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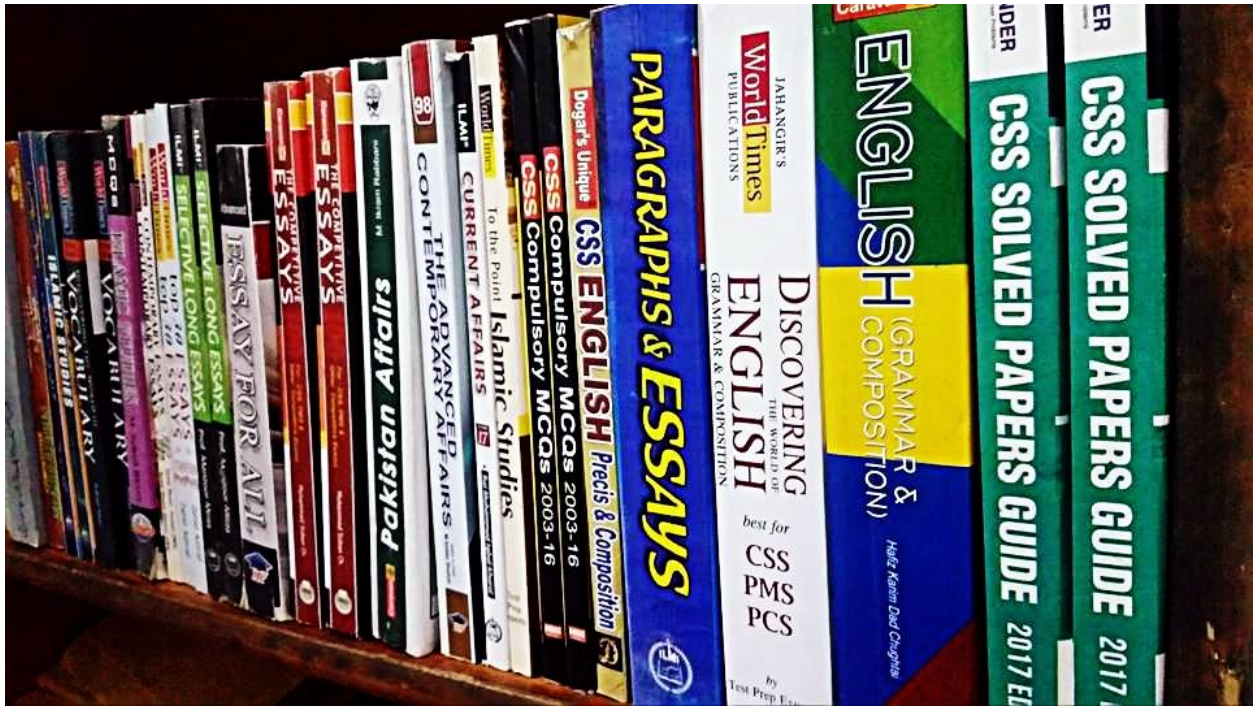
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PAKISTAN

Looming Nuclear War? | Editorial

As if India and Pakistan were short of potential wars, the two sides have been busy fighting a miniscule battle over the Line of Control and the Working Boundary for the last three years. Yet there has been a sudden surge in the intensity of cross-border firing in the wake of the Indian allegation that some of its fallen soldiers had their bodies mutilated by the Pakistan Army.

Pakistan's armed forces vehemently denied the charge. This, however, appeared to fall on deaf ears as the Indian Army chief proceeded to warn of dire consequences. Not only that, he made the audacious claim of having destroyed an army checkpost on the Pakistani side of the LoC. In an expected tit-for-tat rejoinder – Pakistan wasted no time in releasing footage of incident to debunk the big talk.

The recent killings of Indian soldiers in Uri appear to have prompted growing debate among Indian policymakers regarding provoking Pakistan. Thus, the Indian Army and the Modi sarkar claimed the so-called 'surgical strike' inside Pakistan. The latter denied any such occurrence and, realistically, any such adventure can best be classified as cross-LoC skirmishes, which sadly have become all too common. Strategically, India still is, in best case scenario terms, at the early stages of its Cold Start doctrine.

Operationally, such a doctrine is essentially loaded with tactical limitations given geographical proximity. Which means that even if the Indian military establishment carries out such an operation — its radius will be confined to the zone of Jammu and Kashmir, where the two militaries have already fought three wars in addition to intermittent skirmishes. Nevertheless, if somehow in the future India chooses to strike inside Pakistan proper — this will amount to all-out war. In such a scenario, with limited conventional capability, the use of nuclear weapons would appear the only option for Pakistan. An option that, if and when applied, would annihilate millions of people along with fauna and flora on both sides. Moreover, radioactivity could cause severe damage in neighbouring countries, such as Afghanistan, Iran and Nepal. Thus, it is in the mutual interests of India and Pakistan to consciously avoid conventional escalation of hostilities along the LoC. Additionally, the international community should also play its role to prevent a looming nuclear war between the two sides. After all, it is in the interest of the global powers to have peace in South Asia for economic returns. And last but not least,

resolving the Kashmir issue has always and still does remain the key to normalised relations between the two neighbours.

Source: <http://dailytimes.com.pk/editorial/25-May-17/looming-nuclear-war>

Rescuing Pak-US Relations | Editorial

In an attempt to slash foreign aid, the Trump administration in its maiden budget has proposed converting a portion of US foreign military grants into loans. A range of cuts to many other foreign programmes has also been introduced. For Pakistan, the new administration has proposed \$344 million in financial assistance, including \$100 million in foreign military finances, which is a reduction of \$190 million as compared to the year 2016. The United States is re-shaping the way it grants military assistance to foreign nations. Traditionally, the US appropriated funds as loans or grants to enable partner countries to buy American military equipment. The Trump administration wants to convert the majority of grants to loans so that countries would repay at a later date.

For Pakistan, it means more tough choices. In 2016, Islamabad refused to contribute matching national funds for the purchase of eight F-16s owing to its financial difficulties. This pattern is likely to repeat itself. Pakistan would have to be highly selective in buying US military equipment given the state of its own national resources. A large-scale military expenditure would put a strain on the limited financial resources during an election year, when the sitting government's priority is development spending.

The latest measures by the Trump administration aimed at cutting down the foreign aid budget will add another irritant to the bilateral relationship which is currently adrift and in the process of renegotiation. Pakistan would definitely make a case for enhanced economic and military assistance citing the losses incurred due to the ongoing war against terror. Pakistan's case is strong. During the last decade, regional conflict and terrorism have cost the country up to \$118 billions as estimated by the federal government. Even though the internal security situation has improved, the goal of achieving durable political and economic stability remains distant. Pakistan relies on foreign assistance to achieve economic stability. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is likely to inject more than 50 billion dollars in the coming years. The civil and military leadership could not have asked for more.

Pakistan has to contend with a changed US administration, which views foreign relationships as transactional; and in South Asia regards India as its reliable, long-term partner. However, contrary to the populist slogans, the relationship with the United States is an important one. The US is a large trading partner, a valuable source of remittances and there is ample scope to redefine the relationship based on trade, technology transfer instead of one predicated on aid. This is why the foreign policy establishment needs to think beyond the US-India alliance and find creative ways to engage with the Trump administration. If the Riyadh Summit is an indicator, Washington's view of Pakistan is sceptical if not outright jaded. It is time to invest in

serious public diplomacy and redrawing the parameters of bilateral engagement lest this cooling turns into a divorce of sorts.

Source:<http://dailytimes.com.pk/editorial/26-May-17/rescuing-pak-us-relations>

Failure of our Foreign Policy By Dr Ejaz Hussain

Foreign policy analysis has emerged as a sub-discipline within International Relations, where scholars of the field conduct theory-guided empirical analysis of the subject at different levels, ie state, group, individual. The core area of focus and analysis is human behaviour which probably is the most difficult and challenging entity on account of its oscillatory characteristics. Nevertheless, foreign policy experts develop models to measure policy behaviour at a given unit of analysis. The point I am trying to make is foreign policy making and analysis is taken as a scientific inquiry in the developed societies where the only expert of the field — after years of research — comments on different aspects of foreign policy. In the US, for instance, one sees scholars like Joseph Nye or Matthew Bunn appearing on CNN, MSNBC and even local radio to share their scholarly opinion on, for example, Iran-US nuclear deal or the recent visit of President Donald Trump to the Middle East. Journalists generally in the US or Germany ask questions, not answer questions of mass significance. Importantly, there are examples of top journalists in the United States who got PhDs in international relations and public policy and, out of sheer choice, preferred journalism as a profession.

Quite to the contrary, the foreign policy discourse is overwhelmingly controlled by non-experts in the Pakistan's case where a battery of TV hosts and guests, who lack the basics of training and theoretical knowledge of the field, are seen every night, fighting with each other over different aspects of our foreign policy. The majority of the televangelists comprise of politicians, whose majority lacks basic know-how of the complexities of the subject; ex-servicemen, the majority of which only carries some inner information on how our power elite work; and a few so called analysts whose terminal qualifications, on average, is an MA in strategic studies from a local university. Most of them who appear on public and private TV channels carry a pro-state, often biased and uncritical appraisal of the contours of the foreign policy of the country.

Resultantly, though the hosts and the guests do make a name and earn money, it is the masses that are misled, and the policy makers that are poorly fed with an often third rate opinion based mostly on emotive jargon skewed understating of the complex structure of regional and international relations and institutional and ideological biases. To understand the preceding clearly, let us take the example of the most recent case of Pakistan joining the Saudi Arabia led 41-member alliance against international terrorism which is supposedly led by former Pakistani COAS, General Raheel Sharif. Our televangelists, with a minuscule exception, yelled day and night to consistently urge the government, both civil and military, to join the Saudi-led alliance.

Joining the alliance was deemed super beneficial for Pakistan. Firstly, it will be means to counter India that has calibrated cordial relations with the Arab states such as the UAE. Secondly, it will place Pakistan at the centre of the Islamic world in particular and the non-Islamic world in general. Thirdly, it will help Pakistani economy as the country receives billions of dollars in remittances, and Saudi Arabia will fund our bills, too as it did with 1.5 billion US\$ largesse in 2014. Moreover, the ex-servicemen took institutional pride to see a former chief with experience in counter-terrorism to lead such as large and prestigious alliance. So far, the picture looks beautiful. Now, take a glimpse of the ugly side too.

Since Pakistan has shifted its client status to China and is busy calibrating Russia, which is still viewed as an enemy by the security establishment in the US — it was but natural to be ignored by the US at the summit

During the recently held Arab-Islamic-American summit on terrorism in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, contradictions and shortcomings in our foreign policy discourse became evident to which I pointed to in these pages already. I was not surprised to see the way Pakistan was humiliated at the summit: it was to be the way it happened. Firstly, our policy makers miserably failed to take into account the shifting contours of the US foreign policy under the Trump administration. The US, even before the summit, started preferring Saudi Arabia once more in the turbulent Middle East. Since Pakistan has shifted its clientele to China and is busy calibrating Russia, which is still viewed as an enemy by the security establishment in the US, it was but natural to be ignored by the US at the summit. Secondly, our policymakers and the public could not take a dispassionate view of Pakistani-Saudi relations. Indeed, Dr Ayesha Siddiqi had drawn timely attention to it. What we failed to understand is the fact that the alliance is a brainchild of Saudi Arabia in an effort to control the Middle East. It will be naïve on the part of the Saudis to let Pakistan lead and cash it on. Thirdly, our policy makers could not see above and beyond India. The latter has projected itself quite successfully, courtesy its scholars in the US and Europe, as a major power in the region. To add insult to injury, neither Nawaz Sharif, with a history of close ties with the Saudis, nor much hyped Raheel Sharif was invited to address the audience for a minute or so. It is apologia on the part of some analysts to argue Pakistan faced this all because of non-clarity at home. Alternatively, Pakistan did commit to side with the Saudis logistically two years ago and taking it to parliament was and is of no effect as power lies somewhere else in this country.

In a nutshell, this case should suffice to bemoan the failure of our foreign policy, if any. Perhaps this is time to revisit its discourse by preferring to keep it indoors and with scholars than televangelists.

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Source:<http://dailytimes.com.pk/opinion/26-May-17/failure-of-our-foreign-policy>

Solving The Energy Crisis By Farrukh Khan Pitafi

On May 13, China and Pakistan signed the agreement on the CPEC energy project list adjustment during the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation. The adjustment is based on substantial research and scientific analysis on CPEC as well as the recommendations of the CPEC Energy Planning Expert Group that were made at their second meeting in February 2017.

In 2013, 'energy' was the need of the hour in Pakistan. Some regions had loadshedding for 20-22 hours each day and foreign direct investment (FDI) was kept at bay. The energy crisis cost the national economy dearly. It not only led to the loss of GDP growth rate, but also resulted in the reduction of industrial and commercial activities due to flight of capital.

In November 2014, China and Pakistan agreed to build a series of early harvest energy projects with a total capacity of 10,400MW under CPEC in order to meet Pakistan's urgent need and overcome the bottleneck of its economic development.

According to the new agreement, after the adjustment there shall be 15 CPEC prioritised energy projects with the installed capacity of 11,110MW. The Three Gorges Pakistan Second Wind Power Project (50MW), the Three Gorges Pakistan Third Wind Power Project (50MW), the Hubco Coal Power Plant (1,320MW) and Oracle local coal power plants (1,320MW) are included in the prioritised list.

As a major pilot project in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), CPEC has so far 19 early harvest projects that are either under construction or have been completed. This is the largest number of projects under the BRI.

There are four sectors under CPEC – energy, transportation, infrastructure and industrial cooperation. Energy projects have made the most rapid and visible progress. Among these 19 projects, 11 are from the energy sector with a total capacity of 6,810MW. They include one solar, four wind and four coal power plants with a capacity of 6,651MW, which could be completed before 2019-2020. They also include two hydro power stations with a capacity of 1,590MW, which started construction in 2016 and need at least five years to complete. The design of this energy mix considered both near- and long-term needs of Pakistan.

The year 2017 will be one of early harvest of CPEC energy projects. With the gradual completion of CPEC energy projects, the issue of loadshedding will be reduced.

The Chinese investment in the energy sector will bring electricity, employment opportunities for locals and taxes for local and federal governments. These projects are going to be operated by investors for up to 20 years. Wang Binghua, Chairman of the Board of China Power International Development Limited – which is building the Hub Power Plant in Balochistan – said, “We come to Pakistan not for profits only. We attach more importance to development of local industries, helping them to become more sustainable”.

All energy projects under CPEC are FDI projects in line with international practice. The investors borrow from commercial banks at internationally acceptable rates. As per international practice, banks never approve a large foreign investment unless the payment is insured by professional insurance firms. China Export and Credit Insurance Corporation charges a maximum premium rate of 7 percent for CPEC energy projects. The insurance premium is a one-time charge for 15-18 years, therefore it is no more than 0.5 percent annually.

Some ‘experts’ came to the conclusion that the cost of a CPEC project is 13 percent which is untrue. They simply added 7 percent to a presumed 6 percent of interest rate. However, these two are from totally different categories. For instance, the cost of the Karot Hydro Power Plant is only around 5.6 percent. Here is the rundown: the interest rate is LIBOR (1.3) +3.8, plus insurance fee 0.4 percent (7 percent for 17 years).

It is international practice that projects break ground only after the financial close and the first tranche of loan from the banks. In order to help Pakistan overcome the energy crisis, most of the Chinese state-owned companies have been implementing CPEC energy projects from their own equity well before the financial close. For instance, the Sahiwal Power Plant started construction in May 2015 and the financial close was achieved in February 2017 – only four months before its completion. The Karot Hydro Power Plant, the Port Qasim Power Plant and many other projects have similar stories to tell. This has fully demonstrated the sincerity and goodwill of Chinese companies to the people of Pakistan and their ardent desire to meet a true friend’s urgent needs.

To solve the energy crisis is only the first step of the long march. Pakistan’s economic growth rate has reached 5.3 percent this year. This is not far from the economic take off threshold of 7 percent. The future of Pakistan lies in rapid industrialisation. CPEC energy projects will lay a solid foundation for Pakistan to accelerate this process, achieve Vision 2025 and accomplish the dream of becoming the ‘Asian tiger’ at an early date.

Source: <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/207274-Solving-the-energy-crisis>

Pakistan's Saudi Misadventure By Kunwar Khuldune Shahid

Following last week's embarrassment at the 'Islamic' summit in Riyadh, where neither Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif nor former Army Chief Gen (R) Raheel Sharif – who militarily spearheads the Saudi-led military coalition – was invited to speak, there are reports that Islamabad might be reconsidering participation in said 'Islamic' alliance.

The fact that US President was heading an 'Islamic' summit barely six months after winning an election campaign based – in significant part – on anti-Muslim populism should've been embarrassment enough for the Muslim world to begin with. What apparently has fueled rumours that Pakistan might be reconsidering participation in the alliance is the fact that both Trump and Saudi King Salman bin Abdul Aziz upped the ante on anti-Iran rhetoric.

This either is a cop out, or reflects Islamabad's utter lack of basic understanding of international relations and policies of the states it has historically allied itself with.

What exactly was it about Trump or King Salman's speech that came as a surprise for anyone in Nawaz Sharif's entourage, which had spent hours helping the Prime Minister memorise a speech that he ended up binning?

Do those at the helm of Pakistan's foreign policy not even have sufficient knowhow to 'decode' what the theme of a summit lead by Trump and hosted by King Salman would be themed around before accepting the invitation to join in?

Did the fact that the coalition was first announced in December 2015 – ninth months into Saudi military intervention in Yemen and a month before the execution of Shia cleric Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr – also not give Islamabad an idea who this alliance would be aligned against?

One would've been prompted to even hint that this belated suggestion of a potential back-peddling, if not complete retraction, is a reaction to the snub at the summit where Trump and King Salman collectively humiliated Pakistan by first not allowing the premier to speak and then by even refusing to include him in any publicised meetings or photo-ops.

But as far as Pakistan's ties with Saudi Arabia are concerned, disagreement, let alone defiance, has never been on Islamabad's menu.

So what exactly happened that has, apparently, caused a rethink?

“What we need to understand is that the Terms of Reference (TORs) of the alliance are yet to be finalised. The defence ministers of the participating countries will meet and discuss the modalities of the coalition. We must wait until we have all the information to comment on its outcome. We shouldn’t indulge in speculations,” Foreign office spokesperson Nafees Zakria said at the weekly briefing following the Riyadh summit.

Is the foreign office trying saying that an NOC was issued to Gen (R) Raheel Sharif to spearhead this coalition even before the exact details were finalised with Riyadh?

Or worse, was saying No to the NOC not even an option for the government?

Another government official has also maintained that Pakistan will join this alliance “only to fight terrorism.”

That should clear the confusion then. Because it’s not like the term ‘terrorism’ is loaded, or aligned with state policies.

A Kashmiri freedom fighter who picks up the gun is a terrorist for India. A separatist militant in Balochistan is a terrorist for Pakistan. A mujahid can be a terrorist or strategic asset depending on whether s/he is waging war against the military establishment or against it.

So maybe it’s a good idea to modalities of terrorism as well, before we agree to defend Saudi Arabia against terrorists.

A country that has unequivocally upheld that ‘atheists are terrorists’, clearly doesn’t even need an individual to take up arms for them to be lumped into the bin of terrorism. It also underscores that terrorism for the kingdom of Saudi Arabia is primarily based on ideological affiliations. And there are no prizes was guessing the one ideology that Wahabbism is antagonistic to even more than nonbelief.

If the Saudi-led coalition is really about ‘Muslim unity’ and ‘fight against terrorism’, how about Islamabad adds support for the Kashmiri struggle against what it dubs ‘Indian state terrorism’ in the ‘modalities’ of the alliance with Riyadh?

There have already been 223 UN resolutions against Israeli occupation of Palestine in the last decade alone, surely the ‘Muslim Ummah’ would also care about ‘Muslim brothers’ in Kashmir?

The only hindrance here is the fact Saudi Arabia has defence agreements with India, supplies 19% of its oil needs and has bilateral trade worth \$39 billion.

