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PM Asserts To Resume 'Meaningful Dialogue' With India

December 01, 2014



Prime Minister (PM) Nawaz Sharif on Thursday said that Pakistan desires to have 'meaningful dialogue' with India to resolve all the issues including Kashmir, private media reported. PM also asserted that dignity, honour and self-respect are imperative while establishing ties with India. He said, "We believe in it and will maintain it at all costs."

Talking to the reporters accompanying him back from the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) summit the premier said that Kashmir issue cannot be ignored and the matter should be discussed with 'sincerity'.

Indicating the fury of India over the meetings of Pakistani officials with Kashmiri leaders Nawaz said, "We had been talking to the Kashmiri leaders in the past, whenever Pakistan-India talks are held. This is nothing new as we have to seek the opinion of the Kashmiri leaders, on an issue that concerns them the most."

He added further, "if India wants to restore ties, the Kashmir issue must be discussed and that too seriously, with full sincerity."

Talking about growing tension between Pakistan and India PM recalled the number of deaths due to unprovoked firing of India along the Line of Control and working boundary. He reiterated that since India has postponed the talks so the burden of resuming the dialogue lies with India.

When asked about the November 30 PTI protest, Nawaz said that Imran Khan was following a personal agenda and people should ask him why he wants to 'destabilise' the country and spread chaos.

He also said that people of Pakistan have grown mature and they have rejected the politics of negativity.

"Did the people give them [PTI] votes so that they could hold Pakistan hostage or to go to the assemblies to play their role of a healthy opposition," he added, "their only objective is to get my resignation."

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Indo-Pak Rivalry & Regionalism In South Asia | By Dr: Muhammad Khan

December 01, 2014



A lot was expected from the 18th SAARC Summit, held in Kathmandu, Nepal from November 26 to November 27, 2014. There were many agreements which were to be signed during this summit, connectivity being the top most agenda. However, except energy connectivity, other areas like road and rail connectivity agreements could not be agreed upon.

The Kathmandu Declaration however, issued at the concluding session included a long list of future goals like, promotion and development of; “blue economy” (ocean-based economy) for the region, monitoring cyber crimes, good governance, reinforcing cultural heritage, universal health coverage, food security, etc. Since economy; regional investments and financial arrangements for a ‘deeper regional integration’ was the main theme of the Summit, but in the practical terms no important decision could be agreed upon in that respect.

For some regional political and economic experts, “the continuing India-Pakistan duel had once again hijacked the regional cooperation summit (SAARC), rendering it merely an expensive photo op.” Indeed, except a brief handshake, there was no formal meeting between Premiers of Pakistan and India. The antagonistic approach of these two South Asian neighbours remains prominent throughout the

summit. In fact, there has been no change from the previous summits of this South Asian forum; rather there was a clear descent in the bilateral relations between Pakistani and Indian leaders.

The idea behind establishment of this huge South Asian forum was to have an organization which could integrate the region ; politically as economically, resolving the odds between regional countries and moving forward. All inter-state aspects were to be addressed under its principles like; sovereign equality, territorial integrity, national independence, non-use of force and non-interference in the internal affairs of other States and peaceful settlement of all disputes.

In its entire history of three decades now, this South Asian body could neither integrate the region economically nor brought a political consensus on some of the unresolved issues, the real barriers in the efficient performance of SAARC as an effective regional body. Like previous summits, this summit too tried to address the peripheral issues, ignoring the core issues. Over and above, there has been violation of the basic charter of this forum; 'sovereign equality and peaceful settlement of issues' by a regional hegemonic state, while ignoring and violations of the rights of all other regional states.

If ASEAN or EU was the model for those, conceived the idea of SAARC, there has to be a real assessment of its failure to achieve its perceived goals. An honest and fair assessment about the performance of SAARC hinges around one country, India; enormous in its geography and biggest in population. Rather acting as a catalyst for the regional peace and stability, India has been problematic for rest of South Asians as well as other neighbours like China and Myanmar (Burma).

This attitude of India has been throughout and takes roots from the philosophies of Kautilya (also known as Chanakya) an old Indian traditional realist, the founder of the power politics for Indians. Following his philosophies, the successive Indian rulers have created problems for immediate neighbours on political as well as economic fronts. Whereas, all other South Asians have yielded to the Indian dominance, Pakistan refused to surrender, hence facing Indian rivalry and enmity in all areas.

In order to move forward on the agenda of regional integration, in the last almost seven decade, India could have made developments on the core issues like Kashmir. But, it has a policy of denial and illegitimate claims, the mantra of integral part, which not only act as irritant but, also deny the people of State (Kashmir) of their basic rights. This act is a clear violation of UN Charter, which became the foundation of SAARC's Charter. How can Pakistan cooperate on other issues, leaving the core issues aside and ignoring the will and wish of its masses?

As a strategy, India has been diverting the attention of international community from the core issues and instead focusing on peripheral issues and promotion of trade and commerce, which ultimately goes in India's favour. It's spying network; RAW has been and is continuing its anti state and terrorist activities against the state of Pakistan for decades, but has been clever to level allegations against Pakistan.

Just few days before the 18th SAARC Summit, Indian media published an article entitled "Pakistan's ISI may target India's key economic centers and important installations" (Namrata Biji Ahuja-7th November 2014). It contended that Indian intelligence agencies informed that new terror module trained by ISI

have entered India to strike at key economic installations including Reserve Bank, Bombay Stock Exchange, New Delhi's Tihar Jail, BSF HQ at Jalandhar, Patiala Jail in Punjab and Avantipura in J&K. Similarly Indian Home Affairs Minister, Rajnath Singh accused on November 29, 2014 that, Pakistani state actors are destabilizing India.

Under such baseless and misleading accusation, how can one look for a regional integration, where the bigger state; India has adopted an antagonistic approach against Pakistan. It is worth mentioning that, India has completely fenced its border with Pakistan including LoC in disputed Kashmir region. It has mined it and monitoring through lights / watch towers, making any stealth passage impossible, so there is no chance of crossing border. Should still there be some basis for such accusations or these are meant to mislead the world. More on and off, India has been accusing Pakistan premium intelligence agency ISI for its own flaws and security breaches.

If India really wants regional integration in South Asia, it has to act in accordance with UN Charter and principles of SAARC. India will have to settle the core issues with Pakistan and address the Pakistani concerns over its involvement in Balochistan and FATA, where it is promoting separatism and terrorism.

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Positive Turn In Pak-US Ties | By Aftab Hussain

December 01, 2014



Pakistan-US bilateral ties have remained a roller coaster ride. There was a point when the relations were on its peak with US aid and assistance was reaching Pakistan and several incentives were being offered coupled with lifting of embargoes and sanctions. Then came a time when the relations reached to a very low level and both countries were struggling to prevent a further deterioration of their ties. However the good news is that things are improving now. Especially after the visit of Pakistan Army Chief Raheel Sharif things seem to be moving in a positive direction.

The US changed its attitude towards Pakistan a few months back. Even till 2013 there were allegations for Pakistan regarding providing safe heavens to the terrorist. But since the day Pakistan Army launched Operation Zarb-e-Azb things started to change. It has been a long time since the US was asking Pakistan and often pressurizing it to launch a full-fledged military operation in North Waziristan Agency (WNA). But Pakistan was not engaging its forces in NWA because the forces were busy in clearing South Waziristan Agency (SWA) and the settled areas of Khyber Pakhunkha (KPK) of the terrorists. Hence it was not wise to engage forces at multiple places, but once the forces took control of these areas they entered in NWA. This was one example that US often ignored the implications of such advises, and how they might affect Pakistan.

An analysis of relations between Pakistan and US in the past 14 years, i.e. since 9/11 suggests that the, (a) War on Terror, (b) Terrorism in Pakistan (c) US engagement in Afghanistan were the issues which determined the notion of their bilateral ties. Soon after 9/11 when Pakistan agreed to assist US in Operation Enduring Freedom; overnight Pakistan became a non-NATO ally of the US and an aid package was announced.

However, the aid money was not even one tenth of what Pakistan had to pay later as a result of US-led operation in Afghanistan. Shortly, Pakistan became the front line state and had to bear all the consequences of assisting the US. The bilateral relations have taken a positive turn and it is hoped that things will move from positive to pleasant. However, the past experience of the people of Pakistan regarding Islamabad-Washington ties is marked with mistrust, scepticism and a feeling of betrayal. The main reason for such feelings is the US policy of abandoning after its purpose was served in the region and later on an unwanted pressure for “do more”. This behavior promotes anti-Americanism among the people of Pakistan. Still the US drone attacks are despised by Pakistani people.

The change of US attitude towards Pakistan is due to the three main factors mentioned above (a) US-led War on terror is over, everyone is wrapping up (b) Pakistan has launched operation in NWA and the backbone of the terrorists has broken (c) Afghanistan no longer serves the US interests. Well, then why to push Pakistan to the wall? The US could not think of any reason to do that. Hence the US chose to be friendly with Pakistan.

The US still needs to decide that what sort of relations it wants with Pakistan. Either the ties would be on the basis of “where and when needed” or a mature country to country relation. Instead of bashing Pakistan every now and then for one issues or the other and striking drones in its territory, the US must accept the realities of Pakistan’s and leave the internal counter- terrorism operations to Pakistan. With the passage of time things have changed in Pakistan. Islamabad has broken out of the diplomatic isolation and is diversifying its foreign policy. In the near future there will be increased engagement of Pakistan with China, Russia, East Asian countries, Europe and South America. This diversification of foreign policy will decrease Pakistan’s interdependence on the US and increase diplomatic support of Pakistan in international forums including the UNGA and UNSC. Therefore, the US should further develop bilateral ties on the basis of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of Pakistan and non-interference of its internal affairs.

It is ironic to learn that no nation, in the past 40 years – Since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan – has suffered as much – for supporting and assisting the US – as Pakistan, still Islamabad has remained a victim of criticism from the US. Although, the US authorities now appreciate the sacrifices made by the armed forces and people of Pakistan, many things still need to be discussed.

Foreign Policy Dilemmas | By Dr Hasan Askari Rizvi

December 01, 2014



The handshake between Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi provided a happy ending to the 18th Saarc summit conference at Kathmandu on November 27. Perhaps, this was the first conference for regional cooperation where the leaders of two member states were not willing to have a formal bilateral interaction. The persuasion of other leaders led them to shake hands for the media. This does not augur well for the future of regional cooperation in South Asia.

Saarc is hostage to the strong desire of the ruling elites of India and Pakistan to play tough towards each other in order to make political gains in their respective domestic contexts. Prime Minister Modi wants to demonstrate that India is powerful enough to adopt a punitive disposition towards Pakistan. This helps him not only to mollify hardliners in and around the BJP, but it also expands his support in non-BJP circles.

Prime Minister Sharif was keen on fostering trade and economic relations with India when he assumed power, but this came into conflict with his main support base, which is the political right wing, which does not want Pakistan to appear weak under Indian pressure. Furthermore, Indian rebuffs to Prime Minister Sharif, through the cancellation of the foreign secretaries' meeting and the subsequent violent incidents at the Line of Control (LoC) and the working boundary have made his task difficult. He also faces domestic difficulties because of the ongoing confrontation with Imran Khan's PTI and Dr Tahirul Qadri's movement that challenge his political credibility. The army establishment and a section of public

opinion have reservations about the prime minister's keenness for trade and economic ties with India at a time when that country is not willing to address any issue that is of concern to Pakistan. The chances of resumption of meaningful talks between Pakistan and India are minimal, if any, in the next couple of months. The major reason is that India wants to hold talks on its agenda and insists that Pakistan must satisfy India on terrorism as a pre-condition for holding talks.

A strong section of public opinion in India thinks that as India is on its way to becoming an active player in the bigger global power league, it should not let Pakistan become an obstacle to its drive for pre-eminence at the global and regional levels. Pakistan can be neutralised by putting strong diplomatic and military pressure on it either by carefully managed military activity on the LoC or by massive propaganda campaigns or by exploiting its internal dissensions and conflicts to India's advantage. Given India's strident approach, Pakistan should hold back its keenness to revive the dialogue. It should put this relation on hold till India agrees to a mutually acceptable agenda for condition-free talks on all contentious issues.

Meanwhile, Pakistan should pay attention to four issues on a priority basis: increased diplomatic interaction with other countries, especially with Afghanistan, Iran, Russia and the Central Asian states; control religious extremism and terrorism on its soil; streamline foreign policy management; and improve governance and salvage its faltering economy.

Pakistan must strengthen its diplomatic interaction with states other than India to strengthen its diplomatic clout. Special attention should be given to strengthening its ties with Afghanistan for adopting a shared approach for countering religious extremism and terrorism. Pakistan must offer financial and technical support for Afghanistan's reconstruction and economic development. Similarly, economic and diplomatic interaction needs to be strengthened with Iran and the Central Asian states. It should respond quickly and positively on expanding relations with Russia in the fields identified during the recent visit of the Russian defence minister. This option should not be allowed to drift away.

Pakistan cannot develop a positive interaction with the rest of the world without controlling extremism and terrorism in the domestic context. In order to achieve this objective, the current military operation in North Waziristan and other tribal areas must be supported. However, the civilian government does not appear to be keen on building political support for the operation against militant groups. With the exception of periodic statements in support of the operation, the top civilian officials avoid taking a categorical stand in public on a regular basis in its favour.

There is a lot of confusion in foreign policy management in Pakistan. Several federal ministers make contradictory statements that cause confusion about the direction of foreign and security policies. The foreign affairs portfolio is with the prime minister but at least five people make foreign policy statements as and when they like. They are Sartaj Aziz, Tariq Fatemi, Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan, Khawaja Asif and Punjab Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif (for Turkey and China). While the army chief was in the US on a trip meant to strengthen Pakistan-US security relations and assure US officials that the military was pursuing a security operation against terrorists in a non-discriminatory manner, Aziz and Asif made remarks that raised doubts about the credibility of the army chief's trip. The prime minister should limit

the number of his colleagues who can venture into foreign policy and they need to speak in harmony with one another and with the army top command.

The issues of the economy, especially shortages of electricity and gas, should get priority over the federal government's high profile and media-oriented projects of building roads, highways, bus services, free distribution of laptops and giving vehicles to people on soft loans. Use all these funds to address the energy shortage, which will generate new jobs and thus reduce economic pressures on the people. Furthermore, the federal government cannot continue to sleep over the demands generated by Imran Khan and his party. This policy will in the long run hurt the prime minister badly. If the Sharif government and parliament cannot resolve the current political conflicts, both will become dysfunctional and irrelevant to problem-solving in Pakistan.

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India And Pakistan ‘Battle’ For Afghanistan

December 02, 2014



Experts say the impending departure of NATO combat forces from Afghanistan could push India and Pakistan toward a proxy war in the conflict-ridden state, as New Delhi and Islamabad fight for influence in the country.

