war/>

BAD TIME FOR US DEMOCRACY BY SABINA KHAN

Judged alongside the post-coup purge within Turkey, Brexit and the burqini ban, a Trump presidency doesn't seem completely outlandish. As it is commonly accepted, an informed electorate is the prerequisite for democracy. Unfortunately for the world, the bastion of democracy appears to be suffering a breakdown at the hands of an ill-informed electorate. Truth or facts don't matter anymore; this is clearly visible at every Trump rally where his supporters eagerly absorb one lie after another. According to PolitiFact, almost 70 per cent of Trump's fact-checked claims were false. On the other hand, a third of Hillary Clinton's statements that were analysed by PolitiFact were lies. As it happens, Trump and Clinton are the most despised candidates ever.

Both political parties are also to be blamed for the break-up of citizens' trust in the establishment. After Barack Obama's win in 2008, the Republican Party in particular went berserk and eventually birthed the ultra-conservative Tea Party movement. In pandering to these, the Republican Party became more and more radicalised until it finally lost support from the more moderate base, resulting in the nomination of Trump as their candidate. Clearly, Trump is intellectually and emotionally unfit for the job. Rumours keep getting floated that the GOP will supplant Trump with a more stable candidate prior to election day, but that would be the quickest route to political suicide. 'The Donald' was, by a large margin, the most voted for candidate in the Republican primaries. He easily fought off 16 other hopefuls, some with significant financial and political backing, to become the GOP nominee.

Clinton is not exactly revered among many Democrats either and nearly six in 10 Americans don't find her trustworthy. She is perceived to be a symbol of oligarchy. Despite her claims of representing the future by being the first female US president, people are not buying it since she's been entrenched in the system for decades, all the while contorting herself to side with the most politically popular positions. More young Democrats, including women, were supporting Bernie Sanders. He approached rock star status amongst the youth due to his anti-establishment message. For that very reason, the long-time independent Sanders was not welcome among older Democrat stalwarts. When it became clear that he wasn't going to win the Democratic nomination, Clinton adopted some of Bernie's ideas and he capitulated by supporting her in an effort to prevent Trump from winning in November.

The GOP is stuck supporting Trump in order to satisfy his supporters — a monster of their own creation described by Stephanie Coontz as “the crudest alliance of racists, nativists, misogynists, and ‘know-nothings’ that America has seen in any national election since before World War II”. The Democratic establishment, on the other hand, managed to secure the candidate that they pre-selected before a single primary vote was ever cast. As ironic as it may seem, a Hillary Clinton victory may be a win for stability and sanity, but a Trump victory would be evidence that a frustrated citizenry has the ability to install a fringe candidate from outside the confines of a rigged system. Either way, the world will be waiting with bated breath until the last votes are counted on November 8.

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Source: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1167142/bad-time-us-democracy/>

IS ISIS IN SOUTH ASIA? BY ABDUL BASIT

With the advent of the so-called Islamic State (IS) in 2014, the opinions and analyses of policymakers and the strategic community in South Asia remain divided on whether the terrorist group constitutes a threat to the region or not. These differences can be attributed to two schools of thought.

The first believes that, given its global appeal among the jihadist groups and the traction of its ideology among disaffected and radicalised youth, IS poses a significant security threat to the region. The other school of thought opposes this notion, arguing that the monumental barriers of geography, language, and culture will hinder IS attempts to gain a foothold in South Asia.

However, in the last two months the spate of IS-directed or IS-inspired high-profile attacks in Dhaka, Kabul and Quetta, coupled with the travel of radicalised youth from India and Maldives to Iraq and Syria, have dispelled the previous myths that considered IS's presence in South Asia a media hype. The level of planning, sophistication, and coordination exhibited by these attacks indicates the growing footprint of IS in the region.

In less than two years, the terrorist group has built a network of supporters and sympathisers in South Asia, evolving from a potential security risk to a tangible threat.