This diplomatic pickle that Islamabad currently finds itself in is the culmination of decades of Islamist foreign policy where religious affiliation has been peddled as a conclusive determinant not only for bilateral ties between Muslim states, but also to alienate other states – India and Israel being prime examples.

The moment Pakistan abandons its Islamist approach towards relations with neighbouring Afghanistan and Iran – in addition to other Muslim states – and takes up the Kashmir cause without any religious blinkers, it would not only witness a complete revamp of its relations with the world, and in turn the image around the globe, it would also sort out the many contradictions that are forcing Islamabad to pursue duplicitous foreign and security policies.

Till then joining any alliance that claims to be 'Islamic' and discriminatory at the same time is masochistic. For any such coalition would define itself with respect to who isn't Islamic. And we all know what happens when that domino effect kicks in.

Source: <http://nation.com.pk/columns/30-May-2017/pakistan-s-saudi-misadventure>

Resolving the DL Dispute By M. Ziauddin

The first step towards ending for good the dispute over the Durand Line is not by sealing the border with Afghanistan or militarily defending the physical divide that Pakistan believes is the actual boundary line between the two countries.

These steps would only add to the bitterness of a people who naturally cannot bring themselves to accept a line that divides houses, families and tribes.

What is needed and urgently is to make the other side mentally accept the irrelevancy of DL and treat the dispute as nothing more than a difference of opinion needed to be resolved through dialogue rather than mutual acrimony.

How do we do it? Simple. By creating a social order across the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) that would set the region clearly apart from life on the other side. Extending the writ of state and by improving governance at the grassroots in frontier region.

Before continuing this line of argument it would not be out of place to recall here a couple of pertinent excerpts from an article (Life in FATA amid Ongoing Conflict) contributed by Abdul Basit (He holds an M. Phil degree in International Relations from Quaid-i-Azam University and specializes in terrorism- related issues with special focus on the on-going militancy in the tribal areas) in Dynamics of Taliban Insurgency in FATA, a book published in 2013 by Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS):

“Initially, the militants had seemed keen to ensure speedy justice for the disillusioned masses of the tribal areas against the strong criminal and tribal elements. However, once people accepted them as their messiah and an anti-dote to a corrupt and defunct political system, the Taliban showed their true colors. They created a state within the state by setting up parallel administrative and judicial systems in the tribal areas. They exploited the fragile tribal structure, the existing social injustices and the vacuum left by dysfunctional state institutions to increase their influence in these areas.

“The socio-economic indicators suggest that FATA is Pakistan’s most impoverished and economically backward area. No major development work has taken place here since the country won independence from British rule over six decades ago. This has resulted in political alienation, economic deprivation and fueled deep resentment and grievances against the center. The absence of an inclusive and participatory system of governance at the grass roots, a bias in favor of traditional feudal system of economy and a social

hierarchy have created conditions for the perpetuation of a cycle of underdevelopment which is conducive for growth of militancy and religious conservatism”

As could be gleaned from the above the main challenge is to restore effective governance in FATA.

But an attempt to take the initial constitutional step towards this goal by introducing the recommendations of the Sartaj Aziz Committee which had suggested merger of FATA with the Khyber-Pukhtunkhwa province but to be governed under a Riwaj Act was foiled by the Pakistan Muslim League (N) government at the last minute on the advice of Maulana Fazlur Rehman, the Chief of his faction of Jamiatul Ulema-i-Islam (JUI) and Mahmood Khan Achakzai of Puktunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PkMAP).

These two leaders as well as the PMLN have very little political influence in the FATA region notwithstanding their Parliamentary strength. Therefore, it is almost impossible to fathom what the three parties wish to gain from postponing the reforms.

Some quarters believe that since the PMLN and the JUI leadership are opposed to Pakistan Threek-i-Insaf (PTI), KP's ruling party, they fear that the merger would enhance manifold PTI's political influence nation-wide if another four to five million people are added to the province. Besides, the Federal Government would have had to increase the share of the KP under the National Finance Commission (NFC) Award by at least three per cent if the merger had taken place before the budget which the PMLN was not prepared to countenance.

Another reason quoted by quarters close to the PMLN is that it wants to bargain a trade-off with the interested parties in Parliament in lieu of their support for creating a Hazara province carving out of KP. The PMLN has promised a Hazara province in its election manifesto but most other mainstream political parties are opposed to the division of KP. Also, one of the members of the Sartaj Aziz Committee, Senator Lt. Gen (retd) Abdul Qadir Baloch, Minister of State and Frontier Regions (SAFRON) is quoted to have said that the Army is opposed to introducing the reforms at this juncture, therefore the postponement.

The postponement appears to be at least until after the next general elections. This is a long time for such an important reform to be introduced. And the delay in social transformation of the people of FATA and improvement in governance is likely to further deepen the bitterness of Afghanistan over the DL dispute.

If it is actually the Army that is in the way of urgent reforms then those responsible need to understand that it is on the strategic front itself that FATA's inhuman set of laws has failed to deliver, as despite the existence of these harsh laws all these years, the area has remained a lawless, no-man's land for criminals, and a safe sanctuary for the militants waging war against Pakistan. So it would only be strategically helpful if opposition to the reforms, no matter who is actually behind it, is given up forthwith.

Only a nation with a dead conscience could have lived with such an obnoxious law specifically meant for a group of its own citizens, without feeling guilty. We howl and bawl for the beleaguered Kashmiris under Indian occupation, for the Palestinians and for the Muslims of Myanmar. But for the agony and pain that we continue to cause to these four million Pakistanis — whom we credit for winning us half of Kashmir way back in the early days of our independence — we show no feelings at all. Shame on us.

The FATA people in order to express their sentiments against the postponement of reforms are planning to stage a protest march from their homes all the way to Parliament. The FATA members in Parliament are also said to have decided to boycott the President's traditional speech to the two houses at the start of the next parliamentary year. This would surely cause an international embarrassment to the ruling party already under domestic political pressure because of the continuing saga of the Panama scandal.

Source: <http://pakobserver.net/resolving-dl-dispute/>

CPEC Going Global By Farhat Ali

It is reported that the Asian Development Bank, under its programme “Scoping of Economic Corridor Development in Pakistan”, aims to identify potential economic corridors to enhance trade, regional connectivity, growth, and job creation through evidence-based mapping. “The ADB is conducting a study on the potential economic development along the corridor for which ADB would select node cities,” Farzana Noshab, senior economics officer ADB, said while giving a detailed presentation at the headquarters of Board of Investment (BoI). The study shall cover the area/city/location and match it with its economic potential, ie, market niche so that investment and economic activity is generated on the potential. Under focus is CPEC, Pakistan Economic Corridors Programme (PECP), and Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) as the economic corridors immensely impacting the economy of Pakistan.

Asian Development Bank has been a strong partner in the development of Pakistan in the Energy sector, infrastructure and social sector through its technical support and soft term financing. Lately, it has pledged to support Peshawar Mass Transit Mega project. This is one strategic and tested partner Pakistan must work with extensively.

The UK after Brexit and the EU shaken from the “US first policy” are looking for new markets and business alignments to fill in the gap and sustain their economies. The most promising candidate for the CPEC is the UK. After Britons voted in favour of Brexit this past summer, the UK sees the need to bring its investments into the non-EU projects, and the CPEC could become this very platform for investments.

UK Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs Boris Johnson echoed his country’s interest in the CPEC during his most recent visit to Pakistan. Johnson even described the CPEC as “a wonder project” and expressed his desire for the UK companies to participate in various projects of it.

“I am very excited about the CPEC idea. And I would like the UK firms to participate in the construction of this fabulous venture,” Johnson said while addressing the students and faculty of the Government College University in Lahore. “But this should be part of an even more ambitious vision that would revive the ancient Silk Route and see the rebirth of trading caravans connecting East and West.” Boris Johnson urged UK businesspeople to invest in Pakistan. Johnson also said that Karachi should be Asia’s “biggest trading entrepot” alongside Singapore and Shanghai. The British Secretary of State also pledged that his country will “play a part” in helping Pakistan achieve closer economic integration.

He praised Islamabad for making a huge progress in recent years, noting that national security in Pakistan has improved while democracy has been strengthened. Those are the two key points to attracting investors, as they serve as an indication of stability in the country. So his words may be interpreted as a direct invitation to British firms to invest in various sectors of Pakistan's economy and become part of the CPEC. All of this has a positive effect and a number of UK businesses are visiting Pakistan these days.

France too is interested in the CPEC. Ambassador Fenet stated that his country is keen to further strengthen bilateral trade and economic relations between the two nations. Praising the CPEC for creating many business and investment opportunities, Fenet said that France is taking a huge interest in the South Asia country. In a message that was backed by the French Embassy's Head of Economic Department, Philippe Fouet, Fenet also said that his country has what Pakistan needs to boost its economy – the advanced technology and expertise.

German companies are keen to join China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) to further improve trade relations, said Ina Lepel, German Ambassador to Pakistan in her recent address at Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI). Germany is the second largest partner in trade with Pakistan in Europe and will do whatever possible to improve these ties, she added. The ambassador said there is a lot of potential for enhanced cooperation.

The Swiss Embassy in Islamabad and the Swiss Consulate in Karachi, in collaboration with Swiss Business Council Pakistan, recently organised events in Islamabad and Karachi to mobilise the interest of the Foreign Investors, notably, the European investors to invest in the CPEC. The events were participated by diplomats, business chambers, media and government functionaries. The next event on the subject of the CPEC will be organised in Switzerland in early July 2017.

Russia too is looking forward to investing in the CPEC. It is learnt that Russian companies investments in energy, coal mining and metal industry of Pakistan may reach \$5 billion over the next five years. Iranian President Hassan Rouhani has expressed his country's desire to become a part of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) during his meeting with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on the sidelines of 71th UNGA session. The Iranian president lauded Islamabad's vision for translating the CPEC into a strong reality and pointed out that connectivity projects were recognised by both countries as vital to the progress of the region. "The two leaders reiterated the complementarity between Gwadar and Chabahar sea ports that could boost regional trade exponentially in the decades ahead," he said.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has urged Turkish businessmen to invest in the CPEC, arguing that the CPEC is a game changer for the region. He stated this while addressing the Pakistan-Turkey Roundtable Investment Conference recently. Afghanistan's Ambassador to Pakistan Dr Omer Zakhilwal said Kabul absolutely supports the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and wants to become a part of the project. "The CPEC was a great project that was equally relevant to Afghanistan like Pakistan, and anything that will be good for Pakistan will be good for the entire region." The Afghan envoy asserted that the people of Afghanistan are "thirsty for development" and wants to see their homeland prosper. "I think the CPEC is not limited to Pakistan; it is for the entire region particularly Central Asia," the envoy maintained.

In the recent bilateral meetings held with the President of Turkmenistan in Islamabad, the indications are that Turkmenistan will become part of the CPEC project. Its decision will encourage other Central Asia states to be part of the corridor. Moreover, Pakistan and Belarus recently signed a roadmap for bilateral cooperation and decided to establish special economic zones. The two countries also plan on conducting a study for exploring the possibilities of participating infrastructure projects within the framework of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

With the interest and goodwill of all these countries from Europe, Russia, Central Asia and our neighbouring countries we have a great chance to work on them and position their footprints in Pakistan as stakeholders in the CPEC in real terms. This could turn out to be a great investment mix and dispel the apprehensions of CPEC being an all-China affair. We must take on board other countries, notably, Japan and South Korea with a view to achieving the global mix insofar as CPEC is concerned.

(The writer is former President, Overseas Investors Chamber of Commerce and Industry)

Source: <http://fp.brecorder.com/2017/06/20170603184750/>

Pak-US relations — out of balance | Editorial

Geopolitics is a global balancing act, finely tuned by diplomats of every nation to maintain equanimity among the community of nations and is one of the more neglected aspects of international relations. Changes in the geopolitical architecture tend to be small and infinitesimally slow, but there is currently what amounts to a geopolitical churn in the neighbourhood of Pakistan as well as other states in the sub-continent and Central Asia. The churn has been triggered by two of the largest global players entering a phase of major realignment in tune with their national and global interests and ambitions — China and the US.

In this context, the remarks of Senate Chairman Raza Rabbani regarding the relationship between Pakistan and the US as “imbalanced” bear close scrutiny. The senator said that the relationship between us and one of our largest donors is driven by giving priority to the national security interests of the US in the region rather than Pakistan. Well of course it is, and what else does the senator think it is driven by? Certainly not charitable largesse, any more than the Chinese interest in Pakistan is driven by anything other than self-interest, profit and regional influence. The relationship between the US, India and Pakistan is anything but one of equals.

For the Americans, India has much to offer as a market for its goods, whilst Pakistan sits squarely on the debit side of the balance sheet. There is a vast trust deficit that is akin to circular debt in that every attempt to retire it fails. The senator’s attempt to call the US to account founders on the rocks of American exceptionalism and that is not about to change either. America is big enough and powerful enough to do pretty much what it wants. Pakistan has few chips to bargain with, India a fistful. In terms of the visuals, there is never going to be balance between us in terms of a neutrally set bar across the fulcrum — and that said there are unrealistic expectations on both sides. It is not that the relationship is out of balance, just that the balance is being recalibrated.

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Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1102343/pak-us-relations-out-of-balance/>

Pakistan-EU relations By Khurram Minhas

There is a difference between the Europeans and the Americans, which has been reinforced by the occurrence of Brexit in Europe and election of Donald Trump as the US President.

For South Asia, there exists a desire in Europe to push for a dialogue between India and Pakistan. Contrary to the US, Europe is seen as reformist power which cannot tolerate a war going out of hand or any sort of economic depression. In Europe, there exists a concert of nations, where states can talk to each other in order to build consensus to maintain equilibrium. Various analysts in Europe consider the current outlook of China as similar to that of Germany before World War I. However, if observed keenly, China in today's world is able to talk with various countries in different regions with the underlined goal of regional and global stability which is very much what Europe wants. Realistically, China wants this kind of stability for next 20-30 years in order to become a global power, entirely unbothered by the global circumstances.

For Europe, China's emergence as a global power will bring equilibrium in place which could grant greater powers to weaker global powers like Europe, pushing global powers such as the US, altogether for compromises on global level, shutting down opportunities for committing mistakes such as Iraq and Afghanistan war. It was said that Europeans do complain about the refugees' crisis but then it must be understood that they are the people who had been suffering before and even now. If the crisis situation in Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan could have been avoided, there had been no such issues of displacement, continuous instability and chaos. Today, Afghanistan is an unresolved quagmire, Iraq is a weak state and Syria is also a consequence of this old Cold War game. So, from a European perspective, China's rise is not really an issue. This rise might also be helpful for a dialogue between India and Pakistan. Being nuclear powers, issues between both countries are growing intensely. For instance, the European parliament is talking about the Kashmir issue for the last four years as it is an issue about which global powers must talk very directly.

Pakistan does not have any enemies in Europe but the level of diplomacy required to create stronger relationships is missing.

Pakistan must start diplomatic, economic and security maneuvering in the European region. CPEC has brought Pakistan into a whole new light; many are now seeing Pakistan as an emerging economy, new economic power house and spine of Chinese

New Silk Route which must be taken on further. Pakistan's stance on Kashmir has not been listened on the global level as Pakistan has already been in the bad light for terrorism in South Asia and Afghanistan. In reality, Pakistan has been a victim of terrorism and the Afghanistan situation has issues of bad governance, internal chaos, corruption and NATO mismanagement under its fold, which is not Pakistan's fault entirely.

Prospects of cooperation between Europe and South Asia are bright. Also, the countries in Central and Western Europe want themselves to be a bridge for economic and commercial activities in Western Europe, which widens the scope of such cooperation. The interest for economic cooperation is there but for that, states must be engaged.

Europeans do not see South and East Asia as their sole priority, unlike the US. Europe is more of a limited great power, struggling to establish its influence however, if given a global role; it will be received very positively. After Brexit, EU Commission, France and Germany must look forward to include some Western European countries like Spain and Italy in the European Union to ensure its strength and better future.

Source: <http://nation.com.pk/columns/17-May-2017/pakistan-eu-relations>

Strains in Pakistan-Iran relations By Javid Hussain

Signs of strains in Pakistan-Iran relations have been unmistakable for quite some time. First came reports of Iranian disquiet about Pakistan's participation in the Saudi-led Islamic Military Alliance to Fight Terrorism (IMAFT). It was quite clear that, despite the assurances given by Pakistan at various levels that it would not be a party to any anti-Iran activity by this organisation, Tehran continued to view it with deep mistrust and apprehensions. This was not entirely surprising considering the statements made by Saudi and US leaders pointing out that the main objective of the new organisation would be to counter Iranian interests in the region. It was also alleged by some quarters that this Alliance was sectarian in character being an Alliance of Sunni-majority states against Shia majority states such as Iran and Iraq, both of which are not its members. The departure of General (Retired) Raheel Sharif, former Chief of the Army Staff, for Saudi Arabia on 21 April to assume the command of this Alliance merely added to Iranian apprehensions which the visit of a Pakistani parliamentary delegation, led by the Speaker of the National Assembly, to Iran last month was not able to overcome. In a telling remark, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani told National Assembly Speaker Ayaz Sadiq on 24 April that the countries which had been supporting terrorist groups could "not claim to be combating them".

Iranian concerns are not totally unwarranted. On 19 April, US Defence Secretary James Mattis, after meetings with Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud and Prince Mohammad bin Salman, Deputy Crown Prince and Defence Minister, welcomed the move to form an Alliance of Arab and other Muslim countries to counter Iranian influence in the region. Prince Mohammed himself in an interview given to MBC television stated on 2 May stated, "How can we get along with regime (in Iran) which has an extremist ideology....and a profound wish to dominate the Muslim world and spread the Shiite faith?" The remark not only reflects the deep-seated hostility with which Saudi Arabia views Iran and its activities in the region but, more importantly, the dangers of IMAFT assuming a sectarian character thereby aggravating the divisions and disputes within the Muslim world instead of strengthening its unity. Obviously such a development would also undermine Pakistan's internal political stability and social harmony besides having serious adverse repercussions on Pakistan-Iran relations. The forthcoming meeting of the Defence Ministers of IMAFT provides us with a useful opportunity to ensure that the Alliance's activities remain focused on combatting terrorism in accordance with its generally accepted definition within the Muslim world, that it does not become a vehicle for anti-Iran operations or assume a sectarian character, and that it refrains from interference in the internal affairs of other states and from involvement in intra-Arab disputes.

These developments coincided with a press release issued by ISPR on 12 April, 2017 on the basis of a confessional statement recorded by Uzair Jan Baloch a year earlier that he had been passing on secret information about the Pakistan army, its intelligence wings, and key security installations of the country to an Iranian intelligence agency. The allegation was rejected by the Iranian embassy in Islamabad as “unfounded”. The embassy claimed that the “dissemination of such baseless” material was aimed at turning the public opinion in Pakistan against Iran, and was “not commensurate with the trajectory of expanding bilateral relations in all spheres between two friendly and brotherly countries of Iran and Pakistan”. It would also be recalled that earlier in March last year Kulbhushan Jadhav, a serving officer of the Indian navy, who was based in Chahbahar, was arrested in Pakistani Balochistan on charges of involvement in terrorist and subversive activities in Pakistan, especially in Balochistan and Karachi. The report of his arrest was made public on the eve of the visit of the Iranian President to Pakistan the same month. Viewed from the point of view of Pakistan-Iran relations, the media handling of the report of Kulbhushan’s arrest during and after the Iranian President’s visit left a lot to be desired.