The danger for Pakistan is [...] the Indian influence in Afghanistan,” former Pakistani President and Army Chief Pervez Musharraf recently told the AFP news agency in an interview in the southern Pakistani city of Karachi. “They (India) want to create an anti-Pakistan Afghanistan.”

“If Indians are using some ethnic groups in Afghanistan, then Pakistan will use its own support, and our ethnic allies are certainly Pashtuns,” Musharraf continued.

Musharraf, a former military dictator who ruled the Islamic country from 1999 to 2007, has been under house arrest on treason charges, but his words still carry weight. Some Pakistani observers believe that the former general is still close to the current military leadership of the nuclear-armed state, and that he is probably only echoing his former institution's views on India and Afghanistan.

The South Asian country's civilian leadership, too, has similar views on Afghanistan, terrorism and Islamist militants. On November 17, Sartaj Aziz, national security adviser to Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, told the BBC that there was no need for Pakistan to target militants who did not threaten the country's security.

"Why should enemies of the US unnecessarily become our foes," Aziz said. "Some of them were dangerous for us and some are not. Why must we make enemies out of them all?" he said, referring to the militant Haqqani network.

These are two different statements by two Pakistani leaders but they carry a single narrative: Islamabad feels threatened by New Delhi's close ties with Kabul; hence it will likely continue to use some factions of the Taliban as counter-balancing forces in its western neighborhood.

Same old policies

There is nothing new about Pakistan's Afghanistan policy though. The country's military and civil establishment, analysts say, still consider the Taliban an important strategic ally, who they think should be part of the Afghan government after the NATO pullout. Observers say that the Pakistani military hopes to regain the influence in Kabul it once enjoyed before the United States and its allies toppled the pro-Pakistan Taliban government in 2001.

"Kabul is friendlier towards New Delhi now, whereas Islamabad continues to back the Taliban, as now officially admitted by Sartaj Aziz. Pakistan wishes to change this scenario and turn Afghanistan into its political backyard once again," London-based journalist and researcher Farooq Sulehria told DW.

Matt Waldman, a researcher on the Afghanistan conflict at Harvard University, believes that Pakistan won't relinquish its support for the Taliban until the regional dynamics undergo a transformation. "The evidence indicates that the Pakistan hasn't fundamentally changed its Afghanistan policy," Waldman told DW.

Siegfried O. Wolf, a political science expert at Heidelberg University, is of the same view. He told DW that he was convinced that several elements within the Pakistan security apparatus still believe that the Taliban could be used as a strategic tool to counter Indian presence in Afghanistan.

A lost cause

Earlier this year, New Delhi announced a two billion USD aid package for Afghanistan – the biggest India has ever given to another country.

While India has been active in rebuilding Afghanistan since 2001, Pakistan's role has been negligible in this regard, says Sulehria. "By backing the Taliban, Islamabad has contributed to the country's destruction. I frequently visit Kabul and I can say that Pakistan is very unpopular in Afghanistan. Sadly, Islamabad is not ready to change course," the expert added.

Vivek Kumar, a New Delhi-based journalist, says that the Indian and Pakistani interests have always clashed in Afghanistan, and that he does not foresee a major change in these dynamics. "The Indian government would want the new Afghan President Ashraf Ghani to follow his predecessor Hamid Karzai's path. India has invested a lot in Afghanistan, and all this investment is strategically aimed at minimizing Pakistan's influence," he said, adding that Indian PM Narendra Modi would also like to enhance his country's partnership with Kabul in the security sector.

Sulehria says that Afghanistan has changed a lot over the past years, and that objective realities and subjective factors are not in Pakistan's favor anymore. "Pakistan will not be able to dictate terms to the Afghan administration and the rest of the world now. I think Pakistan has already lost the proxy war."

Long term vs short term goals

But with a bilateral security agreement (BSA) between Kabul and Washington in place, it will be difficult for either Pakistan or India to destabilize Afghanistan. The pact, which was approved by President Ghani in September, is aimed at strengthening Afghan security forces while they work to stave off the Taliban. Under the deal, international forces will provide training and support to Afghanistan's security forces.

Commenting on the BSA and the future of Afghanistan, Owais Tohid, a Karachi-based senior journalist, said that the security pact was a "wake-up call" for Pakistani rulers, who should not hope for a Taliban comeback in Afghanistan.

The journalist is of the view that instead of focusing on short-term benefits, Islamabad should forge a long-term alliance with Afghanistan based on commercial and economic interests. "In the long run, it will be a blessing in disguise for Pakistan. These short-term strategic gains only reflect the myopic mindset of Pakistani policymakers," Tohid said.

Geo-Political Location Of Pakistan, Its Unfortunate People |By Dr Ikhtlaq Hassain

December 02, 2014



Pakistan is located on the world map amidst three great continents, South Asia, Central Asia and West Asia. It is surrounded by three big powers, China, India and Russia and located at a crossing amongst important countries like Iran, Afghanistan and Central Asian states. Interestingly the doors of all these countries open into the backyard of Pakistan.

Pakistan's geo-political location is strategically unique and extremely valuable. Six wars have so far been fought from and over the soil of Pakistan and the present continuing War on terror is not yet over.

In addition, Pakistan has always been an important and attractive necessity for global-powers, target of international conspiracies and persistent battle field for regional and global-powers.

History reveals that the rulers of Soviet-Union in the past had a long dream of an access to warm-water oceans for which the shortest route was through Afghanistan, Balochistan and right into the Indian ocean. However this aim could not be achieved due to British global colonial Umpire and their sole supremacy over the ocean. Following the end of British rule over India and independence of India and Pakistan, the objective of gaining an access to the Indian-ocean could be achieved by diplomacy with the concerned Government of Afghanistan and Pakistan, instead the nuclear power Soviet-Union made a historical blunder and chose to use force and thus invaded Afghanistan. In reply to this. US, Afghanistan and Pakistan all-together joined hands, defeated Soviet-Union and forced its disintegration. Pak-China relations have always been excellent and time tested.

Chinese too had a desire for an access to warm-water Ocean through Pakistan. Unlike Soviet-Union, Chinese Government adopted diplomatic channels for the same purpose and with persuasion of Pakistan Government developed most difficult and valuable project of "SHRAH-E-RESHAM" and the deep sea port of "Gawadar" and at the same time the road and rail links are in progress. In this way China's long-term trade economy, energy requirements and above all its future geo-political gains like its presence in the Indian Ocean and at the exit of Persian Gulf which are understandable concerns for regional and Global-Power.

The Indian political pundits know very well that the key to India's progress and prosperity lies in Pakistan. They are hungry to boost their trade, fulfil their energy requirements to and from Iran, Afghanistan, Central Asian energy rich states and China through Pakistan but this cannot be achieved without resolving the major issues between Pakistan and India.

Relating to the events in Afghanistan "War on Terror" still continues, the economically exhausted and militarily defeated US Nato force are preparing to "QUIT" Afghanistan and thus like in the past, leaving behind the burning battle field for their most favourite old allies Pakistan and Afghanistan alone to face terrorism as well as the past-war consequences.

Finally about Pakistan economically near bankruptcy, destroyed by terrorism and politically a failed-State, there is chaos, disappointment and sense of instability amongst the people. Our politicians are criminally negligent about the political turmoil in the country, worsening conditions at its borders and horrible developments in Middle East where beginning of Third World War is imminent.

It looks as if, our politicians have gone bankrupt politically and are busy in fighting with each other their personal political feuds and rivalries. Had there ever been a shrewd type of national leader of the people of Pakistan, possessing deep-vision and farsightedness he would have exploited the valuable location of Pakistan, extracted its real price and benefits and converted this country into an international "TRADE HUB" and "energy-corridor".

Today the entire nation sick of their professional politicians and old colonial electoral, political, judicial and administrative systems, is looking forward to revolutionary changes in the country and determined to get-rid of the corrupt politicians.

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Pakistan's Burgeoning Energy Crisis

December 02, 2014



Problems confronting Pakistan today are innumerable. The gravity of these problems is serious enough to send shiver down the spines of every citizen of this country. You name it and it is there; rampant corruption, gas shortages, water shortages, miserable law and order situation, rapidly declining foreign investment, terrorism, and many, many more.

The most critical of these problems are the devastating electricity and gas shortages. These two problems have acquired critical dimensions because they are directly impacting the industries and thereby the economy of the country. Not that the government in saddles is ignorant about the severity of the situation but things have gone so worse, vis-a-vis these two major issues, that it has become awfully difficult for it to bring these two extremely vital problems under immediate control.

Initially, it was decided that the government, due to critical electricity and gas shortages, would zero down electricity and gas supplies to the industries. But realizing that this action, on the part of the government, would have a serious impact on the industries and thereby the dismal economic condition of the country, it has decided to retract its earlier decision on the matter. The latest decision of the government to provide uninterrupted electricity and gas supplies to the industries sounds really good. However, what boggles the minds of those who are fully aware of the gravity of the situation is how would the government fulfil this commitment with no improvement whatsoever in the current very poor status of these two vital energy resources?

Unambiguously, the commitment made by the government has raised the expectations of the industrial sector of the country without taking stock of its ability to meet it. The fact remains that the promise made by it to not to subject the industries across the country to electricity/gas load shedding, while simultaneously saying there will be no increase in consumer load shedding, can only be fulfilled if there is a significant increase in the production of electricity/gas, something that the government hasn't been able to do thus far. Keeping our fingers crossed and hoping that the government would somehow succeed in fulfilling the commitment that it has made, this would not only resuscitate the rapidly waning industrial sector of the country but also reinvigorate it. This may also bring some relief to the domestic consumers of electricity/gas who stand equally brutally battered by the menace of electricity and gas shortages.

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The Pakistani Origins Of The Israeli State | By Ishaan Tharoor

December 03, 2014



“Pakistan is like Israel, an ideological state,” said then Pakistani President Zia ul-Haq in 1981. “Take out the Judaism from Israel and it will fall like a house of cards. Take Islam out of Pakistan and make it a secular state; it would collapse.”

It’s a strange thing to think about now. Pakistan and Israel are, on the face of it, not kindred spirits. There are no formal diplomatic relations between the two countries— Pakistan, like many other Muslim-majority states, does not recognize Israel’s existence. Israel, meanwhile, has in recent years been cozying up to India, Pakistan’s archrival across the border. Pakistani conspiracy theorists routinely hurl invective at the combined plots of RAW, India’s top intelligence agency, and the Mossad.

But Zia, an instrumental figure in the Islamization of Pakistani society, was saying something quite obvious: Pakistan and Israel are historical twins.

They emerged as independent states one after the other — Pakistan in 1947, Israel in 1948 — following the retreat of the British empire. They were born in blood: Pakistan in the grisly Partition that cleaved

British India in two, Israel in the battles of the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. And ideologically, as Zia noted, they were both states whose *raison d'être* was religion, or at least religious identity.

Pakistan was dreamed up as a haven for Indian Muslims, a state that transcended geography itself with a western and eastern wing suspended in between thousands of miles of India. (It should be noted that India's secular founding fathers never saw their own state as a "Hindu" nation, and that until very recently, there have been more Muslims living in India than in Pakistan.)

Israel was the product of decades of Zionist activism, brought into being after the horrors of the Holocaust as a homeland for Europe's tormented Jewry. Even this cause had an echo in South Asia. Pakistan's founding father Mohammad Ali Jinnah was well-versed in the Zionist plight, since he too wanted to make a nation out of a religious community.

As the Oxford historian Faisal Devji writes in his book "Muslim Zion: Pakistan as a Political Idea," Jinnah "seems to have possessed more books on the problems of European Jewry than on any Muslim people or country." That's not too surprising, given that Jinnah was not particularly religious and envisioned a Pakistani nation that, while defined by Islam, was not necessarily governed by its laws. A similar secular theme ran through the Israeli state.

More tellingly, Pakistan made a direct impression on Israel's rulers in the first years of the country's existence.

In a Haaretz article excerpting work from a new book on Israel and the question of apartheid, South African-born author Benjamin Pogrund explored how Israel followed Pakistan's lead when it came to administering lands and property captured from the Palestinians who had lived there before. Pogrund writes of the challenge that faced David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first prime minister, in 1948:

In the government debates to decide what to do with the Arab "abandoned property," the prime minister's special adviser on land and border demarcation, Zalman Lifshitz, argued for the permanent use of refugee property for the political and economic benefit of the new state. He said that countries in similar situations, such as Turkey, Greece, Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia, had taken on vast powers to liquidate refugee property for state use and he urged the Israeli government "to proceed in a similar manner" as "there is no shortage of precedents."

The laws Lifshitz got enacted in 1949, Pogrund writes, were "based squarely" on Pakistani precedent. During Partition, millions of Hindus and Sikhs had fled what became Pakistan, leaving behind property and assets that could be appropriated on behalf of the millions of Muslim refugees streaming in from the other side of the border. For Lifshitz, Pogrund explains, a similar solution made sense for Israel's Jewish arrivals.

It cannot be said if Lifshitz was aware of the irony of the new Jewish state using the legal techniques of a new Muslim state to deprive its own mainly Muslim refugees of their properties. Whichever, he proposed "a new law, similar to the... Pakistani regulations and based on the principles they contain." Pakistani lawmakers, he noted, had drawn on Britain's Trading with the Enemy Act, but had also

introduced new elements to assist expropriation and transfer of ownership: they had created a mechanism for seizing Hindu and Sikh refugee property in Pakistan and its reallocation for the settlement of Muslim refugees from India.

This curious irony could be chalked off as a quirk of history. But both Israel and Pakistan are still grappling with their fragile ideological identities to this day.

Jinnah's dream has so far proved illusory: in 1971, East Pakistan split away following a brutal revolutionary war and became the independent state of Bangladesh. Ethnic and linguistic nationalism trumped a pan-Islamic identity. Subsequent Pakistani governments have both encouraged rampant Islamism and then struggled to contain its extremist, militant off-shoots.

In Israel, the question of how to reconcile with the Arabs on its borders and in its midst remains as potent and vexing now as it did more than half a century ago. As WorldViews has written about before, the right-wing government of current Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has shown little will to enable the creation of a viable Palestinian state. Some of Netanyahu's allies have specifically ruled it out.

And Netanyahu himself is attempting to push through a controversial law that would cement Israel's status as a "Jewish nation-state," privileging the collective rights of Israeli Jews over the interests of Israeli minorities. It's a proposal that plays well among Israel's right-wing, including communities of settlers living in the West Bank.

But it has its critics, too. "Israelis not in the thrall of settler fanaticism need to decide whether they want to be part of the democratic Western world or not," wrote Israeli intellectual Bernard Avishai in the New Yorker this week. He then offered this tidy comparison: "The Jewish nation-state law puts the choice starkly: a globalist Hebrew republic or a little Jewish Pakistan."

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Islam And The Constitution |By Rafia Zakaria

December 03, 2014



THE project of reconciling faith and constitutionalism is one that enjoys wide popularity in many parts of the Muslim world. Not long ago, Sudan’s President Omar Bashir promised a “100pc” Islamic constitution to his polity. Similarly, when the regime of president Mubarak was toppled in Egypt and the Muslim Brotherhood elected to power, their first and foremost task was to produce a constitution that embodied the values of Islam while also providing rights to the Egyptian citizenry.