Against this backdrop, the growing IS influence, the spread of its ideology, and the nature of its presence in South Asia warrants a deeper examination for accurate threat assessment. Once the enabling factors and structural causes of its growth have been analysed, the existing policy frameworks for counter-terrorism and extremism will have to be revised in line with the evolving trends and patterns.

The sudden increase in IS activities in South Asia is not a coincidence given the group's intentions, since its inception, to carve out a niche in the region. Through its online monthly English magazine and videos, the militant outfit has been routinely hinting at increasing its operations and activities in Bangladesh (Dabiq issues no 12 & 14), India (Dabiq 14) and Pakistan (Dabiq 13).

A terrorist group needs physical sanctuary (ungoverned spaces), social sanctuary (chaotic living conditions) and the demographic sanctuary (vulnerable and

disenfranchised youth) to flourish. The prevalence of these factors in South Asia has provided the Islamic State with a conducive environment and ideal conditions to gain a foothold. Additionally, political squabbling, blame games, self-denials, and the dismissive attitudes of regional states have further augmented IS's efforts to increase its regional footprint.

The presence of longstanding disputes like Kashmir and Afghanistan, the militarisation of sectarian differences and the politicisation of religion have further helped IS galvanise support in the region.

IS's presence in South Asia has three key nodes. The first of these are lone-wolf individuals who get inspired by IS's ideology through the internet and other social media platforms. Then there are lone-wolf groups (packs or cells) of self-radicalised individuals who are connected to IS-Central through a recruiter and are engaged in disseminating the group's extremist propaganda, collecting funds, and planning future attacks. And the third are like-minded militant groups who have jumped on the IS bandwagon and rebranded themselves under the banner of the so-called Caliphate after taking an oath of allegiance to IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

From a policy-perspective, four trends are particularly concerning. First, the growth of Salafism under the garb of a self-styled caliphate is being packaged in a jihadist narrative. This is contrary to pacifist and populist Sufi traditions of South Asian Islam. Second, IS is inspiring and influencing the educated youth of middle and upper-middle class from urban areas who do not fit the traditional profiles of militants considered to be madressah students from impoverished backgrounds.

This trend is similar to the mobilisation of youth from Europe who have travelled to Syria and Iraq as foreign fighters. Against the over-simplistic and popular notions that considered a potential militant to be from particular socio-economic and educational backgrounds, the participation of the educated and well-to-do youth in terrorism has raised new research questions and policy-relevant dilemmas for academics and policymakers.

The ability of Islamist militant groups like IS to connect isolated and individual grievances with the meta-narrative of global jihadism enables them not only to transcend geographical barriers but also helps them overcome diversity by surpassing linguistic, socio-cultural and political constraints, making IS an unprecedented

transnational terrorist threat. So, the advent and rise of IS has created new symbols, new leaders, new ideas, new iconography of terrorism and new narratives which are markedly different from previous jihadist narratives.

Third, a critical factor relates to the proliferation of extremist ideas and discourses in cyberspace and social media platforms. While the underlying structural factors of extremism and its enabling elements exist in the real world, such discourses take a particular shape in the virtual world of the internet.

Thus, the battlefield has expanded from real space to cyberspace. The war within cyberspace pertains to the war of ideas, which can only be fought with better, stronger, and smarter counter-ideas. A hollow and empty rhetoric cannot overcome extremist ideology.

And lastly, the overtly sectarian outlook of IS not only apostatises Shias but also excommunicates other Sunni groups, such as Barelvis, Sufis and Deobandis. Thus, the growing IS influence in the region will target both inter-sectarian divisions (Sunni vs Shia) as well as intra-sectarian (Salafi vs Sunnis) cleavages.

The IS-directed attacks against the Ismaili Shia community in Karachi (2015), the targeting of a Muharram procession in Dhaka and the sporadic kidnapping and targeted killings of the Hazara Shia community in Afghanistan offer glimpses into the sectarian ideological outlook of IS.