More recently, on 26 April ten Iranian border guards were killed in a terrorist attack carried out by Jash al-Adl, a Sunni militant group, at Mirjaveh near the border with Pakistan. Similar incidents had taken place in earlier years also. According to Iranian allegations, the militant group is based in Pakistani Balochistan and enjoys the support of intelligence agencies from the Gulf and the West. The Iranian Foreign Ministry lodged a protest with the Pakistan ambassador over the incident. In addition, its spokesman, in a statement, held the Pakistan government accountable for the terrorist attack and pointedly remarked that “the countries that are participating in the anti-terrorist coalition should respond why they are unable to deal with terrorist groups and armed bandits in their territories.” Here in Islamabad, the Foreign Office assured the Iranian ambassador, who conveyed his government’s concern over the terrorist attack, that Pakistan would extend full cooperation to the Iranian government in strengthening coordination and security along the border. The seriousness of the Iranian concern was brought home by a letter from Iranian President Hassan Rouhani to Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif expressing the hope that “those responsible for this terrorist attack (would) be arrested and prosecuted”. Rouhani noted that “Pakistan’s safety, growth, and progress have always topped Iran’s agenda of ties with the friendly and neighbouring country....Iran’s soil has never been abused against any of its neighbours including Pakistan”. He added, however, that Iran “is very disheartened that it is repeatedly transgressed upon from the Pakistani soil by armed bandits and terrorist hirelings.”

Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif visited Islamabad on 4 May to press Pakistani authorities to take action against terrorists involved in the attack on the Iranian border

guards and adopt necessary measures to prevent such attacks in the future. Jawad Zarif had meetings with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, Interior Minister Nisar Ali Khan, Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa, and National Security Adviser Lt. General (Retired) Nasser Janjua. During these meetings, the Iranian Foreign Minister was assured that Pakistan would take steps to prevent cross-border attacks, including the deployment of additional troops along its border with Iran. The two sides also agreed to ensure better coordination, greater intelligence sharing, and frequent interactions at political, military and security levels.

The importance of friendly relations between Pakistan and Iran for their security and economic progress cannot be overemphasised. The current strains in their relations are, therefore, highly regrettable. Islamabad and Tehran must handle their vital bilateral relationship with great care to safeguard and promote their shared political, security, and economic interests. At the same time, they should learn to deal with their differences on various issues through mutual understanding and accommodation. Unfortunately, both the countries were guilty of serious blunders in handling the Afghanistan issue and their bilateral relations in 1990's with serious adverse repercussions on their security and economic well-being. They cannot afford to repeat those mistakes. They must also beware of the intrigues and machinations of their common enemies who would like to create divisions and disputes between the Muslim countries thereby weakening them and slowing down their progress. Foreign Minister Javad Zarif's recent visit to Pakistan was a welcome development as it conveyed Iran's preference to resolve its difference with Pakistan through diplomacy. It is in Pakistan's own interest to respond positively to the Iranian initiative and take all possible steps for strengthening bilateral relations and resolving mutual differences amicably.

Source: <http://nation.com.pk/columns/09-May-2017/strains-in-pakistan-iran-relations>

Managing Kashmir Conflict By Adeel Mukhtar

Recent assertions of the former head of India's external spy agency Research & Analysis Wing (RAW) came with no surprise. No doubt, India has been discomfited in Kashmir. Hurriyat is unified and Kashmiri youth is more intent today. What should boggle one, however, is the rationale; while Indian chief A. S. Daulat regards today's Kashmir state of affairs 'scarier' and 'hopeless,' he was not citing the use of pellet guns, violation of Geneva Conventions by sniping ambulance and scores of other heinous humanitarian infringements by Indian occupation forces. Ironically, the situation is uncontrollable because 'young Kashmiri minds have gone out of control' and India can manipulate them no longer. To put Indian mentality in further context, one can also refer to Yashwant Sinha's report wherein he, as well, savvy the causes of 2nd Intifada but on limited yardsticks, mostly favouring India. Nevertheless, the bright side is: Indian hawks are now also in favour of dialogue with Pakistan on Kashmir without any pre-conditions as it was agreed in Simla Agreement.

What India is realising today, that dialogue is the better solution; Pakistan has been disseminating since the last 25 years. During this period, Pakistan successfully internationalised the Kashmir dispute. It allowed as well as facilitated the local and international press, including Indian media, to cover the ongoing condition on the Pakistani side of Line of Control (LoC). In a similar manner, Pakistan also placed Kashmir dispute before a number of international organisations, such as Non Aligned Movement (NAM), Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) etc. In addition to on-ground efforts, Pakistan has also been sending versatile delegations, consisting of parliamentarians, thinkers, analysts and journalists to the international community. Pakistan government has been of the opinion that it was India's rational leadership of that time that took the case of the Kashmir to the UN under the article 35 of its Charter on January 1, 1948. Later on, the Simla Agreement, the Lahore Declaration, Agra Summit and the peace process following the 12th SAARC Summit; all bear struggle by Pakistan as well as India to initiate a bilateral discussion on the issue, reiterating Kashmir resolution time and again. The same should have been carried on until the closure of the conflict.

Now, India tried to militarily subdue the aspirations of Kashmiris; but, the only way forward to quench the thirst of Kashmiris' self-determination right is dialogues, as it has already agreed by the Indians now. A Pakistani dove has a solution for it. In this regards, collaborative approach can be utilised to manage the Kashmir dispute. Dr. Syed Shahid Hussain Bukhari in his article entitled, "Managing Kashmir Conflict: A Collaborative Approach" comprehends that, to operationalise the collaborative approach, the foremost step is the recognition of Kashmir dispute as a mutual trouble by

India. It has been India's persistent stubbornness that had been depriving Kashmiris from socio-economic development. What could help in this is the establishment of a loose confederation of Jammu and Kashmir territories with maximum possible decentralisation. Such a central government should be managed by Council of Common Interest (CCI) of both countries, with Kashmiri representatives from both sides as an essential element. Another important initiative should be the revival of people to people contact. Both sides could use biometric verification system to avoid any untoward incidents, if they want. This would resurrect the hopes of self-determination of Kashmiri youth that are not even afraid to die today in their fight against Indian consistent brutalities. Lastly, according to Amit Ray, "The formula of life is simple. It is the formula of giving - giving courage, attention, peace, love and comfort to yourself and the society. Non-violence ... requires courage – courage to love the beauty of life, beauty of humanity and the beauty of the world.

Source: <http://nation.com.pk/columns/09-May-2017/managing-kashmir-conflict>

A Stagnant Relationship | Editorial

Pakistan's relationship with Afghanistan does not seem to be improving despite attempts made by both sides in recent weeks to cultivate an air of cordiality. The primary cause continues to be unilateral Afghan misadventures aimed at irking its neighbour. The premeditated attack on the census team was the first one, and now the Afghan spy agency National Directorate of Security (NDS) picked up two members of the Pakistani embassy in Kabul by force, detained them for several hours, and let them go without a charge after intervention by the Pakistani authorities. These actions are a clear violation of international norms, and without context, a thinly veiled provocation.

The circumstances surrounding the actions are unclear, mostly because the Afghan authorities have given no explanation. However, considering the involvement of consular staff, and breach of articles enshrined in the Vienna Convention, one can draw parallels with the Indian appeal over the Khulbushan Yadav case, which also centres on an alleged breach of the same convention. Coming on a day when the International Court of Justice (ICJ) is finalising its deliberations on preliminary measures, the Afghan actions take on added significance.

However, all of this stands at odds with the statements of the authorities. An Afghan army delegation led by their Director General Military Operations last week visited GHQ where it was agreed during bilateral talks that "an environment of mutual respect, trust, cordiality and cooperation" would be fostered. While there seems to be a general willingness to avoid conflicts and skirmishes that continue to erupt between the two nations, not all elements of the Afghan government seem on board. Perhaps it is the peculiarities of the hybrid Afghan government with two executive powers or just a section influenced by foreign powers, but the messages coming from the Afghan government are inconsistent and contradictory.

If matters continue like this, it is not inconceivable that a misunderstanding leads to another deadly skirmish. Even more likely is an incident like this one damaging relations to the extent that Pakistan is forced to close the borders at Chaman and Torkham again as a punitive measure. None of which is useful for Afghanistan.

While the onus to mend the bilateral relationship rests with Pakistan too, Afghanistan must ensure that it gets the unruly aspects of its administration under order and on the same page as the rest of the nation. There is too much at stake for the country to be cavalier about relations with Pakistan.

Source: <http://nation.com.pk/editorials/19-May-2017/a-stagnant-relationship>

Water Solutions | Editorial

It is not surprising that Pakistan – a largely agrarian based economy which draws its water from a sprawling network of rivers, canals and barrages – faces water shortage. The growing population has taxed the water supply beyond its capacity and the changing climate and lack of the required number of large scale storage facilities such as dams has further exacerbated the problem.

What is surprising however is, that in a country like this, where water management is perhaps the prime concern of the government and water sharing the most routine and important source of cooperation between the provinces and the federation, major disputes that threaten to go to court still exist. More worryingly, the only forum where they can be sufficiently addressed is the Council of Common Interests (CCI), a meeting of provincial Chief Ministers with the Prime Ministers and members of the Cabinet – which is held sporadically and deals with all issues of power sharing between the provinces, water just being one of the concerns.

While chairing a meeting at his Sindh residence in preparation of the upcoming CCI, the Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah said that in response to Balochistan filing a claim against Sindh for shortfall in the Pat Feeder and Kirthar Canal, Sindh will file a claim against the federal government for short supply from the Indus river system from 1991. While he directs his ministers to draw up a calculation of the total shortfall over the decades, Indus River System Authority (IRSA) has said Sindh is already getting its 500 cusecs water for Karachi from the IRSA under the water-sharing accord, but that number can be increased if the CCI authorises it.

It is evident that what is needed is a dedicated body that overlooks water sharing between the different provinces. It needs to be fully empowered to handle disputes, and empowered to make alterations to water quotas. Public claims by Chief Ministers should not be the method through which water sharing – a settled aspect of most governments – is handled.

Source: <http://nation.com.pk/editorials/03-May-2017/water-solutions>

ECONOMY

Alibaba in Pakistan | Editorial

The entry of the Alibaba Group in Pakistan will not only boost the country's e-commerce sector but will also serve as a tipping point for other tech giants to tap into the market. The negotiations that started earlier this year at the World Economic Forum resulted in the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding during Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's visit to the company's headquarters in Hong Kong. The agreement between Alibaba and Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) was signed by Commerce Minister Khurram Dastgir and Michael Evans, President of Alibaba Group, and Douglas Feagin, Senior Vice President of Global Business of Ant Financial, on behalf of Alibaba. Under the terms of the MoU, Alibaba, Ant Financial, and TDAP agreed to foster the growth of worldwide exports of products by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Pakistan through e-commerce.

The government deserves appreciation for its efforts for the steps it has taken to boost the online market. The 3G/4G Internet licences auction in 2014 propelled the number of web users in Pakistan from approximately 3 million in 2014 to over 40 million till now. Moreover, along with the introduction of other business-friendly policies, Pakistan Telecommunication Policy 2015 was a major step in the promotion of e-commerce in the country.

But on the flip side, the government needs to do more to woo investors on this front. First and foremost, it must address the absence of internationally used digital payment methods. And until these are in place, efforts to court tech giants like PayPal, Amazon and eBay will be in vain. Moreover, Pakistan will remain a cashed-based economy, ill-equipped to exploit the full potential of e-commerce. Secondly, the State Bank of Pakistan and private banks urgently need to increase financial inclusion in the country. Recent State Bank data shows that only 16 percent people in Pakistan hold a bank account — which is a dismal figure as compared to the other comparative economies.

The other major concern that the government should heed to is the protection of local start-ups and shopping portals that have established themselves over the years but which don't have the capacity to compete with the likes of Alibaba. This is needed to avoid monopolistic competition of the online market. In the absence of larger e-commerce groups, some local groups such as Daraz have thrived, though resorting to

the cash-on-delivery mechanism. Increased Internet penetration over the past three years has resulted in growth of such portals.

Pakistan cannot afford to waste more time. Quite literally.

Source:<http://dailytimes.com.pk/editorial/17-May-17/alibaba-in-pakistan>

Towards Equitable Growth By Dr Ikramul Haq

The two-day Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation was held in Beijing on May 14-15, 2017. The event, attended by Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif and all four chief ministers of Pakistan, extended great opportunities of economic progress for Pakistan. They also got the chance to meet 28 heads of state and government, about 50 leaders of international organisations, over 100 ministerial-level officials and over 1,200 delegates from various countries and regions who were participating at the mega event.

During his stay in Beijing, the prime minister had meetings with Chinese President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Li Keqiang. The three men discussed and reached many agreements, especially regarding the international airport for Gwadar. This, once again proved that China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is not only beneficial for both countries but for the entire region and many international companies.

An oped, 'Highway to sell: how \$55b trade corridor rekindled China-Pakistan love affair' by Tom Hussain published in 'South China Morning Post' says: "A US\$55 billion programme to link the routes of China's Belt and Road plan through Pakistan has revived a relationship that began with the Karakoram Highway". While highlighting the significance of China's One-belt, One-Road (OBOR) initiative, Hussain mentions that "most Pakistani political opposition was silenced in December 2016 when Beijing agreed to include projects proposed by opposition-controlled provincial governments, boosting the scale of CPEC to US\$55 billion from the original US\$46 billion".

Like many others, Hussain cautions: "The success of CPEC may depend less on politics and more on Pakistan's ability to balance the expense of the project against its impact on economic growth – a matter particularly pertinent given Pakistan's weak finances. Amid stagnant exports and falling remittances, surging imports of Chinese machinery for CPEC projects contributed heavily to a 135 percent jump in Pakistan's current account deficit between July last year and March, according to figures released by the Central Bank in April".

Since 1947, Pakistan has been struggling to become a self-reliant economy that can end its dependence on foreign donors that will inevitably also end its political subjugation. The challenges on the economic front include huge fiscal and current account deficits, burgeoning debts, perpetuation of an elitist economy, a growing gulf between the rich and poor, economic disparities, an uneven development model, an oppressive tax system, sluggish economic growth, lack of investment to accelerate

growth and create new jobs, dearth of skilled labour, dwindling exports, rising imports, inadequate infrastructure development – just to mention the major ones.

Hopes are now pinned on CPEC, which official quarters claim would be a ‘game changer’ and turn Pakistan into one of the largest economies in the coming years. After taking into account the size of CPEC-related projects, all credit rating agencies made positive remarks. They stated that energy projects throughout the country would ultimately reduce the cost of power generation, lowering the need for electricity subsidies – a key burden on the federal budget – and “improving economic growth, which would in turn increase tax revenues for the government”. Obviously these two factors can substantially reduce the budget deficit and resultantly ever-increasing debt servicing.

It is true that many of the key benefits of energy projects under CPEC would not materialise until 2018 but some will start accruing during 2017. CPEC envisages 21 agreements for energy (gas, coal and solar) and 14 out of these will be providing up to 10,400 megawatts (MW) of energy by March 2018 to make up for the 2015 energy shortfall of 4,500MW. According to China Daily, these projects should generate up to 16,400MW of energy altogether. This is what we need to induce local and foreign investors to establish new businesses.

It is time we came out of ‘economic despair’ and utilised CPEC as an opportunity to reform our outdated elitist structures that are the main impediments to our robust economic growth. A new era of economic development is at our doorstep. We need to upgrade all our delivery systems to make this historic opportunity a success. Much-needed foreign investment and development of infrastructure is coming from China – this is a reality and not an illusion as many sceptics portray. We need to make the best use of it.

Execution of all CPEC projects – including those that will be conceived after the infrastructure is completed – can bring prosperity to Pakistan. The corridor will make the country one of the largest economies of the world. The challenge of removing inefficiencies from our administrative structures that are change-resistant is formidable but not impossible. There is a realisation that we should move towards modern and efficient delivery systems. CPEC, being a multi-faceted project, will essentially pull public and private sectors onto a fast track development mode. And so it will prove to be a blessing for Pakistanis who are otherwise suffering on account of lethargy and indifferent attitudes.

The fruits of CPEC connectivity would be enormous for the entire region without which the huge potential of trade within South Asia cannot be achieved. Imagine hundreds of service stations along the roads giving employment to our youth, acceleration of trade between different parts of Pakistan, boost to tourism, peace and prosperity as Afghanistan, India and Iran transit trade through CPEC. There is no doubt that this would bring prosperity to the millions inhabiting South Asia. It is thus imperative for the government of Pakistan and all stakeholders to highlight the advantages of CPEC and create an atmosphere of love and fraternity among all the beneficiaries.

The new dawn of economic wellbeing for Pakistanis is still a dream but it can be turned into a reality – the only thing we need is to ensure that all citizens get adequate opportunities to prosper and benefit equally from economic growth. We must move fast to end economic apartheid that is presently inbuilt in our elitist structure. Without removing these distortions, the real benefits of even mega projects like CPEC could be concentrated in just a few hands – the rich and mighty having control over resources.

Equitable growth can come through great initiatives like CPEC if we implement the Chinese model suggested by the former general secretary of the Communist Party of China, Hu Jintao. He said: “A harmonious society should feature democracy, the rule of law, equity, justice, sincerity, amity and vitality”.

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Source: <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/205278-Towards-equitable-growth>

World Bank Update on Pakistan's Economy By Dr Aamir Khan

In a recently released development update on Pakistan, the World Bank has summarised the state of Pakistan's economy aptly, wisely and succinctly. The report is slick, well-written, and buttressed by all the right facts, figures and graphs. Even non-economists like me can read it. The report heaps praise on Pakistan's government where it should, and paints a realistic picture of the emerging challenges where it must. However, it ignores the 'Basheeran' factor. But first the report. For accuracy, I try to reproduce the report's assertions verbatim.

The report acknowledges that Pakistan's economy continues to grow strongly, emerging as one of the top performers in South Asia. Despite an uncertain global climate, Pakistan's economic growth is expected to accelerate to 5.2% in FY17 from 4.7% in FY16. Services, which comprise 59% of the economy, are expected to grow at a steady 5.6% in FY17.

Similarly, Inflation has remained within a tolerable range. Pakistan's investment-to-GDP ratio is expected to increase slightly in FY17 due to CPEC-related infrastructure projects. CPEC can unleash positive externalities over the short to medium term. Similarly, Pakistan's fiscal position has improved significantly over the past three years as the consolidated fiscal deficit (excluding grants) declined from 8.5% of GDP in FY13 to 4.6% in FY16.

The most remarkable story has been the stellar growth exhibited by Pakistan's equity market, with the benchmark KSE-100 Index growing 45.7% in 2016. This growth has occurred in part due to equity market reforms, including the integration of the country's three stock exchanges and improved governance and risk management.

So the World Bank's update is full of glowing remarks for Pakistan? Not exactly. The report issues numerous warnings that not all is well. Revenue growth is slowing, with the fiscal deficit growing for the first time in three years. Exports continue to fall as imports grow, substantially increasing the current account deficit. Investments rates – already low – fell further in FY16. The energy sector circular debt has resurfaced. There is a possibility that Pakistan may lose its impressive gains achieved over the past four years.

As the government nears four years in office, progress on reforms is slowing down. Privatisation efforts have stalled, and FBR performance in tax collection is below target, even after several years of strong performance. In Punjab, the province's economy has struggled to create enough jobs for its growing young population.

Some of the reasons for these emerging challenges are as follows. As the government nears four years in office, progress on reforms is slowing down. Privatisation efforts have stalled, and FBR performance in tax collection is below target, after several years of strong performance. In Punjab, the province's economy has struggled to create enough jobs for its growing young population. Whereas Vietnam, China and other South Asian countries have increased agricultural yields, Pakistan's agricultural sector has lagged behind. Even remittances have fallen by 2.3% in the first nine months of FY17.

To better understand what I have to say, I need to acquaint readers briefly with one of the oldest debates in social sciences: the question of qualitative versus quantitative approach to creating and testing knowledge. Broadly speaking, the qualitative approach is generally inductive in nature, is used to generate theories, and is not generalised to a certain population. The quantitative approach is exhibited in the World Bank's update; numbers are produced which are generalisable to the entire population of Pakistan.

However, at times even one point of data can lead to a new point of view. Take my own case. We were four brothers (one is a Shaheed) and we have six children amongst us. All six are studying in good schools. There is also a sweeperess in our house. She has around eight children and all are happily married. They have produced around 50 grand-children for her and I have calculated that in another 15 years this figure will reach 100. Most will remain illiterate.