In Pakistan, the question of just how Islamic the Constitution is has been an issue for decades. In its most recent iteration, it became a roadblock in negotiations with the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan, who alleged they could not conduct negotiations with politicians bound by a constitution that the group does not consider Islamic.

While these debates and battles have raged on in various forms in post-colonial Muslim nations, ever insecure about creating the perfect hybridity of Islamic principles and constitutional structure, consensus on these questions has been elusive.

Into this contentious mix comes a new study entitled Measuring Constitutional Islamisation: The Islamic Constitutions Index. Developed by University of Chicago scholar Dawood Ahmad and Moamen Gouda, a professor of Middle East economics at Hankuk University, the study attempts to create the first empirical measure for the relative ‘Islamicity’ of a particular constitution, consequently enabling the

measurement of just how 'Islamic' a particular country's constitution is. An Islamic constitution developed by the scholars at the renowned Al Azhar University in Cairo was used as a model against which the constitutions of the other countries could be measured.

'Islamic' constitutions often grant just as many rights as secular countries: implementation is the problem.

The aim of measuring the 'Islamicity' of any particular constitution was motivated by the same questions that fill Pakistani newspapers on a daily and weekly basis. Central to these is a fact highlighted in poll after poll: Muslim publics have a desire to see faith embodied in public life and in their constitutional instruments. Attached to this widely held desire are the thornier questions of whether Islamic constitutions make a polity a democracy or a theocracy, whether the model of constitutional governance and transcendent faith-based precepts is compatible.

On the theoretical level, all have been roundly and soundly debated, and in their study Ahmad and Gouda turn to the empirical plane. The hope is that perhaps in this dimension the questions of computability, the award of rights, the pre-eminence of faith and the protection for individual freedom can be studied with the certainty of numbers.

Their findings are both interesting and thought-provoking. The 'Islamic Constitutions Index' ranking reveals the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran to be the 'most Islamic' followed by Saudi Arabia and the Maldives. Pakistan's Constitution of 1973 comes in fourth place followed by Somalia, Yemen, Bahrain and Iraq. (Contrary to popular belief, the Saudi constitution is not simply the Holy Quran but contains additional provisions regarding governance and the ruling monarchy.)

Beyond the ranking, the interpretation of the results reveals that not all countries with Muslim majority populations have Islamic constitutions. Notable among these are the Central Asian Republics of Azerbaijan and Kyrgyz Republic as well as Mali, all of whom have majority Muslim populations but secular constitutions. There is a geographic basis to this, for countries in the Middle East and North Africa with active movements for the imposition of Sharia have consequently Islamic constitutions while most Central Asian Republics without such movements have secular constitutions.

There are also some surprises in the data in relation to colonisation and the 'Islamicity' of constitutions. Iran and Saudi Arabia, both countries that have never been colonised, are at the top of the ranking followed by former colonies like Pakistan. Given that Iran and Saudi Arabia are spiritual centres for Shia and Sunni Islam respectively, their example, it can be hypothesised, inspires former colonies like Pakistan who see in them a model of what an Islamic state should look like.

While the researchers state that their analysis does not imply causation, when they correlated the Gender Parity Index developed by the World Bank against their Islamic Constitutions Index, they found a negative correlation between Islamicity and gender equality.

To investigate the question of whether such constitutions are more or less democratic, the scholars compared their data against the Voice and Accountability Index developed by Worldwide Governance Indicators. This too revealed a negative correlation, indicating that civil liberties, political rights of due process and freedom of speech are less available in countries that rank highly on Islamicity in the index. Finally, the scholars also tackled the question of political stability, finding that there was less political stability in countries ranking highly on the Islamicity index.

While gender parity, political stability and democracy were found to be wanting in countries that ranked high in the Islamic Constitutions Index, it was also found that this was not so because the countries did not provide their citizens with rights in their constitutions. In fact, most of the countries were found to be granting just as many rights as secular countries, suggesting then that it is the implementation of rights, and the development of mechanisms that actually facilitate governance that may be lacking in these constitutions.

As the data reveals, Pakistan has been quite successful in Islamising its Constitution, ensuring that the principles of the faith are adequately reflected in the document. The way forward then is to end the debate on whether the country is Islamic enough (the numbers say it is) and focus instead on how the mechanisms for stability, gender parity and democracy can be streamlined, a task the data reveals to be not dependent on faith, but on the jurists, scholars who can develop the procedural mechanisms that can ensure positive outcomes.

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UNGA Urges Pakistan, India And Israel To Follow Non-Proliferation Treaty

December 03, 2014



NEW YORK - A resolution passed by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on Wednesday urged Pakistan, India and Israel to follow the terms of Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) and drop their nuclear weapons.

The resolution aims at achieving a nuclear weapon-free world and it marked out three nations to reduce nuclear-weapons.

The resolution also advised the three countries to keep their nuclear facilities under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards, which prohibit nations from developing nuclear weapons.

The UN joined India, Pakistan and Israel to vote against this part of the resolution. However, France, Britain and Bhutan did not participate in the voting.

The resolution was passed with 165 votes in the 193-member UNGA, with 21 countries absent. Britain, Israel, North Korea and Russia also joined the United States (US) and India in voting against the resolution, while Pakistan, China, Bhutan, Micronesia and Palau abstained from voting.

The report stated that these resolutions are not imperative and carry only symbolic meaning under the UN Charter. UNGA also advised the member nations to take measures against terrorists who could have access to deadly weapons.

In a separate resolution, the reduction in operational readiness of nuclear weapons was stressed, as after the end of cold war a huge number of nuclear weapons were found in active state. The

resolution also made a plea to the five nuclear states to re-evaluate the nuclear doctrines and ensure the low risk of the use of nuclear weapons.

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There's Always a Plan in Washington | By Shahab Jafry

December 06, 2014



A Pakistan plan, especially

A retired US air force officer working out of Dubai – intelligence work, if you believe his broker – once gave the Abu Dhabi crown prince a laughing fit by explaining the American fondness for public holidays. “We would gladly have a public holiday on Edhi Amin’s birth anniversary”. Nawaz knows this pretty well. Bill Clinton made sure he did, when he invited N over to talk out the Kargil issue on Jul4, America’s independence day. And if he remembers that part of the conversation – the rest was not very pleasant – he will read very carefully into Gen Raheel’s recent visit to the US. John Kerry met him, after all, after the general’s visit was extended, that too on Thanksgiving holiday.

And then the secretary of state called the Pakistani army “a binding force”. Now, here’s N, still hounded by the dharna momentum, facing PTI’s shutdown call, there is talk of mid-term election, and there’s the general, given a better outing in the US than N himself, and the White House effectively saying it’s the army holding things together, which means it’s definitely not the government. Interestingly, Sartaj Aziz tried to muddy the waters with the Haqqani controversy, but Gen Sharif was quick to shoot it down – all the way from Washington. And going by the diplomatic body language, Washington seems satisfied enough for the moment.

It shouldn't take a prime minister to understand why the Americans might be happier with the army than the prime minister. The government has lost credibility. N is isolated. There has been no legislation in his year-and-a-half in office. The economy is weak, despite the PM taking credit for lowering fuel prices and inflation. There is agitation across the country, and political parties are campaigning like elections are around the corner.

The army, on the other hand, has finally put its foot down on the terrorism issue. And finally, for all intents and purposes, it has decided to roll-back the strategic depth policy that turned Fata into the terrorist's ideal habitat. Disrupting al Qaeda's structure in the tribal area will benefit America's larger war against terrorism to a large degree. Already, Washington's focus on the Islamic State threat is redefining its Middle East policy of decades.

The fight against IS has contributed to an unprecedented thaw with Iran and there is a rollback of the Syria policy; both rubbing traditional allies Saudi Arabia and Israel the wrong way. Saudi has responded by an OPEC freeze on reducing supplies, keeping oil prices low, hitting Iran and Russia. Pakistan's army is an essential part of this new global war against terrorism. All N has done is take credit for falling oil by reducing fuel prices at home.

And things don't get any better in Islamabad. The Sharifs have a habit of making bad situations worse. The dharna would not even have taken off if he had only taken a few small steps – investigate the four constituencies, pay attention to the economy; text book stuff for a PM. Instead there was Model Town, Red Zone, Ch Nisar outbursts against supportive opposition at a critical time, etc.

And now there's the Plan-C worry. How would it look from far away, where there's always a plan for Pakistan? Imran's going over the top with his tactics, but what if Nawaz is Nawaz when push comes to shove? What if there are more brutal crackdowns? More arrests and, god forbid, more deaths? There will definitely be more political chaos. All parties campaigning for nothing right now will suddenly have something. And, if things get too bad, will someone, or some institution, need to be a "binding force"?

There's simply too much at stake in Pakistan for America. There's Zarb e Azb, which will have to go deep inside the country. Remember Obama's comments alongside Modi? About the "terrorist infrastructure" inside Pakistan, names and all? And then there's Afghanistan. The Americans are going, slowly, and Pakistan will play a role in the 'arrangement'. So it must keep 'functioning', in the right way. So far Nawaz has done little to help his case. And whether or not he has finally learnt to read the writing on the wall will become apparent in a few days. Failure to deal with plan-C may well unravel a plan he can do nothing about.

Corruption In A Nosedive |By Malik M Ashraf

December 06, 2014



Corruption is generally defined as misuse of entrusted power or authority by the elected politicians or appointed civil servants for private gains. It usually entails embezzlement of funds, nepotism, kickbacks, bribery as well as deliberate attempts to perpetuate a system with inbuilt avenues of corruption, graft and entitlement. Corruption has many forms but the major cause of concerns are the systemic corruption and political corruption which germinate other forms of corruption that eat into the social and economic fiber of a country besides generating social tensions and hampering its economic progress.

Political corruption occurs at the highest level of the political system usually at the policy formulation level when politicians and state agents entitled to make and enforce laws in the name of the people, use

their position to sustain their power, status and wealth leading to misallocation of resources and perversion of the process of decision making. Systemic or endemic corruption is an integrated and essential aspect of the economic, social and political system prevalent in a country, embedded in a wider situation that helps to sustain it. It is universally recognized that corruption invariably is related to lack of good governance and the degree of corruption in a society or a country depends on the level of good governance attained by a particular country. It is a social phenomenon permeating the entire world though with varying degrees.

Some agencies of the UN and global organizations like Transparency International keep a constant watch on the prevalent corruption in the countries of the world and based on their assessments issue annual reports on the Corruption Perception Index (CPI). Pakistan has invariably figured on the top rungs of the corruption index. The Transparency International Report for 2012 issued by the agency revealed that as compared to 2011, Pakistan had gone from the 42nd most corrupt country in the world to 33rd most corrupt country on the CPI index.

However it is satisfying to note that the two successive reports for the year 2013 and 2014 issued by TPI, have indicated a reversal of the trend. The CPI index for the year 2013 released by the Transparency International showed Pakistan to have gone down on the corruption scale by almost ten points. It also indicated improvement in governance as no major corruption scandal had been unearthed by the ever vigilant Transparency International and the media. The report for 2014 issued two days ago confirms that the corruption ranking of Pakistan has further gone down by one point from 126th last year to 127th this year. As compared to 2012 the rating has improved by 11 points which is unprecedented since the TPI started issuing the report in 1995.

A deliberate and conscious attempt is being made by the government to revive the economy and providing finances for self-employment to the youth of the country in a transparent manner, as well as the political and legal reforms to improve law and order, security and fighting terrorism. There are also steps in the offing to remove the inadequacies of the eighteenth amendment and bringing other constitutional amendments to improve governance. The government is presently engaged in a consultative process with the parties represented in the parliament in this regard.

Good governance is about bringing political and economic reforms, maintaining law and order, free access to information and data, improving and strengthening judicial system, a responsible and accountable administrative apparatus, institutional reforms, judicious taxation system, encouraging civil society organizations to monitor performance of the government and the existence of a free media in the country.

Pakistan has a free media and an independent judiciary and both these institutions deserve unqualified accolades for their role in exposing and checking corruption at the higher echelons of the government during the previous regime. Billions of dollars and rupees have been reclaimed from the plunderers of the national exchequer.

Shall Pakistan Celebrate Its Best Ever Corruption Ranking |By Dr Iqtidar Cheema

December 06, 2014



Government controlled/ influenced media outlets in Pakistan are busy celebrating the one grade lower ranking of Pakistan in Transparency International's (TI) yearly assessment of corruption Perception Index (CPI) 2014. This year Pakistan has been ranked as 126 out of 175 countries compared to its 127 position in 2013. However, this year's ranking also clearly demonstrates that Pakistan is still 50th most corrupt country in the world. Pakistan's meager point score of 29/100 in Corruption Perceptions Index still classify the country amongst one of the most corrupt countries in the world. The countries which score below 50 points in the index are perceived to be highly corrupt. Those who had a chance to look at the original CPI 2014 can clearly see Pakistani map marked as 'Red' in the index for the corruption. Some of the other south Asian countries i.e. Sri Lanka, Bhutan and India have a much better ranking than Pakistan in CPI 2014.

One must also not forget that this index is based on '**Perception**' of the corruption and not on the actual corruption. CPI is completely based on how corrupt the countries are '**perceived**' to be by a small group of experts based primarily in London, New York, Hong Kong, Beijing and Shanghai who are supported by a global network of in-country specialists, staff and consultants. Most of the Pakistanis know that in

Pakistan Corruption is mostly hidden and under-reported — so probably it is really impossible to measure the actual size of the corruption with great accurateness. In an article for the world famous Foreign Policy magazine, Alex Cobham, a European Financial expert had suggested in 2013 that Transparency International should drop the CPI. He opines that it would be more useful to collect better evidence of ‘**actual corruption**’ or information about how corruption is or isn’t affecting citizens.

The Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, (2000) defines the Corruption as: (a) dishonest or illegal behaviour, especially of people in authority (b) the act or effect of making somebody change from moral to immoral standards of behaviour. This definition is obviously not followed by Transparency International otherwise Pakistan might have been ranked even worst in CPI.

While the Sharifs’ Government is busy in building the roads, overhead bridges, bus services etc, there is allegedly a large-scale corruption in procurement and contracting these major infrastructural development projects. There is lack of a standardised procurement regulations along with absence of procurement expertise in the government. Grounds and opportunities for corruption are there at every stage from preparation to tender, bid evaluation, negotiations, and contracting.

Corruption in Pakistani police and law enforcement is alleged to be unescapable. This creates a culture of lawlessness and lack of integrity and reliance in establishment. The police and law enforcement appointments are often politicised, full of nepotism and conflict of interest. In such a corrupt environment the criminals, rent-seekers and blackmailers are often the sole beneficiaries of the corrupt system. Various recent studies also purpose that in Pakistan, there is an extensive deficiency of public buoyancy in the judicial system. Common man’s access to justice and the rule of law is usually undermined. The system of courts and prisons and their staffs are derisory and prevalent with corruption.