Furthermore, the critiques of the Afghan Taliban and other militant groups like Lashkar-e-Taiba by IS in Dabiq magazine offers further insights into its ideological stance vis-a-vis other Sunni extremist groups.

To overcome the threat posed by IS, South Asian states will have to look beyond their selfish and myopic interests and forge a functional relationship in which they can cooperate against this common enemy. The absence of regional counterterrorism and counter-extremism frameworks will hinder isolated efforts by regional states to defeat Islamic State.

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Source: <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/145594-Is-Isis-in-South-Asia>

Education

EDUCATION: AN IGNORED ORPHAN BY MOHAMMAD JAMIL

Pakistan faces major challenges of income, gender, health and educational inequalities in extreme forms. Over 25 million school-age children are estimated to be out of school; more than 3.7 million of our labour force is unemployed; and about half of total population is victim of food insecurity. Since quality of life is directly linked to the social profile of the country, no aspect of life merits urgent attention and greater investment of resources than improvement in the quality of education. Educating the masses can broaden their vision, make them tolerant and produce skilled work force, which will help increase national income and revenue, enabling the government to allocate more funds for social sector development. In the 2016-2017 budgets, the combined federal and provincial allocations for education are almost Rs 710 billion. This constitutes 2.3 percent of the GDP, a low amount when compared to other countries in the region except Bangladesh.

India spends 3.8 percent of the GDP on education, Bhutan five percent, Maldives over six percent, Bangladesh 2.2 percent, Sri Lanka about 2.5 percent and Nepal 4.7 percent. Pakistan failed to achieve any of the Millennium Development Goals. Sindh and Balochistan are home to the highest proportion of out-of-school children. As many as 66 percent of children in Balochistan and 51 percent in Sindh are out of school, followed by Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with 47 percent and 34 percent out-of-school children respectively. In the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), 62 percent are out of school, while in Gilgit-Baltistan 48 percent, and 43 percent in Azad Jammu and Kashmir. According to the 2013 United Nations report, Pakistan ranked 146 out of 187 countries by spending 0.8 percent of GDP on education and 1.8 percent on health.

However, a mere sizeable allocation for education in the budget would not produce engineers, scientists and intelligent workforce. Among other measures, qualified and trained teachers would have to be appointed in educational institutions. At the present, most schools in Pakistan's rural areas do not have buildings, and students have to take lessons while sitting under trees or in the open. In cities, many schools are without qualified science and IT teachers and laboratories. The schooling of the nation's children is the essential base of the educational pyramid in this century of knowledge-

based polities and knowledge-driven economies, and even advanced nations try to give a further uplift to their already very strong schooling systems. In Pakistan, schooling is just an orphan, at once neglected and ignored. At best, it gets lip service, and at worst, it gets a slice of idiotic populism.

While schooling in private sector has plainly become a commercial proposition, the state-run system has run into intractable rot. As nation's huge children populace coming from poor and lower middle classes attends government schools, it merits serious attention. Unfortunately, educating the citizenry has not been the pursuit of any government since our independence. The worst hit is the schooling, which in any educational pyramid makes up the base. In the 1990s, the crumbling public sector education system deteriorated further, as an unregulated growth of private sector education led to a system of education apartheid sending the majority of the poor to perpetual ignorance and impoverishment. The poor had no choice but to send their kids to madrassas because they could not afford to pay exorbitant private schools' fees. It is true that even the most developed countries with top-class educational systems have fanatical fringes.