My hypothesis is that for every educated child in Pakistan, at least five uneducated children are being produced. I also think that the proportion of the educated in Pakistan is actually falling. This full-throttled population growth will eventually cancel whatever progress we make, degrade environment and lead to a sharp decline in the law and order situation.

Has anyone thought about it?

The writer has a Master's in Sociology from Oxford

Source:<http://dailytimes.com.pk/opinion/22-May-17/world-bank-update-on-pakistans-economy>

Economic Survey 2016-17 | Editorial

Before the aspirations and optimism of the federal budget for the next fiscal year, there has to be a reckoning. The annual Economic Survey, which gives an overview of the performance of the economy over the previous year, showed once again that the government's projections were far from being met. In presenting the survey, Finance Minister Ishaq Dar said that the GDP for the year was 5.28 percent, far short of the target of 5.7 percent. Still, the growth was the largest the country has experienced in the last 10 years and shows that the investments pouring in through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor are having an effect on the economy. That inflation clocked in well below expectations, at just over 4 percent as opposed to the predicted 6 percent is another sign of the strength of the economy.

The industrial and services sectors continue to boom, with both registering growth of more than 5 percent and the service sector now contributes to 60 percent of our total GDP. It is a sign of a maturing economy when there is so much expansion in the service sector. Ishaq Dar was upbeat throughout his presentation, pointing out that the total volume of the economy had crossed \$300 billion for the first time. And there is certainly reason to be happy, with the government's focus on growth now paying dividends. Still, any jubilation needs to be tempered. There are some worrying signs in the figures presented by the finance minister. The trade deficit widened to \$24 billion, with exports only bringing in \$21.76 billion. This is mostly due to the extra capital expenditures we have paid to import heavy machinery for CPEC-related projects and the hope is that those investments will pay off in the future. But much of those imports have been paid for through loans and if we are to be able to repay them then it is vital that our export base is expanded as soon as possible. Dar was also happy that the government met its budget deficit target of 3.8 percent but the figures barely tell the story. The Federal Board of Revenue was not able to come close to the amount it projected to collect in the form of income taxes. The shortfall was made up by removing power subsidies and increasing indirect taxes, which are regressive and disproportionately hurt the poor. Dar didn't have much to say about the informal sector either, which by some estimates is close to half of the documented economy. The revenue lost through the black economy means that the government continues to balance the budget on the backs of the poor. The budget for the upcoming year is likely to give us more of the same, as the government focuses on growth without ensuring that growth is equitable. This is why, although there are reasons to be pleased with the performance of the economy, we now need to ensure that the benefits are felt by all.

Source: <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/206747-Economic-Survey-2016-17>

Indo-Pak Economic Reset By Dr Syed Shahid Hussain Bukhari

Pakistan and India have been at odds with each other for the last 70 years. Both states have fought wars and faced crises that could have escalated into wars. Characterised by the Ex-President of United States, Bill Clinton, as the 'most dangerous place on earth', the South Asian region still awaits lasting peace. People of the Sub-continent have constantly been paying up for their respective national security needs but the states have yet to ensure security. Rather, the region is entangled in a security dilemma.

Several attempts have been made to bring peace to the region but none has come to fruition. Both states have extremely divergent claims that seem not to be reconcilable too easily, but efforts have continued from intra-state activists as well as the international community towards this end. Meanwhile, both states have also been using bilateral diplomatic channels to settle their disputes. The only good thing practiced in the past was the continuation of the dialogue process. Sadly, this practice has now been obsolete and most efforts for negotiations stand relinquished due to India's policy of halting negotiations if and when anything happens against its will. Negotiations are known as the best tool for settlement of disputes between states. One can observe that even the deadliest conflicts and wars have usually ended through negotiations.

Keeping this in view, if one tries to examine the prospects for India-Pakistan dispute settlement, it is observable that India has always refrained from negotiating with Pakistan on the pretext of so-called acts of terrorism in India. Indian policy to suspend bilateral dialogues with Pakistan, without producing a solid proof regarding Pakistan's involvement in acts of terrorism is the product of increasing extremism in Indian policy circles. While India has always been talking about nurturing of extremism in Pakistan and has pointed fingers at non-state actors in Pakistan, it has never taken care of its own policies that are a manifestation of extremist attitude of Indian state. Promoting anti-Pakistan sentiments in Indian public has become a state policy, which is very alarming for peaceful settlement of outstanding disputes between the two countries. It is observable that anti-Pakistan sentiments have been enshrined in hearts and minds of Indian public, media, and political parties. Pakistan-bashing has become a tool for Indian electronic media to attract audience, while Indian political parties use anti-Pakistan manifestos for their electoral campaigns. Some of the recent instances that manifest Indian state's inability or unwillingness to control such extremist attitudes are the cancellation of Pakistani students' tour in India; stone-pelting training of Hindu groups to respond to Kashmiri stone-pelters; and threats to Pakistani celebrities

regarding performances in India. Another incident that shows the extent of radicalisation of Indian policy circles vis-à-vis Pakistan is former Indian Foreign Secretary Kanwal Sibal's suggestion that Pakistani soldiers be kidnapped and used to bargain Kulbhushan Jadhav's release. Indian officials are unable to even understand their international obligations. Yet another manifestation of extremism in Indian policy makers at the highest level is the most recent commendation reward given by Indian Army Chief Bipin Rawat to an Indian Major who had tied a Kashmiri boy in front of his military jeep while driving the vehicle in a Kashmiri neighbourhood.

While India has always talked of Pakistan nurturing extremism and has pointed fingers at its support of non-state actors — it has never tackled its own extremist policies. It seems that anti-Pakistan sentiments are being deliberately supported as a state policy. Although Indian policymakers have been aiming at isolating Pakistan, it is foreseeable that projecting such kind of extremist attitude in one's own public would contribute only to self-alienation. Since neighbours cannot be changed, it would be wise to develop cordial relations with those at your door-step, rather than radicalising your own public in hatred and violence. Indian policymakers must recognise the reality of Pakistan as a prudent state that cannot be undermined through acquisition of weapons or coercive diplomacy. Promoting so much hatred can neither defeat Pakistan nor boost economic development in India. Such an attitude towards Pakistan will prove to be self-defeating for India in its surge for great power status. Moreover, it may also raise questions on the efficacy of Indian establishment to defend its state against the so-called Pakistan-sponsored acts of terrorism. History has proved that despite having better resources at its disposal, Indians have never been successful in subordinating Pakistan, and after the nuclearisation of South Asia such efforts will only prove to be self-destructive. This is an era of economic cooperation and development for Asian nations where mutual cooperation will be a better choice. Pakistan has manifested its positive attitude by inviting India to be part of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) which shall prove to be a road to prosperity in the region. Therefore, it will be a wise choice for Indian policy makers to adopt a policy of 'Act North-West' and open ways for engagement with Pakistan rather than estrangement.

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Source: <http://dailytimes.com.pk/opinion/30-May-17/indo-pak-economic-reset>

From CPEC to OBOR By Imtiaz Rafi Butt

On May 12, 2017, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif along with heads of 27 states reached Beijing to attend the World Forum on One Belt One Road Initiative. China is implementing its vision of leading global trade and the underlying argument is prosperity through connectivity and cooperation. The OBOR initiative, as the name indicates, is still in the phases of being rolled out. The only “well begun, half done” story that the Chinese Government could speak of in favor of OBOR was the preliminary success of CPEC in Pakistan. It is an ambitious stance, but one with considerable credibility. CPEC is a display of commitment by President Jinping. That is why presence of Pakistan was so critical to the success of OBOR forum. However, it would be more than prudent to differentiate between the goals and prospects of CPEC and OBOR separately.

To begin with, it is clear that CPEC is a significant part of initiating OBOR. From a broader perspective, OBOR is China’s grand Geo-Political strategy to transform the World Order as we know it OBOR, ambitious project that seeks to connect the People’s Republic of China with countries of Europe, Asia and Africa through land and sea routes. The primary objective is to capture a larger share of global trade and commerce. Secondary objective is to flood Chinese exports in the newly developed land and sea routes. The third is maintaining a means to acquire cheap oil and gas back and forth as and when required by the expanding giant of an economy that is China. There are 6 routes in all that are to be coordinated simultaneously as follows:

1. China–Pakistan Corridor, running from South-Western China to Pakistan
2. China–Mongolia–Russia Corridor, running from Northern China to Eastern Russia
3. China–Central Asia–West Asia Corridor, running from Western China to Turkey
4. China–Indochina Peninsula Corridor, running from Southern China to Singapore
5. New Eurasian Land Bridge, running from Western China to Western Russia
6. Maritime Silk Road, running from the Chinese Coast over Singapore to the Mediterranean.

All these make up the OBOR initiative in its entirety. It is evident from the above that CPEC is the flagship project and one small portion of the gigantic enterprise that is OBOR. In total, over 60 countries will be directly connected to China, becoming reliant on its goods and services. In exchange of this reliance, China will be willing to offer development in infrastructure, trade, commerce and mutual benefits through exchange. After being formally unveiled by Xi Jinping in October, 2013, OBOR is being praised by economic experts in China unanimously. Gwadar has taken center stage in the CPEC portion of OBOR as it touches the Maritime as well as the Land Silk Route. The distance that Chinese exports have to travel before reaching warm waters has been reduced by over 12 thousand kilometers. China seeks to attain the same competitive edge through all other 5 routes that are under development. All this is happening when China's economy began to slow down after a double digit growth in GDP over the last ten momentous years. From a point of view of National and Organizational theory, after reaching a particular point in development and maturity curve, the graph either goes down or reenergizes itself through innovation and clever restructuring. OBOR is that very readjustment and modernization.

CPEC and OBOR complement each other not just for the sake of trade and commerce but also in socio-political aspects. Pakistan is a long-standing ally with a common border. The Pakistan army is heavily engaged in fighting off militant organizations that allegedly have contacts with hostile neighbor India. From a realist perspective, it would only be a matter of time before the fire of terrorism spreads from Pakistani borders to Muslim majority areas in China. India being a direct economic competitor in the region would surely benefit from disruption in Chinese development and progress. CPEC has political objectives as well as economic. A developed and stable Pakistan would be a bastion against spread of violence and militant organizations. It would not be a difficult task to fan anarchy in a Communist state that discourages all sorts of religious beliefs. Pakistan with a strong Government would make sure that external interference in the region is kept under check, whether coming from American controlled Afghanistan or Indian guided covert operations. On the other hand, industrial and commercial success in Pakistan has been hampered by insufficient infrastructure and power shortage. CPEC would eliminate these two complications thereby giving the Pakistan economy the boost it has needed for decades. It would mark as a shift in diplomatic and economic independence, out of the clutches of Washington based organizations like World Bank and IMF.

Another influential aspect of OBOR is the presence of Putin at the Forum and the absence of Donald Trump. The politics of isolation and protectionism is taking over significant Western countries. Britain decided to part ways with the European Union and the United States is putting America first and calling NATO to be out-dated. Donald

Trump's campaign of building walls instead of bridges has given an involuntary nudge to OBOR. Finally, the United States has lost the advantage that kept it in the lead. For the past 60 years, the Americans actively supported open, fair and free trade. World Trade Organization, IMF and the World Bank championed the cause of fair capitalism. It was advocated that the free market and fair competition can fix the evils of economic disparity. The relevant policies put countries like the United Kingdom and the United States as world leaders. As of 2017, these two countries have decided to look inwards instead of outwards. China has aptly taken advantage of the situation. President Jiping is now the champion of global trade and mutual cooperation. OBOR is the spearhead of China's vision to take over as the world leader. Asia has gained what Western countries have lost in the past few years.

Hand in hand with the success of CPEC is the promotion for OBOR. It is not surprising that the worth of projects under CPEC has been enhanced from 42 Billion Dollars to 54 Billion. For Pakistan, this is the time to form strong bonds and fulfill the commitments made as per the MoUs signed with the Chinese diplomats. The Chinese Government and its vision of expansion are too grand to be interrupted by trivial administrative and domestic complications. There is a lot to gain for both China and Pakistan. CPEC is the largest investment that Pakistan has ever attracted since independence and OBOR is the largest trade and diplomatic expansion project that the Chinese people have ever sponsored.

Source: <http://nation.com.pk/columns/02-Jun-2017/from-cpec-to-obor>

OBOR Summit and Pakistan By Athar Z Abbasi

China has recently hosted the One Belt-One Road (OBOR) summit in Beijing in which participants from various countries attended the summit. China wants to build a sea and road route network in more than a dozen countries of Asia, Middle East, Europe and Africa. It is approximately 1 trillion dollars of investment. Mr Xi Jinping, President of China has said emphatically that countries are open to join, referring to India. China's One Belt-One Road initiative will integrate various regions for trade. It would boost global trade. CPEC is also a project under the same vision of the Chinese OBOR initiative. The May 14-15 forum was attended by 29 heads of state and government, besides delegates from around 130 countries.

Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif represented Pakistan. Underscoring the importance of OBOR, Mr Sharif stated that OBOR is unfolding across continents, is fostering inclusion, creating tolerance, and promoting acceptance of cultural diversity. He categorically said in his speech that CPEC is an economic undertaking open to all countries in the region. It has no geographical boundaries. It must not be politicised. The Prime Minister called for building a peaceful, connected and caring neighbourhood by shunning mutual differences. "It is time we transcend our differences, resolve conflicts through dialogue and diplomacy, and leave a legacy of peace for future generations," he further reiterated in his speech.

Pakistan and China also signed six accords of cooperation in diverse fields: The framework of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road initiative and agreements on economic and technical cooperation (1.5 billion RMB for Gwadar Airport, among others and 1.1bn RMB for East Bay Expressway). The total worth of the accords is about \$500 million. The MoUs add to \$57bn already pledged for CPEC. The following deals are among the accords signed by two countries: Two cooperation agreements worth \$333m for an airport in Gwadar, the site of a deepwater port that is to provide an outlet to the Arabian Sea from the far western Chinese province of Xinjiang, establishment of the Havelian dry port in Pakistan, agreement on economic and technical cooperation (\$160m) for the East Bay Expressway linking Gwadar to Pakistan's highway network.

During the meeting of the Prime Minister of Pakistan with the Chinese President, the chief ministers of four federating units were also with him. This is a good tradition – the four chief ministers of federating units were also being kept on board on all major negotiations and other developments of bilateral relations between two countries. In a way, it also gives them an opportunity to directly interact with the Chinese leadership

with regards to development projects in their respective development programmes. CPEC is a gigantic project and its fruits will be shared with all provinces of Pakistan. CPEC itself enhances the beauty of Pakistan's federation as its route passes through all federating units. During his meeting with his Chinese counterpart, the Prime Minister mulled over industrial zones under the CPEC project. Under the umbrella of CPEC, China is to develop industrial zones in various areas of Pakistan. On the sidelines, the Pakistani leadership discussed the possible assistance of China in building the Diamer-Bhasha dam.

Projects under China's vision of OBOR (One Belt-One Road), there would be immense infrastructure development in the countries of its routes. Countries in Asia and Africa would have an opportunity to integrate themselves with the global economy. It would also help in alleviating poverty in these areas especially in Asia and Africa by generating new jobs and creating industrial zones for the people of these areas. It would open new vistas of investments for these countries. The Minister for Planning, Reform and Development, Ahsan Iqbal has recently pointed out that CPEC's impact on GDP growth would be around 1.5 percent which will create around 1.5 million additional jobs according to some estimates. We need to generate employment for our youth and the need to develop various sectors of our economy and the present government is taking all steps in this regard. The mega projects launched by this government are transparent and are yielding dividends in the form of improvement of the quality of life of the general masses. Infrastructure development is a key indicator of development of a country and this government has not only provided better communication system by constructing road networks in various cities but it has also provided the finest internal communication system for the local commuters in the form of metro bus system. The foreign reserves of Pakistan and the Stock Exchange have touched unprecedented heights in the recent history of Pakistan. All this development, prosperity and progress are basically the vision of Prime Minister, Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif.

It is good that the present government is pursuing its development agenda domestically and internationally. Materialisation of CPEC and other power generation projects with China are a manifestation of this government's commitment to development of Pakistan. Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif has always pursued the policy of peaceful coexistence and that's why he is ready to welcome any country in CPEC. The times are changing rapidly and presently, politics is driven by economics. This realisation should be the ultimate consideration of countries living on this part of the world.

China, with its sincerity, has provided the opportunity to the world to integrate themselves for their development. China's vision of regional connectivity is for the economic prosperity and well-being of humanity. Hopefully, the countries situated

around China's OBOR vision can grab this economic opportunity and tread the path of global development.

Source: <http://nation.com.pk/columns/20-May-2017/obor-summit-and-pakistan>

The Budget and Development By Dr Akmal Hussain

The budget is not just an accounting exercise that brings government expenditures and revenues in line with what is considered a prudent deficit target. For it to be meaningful, the annual budget should be part of a medium-term economic strategy. It may be helpful, therefore, to identify some of the strategic development goals and the associated budgetary design through which these goals can be achieved.

In Pakistan today, the majority of people are deprived of the minimum material conditions of dignified human existence, such as high-quality education, healthcare, hygienic drinking water and sanitation. It is not surprising that as a consequence, illness is widespread, especially among the poor. Our estimates show that 65 percent of the poor population is suffering from ill health and chronic, though treatable, diseases: the poor are on average sick for three months of the year.

Malnutrition is rampant, with 44 percent of children suffering from stunting due to malnutrition. The latest official national estimate shows that in terms of one dollar per person per day, about one-third of the population is living in poverty. But in terms of the internationally used \$2 a day per person figure, about 60 percent of Pakistan's population is living below the poverty line.

Such acute economic deprivation for the majority of the population in a country where a small elite is living in luxury violates our natural sense of justice. Such mass deprivation and inequality thus feeds militant extremism. It also suppresses the productive and creative potential of the majority of people and thereby becomes a major constraint to long-term economic growth.

In this context, four key strategic goals can be specified, the achievement of which is necessary for the welfare of the people as a whole, rather than just the elite. New research shows that the pursuit of these goals is also essential for sustained long-term economic growth.

First, the government should give a commitment to providing for all citizens – in the next four years – high quality healthcare, education and social protection, including state pensions and unemployment benefits. The forthcoming budget should take a credible first step towards this goal. New research shows that this universal provision of basic services plays a vital role in achieving a sustained high per capita income growth. The

empirical evidence is consistent with economic logic. Clearly if people are well-educated and skilled, their productivity will be relatively higher.

Similarly, if people are healthy and lose fewer work days due to illnesses, their average productivity on an annual basis will be higher. Less intuitively obvious are the results of recent research by Easterly and Rodrik, respectively. They have shown that more cohesive societies achieve higher long-term growth compared to divisive societies torn by conflict. It can be argued that the provision of these basic services help social cohesion, and citizens in such societies are more economically secure, have a stake in the state and are hence more motivated to contribute to the nation.

Most of the high growth achievers made this commitment of the universal provision of health, education and social protection. For example, Germany under Bismarck in the 19th century, Japan under the Meiji dynasty in the mid-19th century, China in the mid-20th century, the Scandinavian countries in the early 20th century, Britain in the mid-20th century and finally Brazil and Chile in the early to mid-20th century. Now economic orthodoxy would claim that Pakistan is too poor a country to afford the large budgetary expenditures for such a goal. On the contrary, evidence provided in a recent UNDP Human Development Report shows that many of the countries at the time that they gave this commitment (for example, Germany and China) had a per capita lower than that of Pakistan today.

The second strategic development goal is to place Pakistan on a new trajectory of inclusive growth. I have argued in my recent research that Pakistan has so far been unable to achieve sustained high economic growth because of inequality. If opportunities for investment and high wage employment are provided to the middle classes and the poor rather than just the elite, then a broader base would be created for investment, productivity increase and innovation. Thus a higher and sustained growth can be achieved through equity.

Such inclusive growth requires not only budgetary provisions for providing high quality education and skill-training for people but also access over productive resources, credit and equitable access over markets. Pakistan will have to move out of being what I have called 'economic apartheid' to being an economic democracy.