The Accountability Courts have so far announced judgments in several high profile corruption cases. However, the criticism with regards to selective accountability and political motives has repeatedly been raised.

This political corruption, coupled with bureaucratic corruption, has had a lethal effect on Pakistan’s economy and is a major reason why government services are so poor. There is a wider inclination to the tendency of (Luto tay Phuto) “plunder and run ” rather than investing in tomorrow. Foreign aid without accountability has also stained Pakistani government institutions. Most Pakistanis are deeply offended by the corruption and lack of accountability in their government.

Establishments such as Transparency International says that corruption guides like the CPI are a “wake-up call to political leaders and to the public at large to confront the abundant corruption that pervades so many countries.” The truth about Pakistan is that government and citizens *are* fully aware of the corruption which infuses the nation. The problem is that the people are powerless to stop it.

Pakistan's Security Challenges | By Dr Maleeha Lodhi

December 09, 2014



Pakistan's principal challenge lies within – defeating militancy and extremism, reviving the economy, resolving the energy crisis, educating its children and generating jobs to absorb the youth bulge in our population to avert a looming demographic disaster. The implications of all these problems for national security are apparent and can be ignored only at great peril.

Thus the strategic choices most consequential to Pakistan's future concern these internal challenges. However, the challenge within is, in several ways, linked to Pakistan's external environment, not least because a peaceful neighbourhood is crucial for Pakistan to focus unhindered and undistracted on solving deep-seated domestic problems.

Unfortunately, the tyranny of geography – a volatile neighbourhood and the main faultlines of geopolitics – and the burden of history have consistently put security at the top of Pakistan's national

agenda. It is no different today. At present Pakistan confronts a number of conventional and asymmetric, traditional and non-traditional challenges, hard and soft threats.

Externally, Pakistan's twin challenges are its relations with India and Afghanistan. Both fronts have posed enduring security dilemmas. That is why Pakistan has, over the years, tried to avoid being confronted by a two-front situation.

Continuing tensions on the Line of Control and firing across the Working Boundary when the Pakistan Army is engaged on the western front and fighting militancy within its frontiers is but the latest manifestation of this security dilemma.

Before discussing these two relationships, the global environment needs to be considered. This is unsettled and in flux, with global power shifts reordering relationships across the world. The predominant trend is one of competition rather than cooperation. Great power geopolitics is witnessing a resurgence with competition intensifying between the major powers. Tension among major powers has, in fact, heightened the threat to global instability.

The three major global strategic developments of our time all have direct implications for Pakistan's security. One, the spreading turmoil in the Middle East crystallised by the collapse of the post-World War order in the Arab world; two, the rise of China and the US pivot to Asia, which has opened a new Great Game on this continent; and three, renewed tensions between a resurgent Russia and the West, in what is being widely depicted as a new cold war.

The danger posed by Isis militants and their threat to seek allies and recruits in our region is one that Pakistan's security planners take very seriously, even as the military offensive in North Waziristan and actions elsewhere in the country continue to shrink the space for terrorist groups.

America's 'pivot' is also consequential to Pakistan's security challenges. The pivot is widely seen here, as elsewhere in Asia, as aimed to contain China's rise, even as America simultaneously pursues economic engagement with Beijing.

If this policy involves an endeavour to build India as a counterweight to China, this will have implications for South Asian stability. US plans to supply India advanced weaponry and technology will accentuate the growing conventional and strategic asymmetry between Pakistan and India and further undermine the delicate regional equilibrium.

Three, renewed tensions in Europe have already produced a closer relationship between Russia and China. Moscow is likely to adopt a more balanced posture in South Asia, opening the prospects of cooperation with Pakistan on a range of issues including Afghanistan, counterterrorism as well as defence and security.

This is already being reflected in greater diplomatic engagement between the two countries. The Russian defence minister's recent visit to Pakistan indicates this as well as military and economic agreements forged by the two countries.

Pakistan faces a full spectrum of security challenges – terrorism and militancy, conventional threats and the imperative to ensure the credibility of its nuclear deterrence, which is India-specific.

In fact, the combination of terrorist and conventional challenges has meant Pakistani forces have had to simultaneously operate in two arenas – deal with external challenges and internal security. This dual engagement and deployment is reflected in the evolution of the doctrine of ‘comprehensive response’. Its operationalisation will however continue to pose tough choices and a constant review of strategy in response to a changing threat environment.

Countering militancy and violent extremism will remain the country’s overriding security goal. The present military campaign in North Waziristan follows two earlier, effective operations in South Waziristan and Swat, even though both have yet to complete their post-conflict stabilisation phase.

Aimed at dismantling the last hub of assorted militants in Fata, Zarb-e-Azb has already disrupted the terrorist network, destroyed its command and control, dismantled sanctuaries and established the state’s writ in the area cleared. However the operation is not yet over and confronts a tougher challenge ahead – clearing and taking control of Shawal valley.

Accompanied by less publicised, intelligence-led crackdowns in cities across the country – over 2,000 – the counterterrorism effort has put militants on the run and degraded their capabilities. But the threat from a syndicate of militant organisations, especially sectarian groups, is far from over.

The progress accomplished in the tribal areas will need to be sustained through the build and transfer phases by political reform and economic development. Much will also depend on cooperative counterterrorism actions by Afghanistan against those elements of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan and their associates who have sought sanctuaries across the Western border.

Pakistan’s response will also have to involve enhancing police and intelligence capacities and implementing a well-honed COIN strategy incorporating both kinetic and non-kinetic dimensions. The political, economic and social components of the counter-militancy strategy and coherent counter-narratives will also have to be articulated to match changes in the environment. This obviously requires a whole-of-government approach.

Geography, history, demography, religion and culture bind Pakistan and Afghanistan in a symbiotic relationship. For over 30 years Pakistan has borne the brunt of war and strife in Afghanistan. Even today, our country hosts over two million Afghan refugees, still the largest refugee presence in any one country in the world. Thus, Pakistan sees a peaceful, stable and united Afghanistan as being in its vital interest.

The advent of the new ‘national unity’ government in Kabul has created a fresh opportunity to revive the traditionally close relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan. To this end Pakistan has conveyed to Kabul its readiness to assist in Afghanistan’s crucial post-2014 security, economic and political transitions.

A remarkably positive beginning has been made in reviving security and economic cooperation during President Ashraf Ghani's recent visit to Pakistan. The political atmosphere changed dramatically and agreements were reached rapidly on a series of security, trade and development cooperation issues.

A key element of the security dialogue was the agreement not to allow each other's territory to be used against the other. This involved Pakistan's assurance that its ongoing operation in North Waziristan will make no distinction between militant groups and Afghanistan's commitment to launch a campaign to expel Pakistani Taliban militants from Kunar where they have sought refuge.

Critical to prospects for Afghanistan's stability will be efforts to achieve intra-Afghan reconciliation through peace talks with the armed opposition. President Ghani has made this a priority, and Pakistan can contribute meaningfully to this through an Afghan-led and owned process.

Pakistan is opposed to an armed takeover of power in Afghanistan and believes the only way to prevent an escalation of violence is by the early initiation of an intra-Afghan peace process. It is ready to help with this, as and when asked by Afghanistan to do so.

Islamabad's expectations are that Kabul will, in turn, help in eliminating terrorist and insurgent threats to Pakistan emanating from Afghan territory. Islamabad is encouraged by President Ghani's positive response. It is equally encouraged by his sensitivity to Pakistan's concerns about India's military role in Afghanistan.

While a promising start has been made to put Pakistan-Afghan relations on a better trajectory, there will inevitably be minefields ahead to navigate and confidence to be built to realise Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's vision of a "comprehensive and enduring partnership" between the two countries.

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Evaluating The Energy Sector

December 13, 2014



The government has triumphantly made the energy sector the touchstone of its policy and performance. Rightly so, the energy deficit is viewed as the primary bottleneck in economic development and is a major contributor to the lack of public and foreign investment, as well as being the source of much difficulty for the common man. The first 18 months in power have produced mixed results. The biggest waves have been caused by a large Chinese investment programme; the premier has coaxed various solar, wind, nuclear and coal projects, which would become operational by 2016 at the earliest, significantly reducing the deficit. It is encouraging that the state is exploring sustainable, clean energy as a viable option, utilising the natural potential of Pakistani climate. Ironically, in stereotypical PML-N fashion, many of the projects are embroiled in legal challenges, mostly for the skirting of environmental protection laws and procurement procedures. Assuming that the state works around these hurdles these projects will provide much-needed relief, especially the cheap coal power plants. On the micro scale, the state has announced a significant decrease in the energy tariff and the State Bank of Pakistan's annual report indicates positive trends for economic growth compared to previous years. It goes ahead to candidly attribute most of these to one-off incidents such as the global drop in oil prices and grants by foreign states, such as the \$1.5 billion 'gift' by Saudi Arabia. Nevertheless, this is good news for oil importing countries, who should capitalize while the lull lasts.

Despite strides in the electricity production department there has been almost no development in the energy distribution department – viewed by most as the bane of Pakistan’s energy sector. Electricity theft – colloquially termed “technical loss” – amounts to 24% of production; amongst the highest in the world. No attempt has been made to break the collaborative corruption between the costumers and the distributors or tackle blatant electricity line tie-ins. The recent breakdown of the national power grid on Friday brings into sharp focus the lack of maintenance on our existing power plants, especially hydroelectric. The government needs to tackle all elements of the energy crisis to truly claim success.

Source: <http://nation.com.pk/editorials/13-Dec-2014/evaluating-the-energy-sector>

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Why Institutions Failed To Deliver | By Dr Farid A Malik

December 15, 2014



National institutions are non-existent in the country. While the nation sinks, the party goes on in Islamabad. On August 14, 1947 a new nation was born. Priorities of the nascent democratic state were clear with nation building being the top priority followed by institutional strengthening and individual growth. Unfortunately, the transformation of colonial institutions (Khakis, Baboos, Qazis etc.) did not take place. With the early demise of the Quaid and the murder of the first Prime Minister, nation building was stalled.

First it was Baboo Ghulam Muhammad who managed to become the Governor General with the support of the Khakis and Qazis. Institutions started looking inwards and priorities changed with institutional strengthening on top, followed by individual growth. As a result of the approach, some institutions and individuals grew while the nation declined. Khakis watch khaki interests, Baboos watch Baboo interest and Qazis watch their own. Interestingly, when any of these institutions fall on a hard time they invariably seek the support of the nation.

When the Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) was deposed by a President in uniform, he sought public support. Despite a very dismal track record of service to the nation, the people responded. CJP was restored and the president was first forced to take off his uniform and then made to resign. It was with the support of the people that the CJP was able to regain his position. But instead of delivering much needed justice to the common man, a clash of institutions was started mainly for self projection.

The track record of the Baboos has always been dismal. Instead of service to the nation, they act as masters or Brown sahibs relying on 'Yerkalogy' and 'Turkalogy' with no delivery. Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto (ZAB) took them on by his command of language and paper work. Through lateral entry, he inducted technocrats into important ministries in senior positions who were able to deliver. Baboos were kept on their toes. Every ministry had a night section officer to deliver files and record to the PM in the late hours. Baboos could not hide behind documents as answers were sought on an expeditious basis and their domain of secrecy and cover ups was seriously challenged.

From a public service point of view, the track record of the Khakis has also been poor. Four martial laws followed by brutal crack downs on political dissent have been deadly. The 1965 war was ill-conceived and ill-planned, yet the people of Pakistan stood behind the men in uniform. War in 1971 was another disaster; yet there were no street protests in West Pakistan to stop the madness. Zarb-e-Azab has complete support of the people despite the information cover up about ground realities. Air power is repeatedly used while in India, despite several freedom movements, it has never been employed. Almost everyone agrees except the voters in the South of Punjab, that Zia's martial law destroyed Pakistan. Even cleansing the 1973 Constitution of his amendments has been an uphill task. His so called Islamic clauses still continue to haunt us. During his term in office, civilian institutions were surgically targeted and destroyed (Pakistan Railways, Mechanized Constitution of Pakistan, National Shipping Corporation, WAPDA to name a few). Talibanization and the Afghan war was disastrous for a country with limited capacity to take on a super power.

Lt Gen Ghulam Jilani Khan was governor Punjab. According to him, several of his proposals for reform in the province were rejected by Zia as he believed in preserving the status-quo. Do nothing, exercise control, was his mantra. On hearing this, I asked Jilani Sahib why Zia was not captured and shot in the interest of the nation. He had no answer. It was obvious that the institutional loyalties were over riding.

Article 25-A of the Constitution declared literacy as a right of the citizen to be provided in ten years i.e. by 1985. Zia removed the time deadline and no voices were raised either by the Khakis, Baboos or Qazis. No institution or individual was there to stand up for the nation and its vital interests. In the judicial murder of ZAB, only three judges dissented (Safdar Shah, Abdul Haleem, Dorab Patel) while all four from the Punjab upheld the death penalty awarded by the Lahore High Court (LHC).

No country can progress without national institutions. Pakistan was the first Islamic democracy while Iran was the second. Both failed mainly because of weak institutional support. In Pakistan, the first PM was murdered while in Iran he was deposed and imprisoned. After the Iranian revolution in 1979 when the Shah was toppled, Imam Khomeini decided on a major overhaul of the royal military, administrative and legal set up that was clearly working against national interests.

Generals, senior officials and judges were tried by special tribunals and then punished for crimes against the nation. In the words of the Imam, 'Nation comes first'. Today Iran is the only Muslim country that can stand up against the hegemony of both Jewish and Christian states mainly because of its national institutions.

Failure of institutions in Pakistan calls for a major review of our national priorities. Our journey as a new nation has not been supported by our own institutions. The status-quo is in firm control while we sink as a nation. A crusade for change is currently on. This is a defining moment for the country. The Khakis, Baboos and Qazis and the institutions they represent have a lot of soul searching to do. Quaid's Pakistan was dismembered in 1971. Together we must save and strengthen what is left of it.

Source: <http://nation.com.pk/columns/12-Dec-2014/why-institutions-failed-to-deliver>

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Energy As Big A Problem As Terrorism

December 24, 2014



THE Government is rightly focused on tackling the issue of extremism and terrorism but it, in no way, should mean distraction from other crucial issues of direct concern to the masses. No doubt, no country in the world is problem free but in other parts of the world issues are addressed squarely but here they are allowed to linger on to become a monster.