But their mainstreams stay uninfluenced, robust, decisive and domineering, largely because of the mass of their citizenry being educated with a broad outlook and worldview. The main reason why our mainstream is under such a grave assailment of extremism is arguably the raw deal that education has got from the state throughout. In Pakistan, the decade of 1990s had witnessed some programmes aimed at improving the key social sectors, but mismanagement by a callous leadership brought a resourceful country like Pakistan to the level of one of the least developed countries of the world. Despite spending billions of rupees under the Social Action Programme, the improvement in social indicators remained unimpressive. The rulers did not realise that educated and healthy work force plays an important role in the development of a country and prosperity of its people. Government claims the literacy rate of 57 percent, and the benchmark is that a person who can sign or write his name is considered as literate. The present state of education and less than 30 percent literacy rate in Pakistan is the most glaring reflection of the backwardness of our people and society. In fact, the nation is reaping the fruits of a folly. Had we been not so negligent of education, we would not have seen the spectre of extremism. When the state is so negligent about schooling, what more could you expect from it for keeping the polity as a predominantly moderate and tolerant entity? The problem is that despite unprecedented increase in population, the ratio of students attending government primary schools has been

declining. There is need to learn from the experience of Bangladesh and India where poor people were provided incentives to send their children to government schools.

Western countries especially Germany had established a solid education system, as a result Germany till recently was the third largest economy of the world. After the end of First World War, the Weimar Republic developed a free elementary school called the Grundschule, and since then every government focused on the degree level and higher education. It was because of solid foundation for education laid by them that Germany achieved tremendous success in the field of science and technology. No wonder, Germany having been destroyed in the Second World War was able to quickly rebuild its economy only because their earlier governments had laid a solid foundation for education system.

It goes without saying that education is the prime factor in economic and social wellbeing of any nation. It is a strategic tool in nation building through skill development and vision enhancement, and it also directly contributes towards economic growth.

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Source: <http://dailytimes.com.pk/opinion/09-Aug-16/education-an-ignored-orphan>

ETHICS AND MORALITY IN EDUCATION BY ASAD ZAMAN

Driving spirit of the modern age is the desire to banish all speculation about things beyond the physical and observable realms of our existence. This spirit was well expressed by one of the leading Enlightenment philosophers, David Hume, who called for burning all books which did not deal with the observable and quantifiable phenomena: "If we take in our hand any volume; of divinity or school metaphysics, for instance; let us ask, Does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number? No. Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence? No. Commit it then to the flames: for it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion."

This is a breathtakingly bold assertion. The literate reader may examine his or her bookshelf to see what little, if anything, would survive after applying Hume's prescriptions. Nonetheless, the spirit of the secular age was very much in tune with Hume, and relegated vast areas of human knowledge captured in literature, history, and the arts, to second-class citizenship. The modern world has been shaped by this downgrading of the spiritual, intuitive, and mystical, and the elevation of the rational as supreme judge and arbiter over all other faculties.

The leaders of the Enlightenment advocated rationality as the sole criterion for establishing an authoritative system of ethics, aesthetics, and knowledge. This has led to a dualism which has become firmly embedded in the foundations of Western thought, and has created a social science incapable of perceiving, let alone solving the problems currently being faced by humanity as a whole. Western hegemony has led to the global and widespread acceptance of this dualism, clearly expressed by Hume, in embracing the quantitative and passionately and violently rejecting the qualitative. Exploring the full range of difficulties caused by this dualism would take several books. In this essay we consider just one of the salient problems. Harvard Professor Julie Reuben expressed it as follows: "Truth was (a united whole) embracing spiritual, moral, and cognitive knowledge. By the 1930's, this unity was shattered; factual cognitive knowledge (was separated from) moral/spiritual knowledge."

The Enlightenment project had aimed to provide rational foundations for all human knowledge. However, influential intellectuals like Max Weber, in the early twentieth century, argued that scientific knowledge had to be value-free, because values could not be established empirically. Widespread acceptance of this rejection of morality and

spirituality has had dramatic consequences in all realms of human life. The most important questions that we face as human beings were declared to be meaningless, and unworthy of our attention and study. We all recognise that our own life is an infinitely precious gift; the most important question we face is: how should we use this gift? What is the purpose or meaning of life? What characterises the 'good life' and what steps can we take to achieve a lifestyle which embodies the good?