The third strategic goal is to make financial allocations and institutional arrangements for facing the adverse effects of climate change. Unless we build 'sustainable development' into our budget and policy design, the life and livelihood of the vulnerable sections of society will be threatened by increasingly severe and more frequent floods,

droughts and shortages of fresh water. Consequently, the sustainability of economic growth as well as the stability of society will be undermined.

The fourth strategic goal is to release the physical constraints to growth and human welfare in Pakistan: the provision of adequate electricity, gas and irrigation water. For this, the required budgetary provisions must be made. At the same time, organisational capacity and institutional structures for translating finance into measurable outcomes must be built.

The challenge in designing the budget is how to address the structural constraints to development and unleash the great human potential of Pakistan which for seven decades has remained dormant.

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Source: <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/206205-The-budget-and-development>

EDUCATION

The decline in Pakistan's civil services is no longer a myth but a stark reality By Muhammad Shafiq Haider

Following the result of the Central Superior Services (CSS) exam every year, numerous analyses are raised, largely outsider points of view commenting on its so-called decline.

Such run-of-the-mill analyses blame the dismal state of education in Pakistan, the faulty examination system, the indifference of fresh graduates in regard to joining the civil services, the constantly deteriorating quality of candidates as compared to the bureaucrats from yesteryears, (including those who happen to pass the exam).

There is no denying the fact that the education system in Pakistan is constantly facing a downhill slump. Yet, this decline is often associated with insufficient spending on the sector, which to be honest, is misleading (the education budget is closing in on the official defence budget, at Rs790 billion and Rs860 billion respectively). Salaries of teachers have increased manifold since the 80s, yet the standard of education has been weakening since then.

The raise in salaries, still inadequate though, is not backed with enhancing the skill-set of the teachers or evolving the syllabi so that it may synchronise with the fast-changing needs of the society. There are self-motivated teachers, the lone-shepherds, and then there are those who are not, the vast majority.

Owing to systemic administrative and planning failures, the education system in Pakistan is producing homogeneous brain models in excess, who later find themselves incapacitated in a competitive environment. Resultantly, in a country producing thousands of graduates and hundreds of PhDs every year, only a few thousand appear and a couple of hundreds pass the CSS exam.

An analysis suggests that CSS is not looking for creative, perceptive and competent students. This could have been assumed only if the education system was producing creative and perceptive candidates who failed the CSS exam. The existing education system instead destroys the potential for authentic creativity and produces crammers –

there are exceptions and it is probably these exceptions which are able to make it to the final list of selectees in CSS.

Since such an analysis builds on isolated/personal examples and is subsequently generalised, allow me the liberty to quote my personal experience of the CSS exam. I passed in my first attempt, despite working a full-time job and a personal indiscipline towards exams. I watched Million Dollar Baby (don't try this at all) the night before my essay and comprehension exam – the Achilles heel for majority of the candidates – while my doctor friend crammed essays from some book for days on end.

I passed, he failed. But I probably passed due to my long cultivated habit of reading and writing beyond exams. During the Common Training Program (CTP), I met various colleagues who I believe will stand out amidst large crowds for their inspiring and creative sensibilities.

To say that the CSS selection test places more weight on ideological conformity and pliant behaviour is just another myth. To quote another personal example, there was a group of seven candidates including myself who were undertaking the psychological test and group discussion as part of the CSS selection process. The non-conformist of the group put forth a substantive argument stating that the separation of East Pakistan was a national blunder and Pakistan was still repeating the same mistake in Balochistan. Surprisingly, he received the highest marks and that too while the chairman of Federal Public Service Commission (FPSC) was a retired military general.

To say that the quality of the CSS aspirants, including those who happen to pass the exam, is constantly worsening as compared to the bureaucrats from the good old days, is yet another analysis conducted under the spell of romantic nostalgia.

There have, no doubt, been inspiring oldies, the salt of the earth, and the epitome of integrity, grace and resourcefulness for solving complex public problems. Mr Azam Mohammad Khan (retd), a seventh Commoner Commerce and Trade Group officer, with whom I served in his last year of service, was the perfect personification of all that we admire about the older generation. The man was an institution in himself, a professional giant, and there would be numerous individuals like him who are unfortunately forgotten in anonymity.

But, at the same time, there are equally a large number of officers in this generation who are able, upright, driven, and competitive. My first boss and mentor in the service after the completion of my CTP and Specialised Training Program (STP), Mr Khalid

Hanif, an officer just three years senior to me, came from a similar humble background as that of the majority of the CSS officers.

He graduated from a government college. This same individual won an international scholarship to pursue an LLM in international trade law and then went on to work as a national consultant for a Geneva-based international trade organisation. Mr Hanif personifies many like him, who go unnoticed and are wasted by the system despite their huge personal potential.

What fails this new generation of Civil Services Pakistan officers is not where they come from and the quality of their talent, but what is made of them once they join service and how an opportunity to groom an officer with the right skills is wasted.

One must understand that holding ones ground against political pressures and maintaining integrity is not a cause, but an effect of an officer's character sustained by his expertise in his work and job satisfaction. The civil servants of this generation, during their CTP, are trained into similar subjects (theoretical in nature) with focus on district management and revenue collection, as were the civil servants from the 50s and 60s, to the utter disregard of changing realities of population and public service requirements. Despite their personal spark and potential, they end up being generalists and that too, predominantly academic ones.

A Basic Pay Scale (BSP) 17/18 officer takes home Rs50,000 to 60,000, besides house rent allowance. Now if he were to be posted in Islamabad, he would not be able to rent a house within his budget, except for in the suburbs. Half of his salary is spent on transportation, and with the other meagre half, he resists or gives into political pressure and other temptations.

Income inequality within various service groups of civil service is so stark that "all animals are equal but some are more equal". However, even those with an advantageous income – Police Service Pakistan (PSP), Pakistan Administrative Service (PAS), and Inland Revenue Service (IRS) – fall short of living a life of dignity once they have to afford two school going children.

The system is so warped that there is no room for grooming specialists – an imperative for meeting the changing needs of our society and economy. Officers trained for managing the districts are posted abroad to manage international trade; those trained for managing international trade are pushed to manage deputations in other organisations with relatively better remuneration.

The systemic degeneration and indifference has forced an inertia and meaninglessness upon the otherwise brilliant and full of potential new age bureaucrats. Their talent is not exploited but killed. Their remnants, lost in their own existence, can be found on Facebook and other social media platforms solving metaphysical riddles, mutually complimenting each other's profile pictures in fulfilment of a delusional aggrandised self – a self they could become given the right skills and incentives leading to more engagement in public service.

The dreamers themselves have become, somehow a yonder dream.

Source: <http://blogs.tribune.com.pk/story/50727/the-decline-in-pakistans-civil-services-is-no-longer-a-myth-but-a-stark-reality/>

Decline In Literacy | Editorial

In the last couple of years, one sector of Pakistan that has gravely suffered is education. Successive governments have failed to prioritise the need to educate the citizens, and allot a significant amount of the federal budget towards its improvement.

The education budget for the year 2013-14 was a little over 2 percent, 537.6 billion to be precise.

According to Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey (PSLM), the literacy rate which was previously 60 percent has gone down to 58 percent.

We are already lagging way behind on our Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of reaching 88 percent in 2015.

Intake in primary schools has decreased.

Four out of every child is not going to school in the country.

This means that no significant policy making is being done with regards to the education system.

This is especially true for the governments of Sindh and Balochistan.

Both the provinces witnessed a decrease in their literacy rates.

While terrorism, floods, lack of interest of parents, and non-availability of teachers is to be blamed; it is also the duty of the provincial government to ensure that education is promoted in the province.

Governments of both Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Punjab have been quite vigilant in this area.

KP witnessed an increase in the literacy rate due to an increase in female literacy.

Similar efforts were made by the Punjab government, where 61 percent of the population is literate.

But official statistics are not always reliable, and there is room for improvement.

Basic facilities such as education are key towards the progress of the country; and if they are not prioritised, no developmental project will be able to push the country out of its shambles.

The budget for the current fiscal year again only allotted 2.

3 percent to the education sector.

If this remains the case, we would have to start setting realistic MDGs.

Source: <http://nation.com.pk/editorials/28-May-2017/decline-in-literacy>

Education system needs reform By Shagufta Gul

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

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

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

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

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

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

The state-run institutions follow the national curriculum. Being a living document, curriculum needs to be revised and updated every five years, as per international standards. Our national curriculum has been in the process of reforms including those that may promote tolerance and cohesion. Unfortunately, the core issue in this regard has remained provision of appropriate training for text book writers to ensure that their products reflect the required reforms. Besides, critical thinking and inquisitiveness is prohibited, intentionally or unintentionally, at all levels of education, ending up making machines out of pupils who're taught rote learning and memorisation.

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

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

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

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

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

Once we look at the overall scenario, it's evident that the state needs to take the most critical component of education more seriously to control growing intolerance and extremism in the society. The current multiple systems of schooling are creating different socio-economic classes and pushing us towards a more segregated and frustrated society, rather than a cohesive and a tolerant one. At provincial level, governments are taking initiatives to cope up with the areas highlighted here yet we still need a comprehensive and focused plan along with a well-unified system including capacity building of text book writers and teachers.

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

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

CSS Decline By Tasneem Noorani

THE fact that out of 9,643 applicants only 202 passed the Central Superior Services exam this year has led to headlines like 'Decline of CSS'. While the reasons for this decline are many, this year's result does not stem from them. The actual reason is the change in the system of examination introduced by the Federal Public Service Commission (FPSC).

In 2016, the FPSC, on the basis of a number of studies, changed the rules of the exam. It had been following trends where engineers would opt for high-scoring maths and score solid marks, which was not possible for even brilliant students of other, less-scoring subjects. This specialised subject approach was adopted in other areas also, putting the majority of students at an unfair disadvantage.

Since the concept of the CSS exam is based on looking for generalists with a proven level of intellect, the FPSC has come up with six different groups of subjects, including economics and accounting, pure sciences/maths, business/public administration, history, environment/earth sciences and law. It has made it obligatory for applicants to choose practically one subject from each group to ensure a level playing field.

Bashing civil servants is a favourite pastime.

In the good old days of our vintage, there were no multiple choice questions and taking an exam was an art unto itself. Students of English literature and those who had better writing skills had a distinct advantage. Then some decades later, we saw a preponderance of engineers and doctors as entrants. So until the FPSC finds some other aberration, the new rules are meant to fix that flaw.

Any new system takes time to be mastered. Since failing even one subject eliminates a candidate's chances altogether, the pass percentage has nosedived, as the majority have struggled with elective subjects they have little expertise in.

Some more context is required. Constitutionally, there are three pillars of the state — the executive, judiciary and parliament. Over the years, three more pillars have cropped up — the military, the media and the mullah. Each defends its turf jealously. Take the military and the judiciary. There is only internal accountability. The media and the public are generally careful when it comes to criticising them. Beyond a certain point, the institutions step in to defend their respective members.

Similarly, criticism of or allegations against a parliamentarian is refuted promptly through the media to which he/she has ready access. He/she may also use the floor of the house to use the choicest invective for his/her critic. And, you criticise the mullah at your own physical peril.

Meanwhile, criticise a media person and he/she will ensure that all your blunders, imaginary or real, are brought to everyone's attention and that you are forced to go into full-time media management to save your honour. If that option is not available, his/her union, channel or colleagues come to the rescue.

It is only the bureaucrats who are not defended by any one, not even by their own colleagues. Going to the media is against the rules and 'arranging' a bureaucrat's defence through the media is difficult as civil servants don't have informal access. Officer associations are tame, due to years of servile training; they protest through the 'proper channels' only.

Bureaucracy-bashing continues to be the favourite pastime of the judiciary, the media, and the politicians. Bureaucrats are used as examples of unbridled power, inefficiency and corruption, traits which are not exclusive to them.

When earnest young men and women entering the CSS see posts being given on political recommendations rather than on merit, when they understand that loyalty to the politician in power earns a bureaucrat choice assignments, when the corrupt in their ranks prosper, all idealism goes out of the window.

Those who refrain from falling in line or get themselves posted to some affiliate organisation, away from the mainstream, or just learn to pass time, becoming negative and obstructionist in the process.

When the bureaucracy is not given due respect by the powers that be and the pillars of the state, the public follows suit and you have a system where everyone takes it for granted. Resultantly, it cannot enforce its writ.

Even young, idealistic CSS entrants get no support or guidance from their seniors, who are themselves insecure. The federal establishment secretary and the provincial chief secretaries, at one time the source of ultimate power for the civil servant, are unable to secure themselves and have become post offices.

Can you even imagine a Pakistani army chief waiting for hours outside the prime minister's office to take orders or get approval of the postings of his corps commanders,

or to protest against the posting of a brigadier behind his back? Well this is what happens all the time when it comes to bureaucrats including senior ones. And civil servants are still expected to be decisive and efficient, and to deliver.

The writer is a former civil servant.

Published in Dawn, May 21st, 2017

Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1334433/css-decline>

CSS Reform By Anjum Altaf

A DIAGNOSIS of the alleged ailments of the Central Superior Services (CSS) requires an evaluation of three independent but interrelated aspects: the quality of the pool of candidates interested in the service; the test that identifies the qualifiers for the service; and the working conditions of the selectees once they join.

The average ability of the intake pool is obviously a function of the general quality of education which is considered to be declining. However, given Pakistan's large population, there is little doubt that more than a few thousand outstanding students graduate each year from the leading educational institutions. This number greatly exceeds the 300 or so places to be filled in the CSS per annum.

The real issue is that these outstanding graduates are no longer attracted to the CSS. There used to be a time when the CSS was the most prized career option here. This is no longer the case partly because the set of attractive alternatives has expanded over the years.

At Lums in Lahore, I reviewed the career preferences of recent graduates; only two per cent wished to join the public sector. The majority aspired to go abroad for education or to join MNCs, international agencies, and global NGOs. Thus the pool of candidates willing to join the CSS is a residual. This is not a universal phenomenon; in many countries the civil service continues to remain attractive to top-ranked graduates.

Very few graduates want to join the CSS.

Now consider the second aspect, the selection test that determines who qualifies from among the given pool of applicants. There is a simple criterion by which to assess its effectiveness: does it identify the most suitable candidates? The selection can be rigorous and meritocratic but the outcome depends entirely on the attribute that is being sought in the 'most suitable' candidates.

An illustration can highlight the significance of this distinction: when Z.A. Bhutto was selecting a COAS, was he seeking one most qualified to lead the armed forces (as he should have) or one who would be most subservient to him (as he seemed to do)? It is unlikely the two criteria would have identified the same individual.

The question to ask is whether the CSS selection test places more weight on ideological conformity and pliant behaviour or critical thinking and intellectual independence. And, also, whether the association of competence with the knowledge of English is excluding

otherwise more suitable applicants. These questions can be answered by a transparent review of recent examination papers and a random sampling of the answers submitted.

Once the most suitable candidates are selected from the available talent pool, their subsequent performance depends on a set of independent factors related to conditions of work.

Are civil servants facilitated to perform their assigned duties at their maximum potential? It is almost universally acknowledged that conditions of work have deteriorated over time with civil servants in Pakistan losing the autonomy and constitutional protections shielding them from political pressures. Performance has deteriorated because survival and promotion have become more dependent on pleasing political bosses than on proficiency in the real task of delivering services to citizens.

One can also see how the three aspects are interrelated. The degrading conditions of employment act to turn away from the civil service many future applicants with a sense of integrity. They gravitate to other careers where merit and hard work are better recognised and rewarded.

The establishment, in turn, uses the selection mechanism to attempt to screen out candidates likely to challenge the status quo and ask difficult questions about the prevailing norms of governance. Consciously or unconsciously, adherence to political or ideological positions begins to influence the selection process more than raw talent — loyalty trumps merit. This bias carries implications for the ability with which the selected civil servants can fulfil the tasks assigned.

This review suggests the elements of a comprehensive reform package that could address the problems of performance attributed to Pakistan's civil service.

First, the quality of general education has to be improved so that the pool of applicants is better qualified. Second, the prestige of the service has to be restored so that it becomes an attractive career choice for the best graduates. Third, the selection process has to ensure that the most qualified applicants are picked from the available pool of applicants. And fourth, the conditions of service have to be such that civil servants can discharge their duties honestly without political interference or intimidation.

These steps are not impossible to implement. They imply a reversal of the weaknesses that have undermined the reputation of a service that was previously held in much higher regard.

The writer is a Fellow at the Consortium for Development Policy Research in Lahore.

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Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1335978/css-reform>

WORLD

Trump, Russia & Israel | Editorial

According to American media, President Trump reportedly leaked the identity of an intelligence source to those whom the NATO war machine — under the unofficial stewardship of that most hawkish of doves, Barrack Obama — has long been trying to recast as enemies of the state. Oh, those Russians.

Not a great week for Trump in the run-up to his upcoming state visit to Israel, which has been confirmed as the source in question. Indeed, if that visit goes ahead. Who can tell? Maybe Interpol will get in on the game and issue an international arrest warrant to bring the apprentice-president to heel, if not to account. After all, it was not that long ago that Trump, albeit prior to this latest reincarnation as the man at the helm of the world's lone superpower, called for Edward Snowden, the former National Security Agency contractor who blew the whistle on American surveillance programmes, to be executed for very much the same 'crime'. That is, handing over classified information to Beijing and Moscow. Today, Trump has simply cut out the middle-man.

But in the great scheme of things, is it much ado about not very much? Certainly, in the Pakistani context, Nawaz Sharif should be grateful that he has had to only contend with his own words to the security establishment falling into the hands of one sharp journalist. Imagine the hot water he would be in had he dished the dirt in this way to India, especially about a specific terrorist threat. Then, even the one-size-fits-all mantra of the leak being in the national interest would not have cut it.

Yet in the great scheme of things, Trump's gross misstep, if that is what it really is, likely won't amount to much. Already the White House has failed to hand over either transcripts or tapes pertaining to the administration's dealings with Moscow. This, despite the fact that three separate congressional hearings are investigating this.

Simply put, if American democracy were as strong as it would have the world believe this begs an inevitable question: why has a caretaker government not been put in place while possible treason proceedings are initiated against the president. If, of course, the matter is as serious as everyone would have everyone else believe. Everyone, apart from the media, that is. Trump's national security team went on record as terming the original Washington Post story as false, even while White House insiders confirmed, on

condition of anonymity naturally, that Israel was, indeed, the source. Thus the present furore could, likely, be put on the backburner. Much will depend on Trump's meeting with the Israeli prime minister. And whether the two sides want to focus on the peace process, or lack thereof. Or whether they prioritise spotlighting Trump's letting the cat out of the bag to circumvent having to talk Mideast peace. When it comes the self-proclaimed global defender of freedoms on the one hand and an occupying aggressor nation masquerading as the region's only democracy on the other — all bets can only be off.

Source:<http://dailytimes.com.pk/editorial/19-May-17/trump-russia-israel>

Trump in Saudi Arabia | Editorial

As Donald Trump heads off to Saudi Arabia this weekend, for his first official foreign adventure, he will be pretty sure that all eyes will be on him. Yet also in attendance will be Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. This will be a much needed boost for PM Sharif's embattled political career with his Saudi patrons and the US President giving him a proverbial pat on the back.

Much has been said about the resetting of the US-Saudi bilateral relationship, even if that was not much in evidence on the election campaign. Though to be fair, Trump more than made up for his petulance over the inflated Saudi defence bill with his unilateral strike against Syria once in the White House hot seat. Even more has been made of Trump's anticipated speech on Islam. Though presumably he will have the common sense not to do his version of a Marine Le Pen and plagiarise one he made earlier, notably on how "Islam hates us". Nevertheless, much of the peace loving world will likely be watching with bated breath as to what transpires in the holy lands.

Not only will the US president be rubbing shoulders with his Sudanese counterpart who faces being hauled before the International Criminal Court on genocide charges. He will also be hobnobbing with members of the Gulf Cooperation Council, a regional alliance that is militarily committed to toppling the Syrian regime. But, perhaps, most exciting of all, Trump will meet around 37 heads of states — with more than a few of them fully signed up to the Saudi-led Islamic Military Alliance. This includes Afghan President Ashraf Ghani who is still standing after having been hit with the 'mother' of all bombs.