A number of challenges have engulfed Pakistan right from its creation but some of them have compounded to alarming extent due to mismanagement and indifference of the successive governments. Energy crisis is one of those problems that were allowed to be accentuated by the past governments and the incumbent one too has not been able to provide any relief to the masses despite lapse of one and a half year of its rule. Food, shelter and energy are among the basic necessities of life, which every Government is supposed to prioritise. Pakistan is bestowed with immense human and natural resources and their proper exploitation would have changed the destiny of nation but our criminal negligence has pushed us to an era of darkness. In the past, people did not get electricity when mercury peaked and received no gas when temperature falls around zero but for the first time they are experiencing acute load-shedding of both electricity and gas during winter. This has forced people to come out on roads for protests as their routine life has been paralysed. Industries are unable to run, businesses are at a standstill and even housewives are unable to prepare food. This state of affairs is

unacceptable and if allowed to continue might make the problem as lethal as the menace of terrorism and therefore, the Government should work on war footings to mitigate energy-related problems of the masses.

Source: <http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=258624>

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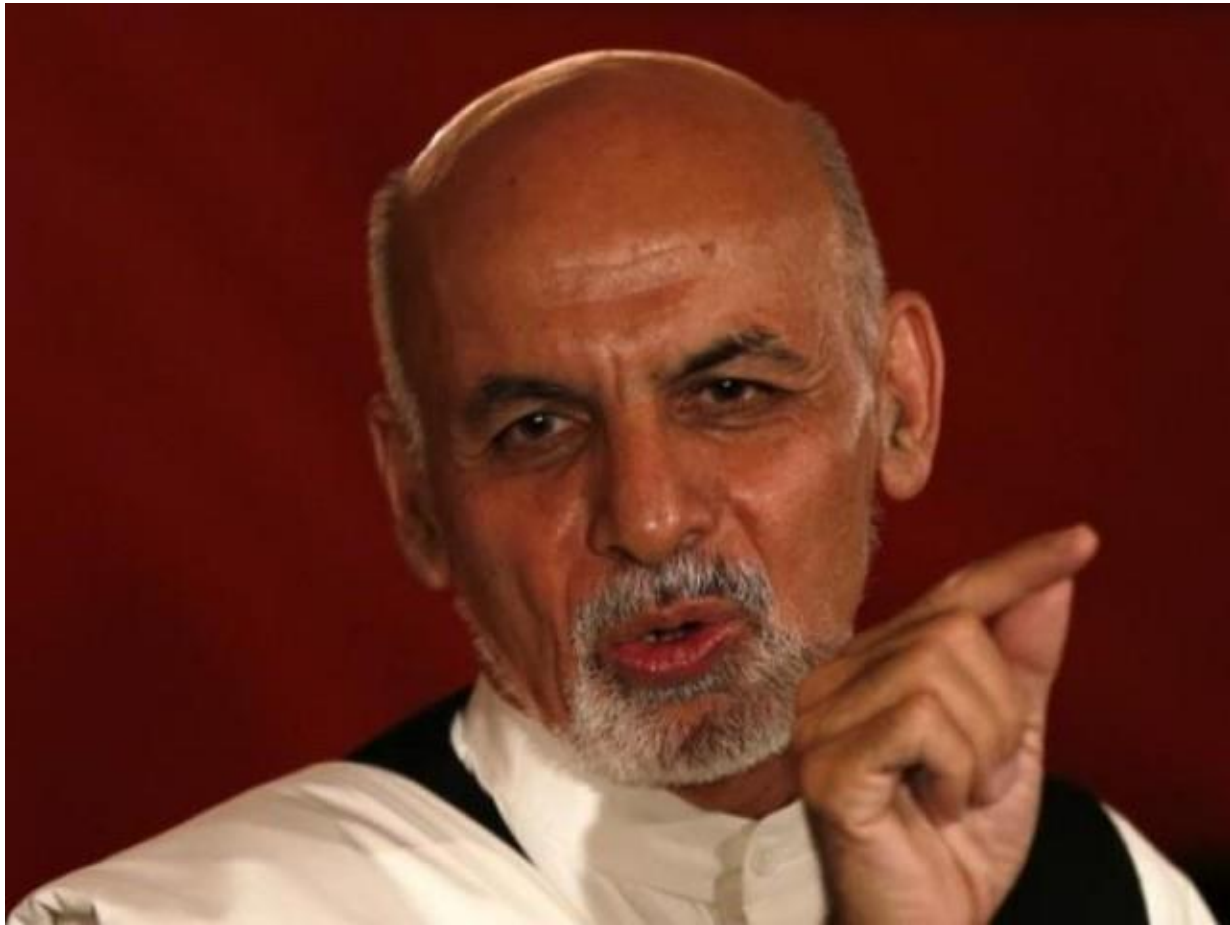
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Afghan reconciliation: Ghani resumes backdoor diplomacy with Taliban

December 01, 2014



ISLAMABAD: Afghan President Ashraf Ghani has tacitly resumed backdoor diplomacy with the Taliban in a bid to revive a peace process that had collapsed towards the fag-end of Hamid Karzai's regime. Sources privy to the development said that negotiations aimed at reintegrating the Afghan Taliban into the country's political equation have started under UN supervision. Officials in Islamabad confirmed that Pakistan has assured the Afghan government and the Taliban that it would help revive the stalled peace process.

Marred by setbacks and growing distrust, the peace process has been a bumpy ride for all the stakeholders, including Washington

Efforts to negotiate peace with the Taliban were torpedoed last year by Karzai who had objected to the opening of a political office by the Taliban in the Qatari capital of Doha. He had refused to recognise the Taliban office, calling it an affront to his government's legitimacy.

While Karzai's successor seeks to resuscitate the Doha peace process, the Taliban have intensified attacks on the nascent Afghan security forces and foreign troops. US-led Nato forces are scheduled to pull out of Afghanistan by year-end after a long and costly war. However, under a recently signed security deal between Kabul and Washington, a contingent of foreign troops will stay on beyond December 2014.

Marred by setbacks and growing distrust, the Afghan peace process has been a bumpy ride for all the stakeholders, including Washington. Fissures grew between the US and the Taliban after a negotiated prisoner swap deal between the two ended in acrimony.

The deal, which was seen as an opportunity to jumpstart the peace process, envisaged the release of five former Taliban cadres from the Guantanamo Bay detention centre in exchange for US soldier Bowe Bergdahl who had been held captive by the Haqqani Network for nearly five years.

The Taliban freed Bergdahl, while the US handed over the Taliban figures to the Qatari government which had brokered the deal. The Taliban called it a breach of confidence, claiming that the detainees had not been released. The mistrust had led to the breakdown of backdoor diplomacy, leaving peace efforts in disarray.

The new Afghan leader has been pushing for the resumption of dialogue with the Taliban for which the group has agreed to under UN supervision.

Criminal States Protecting Their Proxies at UN

December 01, 2014



On November 18, the United Nations Third Committee adopted a resolution recommending the referral of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to the International Criminal Court, alleging crimes against humanity. This was the first time a U.N. resolution recommended sending North Korea to The Hague.

The General Assembly is expected to accept the committee's report next month and formally pass the matter to the Security Council.

China and Russia, among the 19 voting against the Third Committee resolution, will undoubtedly use their Security Council vetoes to make sure the ICC does not get an opportunity to hear the case.

South Korea, which has been pushing hard for the ICC referral, is not dismayed by the intransigence of Beijing and Moscow. “This is just the beginning,” said Lee Jung-hoon, South Korea’s human rights ambassador, to the Wall Street Journal. “The fact that the Security Council will discuss this, and talk about Kim Jong Un and the International Criminal Court in one sentence—that’s a huge step forward.”

Lee is right, but a conversation about human rights in North Korea is not complete without talking about Pyongyang’s long-time accomplice. The regime in Pyongyang could not brutalize its population without the active support of its northern neighbor, the People’s Republic of China.

In February, the U.N.’s Commission of Inquiry cited China for possibly “aiding and abetting of crimes against humanity” by, among other things, forcibly repatriating refugees to the North.

As Roberta Cohen of the Brookings Institution tells us, the U.N., for the first time, put China “under broad international censure” for the return of refugees. The U.N. report was damning, pointing out, in Cohen’s words, “that over a period of two decades, China has forcibly returned tens of thousands of North Koreans almost all of whom have been subjected to inhuman treatment and punishment in the form of ‘imprisonment, execution, torture, arbitrary detention, deliberate starvation, illegal cavity searches, forced abortions, and other sexual violence.’ ”

Beijing, which said the report was “divorced from reality,” has been blatantly violating its international obligations for years by refusing to consider refugee status for fleeing North Koreans, but neither America nor any other nation was willing to hold China accountable.

Therefore, it is no surprise the Third Committee did not recommend referring the Chinese state to the ICC. No one, it seems, wants to take on a seemingly powerful Beijing, but there is another reason for the failure to enforce norms and rules. In short, there is an enduring hope that Chinese communists will one day become responsible actors. “How many times is China going to veto this down?” South Korea’s Lee asked, referring to the Third Committee’s recommendation. “If China wants to be a world leader with the U.S., it needs to take a moral stance.”

Lee miscomprehends China’s Communist Party, which thinks it can become a world leader without making bows to morality, at least as the concept is understood around the world. The Chinese people are undoubtedly as moral as any other, but the one-party state that rules them has its own imperatives.

One of those imperatives is supporting Pyongyang to the hilt when it comes to refugees. Last Thursday, the lawyer for Peter Hahn, a Korean-American running a Christian charity and school in China just across the Tumen River from North Korea, said the activist had been detained by authorities. Hahn’s detention follows the taking into custody of Kevin and Julie Garratt three months ago in Dandong, along the Yalu River, which also separates the two people’s republics. Both Hahn and the Garratts were aiding refuge.

The changing global power balance |By S P Seth.

December 04, 2014



China sees the US as being behind all the regional challenges to its power, which historically it regards as its own

It is amazing how fast the global strategic balance is changing. What this means is that since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the ascension of the US as the only global superpower in the 1990s, the world is transiting into a state of multi-polarity. While the US still remains the most powerful military machine in the world, its position is strongly challenged by Russia and China. Take, for instance, the Ukrainian situation. While the US and its western allies have sought to pressure Russia through a regime of economic sanctions, they have so far avoided any military action to confront it. Indeed, President Putin at one point cautioned the NATO alliance not to mess with Russia, which has nuclear weapons.

In the case of China, even as it was flexing its political and military muscle in the South China Sea and East China Sea, the US was avoiding any military confrontation. The contrast was quite marked when compared to the mid-1990s when the US sent its naval flotilla towards the Taiwan Strait when China was seeking to thwart presidential elections in Taiwan by a show of military force. But now, while China is asserting its power and making sovereign claims on islands in the South China Sea and East China Sea, the US is mostly confining its role to criticising Beijing's unilateral action. The situation has eased a little bit since China withdrew its oil rig from the vicinity of the Hanoi-claimed South China Sea islands, as well as going easy on its air identification zone over and around the contested (with Japan) group of islands in the East China Sea. But tensions can resurface any time as China is determined to assert its 'sovereignty'.

An interesting development in this changing strategic calculus is Japan's active defence policy. Under its US-designed post-World War II constitution, Japan is a pacifist nation not allowed to wage war. It has a substantial self-defence force but it is not meant for operations outside the country. And its defence is basically underwritten by its security alliance with the US. However, lately, since Shinzo Abe became Japan's prime minister in 2012, Japan is reacting to China's assertion of power in the region with a certain creative reinterpretation of its pacifist constitution to enable it to be an active security partner with its allies and friends.

Even though it was the US that imposed the pacifist constitution on Japan after its defeat in WWII, it now welcomes Japan playing a defence role to supplement the US's overstretched military commitments in the region and around the world. As long as the US was both the dominant Pacific and world power, the regional countries at odds with China over territorial and maritime disputes were quietly confident that the US would underwrite their security, not just for their sake but also to maintain its own naval supremacy. Things have changed since then as China is becoming more powerful and more assertive. And such assertive power projection has happened much more under President Xi Jinping, who took over the presidency around the same time, early in 2013, as Shinzo Abe, who became prime minister in late 2012. In other words, the region is becoming unstable with both China and Japan determined to tough it out. Indeed, this almost led to aerial and naval incidents over their contested East China Sea Islands.

While the US seems keen not to let the regional situation get out of hand between China and its regional allies/partners, tensions in the region have the potential of developing into something ugly at any time. China sees the US as being behind all the regional challenges to its power, which historically it regards as its own. By that logic, the US is an outside power with no business to be flaunting its reach. But the US is

equally determined to remain engaged as an Asia-Pacific power with its own strategic, economic and political interests as well as by virtue of its security and other commitments to regional countries. Indeed, during his recent visit to Australia to attend the G-20 meeting in Brisbane, President Obama reiterated the US's "pivot" to Asia-Pacific, with the deployment of a substantial part of its navy to the region. In other words, the US is not letting China strategically appropriate the Asia-Pacific region to its own sphere.

That might be so, but China seems determined to alter the existing regional order designed by the US-led western alliance. For instance, China has floated a parallel regional economic architecture for an Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), purportedly to help regional countries develop their economic potential. Under US pressure, Australia and South Korea opted to stay out of it, obviously regarding it as rivaling the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank. In the same way, China is actively pursuing an Asia-Pacific free trade area to rival the US-led Trans-Pacific partnership from which China is excluded. In other words, we are witnessing greater competition and rivalry between China on one side and the US and its Asian allies, like Japan and Australia, on the other. And that portends trouble for the region.

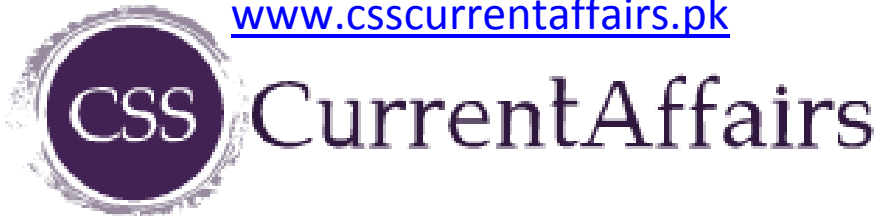
It is not just the Asia-Pacific region that is a centre of strategic rivalry. Elsewhere in Europe and Russia, the US-led EU/NATO are involved in serious confrontation with Russia, with Ukraine as its epicentre. Russia was supposed to see sense because of the US-led economic sanctions as they are hurting its economy and the pain is likely to increase. At the recent G-20 summit in Brisbane, President Putin was warned that further sanctions awaited Russia if President Putin failed to back off from Ukraine. So far it would seem this threat has had the opposite effect. Moscow is expanding its military reach far and wide. Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu has reportedly said, "We have to maintain military presence in the western Atlantic and eastern Pacific, as well as the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico." Indeed, lately, Russia and China are drawing closer. Moscow and Beijing recently signed a multi-billion dollar gas deal. And their navies are reportedly holding naval exercises in the Pacific and indeed in the Mediterranean next year.

Moscow is also strengthening its relations with Iran in the area of nuclear energy by undertaking to build two nuclear reactors, with six more likely to follow. These power plants will operate under the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards. But the timing of Moscow's announcement to coincide with the deadline of November 24 for a nuclear deal between Iran, and its dialogue partners in the matter, was not appreciated by the US.