Influential positivist philosophers argued that these questions had no meaning, because there was no empirical or observational evidence which could be used to answer them. All answers were equally valid. We should simply do with our lives whatever we desire to do. There were no ethical or moral standards to guide our behaviour. As one of the leading positivist philosophers, A J Ayer, stated: "Moral judgments are as meaningless as a cry of pain". Centuries of traditional wisdom about life was discarded as meaningless noise, and the new generations were encouraged to work out answers to these deep and difficult questions on their own, starting from scratch.

The key to the social sciences is an understanding of the nature of human being. Can we understand human lives without understanding responsibility, conscience, courage, love, heroism and cowardice, trust, jealousy and the enormous range of human emotions? All of these elements of human lives are deeply and inherently qualitative and cannot be measured on any scales. Thus, by definition, these do not qualify for inclusion in the realm of scientific knowledge. The wisdom of the ancients, contained in books discussing these concepts in literary and philosophical terms, without measurement and data, would deserve to be burned according to Hume. But all this book-burning would leave us without any guidance on issues central to human affairs.

The dualism that deified science, and scoffed at that qualitative and unmeasurable, resulted in a tremendous loss of knowledge on the nature of human beings and society. We are living with the consequences of a college education which teaches students how to build bombs, but nothing about the ethics of killing innocents. As a chilling example, consider the changing attitudes towards torture and murder. Japanese soldiers were executed for torturing American POW using waterboarding, and American soldiers in Vietnam were tried for such treatment of Vietnamese prisoners. But recent Presidents have thrown their full support behind the use of extreme torture techniques, officially approving their use. Hollywood movies glorify and justify torture, even though empirical evidence shows that it does not work to obtain useful intelligence. Official reports show that senior officials in the UK and the US concocted evidence to fool the

public into supporting the invasion of Iraq, resulting in deaths of millions of innocent civilians, and unnecessary expense of trillions of dollars. But no one has been convicted of any wrongdoing. MBAs are taught that the bottom line is all that matters, and social responsibility should not interfere with the pursuit of profits. Thus, there is no outrage at the deaths of the poor and hungry farmers, caused by millions of dollars spent on research to produce genetically modified non-terminating seeds, so that rich organisations can make more profits by selling seeds every year. Even justice has been separated from morality; in the adversarial system, lawyers are taught that their responsibility is to win the case for their clients, regardless of whether or not justice would be served by this win. Reform requires deep and fundamental changes in the system of education, which needs to be firmly grounded in all those ideas that have been kicked out of the curriculum as 'unscientific'.

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IMPROVING BASIC EDUCATION SYSTEM IN PAKISTAN BY ISHFAQUE AHMED RUSTAMAN

Education is a benchmark for excellence and is crucial for any developing country's efforts to achieve sustainable development and prosperity. Well-being of a nation comes with education, as illiterate individuals do not turn out to be fruitful for any nation. It needs to be understood that education not only equips the population with knowledge and creative approach but also acts as an engine to accelerate economic growth. However, although a number of educational policies have been framed by different rulers, unfortunately, they were not put in practice in letter and spirit. With more than 68 million children under the age of 15 to educate, what is required are more efforts to overcome the challenge, and create a sustainable path to a better future for the country and its youth.

Article 25-A in the Constitution of Pakistan guarantees the right to free and compulsory education to all children of age five to 16 years. This means that free and compulsory education is to be provided by the state, but it is observed that little has actually been achieved on the implementation of Article 25-A so far. Moreover, laws necessary to ensure the implementation of the article have either not been made or not made effective by all the provinces. There is a desperate need to take meaningful measures to implement this article in real terms.

It is, however, important to note that the implementation of Article 25-A is a challenge because there are still millions of out-of-school children. Moreover, the way the population of the country is increasing, our society would soon be engulfed in more illiteracy because of a low enrollment rate. The rapid population growth would lead to a steady increase in the number of out-of-school children, and resultantly, the number of illiterate people in the country would multiply.