For the apprentice-president is due to formally unveil the blueprint of the so-called Muslim NATO this weekend. Cue for much smugness from Nawaz. Indeed, the latter's words of welcome to Trump may go something like this: Saudi Arabia is my home. And my home is your home. After all, the Pakistani PM will be feeling more than a little magnanimous. Not because of Trump currently being in hot water with the Israelis over everything from classified leaks — to wanting to make a dramatic helicopter landing on a UNESCO heritage site — to misspeaking by locating the Western Wall in the West Bank, not Jerusalem. But all because of a certain man in uniform who is charged with leading the Islamic Alliance into battle wherever NATO may push it. Perhaps Nawaz may even feel so bold as to say a big thank you to Gen Raheel. Without the formality of a hashtag, even. For providing a welcome boost to Pakistan's image on the international stage as a fighter of terrorism rather than a state-sponsor.

Yet, sadly, even Nawaz may have to admit that President Trump could just be smarter than the average bear. For this latest Muslim grouping is said to serve the new US administration well. Not only does it transfer the picking up of the counter-terrorism tab to its allies. It will help boost the economy at home through job creation paid for by massive arm sales. Most notably to the Saudi kingdom. This is expected to come in at somewhere between \$99-128 billion, or \$350 billion over a decade.

Maybe it is Trump who should be rolling out the red carpet for his more than generous Saudi hosts.

Source: <http://dailytimes.com.pk/editorial/20-May-17/trump-in-saudi-arabia>

Nuclear Waste By John LaForge

After millions of citizens pushed Canada's Environment Minister to delay plans for an underground radiation dump right next to Lake Huron (this fight is not yet over), two waste firms, UniTech Corp., with offices in France, Holland, Germany, England and all over the United States, and PermaFix, in Atlanta, now make news with plans to ship tons of radioactive waste from Canada to the United States.

UniTech wants to truck 10,000 tons of 'radioactive-contaminated tools, metals and other solid materials' across the border using five different border crossings. Can you say 'Homeland Security'? To transport 10,000 tons, think of thousands of truckloads of 'dirty bombs' driving across the country, around lakes and rivers, through cities and towns, over bridges and through tunnels for years and years.

Ten-thousand tons is a lot of material, equivalent to the mass of an old Navy Heavy Cruiser two football fields long, four stories high, and 60 feet wide. The waste haulers what to truck the radioactive metal –the bulk of the waste is coming from Canadian nuclear power reactors and laboratories – some infused with plutonium, strontium, cobalt-60, americium, and neptunium. These so-called 'low-level' wastes are not benign but some of the deadliest and most long-lasting poisons on Earth, and the worst to come from nuclear power and weapons.

Both UniTech and PermaFix have applied to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) for licenses to 'export' and 'import' thousands of truckloads. The vagueness of the applications, with nondescript references to 'tools', 'metals', 'other solid materials', and the curious mention of 'incremental amounts of special nuclear material' – is only partly cleared up by a list of 48 different radio-isotopes that will contaminate the 'materials'.

These and the wastes' 43 other identified isotopes give off radioactive alpha particles, beta particles, or gamma rays to one degree or another. It's this 'radiation' that makes the waste deadly because exposure to it, or inhaling or ingesting it, can cause heart disease, immune system dysfunction, birth abnormalities, and cancer. The effects are cumulative too, so adding more radiation to the exposures we've already had increases our risks and shortens our lives.

UniTech has already won an NRC 'export' license, allowing it to ship wastes into the US. (Its plan to ship some of it back across the border to Canada is still being contested with the NRC and may end up in court.) Some of UniTech's waste will be trucked to waste-handling factories in Tennessee, Illinois and Pennsylvania for 'processing'.

According to UniTech's license application, the proposed US 'processing' is for '...segregation, survey, decontamination, unrestricted release, beneficial reuse'. Kay Cumbow, Secretary of the Great Lakes Environmental Alliance, warns that such 'unrestricted release' means the waste can be dumped in ordinary municipal landfills. Tennessee state laws are so lax as to allow this. 'Beneficial reuse', says Cumbow, means sending contaminated metals to ordinary metal smelters from which recycled metals are used in consumer products like jungle gyms, frypans, nails, etc.

This game of nuclear shuffle board, bumper cars, or demolition derby gets bizzarrer and bizzarrer. Waste resulting from the US 'processing' and declared 'un-usable' is to be shipped back into Canada, adding another lengthy round of packaging, handling and transport recklessness. If all this sounds absolutely cray-cray, you may be a precautionary or a prudent person. Dr. Gordon Edwards, President of the Canadian Coalition for Nuclear Responsibility, says that the processing can be done in Canada, so there is no need for the program at all. Cumbow's group and others have promised law suits.

Pierre Sadik, of US Public Interest Research Group, has pointed out that the Department of Energy and the nuclear industry try to create the impression that the transport of radioactive waste has been entirely safe. But this is bunk.

This article has been excerpted from: 'Nuclear Waste Shell Game May Bring Contaminated Canadian Metals to the US – and Back'.

Courtesy: Counterpunch.org

Source: <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/205490-Nuclear-waste>

Is 'Globalisation' Dead? By Shahid Javed Burki

A decade or two ago, there was great confidence on the part of most social scientists that the world was finally settling down in ways that would help all countries and all people. With the Soviet Union having collapsed in 1991, with Eastern Europe having abandoned communism and with China and its southern neighbours having adopted forms of capitalism to manage their economic systems, ideological conflict ended. The American sociologist Francis Fukuyama in his book titled *The End of History* celebrated these developments. He laid out the direction in which the world was headed. It was moving towards Western liberalism.

This sense of confidence led a number of economists to develop policies they lumped together in what they called *The Washington Consensus*. This was done to help developing countries adopt policies that would quicken the rate of growth of their economies. This policy set had two important components. The most important of these concerned the size of the state and the functions the governments should perform. The Consensus opted for a minimalistic approach to governance. The state should leave the running of the economies to private enterprises. The government should lightly regulate private activity.

The second important component concerned flow of trade, capital information and, to a limited extent, people. All these should flow across international borders without much hindrance. That way these factors will go to the places where return was high that would result in increased economic activities and add to global growth. However, with borders open, the benefits from increased global output would spread across the globe.

That is the way the world did go for a couple of decades until two things happened and the freed private sector acted irresponsibly, in particular its financial component. Banks in the US lent huge amounts for housing to those who could not afford to service the loans that were being aggressively marketed. The banks did not keep these loans on their books. They combined them into fancy products that were rated highly by the rating agencies and sold to the institutions, such as pension funds and insurance companies that had large amounts of long-term capital at their disposal. Thus was built a house of cards that collapsed in 2007, plunging the world into what came to be called the Great Recession. This lasted for a couple of years and changed for good the structure of the global economy.

A "new norm" came into being in which the rates of growth slowed down to the point that equalled increase in productivity and in the size of the labour force. However, in most developed countries natural increase in the workforce was negative unless

immigration was allowed. People came in from the crowded parts of the world to fill the job markets in rich countries. People-flows became important for the economies of the US and the UK. The former received a lot of illegal labour from Mexico, while the latter had legal migrants from Eastern Europe, in particular from Poland. The migrants affected the labour market in ways that hurt the low-income earners. This group included what sociologists call “low-income, non-college educated white population.” They formed the base of support for the Donald Trump and the movement in Britain to leave the EU. In both countries this disaffected and disgruntled population was fed anti-globalism. Banning the entry of immigrants and walking out of trade deals were sold as the policies that will rescue this group from its economic troubles. With Trump elected president and with Britain’s Prime Minister Theresa May having sent the divorce letter to Brussels, the stage is set for more anti-globalisation moves. But has globalisation really hurt these countries? The answer comes from a recently published Washington-based study by the Peterson Institute for International Economics.

According to the report, trade has contributed significantly to the rise of living standards in the US. Since the end of WWII, the US has gained \$2.1 trillion a year, which is equivalent to 11 per cent of the current estimate of the size of the country’s economy of \$18.5 trillion. This has benefited low-income groups whose budgets are weighted towards such manufactured products as shoes, clothing and electronics. Also, only modest job losses resulted from trade. In recent years, imports displaced 312,500 jobs per year but the economy on average created 156,250 jobs. Most of the job losses were because of technological advances, not because of trade. The report also found that since 2003, benefits from trade have exceeded costs by a factor of five to one. However, as the economist Mancur Olson pointed out, some time ago, gains from trade are spread among millions of consumers while the pain of job loss is concentrated in the areas where factories close. These were the areas that voted for Trump and cast their votes in favour of Brexit.

As the economic writer Robert J Samuelson wrote in a recent article, “politically globalisation shifts blame abroad. Foreigners – their exports, subsidies, exchange rates or whatever – are the villains. We are the victims. Little wonder that Trump has found anti-globalisation an irresistible pitch. So have many others. Yet this has created a dilemma for trade policy. What’s good politics is bad economics and vice versa.” It is hard to predict what is in store for the Trump presidency. On May 17th, the Justice Department appointed a Special Counsel to investigate the nature of president’s and his team’s contacts with Russia. No matter what they find from this investigation, a great deal of damage has already been done to globalisation.

Source:<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1415742/is-globalisation-dead/>

Nuclear Diplomacy and the NPT By Sitara Noor

During the first two weeks of May, delegates from 188 state parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) gathered in Vienna for a preparatory committee meeting (PrepCom), marking the beginning of the process for the 2020 NPT Review Conference (RevCon). The PrepCom cycle, which starts three years prior to each RevCon, is significant as it aims to develop a substantive agenda and set the tone for the issues to be discussed at the RevCon, which takes place every five years. Considering the failure to reach a consensus at the 2015 NPT RevCon and the presence of numerous other mounting challenges, there were already mixed expectations for the 2017 NPT PrepCom.

The PrepCom cycle began on the heels of the first round of negotiations on a treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons held at the United Nations headquarters in New York from March 27 to 31. The ban negotiation process manifested the disappointment of non-nuclear-weapon states (NNWSs) over the lack of progress in the fulfillment by the nuclear-weapon states (NWSs) in fulfilling their disarmament commitment under article VI of the NPT. The negotiations also reflected the sharp divide among the NPT member states. While the ban proponents made every effort to express their support to the NPT during the first round of negotiations, the NWSs, along with US allies in the Nato countries and Asia/Pacific (the “umbrella states”), oppose the ban process, calling it a threat to the NPT.

While the smooth conduct of discussions during the PrepCom was appreciated by many member states, one could see a conspicuous effort to conceal the simmering tensions over the ban issue in the room.

Some fireworks had also been expected on the issue of the establishment of a WMD-free zone in the Middle East. However, the PrepCom only exposed deep fissures among the Arab league states, who were unable to agree on a joint way forward. The chairman’s summary underlined the importance of the establishment of a WMD-free zone in the Middle East and many states, notably Egypt and Russia, regretted the failure to convene a conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction, as endorsed at the 2010 Review Conference.

It is important to recall that the resolution on the establishment of the WMD-free zone in the Middle East in the 1995 review conference formed the basis for the indefinite extension of the NPT without a vote.

The four outliers of the NPT, namely India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea, were called upon by many states to abandon their nuclear weapon programmes and to join the NPT as NNWSs. North Korea was the subject of specific condemnations for its aggressive nuclear posture and the states parties to the NPT, including the NWSs, all urged the DPRK to cease its nuclear activities and missile tests. Nonetheless, the NWSs and their allies focused on the need to “create the conditions” for the international security environment to be conducive before the NWSs could fulfill their pledge to disarmament under the NPT. Interestingly, in parallel to the criticism on modernisation plans of the NWS, the United States test-launched a Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missile just a day after its opening remarks at the NPT PrepCom. This manifested an increasing gap between the deterrence and disarmament communities.

A number of state parties hailed the implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action concluded between Iran and E3/EU+3 and expressed their strong support for other existing international mechanisms such as the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, especially against the backdrop of impending resistance from the Trump administration in the United States. States parties also called for early negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty. Many countries, notably Brazil, strongly emphasised the need to take into account existing stocks of fissile material in an FMCT.

Overall, the 2017 NPT PrepCom was hailed as a success because it effectively avoided a deadlock by not attempting to move forward on the contentious issue in the first place. If it is incorrect to equate inaction with failure, then it is safe to say the NPT PrepCom 2017 was successful and provided a display of smooth international diplomacy.

In the age of Twitter, such meetings are no longer confined to the participants alone and anyone can get the sense of the debate even remotely. Perhaps nothing remains behind doors (except for the closed meetings, of course), as each word of the national positions during the open sessions goes on line in real time. However, coming from one of the four “outlier” states, it was indeed a unique experience for the author to witness nuclear diplomacy first hand at the NPT PrepCom.

Published in The Express Tribune, May 23rd, 2017.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1416444/nuclear-diplomacy-npt/>

US Rethink on Afghanistan By Javid Husain

“You can count on the Americans

to do the right thing ultimately,

after trying everything else.”

–Winston Churchill

The US Afghanistan policy since the overthrow of the Taliban government in the aftermath of 9/11 is a living proof of the US proclivity to make strategic mistakes in handling international security issues. Washington proved the accuracy of Churchill's assessment in its flawed handling of the war in Vietnam with disastrous consequences for Vietnam, the region, and the US itself. It persists in its gross mishandling of Iran since the Islamic revolution of 1979. With President Trump's nationalist approach to foreign policy, the chances are that the US mishandling of Iran will get worse before, if ever, it gets better. The Palestine issue is another example of the US tendency to invite political and security disasters through its superficial analysis and incompetent handling of sensitive foreign policy issues. Any impartial observer of the Palestine issue and the Arab-Israel dispute would have no hesitation in concluding that the unquestioned support extended by the US to Israel in its aggressive and expansionist designs in Palestine is amongst the root causes of the monster of terrorism in the form of Al Qaeda and ISIS. The US invasion of Iraq in 2003 in violation of the principles of the UN Charter and international law was another example of its short-sighted and military-dominated approach in handling foreign policy issues. Washington under President Bush failed to foresee the negative strategic consequences of its invasion, from which Iraq, the region and the US continue to suffer till today.

Washington's Afghanistan policy since 9/11 has again been full of strategic blunders, the adverse consequences of which continue to haunt that country, the region, and indeed the United States itself. After the overthrow of the Taliban government in Afghanistan in the aftermath of 9/11, the US decided to impose on the country a government of its choice reflecting its political and cultural preferences rather than one which would be reflective of the wishes of the Afghan people, their political tendencies, and their cultural traditions. As a former British ambassador to Afghanistan, Sherard Cowper-Coles, later put it, “the Bonn settlement that had followed (the overthrow of the Taliban government) had been a victors' peace, from which the vanquished had been excluded; and the constitution resulting from that settlement could last only as long as the West was prepared to stay in Afghanistan to prop up the present

disposition.” The US attempt to impose on Afghanistan a system of government which was divorced from ground realities laid the seeds of discord and the renewal of the civil war in the country, which had been going on since the fall of the Soviet-installed Najibullah government in 1992. This was a strategic blunder of monumental proportions on the part of the US which failed to draw the right lessons from the earlier failed attempts by foreign powers to control Afghanistan.

The easy victory of the US-led forces over the Taliban government in Afghanistan in 2001 created a false sense of complacency in Washington. The US ignored the lesson, which the British and the Soviets had learnt at tremendous cost, that it is much more difficult to control Afghanistan after defeating it militarily. No wonder that a former British Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan, had advised that the first rule of politics is “Don’t invade Afghanistan”. Considering the nature of the government installed by the Americans in Kabul, it was just a matter of time before the Taliban would stage a comeback. The diversion of the US resources for the invasion of Iraq in 2003 provided the Afghan Taliban the space for staging this comeback with a vengeance. The direct and indirect attempts of the US to impose its own liberal cultural values on the extremely conservative Afghanistan society, especially in the rural areas, provided fuel to the fire of the Taliban revolt against the Kabul government.

The third strategic mistake on the part of Washington was to seek the solution of the problem posed by the Taliban insurgency through military rather than political means. The US military establishment for a long time was not prepared to face the harsh political realities in Afghanistan and recognise the fact that the political disposition imposed by Washington did not enjoy the support of a sizable segment of the Afghan people, especially the Pashtuns who constituted almost half of the Afghan population. Consequently, the increase in the number of the ISAF troops up to 130,000 at their peak and the allocation of additional resources amounting to \$100 billion annually failed to break the back of the Taliban revolt. The US generals and leaders found it convenient to shift the blame for the growing Taliban insurgency to Pakistan, which in fact had paid a heavy price in blood and treasure in combating the Taliban in Pakistan in compliance with the US wishes. Instead of recognising the reality that the root cause of the Taliban revolt lay in Afghanistan and that its solution demanded national reconciliation and a political settlement in that country, the US for a long time kept asking Islamabad to do more. In fact, the need of the hour was to focus on a political settlement in Afghanistan.

It was not until February, 2011 that the Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in a speech to the Asia Society publicly expressed US support for a political settlement in Afghanistan through negotiations between the Kabul government and the Taliban. Since then some half-hearted attempts for the initiation of the talks between the two main protagonists in

Afghanistan have failed to take off because of one reason or the other. Meanwhile, the Taliban succeeded in putting tremendous pressure on the US-led forces and the Kabul government leading to the decision by the Obama administration to withdraw most of the ISAF troops from Afghanistan by the end of 2014 leaving behind a residual force of about 13,000 troops including 8,400 from the US. This was an open admission of the failure of the US policy to seek a military solution and a recognition of the need for a political settlement in Afghanistan.

The Trump administration is now faced with the task of charting its future Afghanistan strategy. It has been reported that a proposal to send 3000 to 5000 additional US troops to Afghanistan is being considered by Washington to stabilise the Kabul government in the face of the growing pressure being exerted by the Afghan Taliban. But there are also some indications of a US rethink on Afghanistan. In a recent Congressional hearing in Washington, Dan Coats, the head of the US intelligence agencies, stressed that the political and security situation in Afghanistan would continue to deteriorate through 2018 despite a modest increase in the US military strength. Lt. General Vincent Stewart, the head of the US Defence Intelligence Agency, in the same hearing urged that the US must do “something different” in Afghanistan or else the Taliban would make new advances on the battle-field. President Trump reportedly has also asked his military advisers “to relook at the entire strategy”. Let us hope that Washington would finally recognise that the only realistic way to restore durable peace in Afghanistan is to seriously pursue an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process in the country. This would require the recognition of the Afghan Taliban as a legitimate Afghan political party despite its obscurantism and the change of focus from combating them to bringing them to the negotiating table.

Source:<http://nation.com.pk/columns/23-May-2017/us-rethink-on-afghanistan>

American Vision of Syria By Yasmeen Aftab Ali

Whether it is Libya, Yemen, Iraq or Syria; nationalism has not been a binding force for these states. The Arab nations all suffer from the malaise of being fragmented into clans, tribes, the local rich and the warlords. Once the state structures are destroyed, it does not bring these forces together on one platform. The uprising against President Bashar al-Assad in 2011 was not one for democracy but for change of regime no matter how much the White House convinced itself otherwise. The outcome of six years of an embattled Syria is growth of the Islamic State Group, a fragmented opposition and a disaster of humanitarian nature that has spiralled into a major refugee crisis.

Reportedly, USA has supported the Syrian rebel groups logistically and with weapons. Jabhat al-Nusra, emerged as a powerful opposition force willing to go to anything to overthrow Bashar al-Assad's government. In mid-2016, al-Nusra officially spaced away from al-Qaeda and renamed itself Jabhat Fatah al-Sham. It then merged with Tahrir al-Sham, the so-called moderate Syrian rebels "The group was formed in a merger of Jabhat Fatah al-Sham with other influential Salafi jihadist militias in Syria, including Nour al-Din al-Zinki, which had previously been CIA-vetted and armed with TOW anti-tank missiles by the U.S." (Ben Norton AlterNet, March 22, 2017)

So what is President Trump's policy for Syria?