US Secretary of State John Kerry has likened the new global power balance to the 18th and 19th century. To quote Kerry, “In many ways, the world we are living in today is much more like 19th century and 18th century global diplomacy, the balance of power and different interests, than it is the bifurcated, bipolar world we lived in during the Cold War and much of the 20th century.” In whatever way one looks at it, it points to greater instability.

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Cold War Is On |By A.G Noorani

December 13, 2014



A COLD war is on between the West and Russia in right earnest. Its immediate cause is, of course, the Ukraine. But Prof John J. Mearsheimer of the University of Chicago, and one of the few dissenters in the US, points out in Foreign Affairs that “the taproot of the trouble is Nato enlargement”.

The West’s backing of the pro-democracy movement in Ukraine beginning with the Orange Revolution in 2004 aggravated the situation. “For President Putin, the illegal overthrow of Ukraine’s democratically elected and pro-Russian president — which he rightly labeled a ‘coup’ — was the final straw. He responded by taking Crimea, a peninsula he feared would host a Nato naval base.” He began working to destabilise Ukraine until it abandoned its efforts to join the West.

This provoked a slew of unprecedented sanctions on individuals; tensions mounted as charges were traded.

Ukraine is not a Nato member, and is not covered under its umbrella, but it has expressed interest in joining. Three other former Soviet republics have joined the alliance since the end of the Cold War, as well as the former Warsaw Pact states of Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, Romania and Bulgaria.

Jack Matlock, former US ambassador to the then USSR is a scholar, who prizes objectivity over the claims of 'patriotism'.

He said emphatically that "If there had been no possibility of Ukraine ever becoming part of Nato, and therefore Sevastopol becoming a Nato base, Russia would not have invaded Crimea. It is as simple as that. Why don't we understand that other countries are sensitive about military bases from potential rivals not only coming up to their borders, but taking land which they have historically considered theirs?"

The US has persecuted Cuba for over half a century. Its Monroe Doctrine remains intact; but it has no qualms about poaching in the vicinity of another power's frontier.

Mikhail Gorbachev risked a lot in his quest for a détente with the US. In his memoirs Gorbachev quoted US secretary of state James Baker as proposing during a meeting in 1990, that a united Germany be allowed to remain in Nato "with the guarantee that Nato jurisdiction or troops would not extend east of the current line".

Matlock adds that "Gorbachev's account coincides with my notes of the conversation. ... Therefore, both he and the Soviet foreign minister Shevardnadze assumed that they had assurances that Nato would not replace the Warsaw Pact in Eastern Europe. After all, that would have been a direct violation of the understanding at Malta that the United States would not 'take advantage' of a Soviet military withdrawal from Eastern Europe".

Archival evidence dug out recently by Prof Mary Elise Sarotte proves the deception. The then German chancellor Helmut Kohl met Gorbachev in Moscow in February 1990. He had received two conflicting letters before the meeting. President George H.W. Bush suggested that Nato could move eastward. Secretary of State James Baker suggested it would not.

Kohl followed Baker's line and assured Gorbachev accordingly. His foreign minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher told his Soviet counterpart Eduard Shevardnadze "Nato will not expand itself to the East".

But this is what Kohl heard from Bush at Camp David that month. “To hell with that. We prevailed, they didn’t. We can’t let the Soviets clutch victory from the jaws of defeat.” This triumphalism reflected an arrogant cynicism and governs American policy.

Putin sounded the alarm as far back as in February 2007, when he attacked American’s ‘unipolar’ behaviour at a conference in Munich. The United States had “overstepped its national borders in every way”, imposing on other nations its “economic, political, cultural and educational policies”.

He was particularly bitter regarding Nato enlargement. “What happened to the assurances our Western partners made after the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact?”

He cited not only James Baker’s private words to Gorbachev and Shevardnadze, but a public statement by Manfred Worner when he was Nato secretary-general, who had stated in a speech in Brussels in 1990: “The fact that we are ready not to place a Nato army outside of German territory gives the Soviet Union a firm security guarantee.”

In contrast, in 1990 Gorbachev cooperated with Bush on the Iraq war. So did Putin on Afghanistan and continues still to do so on Syria, Iraq, Iran and the militant group the Islamic State.

The United States is sadly mistaken if it imagines that it can unilaterally shape the world order especially in Asia without the cooperation of Russia, China and the Third World countries.

The problems are too great for any single power to acting alone to resolve them. President Barack Obama has reached out to Iran. He will do well to do the same to the Russian federation.

Source: <http://www.dawn.com/news/1150490/cold-war-is-on>

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The 35 Biggest Geopolitical Risks In 2015

December 17, 2014



The Council on Foreign Relations released the Center for Preventive Action’s Global Conflict Tracker, an interactive guide to US conflict prevention priorities in 2015. It is based on the most recent Preventive Priorities Survey, which asked government officials, foreign policy experts, and academics to assess ongoing and potential conflicts based on their likelihood to occur in 2015 and their potential impact on US interests.

The survey was sent to more than 2,200 government officials, foreign policy experts, and academics. Respondents were asked to estimate the relative likelihood and potential effect of each of the contingencies on U.S. interests according to defined criteria.

Below are some of the findings (and here is the full report):



Namir Noor-Eldeen/ReutersVictims walks away after a car bomb attack in Baghdad March 15, 2007.

High impact; high likelihood.

Sectarian violence in Iraq continues to worsen as clashes erupt between Sunni and Shia groups. Maliki’s Shia-dominated government had increasingly removed Sunni officials and arrested

hundreds of extremists in response to bomb attacks targeting Shia neighborhoods.

If sectarian violence continues to take hold of the country, Iraq may plunge into a deeper state of chaos and potentially into a state of civil war.



Wikipedia

High impact; moderate likelihood.

Al-Qaeda and other terrorist organizations continue to pose a stark threat to the U.S. homeland more than a decade after 9/11.

Although the United States has been successful in eliminating most of the senior al-Qaeda leadership, affiliates and other extremist groups—ISIS, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), and Lashkar-e-Taiba—have emerged and grown in strength.

Domestically, concerns of homegrown terrorism were reinforced by the April 2013 Boston Marathon bombings.



KCNA/Reuters

High impact; moderate likelihood.

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un's efforts to purge high-ranking officials, including his uncle, Jang Song-taek, have increased the potential for political instability and unrest in the country. This too

could escalate in dangerous ways that lead to military intervention by neighboring powers.

Furthermore, the scope of North Korea's uranium enrichment program remains uncertain, U.S. intelligence agencies estimate that it has enough plutonium to produce five nuclear weapons.



Noel Celis//Reuters A Philippine Navy personnel mans a .50 caliber machine gun during the bilateral maritime exercise between the Philippine Navy and U.S. Navy dubbed as Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT) in the South China Sea near waters claimed by Beijing June 29, 2014.

High impact; moderate likelihood.

Territorial and jurisdictional disputes in the South China Sea could escalate into a military clash between China and one or more Southeast Asian nations. China's sweeping claims to sovereignty over the sea—and its untapped 11 billion barrels of oil and 190 trillion cubic feet of natural gas—have antagonized competing claimants Malaysia, Vietnam, Brunei, Taiwan, Indonesia, and the Philippines.

The failure of Chinese and Southeast Asian leaders to resolve the disputes by diplomatic means could undermine international laws governing maritime disputes and encourage destabilizing arms buildups.



Flickr

High impact; moderate likelihood.

The rising prevalence of cyberattacks was detailed in a 2013 report by the U.S. security firm Mandiant that linked the Chinese military to 140 cyberattacks against U.S. and foreign corporations. The same year, major U.S. banks called on policymakers for assistance after experiencing cyberattacks emanating from Iran. The Obama administration has emphasized the importance of cybersecurity—its fiscal year 2014 budget requested a 20 percent increase in funding.

The US has strengthened its offensive strategies by developing rules of engagement for cyber warfare and cyber weapons capabilities. However, cyberspace policymaking remains decentralized with authority shared among the White House and five executive departments, resulting in gaps in U.S. cyber policy that leave vulnerabilities unaddressed.



Adrees Latif /ReutersIran's President Hassan Rouhani gives a news conference on the sidelines of the 69th United Nations General Assembly at United Nations Headquarters in New York September 26, 2014.

High impact; moderate likelihood.

The prospects for a breakthrough in the nuclear standoff with Iran have recently improved, but a lasting settlement of the dispute is still uncertain. Following the election of President Hassan Rouhani in June 2013, Iran has signaled its desire to reach a mutually acceptable final agreement that resolves the status of its nuclear enrichment and reprocessing activities.

Since 2006, the UN has passed 9 resolutions on Iran, but the International Atomic Energy Agency is still unable to confirm if there are potential military dimensions of Iran's clandestine operations.



APPalestinians run for cover during clashes with Israeli soldiers following a protest against the war in the Gaza Strip, outside Ofer, an Israeli military prison near the West Bank city of Ramallah, Friday, Aug. 1, 2014.

Moderate impact; high likelihood.

The murders of three Israeli teenagers and one Palestinian teenager in the summer of 2014 ignited clashes in the Palestinian territories and precipitated a military confrontation between the Israeli military and Hamas, a Sunni Islamist group in Gaza. In August 2014, in violation of the November 2012 ceasefire, Hamas fired nearly three thousand rockets at Israel. In retaliation, Israel launched

airstrikes on rocket launchers and other suspected terrorist targets in Gaza. The recent skirmish ended in late August with a cease-fire deal brokered by Egypt.



A Palestinian insurgency—or a third intifada—could break out if the cease-fire does not hold.

Shamil Zhumatov/ReutersThe MH17 crash site.

Moderate impact; high likelihood.

Political instability that overtook in Ukraine in 2013 has escalated into a major international crisis pitting the United States and the European Union against Russia. Both the US and EU have imposed broad economic sanctions against Russia in an effort to dissuade further assistance to Ukrainian rebels, tightening restrictions on major Russian state banks and corporations and targeting the energy and arms sectors. While these punitive measures, combined with falling oil prices, have hurt Russia's economy significantly, the ceasefire in eastern Ukraine remains highly fragile.

Much is at stake in the current crisis, not least the risk of wider conflict and a fundamental deterioration in US-Russian relations that undermines cooperation on many important issues from strategic arms control to Iran and Syria.



AP ImagesFlames rise from oil tankers after an attack claimed by Taliban militants on the outskirts of Kabul, Afghanistan, Saturday, July 5, 2014.

Moderate impact; high likelihood.

The United States has a vital interest in persevering the many political, economic, and security gains that have been achieved in Afghanistan since 2001. A resurgence of the Taliban insurgency could once again turn Afghanistan into a terrorist safe haven. Moreover, internal instability in Afghanistan could have larger regional ramifications as Pakistan, India, Iran, and Russia compete for influence in Kabul and among influential subnational actors.



Goran Tomasevic/ReutersA Free Syrian Army fighter takes cover during clashes with Syrian Army in the Salaheddine neighborhood.

Moderate impact; high likelihood.

Ongoing instability has enabled the expansion of powerful jihadist elements. ISIS, most notably, has captured extensive territory in Syria, perpetrated shocking violence against Shias, Christians, and fellow Sunnis, and beheaded captives from the United States, United Kingdom, and France.

Thus far, the Obama administration has ruled out the possibility of using US airstrikes to target Assad or sending US ground troops to the region as part of the campaign against ISIS. Yet ongoing violence could create a safe haven for other extremist groups active in Syria, such as the al-Qaeda affiliated Nusra Front and Hezbollah.

Source: <http://www.businessinsider.com/the-35-biggest-geopolitical-risks-in-2014-2014-12>

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'Security, Political Challenges In S.Asia Need To Be Addressed

December 18, 2014



ISLAMABAD: Speakers at a conference on regional connectivity on Wednesday called for addressing security and political challenges in South Asia for integrating the world's least connected region.

Speaking at a day-long workshop on 'Regional Connectivity in South Asia' organised by the Centre for International Strategic Studies (CISS) in collaboration with German foundation, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, the experts discussed various obstacles to integration in South Asia and noted that success of planned projects like Silk Route Economic Belt, New Silk Route, CASA-1000 and TAPI depended on the security situation in the region.

The speakers were of the opinion that Pakistan-India rivalry was the biggest hurdle in the way of integration.

Listing the factors behind poor integration of South Asia, analyst Dr Riffat Hussain said it was a result of colonial legacy, Pakistan-India hostilities, India-centred power structure of the region, its geography, presence of non-state actors and involvement of external powers. The situation, he contended, made

the countries of the region look outwards for solution to their problems instead of finding solutions within the region.

He recommended conflict resolution, particularly that of Kashmir issue, as a way forward. Settlement of Kashmir, he said, was important for marginalising non-state actors who are threatening regional peace.

‘Until border disputes are resolved and regimes for regulating borders are in place, doubts and suspicions would linger on and regional connectivity would remain a pipe dream,’ he added.

Dr Hussain further proposed a regional mechanism for discussions on terrorism, adding that terrorism was a ‘regional public bad’ that did not serve anyone’s interest.

Former foreign secretary Shamshad Ahmed too blamed Pakistan and India’s ‘legacy of mistrust, hatred and suspicion’ for the situation, but said the country’s leadership suffered from ‘bankruptcy of strategic vision’.

He stressed that ‘corrupt methods and insensitivity’ of political leadership and bureaucracy was behind poor progress of connectivity projects.

Ambassador Shamshad said it had been over a year that the government signed an MoU with China for the Economic Corridor, but still there was no structure for handling the mega project that was dubbed a game-changer.

‘Mindset at the top would have to change or else this project too would suffer,’ he said and recalled that Gwadar Port remained unoperational for eight years and the agreement on increasing trade wasn’t able to meet the set targets.

Dr Ashfaq Hassan Khan, dean School of Social Sciences and Humanities, Nust, said peace and stability was critical for success of CASA-1000, TAPI and New Silk Route (NSR).

He asked Afghanistan and its neighbours to take ownership of NSR, conceived by the US for regional cooperation in South and Central Asia, sustaining economic growth in Afghanistan and promoting trade and investment in the region, so that it could succeed.

‘If the driver is pulling out then, who’ll take care of it,’ he said about the future of NSR after the completion of US drawdown from Afghanistan.

The Silk Route Economic Belt (SREB) project, he said, in comparison (to NSR) looked more viable because of support from China that has made it the centre-piece of its economic diplomacy.

Speaking about the SREB, Fazlur Rehman, an analyst, said China would continue to invest in the project despite the security challenge.

‘The Chinese thinking is that economic progress would address poverty and ultimately fundamentalism and extremism.’

Mr Rehman, however, said security incidents could slow down the progress on SREB and economic corridor linking Gwadar to Kashgar.

Analyst Simbal Khan said political disputes played a more pronounced role in hindering connectivity in South Asia than in any other region.

She was of the opinion that domestic considerations of India and Afghanistan would have a stronger impact on the future of connectivity in the region.