It is estimated that at present about 55 million Pakistanis of age 10 plus are unable to read and write, and seven million children of age five-nine years are out of school. Worst still, in rural areas, about 52 percent of girls are not enrolled in school, and 67 percent women are illiterate. Thus owing to a low standard of education our society has been immensely affected in all spheres of life, including developmental processes, economic uplift, and social and political stability.

Many educational policies have been designed since the inception of Pakistan; we are adept at making policies but slow in fully implementing them. Now the time has come to have a realistic approach and innovative ideas that may help to improve the standard of education in Pakistan. In this regard, it is necessary that government should work on mass mobilisation and have awareness campaigns in every village, town and city. Political and religious leaders, social workers and civil society organisations should participate in campaigns in their respective areas. Participation of local communities is said to be the key to success of basic education programmes. This participation has been lacking in Pakistan where many parents and communities neither understand the importance of education nor support it in any way. Thus it is important that community-based awareness campaigns are started everywhere, as such activities would be helpful to eliminate lack of awareness, conservatism and ignorance of parents about benefits of education. These factors are deemed to be basic hurdles that impede enrollment of all children into schools.

Quality of education in primary schools should be evaluated by these indicators: student attendance, teacher attendance, test scores, transparency and checking of school resources. All that would lead to an improvement in the standard of education. It is necessary to systematically monitor teachers' actual presence during school time, as it is commonly observed that students' attendance is greatly related to teachers' presence. Thus measures should be taken to encourage teachers to serve in schools with honesty and integrity. Growing evidence on learning achievement confirms that the quality and relevance of basic education is related to giving training to teachers and enhancing their pedagogic practice, and improving learning/teaching conditions. It is up to teachers' abilities to improve the quality of education, and that comes through methods used for different ways of teaching.

We must celebrate children's voices and rights in the classroom and the school. And in order to make that happen there should be events where civil society members, parents, and teachers interact with children. This influence should extend to pedagogy as well as school councils; for it is the classroom where citizenship starts, and it is common knowledge that discussion, dialogue and argument are very powerful tools for learning.

Fighting illiteracy is a great tool to ensure social stability. We must understand that rampant illiteracy has grave implications for our national security. A largely illiterate population is an easy prey to nefarious propaganda, and can be easily misguided,

divided, and radicalised. State should take measures and make sure every child is schooled and every Pakistani is literate.

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ORIGINAL RESEARCH IN HIGHER EDUCATION BY MEEQAT SULTAN

Reputable accreditation bodies of higher education focus on the quality of teaching and research in rating and ranking of universities at the national or international levels. There are, of course, other criteria that are considered: physical infrastructure, student-faculty ratio, library, lab and IT facilities, co-curricular activities, students' societies, philanthropic work or corporate social responsibility initiatives. However, the highest priority is given to the standard of faculty and originality of research indeed.

Quality enhancement at our universities is reflected from the social and economic conditions of the majority, not of the handful of our population. There are other factors that have a positive or negative bearing on life at large such as leadership, law and order situation, unemployment and inflation etc. But quality enhancement at our universities, especially with pertinent, original and practical research, quietly plays an important role in determining the quality of life of our people.

The essence of higher education and research would be of no help to society if concerned benefits do not reach or are not shared by the common man. Can learned head of departments and faculty members of our universities offer a minute of a thought each on how their lofty higher education and research masterpieces have trickle-down public benefits in their respective field of specialisation, be it economics, human resource management, marketing, finance, information technology, psychology, media or social sciences?

It is a challenging, gutsy and thought-provoking question, breaking away from the standard and stereotypical practice of research that stays mainly in the libraries. It is presented as research papers to be shelved sooner or later, or brainstormed in guest speaker sessions, conferences, seminars and symposia for projection and for reference. There is generally no follow-up and feedback amid degradation of arts, sports, culture, business, economy, education, law, government, politics, education, health and so on.