"My attitude was you're fighting Syria, Syria is fighting ISIS, and you have to get rid of ISIS. Russia is now totally aligned with Syria, and now you have Iran, which is becoming powerful, because of us, is aligned with Syria ... Now we're backing rebels against Syria, and we have no idea who these people are," Trump said, referring to the IS by its other acronym, which stands for Islamic State of Iraq and Syria. "We end up fighting Russia, fighting Syria, if the US attacks Assad," he told WSJ. (DW November 16, 2016)

Initially having a firm stance of "America First" policy, touched and deeply moved at the pictures of Syrian children who lost their lives in gas attack in early 2017, 59 missiles were fired in Syria by US. However, Trump was careful to choose the "narrowest targeted strike" out of all options available. This was deemed as a strong warning to Bashar al-Assad to not to use chemical weapons again.

Entering the White House seems to have modified Trump bringing a radical change in his views about war in Syria. During his presidential campaign speeches he had repeatedly reiterated his desire to fix the American economy rather than policing the

globe. This is certainly not the first time Assad used chemical weapons. Reported examples of his handling and the result have been available. “Unlike chemical weapons, barrel bombs — typically oil drums filled with explosives — are used with vicious regularity in the Syrian civil war. According to the Syrian Network for Human Rights, the government dropped 495 barrel bombs in March alone, and 12,958 in 2016.” (Boston Globe April 11, 2017)

On the face of it, America does not have to have a war policy in Syria. The consequences of American adventurism has been huge, there seems to be no cut-off time to handling the crisis. The step taken by Trump is more reactive in nature to an incident taking place than a well-thought out cogent strategy to deal with the Syrian situation. There seems to be no “thinking out” of the steps to take Syria out of the abyss it is in.

An excerpt from the joint statement between Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United States of America, “The two sides emphasised the importance that the Syrian regime adhere to the 2013 agreement to eliminate its entire stockpile of chemical weapons.” (Release by White House May 23, 2017)

If any solution to Syria has to be reached at, Iran forms a part of the solution. Will Trump be willing to talk to Iran? A lot of aversion will need to be swallowed there. In his first trip outside his home shores, Trump used a lot of vitriol against Iran, much to the delight of Saudi Arab and Israel. Iran has recruited and sent thousands of forces to Syria to fight by Bashar al-Assad. The presence of these forces ensures Iran’s presence in any equation to resolve the situation. “Iran is a very big problem and will continue to be. But if I’m elected president, I know how to deal with trouble.” (March 21 speech in Washington, D.C) The rebels in Syria, with support by America and the Sunnis from Saudi Arab may want to see the end of Bashar al-Assad’s rule but this is nothing but a pipedream. An option of taking on Iran head-on in any arena will make any solution in Syria a mirage.

The solution may lie midway between both the forces. For any solution to be reached, the regional allies of both sides of the divide will have to be involved in reaching any peace based solution. Different players exercise influence in different areas of Syria and must work towards a cease fire in their respective areas. Trump will have to broker a deal with Russia. Any counter-terrorism effort by American must be supported by Russia. America under Obama did try to initiate working out an equation with Russia but it did not work out. That was then. Now is now. The effort is worth a try.

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Source: <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2017/05/29/american-vision-of-syria/>

Muslim World's Challenge | Editorial

A MAIDEN trip to the Middle East by US President Donald Trump has underlined several dangerous contradictions at the heart of the global fight against militancy. If there is some unity left in the world today, it is about the understanding that virtually every country faces a militant threat. And in the militant Islamic State group, virtually every country faces a common threat. But global coordination against IS and other militant threats is being undermined by national, regional and international approaches to fighting militancy that are contradictory and self-defeating. Indeed, the placing of Mr Trump's avowed goal of crushing IS at the centre of his administration's foreign policy may unwittingly be helping the militants' narrative of a war between Western and Islamic values. The war against militancy must be led and coordinated by the Muslim world. Militancy is first and foremost an existential threat to Muslim countries and any strategy against it that relies fundamentally on Western leadership and coordination will not succeed and can be counterproductive.

To be sure, Western nations face a dangerous problem of home-grown militancy and have intelligence and counterterrorism apparatuses that are vital to the global fight against militancy. No nation, not least the open, democratic societies in the West, can meekly surrender before millenarian terrorists who seek to destroy the very fabric of society. The serial devastation wrought across many European countries in recent times and the memory of 9/11 in the US loom large in any international conversation about militancy. Within the law and constitution of those countries, and in a way that aids the overall fight against militancy, the steps Western countries take in this battle can have desirable long-term effects. But the security of Western nations cannot be re-established in the long term without a global understanding that the fight against Islamist militancy must be led by Muslim countries and the fight to protect the minds of Muslims from violent ideologies must be led by Muslim societies.

Unhappily, the eagerness of Mr Trump to cast himself as his country's protector against a militant threat he clearly has little understanding of is allowing Muslim-majority countries to once again escape responsibility for crafting a workable strategy to jointly defeat terrorism and militancy. While Saudi Arabia is rallying Sunni-majority countries to its side under the umbrella of the Islamic Military Alliance, Iran is continuing with its strategy of extending its influence across the Middle East via proxies. Meanwhile, the militant groups that all Muslim nations purport to fight are deepening their ideological influences in those very societies. Mr Trump will likely be on the world stage for four or eight years; militant ideology has a shelf life far greater. Long after Mr Trump and his bombast are gone, the Muslim world will still have to contend with the evil that lies within.

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Climate Policy in the Age of Trump By Ted Nordhaus, Alex Trembath, and Jessica Lovering

Of the many reasons that a slim minority of voters chose to elect a bombastic reality television star to be president of the United States, climate change was surely not high on the list. Nonetheless, Donald Trump assumed the office last week openly hostile to the environmental movement. He has threatened to withdraw from the Paris climate accord, gut the Barack Obama administration's Clean Power Plan, and cut funding for climate science research. Should he follow through, two decades of work trying to translate a growing understanding of human-caused global warming into explicit treaties at the international level and emissions policies at the federal level will have reached their denouement. And that, in the long run, might be a good thing for the climate.

THE STATUS QUO'S SMALL FOOTPRINT

Since international efforts to limit carbon emissions began in earnest almost 30 years ago, there has been little evidence that either international agreements or national commitments to cap and reduce emissions have done much good. Analysis published late last year by our research outlet, the Breakthrough Institute, found that the carbon intensity of energy systems fell faster before climate policies were enacted in California, Germany, and around the world through the Kyoto Protocol. Modeling by the Yale economist William Nordhaus (the uncle of one of the authors) released last year reached a similar conclusion.

Emissions growth rates in various economies around the world have risen and fallen over recent decades, mostly owing to macroeconomic factors or technological developments. The collapse of the Soviet Union, the reunification of Germany, the opening of China to the global economy and its subsequent entry into the World Trade Organization, and the Great Recession all had clear and demonstrable impacts upon emissions. So, too, did the shale revolution in the United States and France's and Sweden's decisions in the 1970s and 1980s to go nuclear. Carbon treaties, caps, regulations, and taxes, meanwhile, have not.

The trend will likely hold. The Intended Nationally Determined Contributions, to which nations committed in lieu of legally binding emissions reduction commitments in Paris, turned out to be mostly indistinguishable from business-as-usual decarbonization trends and policies that nations would have pursued for other reasons, such as energy independence or offshoring of industry. Recent MIT modeling concluded that, all told,

the emissions reduction pledges made by nations at Paris would reduce the projected global temperature increase by late this century from 3.9 to 3.7 degrees Celsius.

With or without the Obama administration's Clean Power Plan, the long-term shift from coal to gas is likely to continue. Cheap gas, not a war on coal, has been the primary driver of coal's decline, and the new administration has been clear that it intends to further promote shale production. There may be less than meets the eye to other controversial changes as well. U.S. Energy Secretary-designate Rick Perry may not have been able to remember that the Department of Energy (DOE) was one of the agencies he'd pledged to abolish while campaigning for president in 2012. But this vow, popular among U.S. conservatives since President Ronald Reagan, has never been realized. Both the DOE and the national laboratories it oversees have vocal bipartisan constituencies in Congress.

With or without the Obama administration's Clean Power Plan, the long-term shift from coal to gas is likely to continue.

Federal tax credits for renewable energy similarly maintain bipartisan support and are unlikely to be repealed by the new Congress. The Trump administration might even figure out how to do something to keep the nation's embattled fleet of nuclear power plants online, a step that would keep U.S. emissions heading in the right direction even as the Trump administration reverses course on other initiatives.

The reality is that the trajectory of emissions is unlikely to differ significantly under a Trump administration from what it would have been under a Hillary Clinton administration. That, however, is not much comfort, given the not insignificant long-term risks posed by climate change and how unwilling the world seems to do anything to significantly mitigate those risks. The situation should prompt some reconsideration of what a plausible path forward might look like and how the politics of climate, energy, and the environment might be reconfigured in ways that could offer both more successful policy outcomes and a more robust and sustainable political consensus for action.

A CLIMATE RESET

The necessary reset of U.S. climate policy and politics will need to start by properly valuing the low-carbon assets we have today. As long as production remains high and gas remains cheap, gas should continue to displace coal, with or without the Clean Power Plan, for the next several decades. With modest actions to prevent further closures of nuclear power plants, reforms to speed up the relicensing of hydroelectric

dams, and continuing federal and state incentives for wind and solar deployment, we should be able to reduce emissions from the U.S. power sector by about 40 percent between now and 2040, a not insignificant achievement but still far from the scale reductions that would be necessary to reduce emissions to levels consistent with limiting the global temperature increase to three degrees Celsius in the twenty-first century (much less the international target of two).

Limiting temperatures further will require that the United States entirely decarbonize the power sector as well as other key parts of the economy such as transportation, industry, and agriculture that have proven much more difficult to decarbonize. The technological options for doing so at present are not good. Light transportation might be electrified, but heavy transportation, shipping, and aviation present more daunting challenges. There are similarly, at present, no viable low-carbon technologies for the production of steel, concrete, or fertilizer. Whether through electrification, fuel cells, or fuels manufactured without fossil inputs, economy-wide decarbonization will require full decarbonization of all of these sectors. Neither conventional nuclear nor wind and solar offer particularly plausible solutions to do so today.

Even in the power sector, the United States and most other developed countries have mostly stopped building nuclear power plants. Demand for nuclear power is growing slowly, public fears of nuclear accidents and radiation are vastly out of step with the actual risk, and liberalized electricity markets have undermined the kind of long-term planning that a cost-effective build-out of large conventional nuclear power plants requires. In contrast, wind and solar have been growing at a rapid rate from a tiny base over the last decade. But wind and solar installation around the world has reliably stalled as their share has approached about 20 percent of electrical grids. At that point, sometimes intermittent wind and solar will generate nearly all the grids electricity needs and sometimes none at all, so the costs of dealing with high penetrations of variable renewable energy sources start to become prohibitive.

In the face of such challenges, climate advocates have engaged in one version or another of magical thinking. There is hope that some combination of better climate science and mounting climate catastrophes will motivate public support for a World War II–style mobilization of wind and solar energy. There is faith that pumping subsidies into existing solar and wind technologies will result in incremental improvements that over time will accrue to the sorts of radical breakthroughs that would be necessary to scale those technologies to levels beyond what is today technically and economically feasible. There is also the belief, not much supported empirically, that a price on carbon or other regulatory mandates will spur private entrepreneurs to come up with the breakthroughs we will need to move human societies wholesale off of fossil fuels once and for all.

THE NUCLEAR OPTION

Given the scale of what would be necessary to have much impact on the global climate, some level of magical thinking may be unavoidable. One way or another, the world will need to develop and deploy technologies that don't yet exist on a massive and unprecedented scale. But there is one other possibility that hasn't much been on the table until relatively recently. In recent years, a new generation of nuclear engineers has launched a slew of advanced nuclear energy start-ups. The technologies aren't anything like the nuclear reactors operating around the world today, nor are the companies anything like the midcentury goliaths that commercialized the current generation of nuclear reactors. The new designs are small, hyperefficient, and radically safe. They can't melt down, are often a tenth or less the size of conventional light-water reactors, can be manufactured in factories just like wind turbines and solar panels, and can operate at sufficiently high temperatures to provide heat and power for steel, cement, hydrogen, and fertilizer production. Like wind and solar, these reactors produce energy with zero carbon dioxide. Unlike wind and solar, they produce it 24/7.

The new nuclear reactor designs are small, hyperefficient, and radically safe.

The United States is unlikely to embark upon the kind of state-led, top-down nuclear build-out that allowed France and Sweden to virtually entirely decarbonize their power sectors with nuclear power, but it might be able to embark on an entrepreneur- and venture-led effort to radically disrupt the nuclear sector. Doing so might allow the United States to once again lead the world in developing nuclear power on a planet that will soon enough have nine billion energy-hungry consumers. Reforming the Department of Energy, the national laboratories, and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission so that this sort of radical innovation would be possible might be just the sort of thing that congressional Republicans and the new administration would be able to get behind. And a climate mitigation effort that featured an innovative, entrepreneurial nuclear sector competing for growing global energy markets might persuade many U.S. conservatives to take the climate challenge a lot more seriously.

In the meantime, the prospects for a coherent climate policy in a Trump administration are exceedingly dim. But one thing the Trump era ought to do is challenge climate advocates to grapple seriously with why their politics and policies have failed so consistently for the last several decades. More than anything that is likely to happen in the next Congress, such a reckoning might offer a more hopeful and optimistic path for climate advocacy in the years to come.

Source: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/north-america/2017-01-24/climate-policy-age-trump?cid=int-lea&pgtype=hpg>

India's influence in Afghanistan | Editorial

At long last, Pakistan's concern about growing Indian influence in Afghanistan is increasingly being echoed in Washington, thanks to effective diplomatic efforts and interaction of our military leadership with Pentagon especially US commanders in Afghanistan. According to latest reports from the US capital, American intelligence community has informed Congress that Islamabad does not want heavy Indian influence in Afghanistan and will likely turn to China to offset New Delhi's sway on its western borders.

Pakistan has long been recording its protest and disapproval of moves by the United States to bolster India's military, strategic and economic role in Afghanistan especially in the backdrop of withdrawal of foreign forces. It is because Pakistan has genuine interest in Afghanistan's peace and stability, an objective that cannot be realised with growing influence and presence of New Delhi on Afghan soil. Pakistani concerns are not unfounded as India has about a dozen consulates in Afghanistan that have no other objective but to hatch conspiracies and sponsor terrorist activities in Pakistan especially in Balochistan, FATA and Karachi. This was also acknowledged by RAW agent Kulbhushan Yadav and based on his confession, dossiers were prepared and shared with the United Nations and the United States. With or without dossiers, the United States knows it well that India was massively involved in efforts to destabilise Pakistan and most of these conspiracies are hatched on Afghan soil and with full connivance of Afghan National Security Directorate. Assigning undue importance and role to India in Afghan affairs by the United States is not understandable as the country has no joint borders with Afghanistan and it has no security interests there as well except to create problems for Pakistan and increase pressure on Islamabad both on eastern and western fronts as we have been witnessing these days. It is not yet known as to what extent Pakistani concerns would be taken care of by the United States, which is in the midst of formulating a new strategy to deal with the Afghan imbroglio but any policy that does not take into account these concerns is bound to fail as far as the ultimate goal of peace and security in Afghanistan is concerned.

US-Europe divide grips NATO By Syed Qamar A Rizvi

SEEN from President Trump's perspective, unlike his predecessors, he is not an ardent advocate of endorsing the futurity of the sixty-eight years old trans-Atlantic partnership. Though he may now have reversed his position on Nato's obsolescence, yet he tends to redefine the scope of this relationship with Europe by means of transactionalism. But today most of the Western strategists feel alarmed at the proposition that, with its lost political and strategic unity, Nato's power is waning. This thesis gets prompt validation by German Chancellor Angela Merkel's recent remarks: "Europe must take its fate into its own hands faced with a western alliance divided by Brexit and Donald Trump's presidency."

Addressing the Brussels Summit on May 25, Trump said: "Twenty-three of the 28 member nations are still not paying what they should be paying and what they are supposed to be paying for their defence. This is not fair to the people and taxpayers of the United States". The North Atlantic Treaty Organization was founded in 1949 as a united mission to protect a war-shattered Europe from Stalin's Soviet Union. In view of General Hasting Ismay, the first Secretary General of the Nato Alliance, the main function of the Alliance was "to keep the Americans in, the Russians out, and the Germans down". Strategically, the NATO Alliance vitally served US-Europe interests during the Cold War period. Yet in the post Cold War era, the transatlantic relationship undergoes a shift.

While today Europe is quite capable of shaping and paying for its own security; NATO's structure remains unchanged. For the Europeans, America should remain politically close to European countries but stop telling them how to defend themselves. Left to their own devices, they might pull back from the snarling confrontation with Russia into which NATO is leading them. For NATO's hardliners, repositioning of Nato's role— as Europe's principal provider of military security is necessary to warrant the viability of the Alliance by having a firmed stand against Moscow. But there is growing discomfort in Alliance's European partners at the protection racket approach Trump is applying to NATO, Trump's advocated give and take approach is stimulating divide in the Alliance.

Furthermore, France, Germany and Italy are unhappy at US proposals to give NATO a greater role in the anti-IS coalition, and there's little interest outside Washington for expanding NATO's role in Afghanistan. And yet the US is also unlikely to drop its beef with the problems of burden-sharing. The secretary general Jens Stoltenberg reported in March that while 16 NATO allies had seen real increases in overall defence spending

in 2016, only five – the US, Estonia, Greece, the UK and Poland – were meeting NATO's defence spending target of 2% of GDP.

Even though Turkey, Romania, Latvia and Lithuania are expected to hit that target in 2018 or 2019; but Germany, Italy and Canada, three of NATO's biggest hitters, have been showing little enthusiasm to do the same. French President Macron has suggested, will not meet mark until 2025 at earliest. Talk deficiencies have become macroscopic with evolution of strategic situation in Europe.

European security experts of the ESDP don't fully agree with NATO'S reforms introduced by Nato's former Secretary General Fogh Rasmussen (a Danish reformist). Rasmussen tried to achieve the goal thereby transferring a series of vital functions— to member states —that mainly come from Nato's Command Structure, NATO's Force Structure (NFS), and the affiliated agencies whose control is not linked to Allied Commander in Europe (SACEUR), such as NATO Support and Procurement Agency (NSPA).

Politically, Nato's house is divided into three camps: one- representing the US-centric security system imbibed in US-controlled or monitored European security paradigm(the US, Estonia, Greece, the UK, Poland and Czech); second – representing a Euro-centric independent security system envisaged by both France and Germany; and the third camp- representing those European states(Austria, Netherlands, Italy, and Spain) who are cautious over the question of their security policy vis-à-vis Russia. Besides, Europe's leading populist parties— AKEL, Die Linke, FPO, Gloden Dawn, KSCM, and Jobbic— are opposed to the Nato Alliance.

UK's vote to quit the European Union has trigger a torque in EU-Nato politics. The exposed cracks in EU's transnational unity and the ongoing cleavages in Nato's supranational camp have some inseparable connection. Therefore, some hold the caution: as EU has been shocked into reality, the next jolt might be NATO's. With UK's exit from EU, many Americans fear that Washington's role in Brussels' affairs will become secondary.

In view of some Western pragmatists (as they also disapprove Georgia's entry as a part of Nato's eastward expansion), Russia threatens none of America's vital interests. On the contrary, it shares US's eagerness to fight global terror, control nuclear threats, and deter other urgent challenges posed to global security. Depending on European nations' respective perspective, Russia might be seen as a destabilizing force in Europe. Either way, it is a challenge for Europeans, not for the United States. While NATO has become

America's instrument in escalating its dangerous conflict with Russia, some still argue that they need less NATO, not more.

Today, however, a shifting Weltanschauung about Nato is that it is becoming more centrifugal than centripetal, expanding rather than concentrating power. Nato's Article 5 has been losing its centrality. Its supranational power is declining. The real breach in Nato's unity started with George W Bush's insane decision of invading Iraq in 2003 when German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder rejected any support of a US-led military campaign against Iraq. Nevertheless, the brewing cleavages in Nato's expanded club surfaced by horizontal and vertical polarization are fundamentally based on European governments' security and economic expediencies entailed by the priorities set in their domestic or national policies. The geo-political truth is that Europeans cannot annoy Russia.