Executive Director CISS retired ambassador Sarwar Naqvi concluded that Chinese commitment to the planned Economic Corridor coupled with determination and support of Pakistani government was cause for hope about the success of the project.

source: http://epaper.dawn.com/DetailImage.php?StoryImage=18_12_2014_005_006

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Confidence Building And Nuclear Risk-Reduction Measures In South Asia

December 20, 2014



Nuclear dangers grew on the subcontinent after India and Pakistan tested nuclear devices in 1998. Nuclear deterrence theorists have a term for this phenomenon: the “stability-instability paradox.” In this concept, nuclear weapons provide a measure of stability against a central strategic exchange or an all-out conventional war, but they also prompt tensions at lower levels. This was true after China joined the nuclear club, when Beijing and Moscow engaged in border skirmishes. It has also been true in the India-Pakistan case. The stability-instability paradox holds that a state might be emboldened by its nuclear weapons to seek advantage or to engage in provocations in the confident expectation that its adversary would not escalate. There are no guarantees that escalation will remain controlled.

Nuclear deterrence theory is now being tested against the complex realities in South Asia. India and Pakistan, like the United States and the Soviet Union, can take steps to reduce nuclear danger and to demonstrate responsible nuclear stewardship. Stimson’s workshops, research, and publications focus heavily on this agenda. Stimson has published extensively on this research agenda, including four books: *Crisis Prevention, Confidence Building and Reconciliation in South Asia* (St. Martin’s Press, 1995); *Global Confidence Building: New Tools for Troubled Regions* (St. Martin’s Press, 1999); *Cooperative Threat Reduction, Missile Defense and the Nuclear Future*. (Palgrave Macmillan,

2003); Nuclear Risk Reduction in South Asia (Palgrave Macmillan, 2004) and Escalation Control and the Nuclear Option in South Asia (Stimson, 2004). Stimson has also published dozens of monographs and reports on these issues.

The Stimson Center has been working to promote confidence-building measures in regions of tension since 1991. CBMs are diverse arrangements — such as hotlines, people-to-people exchanges, and prior notifications of military exercises — that can help reduce tensions and promote good neighborly relations.

Communication, constraint, transparency, and verification measures are the primary CBM “tools.” These tools are designed to make the behavior of states more predictable by facilitating communication among states and establishing rules or patterns of behavior for states’ military forces, as well as the means to discern and verify compliance with those patterns.

CBM programming in South Asia aims to expand the use of confidence-building measures and to strengthen measures that already exist. To help researchers in this field, Stimson has compiled a chronological file of events relating to CBMs and NRRMs on the subcontinent. Stimson has also compiled key documents relating to CBMs and NRRMs in the region.

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Communication measures can help defuse tensions during moments of crisis. They can also be employed on a more regular basis, as consultative mechanisms designed to allow states to air grievances and ward off crises before they occur.

“Hotlines” such as those that exist between the United States and Russia, and between Indian and Pakistani sector commanders along the line-of-control in Kashmir, can provide reliable direct channels of communication at moments of crisis.

Regional communication centers can assist area states in conflict and crisis management. The European model of a communications and security center, established by the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), is being adapted to suit the Middle Eastern security environment.

Regularly scheduled consultations, like the annual meetings established between U.S. and Soviet/Russian navies by the 1972 Incidents at Sea Agreement (INCSEA), or those between chiefs of staff of the armed forces of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay, can provide rare opportunity for

direct military-to-military contact. Such forums allow parties to voice concerns and air any grievances they may have.

Constraint measures are designed to keep certain types and levels of states' military forces at a distance from one another, especially along borders.

Thin-out zones, or limited force deployment zones, restrict the type and number of military equipment or troops permitted in or near a certain territory or boundary. Detailed provisions of the 1975 Disengagement Agreement between Syria and Israel established a demilitarized zone (DMZ) as well as an area extending 20 kilometers on each side of the DMZ in which forces and weapons were limited.

Pre-notification requirements included in the Stockholm Accord of 1986 placed constraints on military exercises by imposing longer lead times — 42 days for major military exercises and 1-2 years in the case of larger scale exercises — before activities subject to prior notification could occur.

Transparency measures are measures that states engage in to foster greater "openness" of their military capabilities and activities. Transparency measures merit a special focus as important first steps in the confidence-building process.

Pre-notification requirements of a certain time period for planned military exercises or troop movements of an agreed upon level also help make a state's military intent more transparent. Notification mechanisms can also be applied to missile tests. Near contentious borders, this type of transparency measure can help eliminate fears that an exercise may be part of preparations for war.

Data exchanges detailing existing military holdings, planned purchases, military personnel and budgets can clarify a state's current and projected military capabilities and provide advance notice of destabilizing arms build-ups. Data exchanges can take place bilaterally or multilaterally.

Voluntary observations of another state's military exercises provide first-hand access to that party's equipment and operating procedures.

Verification measures are designed to collect data or provide first hand access in order to confirm or verify a state's compliance with a particular treaty or agreement.

Aerial inspections enable parties to an agreement to monitor compliance with force deployment limitations in restricted zones, to confirm data exchanges on the disposition of military forces, and to provide early warning of potentially destabilizing activities.

Ground-based electronic sensor systems, manned or unmanned, can also verify states' compliance to agreed restrictions on equipment deployment or troop movements.

On-site inspections, challenge and routine, can help verify that states are complying with agreements. Inspections may be carried out by third parties, opposing parties, or jointly.

Back to Confidence-Building Measures in South Asia

A brief summary of recent CBM accords follows:

Following the 1971 war between India and Pakistan, a dedicated communication link, or “hotline,” between the Pakistani and Indian directors general of military operations (DGMOs) was established. In December 1990, India and Pakistan agreed to reestablish the DGMO hotline and to use it on a weekly basis, if only to exchange routine information. At the February 1999 Lahore Summit, India and Pakistan agreed review all existing communication links with a view to upgrade and approve the DGMO and other hotlines.

Implementation:

The DGMO hotline has been used intermittently. However, during periods of tension, important information has not been communicated over the hotline in a timely fashion. During a serious regional crisis in 1987, the DGMO hotline was not used nor was the hotline used during another major crisis in Kashmir in the spring of 1990. Use during the Kargil conflict was sporadic and unreliable. The DGMO hotline is used once a week at an assigned day and time. Some skirmishes and stand-offs have been diffused by contact over this hotline. On December 24, 2013, the DGMOs ended a 14 year-hiatus from in-person talks, meeting at Wagah. This meeting had been agreed to during a September 2013 meeting between the Indian and Pakistani prime ministers in New York, and intended to reinstate the ceasefire and to diffuse tensions on the LoC.

The first hotline was installed in 1989 by Prime Ministers Benazir Bhutto and Rajiv Gandhi. In November 1990, Indian Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar and Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif re-established the hotline to facilitate direct communication. In May 1997, Indian Prime Minister I.K. Gujral and Sharif pledged to reinstate the hotline.

Implementation:

Nawaz Sharif used the hotline to express his interest in further developing bilateral ties with Chandra Shekhar. Prime Ministers Sharif and Gujral spoke on the eve of the revived Foreign Secretary talks in June 1997 to reaffirm their commitment to the dialogue process. They also used the hotline during a period of particularly severe skirmishes and heavy artillery fire along the Line of Control (LoC) in Kashmir in October 1997, and during the 1999 conflict over Kargil. Nonetheless, the repeated re-establishment of the Prime Ministers’ hotline suggests that its use has been intermittent, at best.

The 1966 Tashkent Declaration, facilitated by the Soviet Union, formally concluded the 1965 Indo-Pak war. It stipulated that “relations between India and Pakistan shall be based on the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of the other.” The 1972 Simla Accord which followed the 1971 Indo-

Pak war obliges both countries to renounce the use of force as a means of settling outstanding disputes. In addition, both sides agreed to resolve their disputes in bilateral fora.

Implementation:

Implementation has been weak. Many in South Asia believe that Indian and Pakistani intelligence services have been actively involved in cross-border acts of terror. Neither the Simla Accord's letter nor spirit has been implemented. Pakistan argues that India refuses to negotiate the final status of Kashmir while India argues that Pakistan, by seeking third-party mediation of this dispute, is acting contrary to the Simla Accord. The 1999 conflict on the LoC over the Kargil region has further damaged the credibility of declarations renouncing the use of force.

An Agreement on Reducing the Risk from Accidents Relating to Nuclear Weapons was signed on February 21, 2007, and reaffirmed for a five-year term in February 2012.

Pakistan and India signed an Agreement on Pre-Notification of Flight Testing of Ballistic Missiles in October 2005.

An Agreement on Prior Notification of Military Exercises was completed in April 1991. Notification is required for exercises comprising two or more divisions in specified locations. Near the LoC, notification is required for any exercises involving division level or above. Troop maneuvers directed toward the international border are proscribed. Exercises at the corps level must be held forty-five kilometers away from the border. At the division level, exercises must be held twenty-five kilometers away from the border. No military activity is permitted within five kilometers of the border.

Implementation:

This agreement has mostly been honored. Most troop movements of concern, such as those involving special forces, would fall outside the purview of this agreement. On some occasions, division-level exercises have not been pre-notified.

An Agreement on the Prevention of the Violation of Airspace, signed in April 1991, and entered into force in August 1992, stipulates that combat aircraft are not to fly within ten kilometers of foreign airspace. Unarmed transport and logistics aircraft are permitted up to 1,000 meters from the border; flights within this range for supply or rescue missions are permitted if advance notice is given.

Implementation:

There are periodic claims by both countries that the airspace agreement has been violated. In the Siachen Glacier region, where rules of engagement are more aggressive, helicopters have been shot down.

An Agreement on the Non-attack of Nuclear Facilities was signed by Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto in December 1988. It was ratified by both countries and implemented in January 1992. The agreement requires an annual exchange of lists detailing the location of all nuclear-related facilities in each country. The measure further pledges both sides not to attack listed facilities.

Implementation:

Though lists of nuclear facilities have been exchanged each year, the definition of nuclear facilities to be declared is unclear. When lists were first exchanged in 1992, each side reportedly left off one facility.

A Joint Declaration on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons was concluded in August 1992. Both countries agreed not to develop, produce, acquire, or use chemical weapons.

Implementation:

When the government of India joined the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), it declared having chemical stocks as well as production and storage facilities for the express purpose of dealing “with any situation arising out of possible use of chemical warfare against India.” Pakistan did not declare any chemical stocks, production, or storage facilities when it joined the CWC. Pakistan’s declarations have been met with skepticism.

In November 1990 the Indian and Pakistani Foreign Secretaries worked out a code of conduct to protect diplomatic personnel, guaranteeing them freedom from harassment.

Implementation:

This code has often been violated in both letter and spirit. Pakistani authorities did not protect Indian officials and property in Karachi after the 1992 destruction of the Babri Masjid in India. Diplomatic personnel are often harassed by intelligence services in both countries, and reciprocal expulsions of diplomats occur periodically. In the wake of the Indian nuclear tests in May 1998, an Indian diplomat in Islamabad was badly beaten by a Pakistani security guard.

The track record of CBM implementation in South Asia is spotty, at best. Both India and Pakistan assert that trust is lacking and is the key ingredient to improved relations, but neither country has chosen to generate trust through CBMs voluntarily negotiated. Now that nuclear dangers and regional instabilities have grown, India and Pakistan might do well to implement existing CBMs properly. New nuclear risk reductions measures might also be considered in bilateral negotiations.

In a Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Indian and Pakistani foreign secretaries at the Lahore Summit in 1999, both countries agreed to pursue a list of confidence-building measures, which included measures aimed specifically at nuclear risk reduction. While the Kargil conflict has since stymied any

progress on these issues, the measures enumerated in the Memorandum indicate common ground between India and Pakistan and highlight areas where future agreements may be possible.

Source: <http://www.stimson.org/research-pages/confidence-building-measures-in-south-asia/>

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Rss To Ensure A 'Hindu' India Only

December 20, 2014



The trouble started a few months ago, when members of right-wing Hindu group RSS swept into a small village where several families had converted to Christianity more than a decade earlier. They held a fire purification ceremony with the villagers, tore a cross off the local church and put up a poster of the god Shiva. The space was now a temple, they declared. They announced a Christmas Day ceremony where they planned to welcome hundreds of Christians and Muslims into Hinduism. A fundraising flier solicited donations for volunteers to undergo conversion — about \$3,200 for each Christian and about \$8,000 for each Muslim.

After a nationwide furore, organisers postponed the ceremony. But one of them, Rajeshwar Singh Solanki, said in an interview Thursday that his group will demonstrate against any church baptisms performed on the holiday. He said his group's ultimate aim is to ensure that Islam and Christianity "cease to exist" in India. Christians in Aligarh say they are afraid of what might happen on their holy day. "We just want security from the government, particularly on Christmas," said Ajay Joseph, 39, a lab technician.

His fears echo those of other religious minorities in majority-Hindu India, where some Christians and Muslims worry that incidents of religious intolerance will rise with the advent of a conservative government led by Narendra Modi, himself a fervent Hindu nationalist. In recent days, carolers have been beaten in the southern city of Hyderabad, and a Catholic church in New Delhi burned in a suspected case of arson. A conservative Hindu group said Wednesday that another mass “conversion” event would be held in February.

For several days this month, India’s secular Parliament repeatedly lapsed into chaos as members debated religious conversions and a plan that would have kept students in school on Christmas, normally a holiday, and designate Dec. 25 “Good Governance Day.” The country’s foreign minister also called for designating the sacred Hindu text the Bhagavad Gita the “national scripture.” “They are feeling nobody can do anything to them because of Narendra Modi,” said Yusuf Dass, a pastor at Central Methodist Church in Aligarh. Dass, 32, grandson of a minister, grew up in nearby Agra and is from a family that has been part of India’s Christian minority for generations. He rides a motorcycle with the words “Glory to God” on the windshield. “They were saying this country belongs to Hindus and India should belong only to Hindus. I don’t know who is misguiding them,” Dass said.

India’s 64-year-old prime minister has a troubling history of religious intolerance, opponents say. In 2005, while he was chief minister in the state of Gujarat, the United States revoked Modi’s US visa on the grounds that he had committed “severe violations of religious freedom” by not acting to stop Hindu-Muslim riots in Gujarat in 2002, killing more than 2000 Muslims. John Dayal, a former president of the All India Catholic Union and a member of the government’s National Integration Council, said that RSS volunteers, called pracharakas, now have an ally at the top of India’s government and feel emboldened to act more freely than in previous years.