Our private and public sector universities have excelled in the set and standard criteria of university rankings as carried out by the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan. These specialised ratings are pursued by the National Business Education Accreditation Council, National Computing Education Accreditation Council, and international rankings as those pertaining to ASSB standards, Ed Universal ranking of business

institutions, and so on. But seldom do these universities now produce scientists, researchers, engineers, doctors, economists and heads of institutes who have an overall positive bearing on the social, educational, economic and developmental perspective of Pakistan.

Specialised writing is expected of specialists in various fields. While it needs to initiate with all its ingenuity at masters level, it is not required of under-graduate students. Writing flair needs to nurture at school and develop at Intermediate/A-Levels or during bachelor's programme towards study and career excellence. Career-focused writing plays a vital role in the development perspective of developed societies be it social, environmental, biological, medical, physical or nuclear sciences, or in education and any field of socioeconomic development. It is not just the highly advanced status that some countries enjoy as a result of their intelligentsia's original thinking, research and writing but the individual financial and social worth of the concerned contributor is rejuvenating indeed.

A specialised writer is one who writes in a newspaper, journal or magazine, or as a workshop or seminar paper or for research and reference in a potential field. It is when a doctor writes on medicine, an IT person writes on computers, a physicist writes on physics, a teacher writes on education, an economist writes on economy, a politician writes on politics, a philanthropist writes on social work and so on. A pre-requisite in specialised writing is sound language ability with vocabulary, grammar, punctuation and presentation. What counts is the concerned knowledge through books, journals, media, travel and field trips, and through social and career-oriented interaction. Aptitude and inquisitiveness, knack for intensive reading, flair for reading beyond textbooks and devotion to reference and research remain important. Reputation enhances through writing for and contributing to specialised media sections and self-initiated or officially sponsored papers and publications. What matters in professional credibility is marketing research at concerned outlets and looking for continuous ingenuity, excellence and feedback.

As such, the whole gamut of developmental activity flourishes with ingenuity and inspiration stabilising the subsistence levels and raising the living standards of the concerned society where sky is the limit in innovation, enlightenment and rewards in contemporary living. All fields blossom whether arts and culture, education and research, health and recreation, business and industry, banking and insurance, trade and commerce, shipping and aviation, science and technology etc. The urge to write in

one's own field makes one more research-oriented and more investigative as fresh ideas, insights, information and initiatives abound in human breakthroughs in arts, humanities and commerce, and in natural, biological, environmental and physical sciences. As the concerned society benefits through inspiring and rewarding lifestyles and standards, the initiators of creative writing deserve that well-earned financial and social credibility. Rewards are aplenty for specialised writers who sure have an edge over stereotypes whether in teaching, journalism, law or public affairs, or for those pursuing careers in medicine, engineering, management, information technology or in any profession.

Meanwhile, the concept of experiential learning, sharing and applying becomes indispensable amid advancement in wide and varied fields of education. Geared up to experiential learning and sharing are universities the world over: those linked to Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, Erasmus Mundus Consortium of European Universities, Association of American Universities, Association of Australian Universities, Association of Commonwealth Universities, Universities of the 'underdeveloped world' fostered by the Organisation of American States, and Organisation of African Unity, universities fast endeavouring for educational and research excellence in India and Pakistan, individually speaking Global and Communication Studies at Helsinki University, Institute of Social Studies at The Hague in the Netherlands, Institute for English Speaking Students, University of Stockholm, Experiment in International Living, Brattleboro, Vermont, and emerging universities in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Dubai etc.

What remains of importance for the least developed, under-developed and developing countries are endeavouring for such a model of survival, sustenance and development that is in consonance with their objective conditions. It is seldom realised consciously or subconsciously the intelligentsia, men at the helm of affairs or the policy-makers of such countries are mostly bewitched and bewildered by such imported or alien concepts in planning and development, which have nothing to do with their sorely, objectively and indigenously needed socioeconomic development planning and practice.

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