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Source: <http://pakobserver.net/us-europe-divide-grips-nato/>

Nuclear weapons By John LaForge

Twice in seven days the United States shot nuclear-capable long-range missiles toward the Marshall Islands, but the same government refused in March to join negotiations for a new treaty banning nuclear weapons.

Tests conducted April 26 and May 3 from Vandenberg Air Force Base launched modernized Minuteman-3 ballistic missiles, and the US Air Force said in a statement that such tests ensure “the US’ ability to maintain a strong, credible nuclear deterrent as a key element of US national security...”

In late March, US Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley explained why the US would boycott the ‘treaty ban’ negotiations that began March 27 at the UN in New York City. Haley said about nuclear weapons, “[W]e can’t honestly say that we can protect our people by allowing the bad actors to have them, and those of us that are good, trying to keep peace and safety not to have them”. North Korean president Kim Jong-un could have said the same thing about his seven nuclear warheads, especially in view of US bombs and missiles currently falling on seven countries – Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, and Libya – and engagement in massive war games off the Korean peninsula.

Ambassador Haley managed to avoid being two-faced on one level. Joining the ban treaty talks would have been openly hypocritical while her colleagues in the war department were preparing both new nuclear weapons production and a series of test launches. Another April test, at the Tonopah bombing range in Nevada, dropped a so-called ‘B61-12’ the newest US H-bomb now in development and scheduled to go into production after 2022.

Jackie Cabasso, of the Western States Legal Foundation, explained April 20, “In 1997... President Bill Clinton signed Presidential Directive-60, reaffirming the threatened first use of nuclear weapons as the ‘cornerstone’ of US national security.... President Obama left office with the US poised to spend \$1 trillion over the next 30 years to maintain and modernize its nuclear bombs and warheads.... Over the past couple of years, the US has conducted a series of drop tests of the newly modified B61-12 gravity bomb.... Each new bomb will cost more than twice its weight in solid gold.” Of the 480 B61s slated to become B61-12s, about 180 are scheduled to be placed at six NATO bases in Europe.

As it did Feb. 21 and Feb. 25, 2016, the Air Force regularly tests Minuteman-3s. Deputy Pentagon Chief Robert Work explained before the Feb. 25 launch that the US had

tested 'at least' 15 since January 2011, "And that is a signal ... that we are prepared to use nuclear weapons in defense of our country if necessary." This is a Big Lie. To 'use' nuclear weapons produces only massacres, and massacres are never defensive.

Jason Ditz put the rocket tests in context for Antiwar.com: "Everywhere and (mostly) without exception, the test of an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) would be angrily condemned by the United States as a dangerous provocation, and the firing of a nuclear-capable rocket would be treated as tantamount to an act of war. Not today [April 26], of course, when the missile in question was test-fired from California by the United States flying some 4,000 miles before hitting a test target near the Marshall Islands. The missile was identified as a Minuteman III, a nuclear-capable weapon of which the US has 450 in service".

The two times Haley flubbed her March 27 'peace and safety' speech were alarming. Haley stumbled once saying, "We would love to have a ban on nuclear treat... nuclear weapons." A ban on nuclear treaties is clearly what Haley's bosses do want. So she didn't correct herself when she said, "One day we will hope that we are standing here saying, 'We no longer need nuclear weapons.'" Translation: today the US does not even hope to get rid of nuclear weapons.

Instead, the US is simultaneously bombing and rocketing across the Middle East, hitting civilians with drones, cruise missiles, depleted uranium, and even a 21,600-pound 'Massive Ordnance Air Blast' or MOAB bomb.

This article has been excerpted from: 'United States Says 'Yes' to Nuclear Weapons Tests, 'No' to a Nuke Ban Treat'.

Courtesy: Comondreams.org

Source: <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/203482-Nuclear-weapons>

The Plot Against American Foreign Policy By G. John Ikenberry

Is the world witnessing the demise of the U.S.-led liberal order? If so, this is not how it was supposed to happen. The great threats were supposed to come from hostile revisionist powers seeking to overturn the postwar order.

The United States and Europe were supposed to stand shoulder to shoulder to protect the gains reaped from 70 years of cooperation. Instead, the world's most powerful state has begun to sabotage the order it created. A hostile revisionist power has indeed arrived on the scene, but it sits in the Oval Office, the beating heart of the free world. Across ancient and modern eras, orders built by great powers have come and gone—but they have usually ended in murder, not suicide. U.S. President Donald Trump's every instinct runs counter to the ideas that have underpinned the postwar international system. Trade, alliances, international law, multilateralism, environmental protection, torture, and human rights—on all these core issues, Trump has made pronouncements that, if acted on, would bring to an end the United States' role as guarantor of the liberal world order. He has broken with 70 years of tradition by signaling the end of U.S. support for the European Union: endorsing Brexit and making common cause with right-wing European parties that seek to unravel the postwar European project. In his inaugural address, Trump declared, "From this moment on, it's going to be America first," and he announced his intention to rethink the central accomplishments of the U.S.-led order—the trade and alliance systems.

Where previous presidents have invoked the country's past foreign policy triumphs, Trump describes "horrible deals" and allies that "aren't paying their bills." His is a vision of a dark and dangerous world in which the United States is besieged by Islamic terrorism, immigrants, and crime as its wealth and confidence fade. In his revisionist narrative, the era of Pax Americana—the period in which the United States wielded the most power on the world stage—is defined above all by national loss and decline. Trump's challenge to the liberal order is all the more dangerous because it comes with a casual disrespect for the norms and values of liberal democracy itself. The president has questioned the legitimacy of federal judges, attacked the press, and shown little regard for the Constitution or the rule of law. Facts, evidence, scientific knowledge, due diligence, reasoned discourse—the essential elements of democratic political life—are disparaged daily. One must look long and hard to find any utterances by Trump about the virtues of the nation's political traditions, the genius of the Founding Fathers, or the great struggles and accomplishments of liberal democracy. This silence speaks loudly.

And in February, when asked on Fox News why he respected Russian President Vladimir Putin even though he is “a killer,” Trump dismissed 250 years of national ideals and the work of generations of Americans who have strived to reach the moral high ground, responding, “What, you think our country’s so innocent?” The profundity of this political moment is greater still because it occurs amid a wider crisis across the liberal democratic world. The centrist and progressive governing coalitions that built the postwar order have weakened. Liberal democracy itself appears fragile, vulnerable in particular to far-right populism. Some date these troubles to the global financial crisis of 2008, which widened economic inequality and fueled grievances across the advanced industrial democracies, the original patrons and beneficiaries of the order. In recent years, Western publics have increasingly come to regard the liberal international order not as a source of stability and solidarity among like-minded states but as a global playground for the rich and powerful. Trump is less a cause than a consequence of the failings of liberal democracy. But now that he is in office, his agenda promises to further undermine its foundations.

If the liberal international order is to survive, leaders and constituencies around the world that still support it will need to step up. Much will rest on the shoulders of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan and Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany, the only two leaders of consequence left standing who support it. Trump has abdicated responsibility for the world the United States built, and only time will tell the full extent of the damage he will wreak.

DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU GOT

Trump’s dark narrative of national decline ignores the great American accomplishment of the twentieth century: the building of the liberal international order. Constructed in the years following World War II, the order is complex and sprawling, organized around economic openness, multilateral institutions, security cooperation, democratic solidarity, and internationalist ideals. For decades, the United States has served as the system’s first citizen, providing leadership and public goods—anchoring the alliances, stabilizing the world economy, fostering cooperation, and championing the values of openness and liberal democracy. Europe and Japan helped build the order, tying their fortunes to multilateral organizations and enlightened U.S. leadership. The bilateral alliance with the United States is enshrined in Japan’s constitution. Nato played a critical role in Germany’s postwar rebirth and, half a century later, its peaceful reunification. Over time, more states signed up, attracted to the fair-minded rules and norms of the order. A system of alliances now stretches across the globe, linking the United States to Europe, East Asia, and the Middle East.

Compared with past orders—imperial and anarchic systems of various sorts, from the Greek and Chinese worlds of the classical era to the nineteenth-century European imperial system—the liberal order stands alone. Choose your metric. But in terms of wealth creation, the provision of physical security and economic stability, and the promotion of human rights and political protections, no other international order in history comes close. The liberal order may have its shortcomings—costly and ill-advised wars have been fought in its name, and vast economic and social injustices remain—but it has empowered people across the world who seek a better life within a relatively open and rules-based global system.

When Trump sees the United States “losing” to other countries, then, he misses the bigger picture. As the most powerful state in the system, the United States has agreed to restrain itself and operate within an array of regional and global institutions. In 1945, at the meeting in San Francisco that established the UN, President Harry Truman declared, “We all have to recognize, no matter how great our strength, that we must deny ourselves the license to do always as we please.” The United States became, in effect, a user-friendly superpower. Its power was loosely institutionalized, making it more predictable and approachable. The country may spend more on security than its partners, but they host and subsidize U.S. forces and offer political solidarity. Washington receives geopolitical access to Europe and East Asia, where it still wields unrivaled influence. It gives up a little of what Trump sees as unused leverage, but in return it gets a better deal: a world of friendly states willing to cooperate.

Trump’s transactional view of international relations misses the larger, interdependent logic of the U.S.-led system. The United States remains the linchpin of this order, and if it withdraws, the architecture of bargains and commitments will give way. Countries that expected to live within this system will need to make other plans. On the campaign trail, Trump said that it might be time for Japan and South Korea to get their own nuclear weapons, and some European policymakers have begun to talk about building an EU nuclear weapons program. China, meanwhile, has already begun to step into the geopolitical vacuum Trump is creating: in January, for example, in a speech at the World Economic Forum, in Davos, Chinese President Xi Jinping launched Beijing’s bid for leadership of the world economy. As the order unravels, Trump may succeed in bullying some U.S. partners into a slightly better deal on trade or defense burden-sharing, but he will squander a 70-year investment in a system that has made the United States more secure, more prosperous, and more influential.

DANGEROUS IDEAS

Trump's revisionism is dangerous precisely because it attacks the logic that undergirds the United States' global position. There are voices in the administration—Secretary of Defense James Mattis and National Security Adviser H. R. McMaster—that do not appear to share Trump's destructive instincts. But the worldview of the president and his base has long been clear, and it represents a frontal assault on the core convictions of the postwar U.S. global project. The first is internationalism: the belief that the United States can best advance its economic, political, and security interests by leading the order and engaging deeply with the major regions of the world. This was the hard-earned lesson of the twentieth century. From the 1930s onward, the United States has faced the prospect of a world divided into competing empires, blocs, and spheres of influence controlled by hostile great powers.

The building of the postwar order was driven by a bipartisan aspiration to reject such a world.

Yet when Trump looks beyond U.S. borders, he does not appear to see an order—defined as a strategic environment with rules, institutions, partners, and relationships. Not surprisingly, therefore, he sees no larger significance in U.S. alliances. He has made it clear that the United States' commitment to allies and regions is contingent. It is a business proposition, and allies need to pay up.

The second fundamental conviction that Trump rejects is the U.S. commitment to open trade. This responsibility dates back to the 1934 Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act, which started the slow process of reopening the world economy after the Great Depression. Ever since, trade has played a central role in U.S. foreign policy. It has strengthened the U.S. economy and driven the postwar ascendancy of the liberal democratic world. As the historian Paul Johnson has argued, in the decades following World War II, the open trading system ushered in “the most rapid and prolonged economic expansion in world history.” Since then, it has provided the economic glue that has bound Europe, East Asia, and the rest of the world together. The World Trade Organization, championed by the United States, has developed elaborate trade rules and disputesettlement mechanisms that make the system fair and legitimate, and the organization has given the United States tools to defend itself in trade conflicts with countries such as China.

Every postwar president has regarded this open system as integral to the prosperity of the United States and to its larger geopolitical goals—until Trump. For decades, Trump has displayed a more mercantilist, or zero-sum, understanding of trade. In his view,

trade is a game of winners and losers, not an exchange that generates mutual gains. Small wonder, then, that the new administration withdrew from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (tp) and has pledged to renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement. Even the European Union, according to Trump, represents merely a tool Germany uses to “beat the United States on trade,” as he said in an interview in January.

A third conviction underpinning U.S. global leadership has been the United States’ support for multilateral rules and institutions. This is what has made U.S. power so unique—and legitimate. After World War II, the United States proceeded to create a global web of institutions and regimes. As a result, other countries realized that they could benefit from U.S. ascendancy. Global institutions fostered cooperation and allowed Washington to attract allies, making its global presence more acceptable and durable. These institutions helped the international order solve common problems. And when the Cold War ended, no antiAmerican bloc formed. To the contrary, countries gravitated toward a global liberal internationalist system. The un, the Bretton Woods monetary system, arms control regimes, environmental agreements, human rights conventions— these features of the order are easy to take for granted, but they would not exist without a persistent U.S. commitment. Trump has shown little respect for this accomplishment. He has signaled that he is willing to rethink the United States’ financial and political commitment to the un. He disdains international law and endorses torture. Trump has yet to grasp what past presidents learned, sometimes the hard way: that working through the un and the U.S. alliance system leverages U.S. power.

When the United States embraces multilateralism, it gains greater public acceptance in other countries, particularly in Western democracies, making it easier for their governments to support U.S. policy. An “America first” attitude toward global rules and cooperation will breed a generation of anti-Americanism—and it will take years to undo the damage. Fourth, Trump disdains the multicultural and open character of American society. U.S. power is often denominated in units of gdp and military spending. But American society itself has been a sort of hidden asset. The United States is a nation of immigrants, and its openness has attracted people the world over. Racial, ethnic, and religious diversity makes the U.S. economy more dynamic, and countless familial and cultural linkages tie the United States to the rest of the world. Immigrants come to the United States to make their mark, but they do not entirely leave the old world behind, and the resulting networks boost U.S. influence in real, if intangible, ways. This aspect of U.S. leadership is often forgotten, but it becomes visible when threatened, as it is today. The Trump administration’s flagship policies on immigration—building a wall along the Mexican border, banning immigrants from six Muslim-majority countries, and temporarily barring all refugees— have sent an unmistakable message to the world. But

more worrying than the specific policies themselves are the ethnonationalist, nativist ideas behind them. For some of his advisers, such as Steve Bannon and Stephen Miller, immigration not only threatens national security; it also poses a cultural danger, as it plants the seeds of multiculturalism and accelerates the decline of a white Christian society. What has made the U.S. experience with immigration work so well is the notion that the U.S. polity is based on civic nationalism, not ethnic nationalism—that the United States’ political community is defined by the Constitution, by citizenship, and by shared values, not by ethnicity or religion. Trump’s advisers speak the language of ethnic nationalism, and the world has taken note. Protests against the new administration’s immigration policies have broken out in cities all over the world. The United States’ great myth about itself—that it offers refuge to the tired, the poor, and the “huddled masses yearning to breathe free”—remains a powerful source of the United States’ appeal abroad. But Trump is threatening to extinguish it.

Finally, every U.S. president from Woodrow Wilson to Barack Obama has maintained that an enduring community of liberal democracies exists, and that democracies possess a unique capacity to cooperate. During the Cold War, there was an authentic belief—felt in Washington but also in European and Asian capitals—that “the free world” was more than a temporary alliance to defend against the Soviet Union. In 1949, as he introduced the text of the treaty for the proposed Atlantic alliance in Washington, U.S. Secretary of State Dean Acheson argued that the world’s democracies shared “fundamental” bonds—“the strongest kind of ties, because they are based on moral conviction, on acceptance of the same values in life.” Initially, this community comprised only the United States, Western Europe, and Japan, but since the end of the Cold War, it has expanded.

Trump disdains this vision of the order, refusing to distinguish between liberal democratic friends and autocratic rivals—in January, he said that he trusts Merkel and Putin equally. In response, some western Europeans now view the Trump administration—and therefore the United States—as a greater threat than Putin’s Russia. In February, for example, an editorial in the German newsmagazine *Der Spiegel* called on Europe to “start planning its political and economic defenses. Against America’s dangerous president.”

IF NOT AMERICA . . .

If the liberal international order is to survive, leaders and citizens in the United States and elsewhere will need to defend its institutions, bargains, and accomplishments. Those seeking to defend it have one big advantage: more people, within the United States and abroad, stand to lose from its destruction than stand to win. The defenders

of the order should start by reclaiming the master narrative of the last 70 years. The era of U.S. leadership did not usher in the end of history, but it did set the stage for world-historical advances. Since the end of the Cold War, over a billion people have been raised out of poverty and hundreds of millions of children have been educated. The world has been spared great-power war, and a sense of common responsibility for the well-being of the planet has emerged. In trying to reclaim this narrative, politicians and public intellectuals should take their lead from U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill. In 1941, the two leaders met in Newfoundland and signed the Atlantic Charter, a declaration of their shared commitment to building a better world after the war ended. They pledged to establish an international system based on the principles of openness, cooperative security, and social and economic advancement. Today, the leaders of the liberal democratic world should present a charter of their own, to renew their support for an open and rules-based order.

The United States' friends and allies need to make it tough for Trump to pursue an "America first" agenda. They need to show that they are indispensable partners, increasing their military spending and taking the lead on issues such as climate change, nuclear proliferation, trade cooperation, and sustainable development. Abe and Merkel, the new leaders of the free world, will have to sustain liberal internationalism for as long as Trump is in office. Abe should keep promoting liberal trade agreements, modeled on the tpp, and Merkel, as the leader of the country that perhaps most embodies the virtues and accomplishments of the postwar liberal order, is uniquely positioned to speak as the moral voice of the liberal democratic world. U.S. allies also need to engage in what the Japanese call *gaiatsu*—"foreign pressure." The French government had the right idea when it proposed placing a surtax on U.S. goods if the Trump administration pulled out of the Paris climate agreement. The United States needs allies in part because they will push back when it goes off track.

Those seeking to rebuild the world's troubled trading system will need to think about how it can once again strengthen national economies. Since World War II, policymakers have used trade agreements to increase the flow of goods and investment. The Harvard economist Dani Rodrik has argued that governments should instead view trade agreements as exercises in which governments provide access to one another's "policy space" to manage open trade. The goal is not primarily to lower barriers to trade and investment; it is to cooperate to stabilize the flows, and in a way that protects the interests of workers and the middle class. In his last address to the un General Assembly, in September, Obama hinted at this agenda, calling on countries to preserve the gains from global economic integration while cooperating in new ways to reduce the ravages of "soulless capitalism," combating inequality within countries and strengthening the position of workers. The challenge ahead is to build on these visions

of how the open world economy might adapt to the deep economic insecurities across the advanced industrial world.

The liberal international order is in crisis for reasons that predate the Trump administration. It has lost something critical in the decades since its birth during the Cold War—namely, a shared sense that a community of liberal democracies exists and that it is made physically safer and economically more secure by staying united. Across the democratic world, the first generation of postwar policymakers and citizens understood that the liberal order provided the political and economic space in which countries could prosper in safety. The political scientist John Ruggie has described this order as “embedded liberalism”: international agreements, embodied in the Bretton Woods system, gave governments discretion to regulate their economies, allowing them to reconcile free trade with economic stability and policies aimed at ensuring full employment. But with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the liberal order expanded across the globe, and sowed the seeds for today’s crisis: it lost its embedded, protective qualities and was increasingly seen as a neoliberal project aimed at facilitating the transactions of globetrotting capitalists.

Today, the defenders of the order will need to recapture its essence as a security community, a grouping of countries bound together by common values, shared interests, and mutual vulnerabilities. Trump will do a lot of damage to this order, but the decisions of others—in the United States and abroad— will determine whether it is ultimately destroyed. “The best lack all conviction, while the worst / Are full of passionate intensity,” William Butler Yeats wrote in the aftermath of World War I. If the liberal democratic world is to survive, its champions will have to find their voice and act with more conviction.