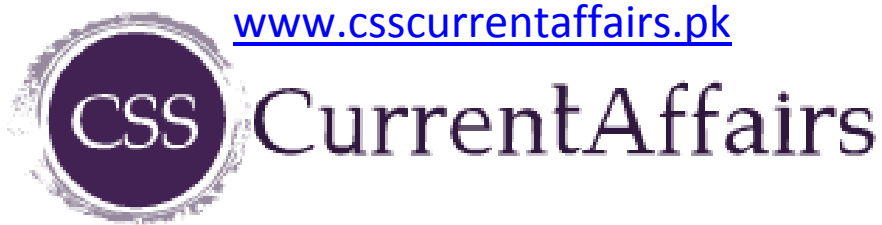
On Wednesday and Thursday, proceedings in India’s Parliament again ground to a halt as members of the upper house demanded that Modi appear and make a statement promoting religious harmony. He came Thursday, looking grim. No statement was made. Opposition members have expressed outrage over the now-postponed conversion event in Aligarh as well as one that happened this month in which 50 poor Muslim families attended a ceremony where they were asked to chant and throw offerings into a holy fire, then were declared converted. The Muslims later said that they were lured to the ceremony with the promise of govt food ration cards. Another mass conversion is planned for Feb. 6.

Ram Madhav, the general secretary of Modi’s Bharatiya Janata Party, said that the ongoing debate over religious conversions — and whether the country needs a national law to stop forced or coerced

conversions — is being fomented by political opponents who are deliberately trying to sabotage Modi's efforts to reform the country's economy. "Why drag the prime minister into this?" he asked. "Modi wants to push through important economic bills, and these people just want to derail his agenda."

Source: <http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=258458>

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NATO Ends Combat Mission In Afghanistan After 13 Years

December 29, 2014



KABUL: Nato formally ended its war in Afghanistan on Sunday, holding a low-key ceremony here after 13 years of conflict that have left the country in the grip of worsening violence.

The event was arranged in secret because of the threat of Taliban strikes in the Afghan capital, which has been hit by repeated suicide bombings and gun attacks over recent years.

“Together... we have lifted the Afghan people out of the darkness of despair and given them hope for the future,” Nato Commander US Gen John Campbell told assembled soldiers. “You’ve made Afghanistan stronger and our countries safer.”

On Jan 1, the US-led International Security Assistance Force (Isaf) combat mission, which has suffered 3,485 military deaths since 2001, will be replaced by a Nato “training and support” mission.

About 12,500 foreign troops staying in Afghanistan will not be involved in direct fighting, but will assist the Afghan army and police in their battle against the Taliban, who ruled from 1996 until 2001.

When numbers peaked in 2011, about 130,000 troops from 50 nations were part of the Nato military alliance.

“I hope you take great pride in the positive impact you’ve made and will continue to make upon the Afghan people,” Gen Campbell said in a speech released by Isaf on Twitter as live broadcasts were banned for security reasons.

He folded up the Isaf flag and unveiled the flag of the new mission, named Resolute Support.

The ceremony — held in a sports hall at Nato headquarters — completed the gradual handover of responsibility to the 350,000-strong Afghan forces which have been in charge of nationwide security since last year.

But recent bloodshed has highlighted fears that the international intervention has failed as Afghanistan faces spiralling violence.

The United Nations says that civilian casualties hit a record high this year, jumping by 19 per cent with 3,188 killed by the end of November.

Afghan police and army have also suffered a grim death toll, with fatalities soaring to more than 4,600 in the 10 months — far higher than all Isaf deaths since 2001.

“The US and Nato mission was an absolute failure as today’s ceremony shows,” Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid told AFP.

“They are fleeing from Afghanistan. They have not reached their goals in defeating the Afghan mujahideen.”

United States and Afghan commanders insist the national security forces can hold the line against the Taliban despite concerns of a repeat of Iraq, where an American-trained army virtually collapsed in the face of a militant onslaught.

Source: <http://www.dawn.com/news/1153752/nato-ends-combat-mission-in-afghanistan-after-13-years>

Globalization And Its Discontents | By Dr Saulatnagi

December 31, 2014



The development of productive forces beyond their capitalist organisation suggests the possibility of freedom within the realm of necessity.

As the Soviet Union successfully accomplished its hara kiri in the most grotesque of styles, for the first time in this world populated overwhelmingly by the have-nots, the market economy — based on the capitalist mode of production — established its unchallenged hegemony on the ‘wretched of the earth’. With the backing of the middle class, the process of altering the language that was already in vogue was hastened. A new lexicon was created; it was inundated with new jargon, rigmarole and balderdash. A few words that lacked the element of conformity were meticulously deleted. Some that blatantly exposed the irrationality of the new order akin to class, false consciousness and surplus value were declared redundant and hence pushed into oblivion. New terminologies such as rationalisation, meaning social cuts and entitlements, indicating the scuttling of the most inalienable human rights such as health, education and unemployment allowances, and rightsizing, that stood for mass unemployment, were introduced. These euphemistic cadences were meant to conceal or mollify the hideous crimes that were about to be committed against humanity. The treachery and caprice hidden right behind these terminologies became evident no sooner was the veil on them lifted. The reality proved atrociously ugly, especially when dearth, deprivation and depredation extracted a heavy toll from the masses. Poverty, hunger and a mass exodus of the working class from workplaces exposed the myth behind this glittering deceit.

Globalisation too was part of the same linguistic jugglery marred by deception — a word that creates a fixated structure and demands from the individual to behave in a similar fixated and specific manner. The granger it carries conveys simultaneously a sense of intimidation and glorification. The objective is to insinuate subservience and silent conformism to the newly established reality in which the human being is nothing but a stupefied buffoon, a newly born Lilliputian. In this new reality, “Everyone is under

the whip of a superior agency. Those who occupy the commanding positions have little more autonomy than their subordinates; they are bound down by the power they wield” (Horkheimer).

Under the banner of internationalism, the idea of globalisation was initially floated by Marx. This claim can be advanced with certainty but contrary to the bourgeois expression it had drastically different connotation than what has been presented by hegemonic powers. In capitalism, the very syntax of the word has been altered. Akin to a merger of two opposites such as ‘mother of evil’ and ‘father of the nuclear bomb’, the word globalisation too carries tacit and tactful ambiguity. The idea related to this world becoming a global village is neither farce nor holds anything unique or utopian. Despite having different colours, creeds and cultures, the people of this world have one thing in common: they are human beings. They share the same feelings, emotions and pathos though with variable intensities. However, vested interests have created artificial boundaries between people. The motive is to check the movement of labour from one official line of demarcation to the other and to foment the hysteria of hatred that could culminate into war for the realisation of capital. Workers of India and Pakistan, the citizens of apparently two hostile nuclear-armed nations, have no reason to keep any grudge against each other. Both are afflicted by the same malady of hunger and poverty. Either one is stymied and stifled by the expropriation and exploitation of its respective native bourgeoisie in collusion with international capitalism. Having a common enemy, their fight can only embrace success if they integrate themselves as a unified bulwark against the highly organised forces of oppression.

But here lies the rub; the interaction of the working class could be inimical for the ruling classes that, according to Engels, are the executive councils of the bourgeoisie. In Marxism, globalisation means the ultimate stage of redemption of humanity, when a new human being will be born who, according to Nietzsche, is not “ashamed of himself”. A human being created by a society of free producers, a society that will abandon the concept of free labour in favour of freedom from labour itself, which in all circumstances remains an alienated objectified process. According to Herbert Marcuse, “Marx rejects the idea that work can ever become play. Alienation would be reduced with the progressive reduction of the working day, but the latter would remain a day of unfreedom, rational but not free. However, the development of productive forces beyond their capitalist organisation suggests the possibility of freedom within the realm of necessity. The quantitative reduction of necessary labour could turn into quality (freedom), not in proportion to the reduction but rather to the transformation of the working day, a transformation in which the stupefying, enervating, pseudo-automatic jobs of capitalist progress would be abolished.” Once this society based on exploitation is dispensed with, the new human being will turn the process of production into a process of creation. Work or labour will

cease to be a necessity. It will be carried out since the human being is born to work for the advancement and welfare of mankind. Everybody may not become an Einstein, Gorky, Picasso or Mozart but the phenomenon of becoming great — much like these personalities — will not remain so rare.

The idea of globalisation propounded and realised by capitalism is altogether different. It is synonymous with the brutalisation of the free market economy. When launched in the early 1990s, its commandments rallied around controlled democracy, free trade, minimised role of the state, an uninhibited transfer of wealth from one corner of the world to the other, labour market flexibility, which meant pushing wages down and workers out, unbridled access to all potential markets, hegemony of the IMF and World Bank. “The most important reforms involved lifting constraints on labour mobility and wage flexibility as well as breaking the ties between social services and labour contracts” (Noam Chomsky). This was a euphuism for absolute privatisation including once tabooed industries of health, education and even the army, airports and security. To avoid any threat to the realisation of capital, institutions such as the Pentagon and NATO became the overseers of this hegemonic arrangement. As Noam Chomsky states, “Cynical slogans such as ‘trust the people’ or ‘minimise the state’ did not call for increasing popular control. They shifted decisions from government to other hands, but not the people.”

Once the ‘evil empire’ of the USSR swiftly succumbed, capitalism, in its euphoria, succumbed to the fallacy of resolving all contradictions inherent in its system automatically through market forces. The future appeared to be one having smooth sailing but the Marxist negation of the negation turned out to be reality yet again. Capitalism itself is its own nemesis. Why would it need any other foe? The demise of its erstwhile enemy turned out to be a decisive blow to its own survival. Many seething internal contradictions that in the presence of the Soviet Union lay hidden, came to the fore. The huge military-industrial complex built to counter the enemy on a permanent basis suddenly found its utility outlived. The very idea of shutting down the huge private enterprise producing the means of destruction was impossible for an economy based on war. The control of this ‘destructive’ mafia was so effective that the whole ruling hierarchy, while owning its existence to its mercy, was held hostage to the barrel of its gun. Except for the creation of another immediate enemy, the constant piling up of armaments was becoming a liability both for the capitalists who were constantly producing it and the state that was obliged to purchase it.

Source: <http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/opinion/01-Jan-2015/globalisation-and-its-discontents-i>

The Global Search for Education: What's the News from Pakistan?

December 04, 2014



“A major factor of our success has been improved management at every level. We had good, focused attention from the chief minister and a really good team of officials in Lahore.” — Sir Michael Barber

I had the pleasure of talking to Sir Michael Barber (Chief Education Advisor, Pearson) who is a leading authority on education systems and education reform. Barber’s recently published report, *The Good News from Pakistan*, showcases the revolutionary reform in Punjab — an initiative that posed one of the greatest challenges to education improvement in the world.

Sir Michael (Britain’s Special Representative on Education in Pakistan) who notably served as a Chief Advisor to Tony Blair, demonstrated in a heroic example of education leadership that even the most difficult jobs, when met with rigorous responsibility, can be completed with effective results. Pakistan is

not only looking up, with more students completing education programs, but is also showing its own leadership, and thus growing independently from external aid. Sir Michael shared what he learned from this process and some of the facts about how he accomplished this feat in the dialogue that follows.



“Provincial government is fundamental. It’s very, very difficult to do something like this without good political leadership.” — Sir Michael Barber

What made you call Pakistan, when you first approached your job, the biggest education reform challenge on the planet?

One reason was just the sheer scale: estimates vary, but there are somewhere between 25 and 30 million children and between 300,000 and 400,000 teachers in Punjab, Pakistan. The numbers in Pakistan as a whole are double that. Another is that Pakistan is a place riddled with crises and complexity, given just the security challenges alone. Punjab had just had a flood; that’s not the first time that’s happened. They’ve got a whole variety of health challenges; they’ve got a water challenge; they’ve got an energy challenge. And then the politics have been complicated throughout. So put

together all of those things — the scale plus all the challenges that Pakistan faces in society, and all of those things distract the politicians.

Your report shows immense statistical improvements in its education system, including improved attendance and teacher presence. What changes for you have been the most crucial?

A major factor of our success has been improved management at every level. We had good, focused attention from the chief minister and a really good team of officials in Lahore, the capital of Punjab, overseeing a team of about 10 or 12 officials that any UK government or any US state would be proud to have running their education report. The districts, the top officials, and the top education officials are now all appointed on merit. So a really big part of it, that's very important, is just improving the management, or what I call a "delivery chain."

The second thing is getting regular monthly data from all the 60,000 schools of Punjab. We use that data to drive action, so if we see that one of the 36 districts is underperforming in one of the indicators, we try to find out why that is and solve that problem with them. So great management and real time data.



"I always thought that one of the big problems in Pakistan would be that in the people's heads, they really didn't think things could change. My personal job was never to doubt that we could do this." — Sir Michael Barber

Was there any particular thing that surprised you or caught you by surprise that you were able to change but just seemed impossible at the beginning?

That's a great question. We had many setbacks and challenges. I always thought that one of the big problems in Pakistan would be that in the people's heads, they really didn't think things could change. My personal job was never to doubt that we could do this. So I always expressed confidence, but probably the thing that I'm most excited about is the new confidence and belief that the people have that they can change things.

That's great. It is amazing the kind of change you can bring about once people are inspired by a compelling cause. How important are the roles of national governments and international federations such as the World Bank to education reform in struggling countries?

In Pakistan, education is a provincial not a federal issue. Provincial government is fundamental. It's very, very difficult to do something like this without good political leadership. So the chief minister, Shahbaz Sharif, has to make tough decisions and he has to stick with it even when he's distracted by political crises. So political leadership and then building a government machine that can deliver are essential. The international aid agencies (such as the British Department for International Development) have been crucial for this endeavor. The World Bank has been cautiously supportive and they put some money into it. But it is also really important to note that their money totaled up is only about five percent of the total Punjab education budget. The key things are the commitment of the chief minister and his team, and on our side, the expertise and the ability to assemble the evidence from around the world. And then the support that takes the chief minister and the system through the difficult positions. So we're at his side. We're like a rock that he can depend on. In the end, that's the most important thing. In the end, the chief minister of Punjab is a proud man. In his perfect world, he wouldn't need aid. He really appreciates the support of the aid agencies but what he wants ultimately is for Punjab to be able to run itself. So we see a big part of our job as building the capacity of the Punjab government to support itself. I often say that, as much as I love going to Pakistan, I would be delighted if there's a time when I don't need to go anymore.



“We’re beginning to use technology for the teacher development process, we’re beginning to use it in the data collection process, and we’re beginning to experiment with it in the education process, but so far it hasn’t been central.”

– Sir Michael Barber

Where does Pakistan’s educational system stand now in terms of effectiveness, in your opinion? And what further progress or changes at this point do you feel need to be made, looking forward?

It’s still a very poor system in terms of national benchmarking. It’s still far short of what it needs to be. The chief minister and all his officials are totally aware of that. So it’s got a long way to go. I would say that what the chief minister and his team have done is take a system that was really, really poor and

make it better. But there's much more to do to build the capacity of teachers to teach great lessons every time. They've got much better textbooks, they've got lesson plans, but the sophistication of the lesson plans, really delivering high quality lessons on a regular basis, and the whole approach to continuous teacher development that you see in the better developed systems, we haven't quite got that working the way we need to yet. That's a big focus at the moment.

Has new technology played an important role in the reform process?

It's not been a major part of the strategy at all: 900 ex-army guys on motorbikes collected the data by paper, going from school to school. But now that is going digital, which will be great, we'll get the data in real time as they collect it. So there's technology at that level. In the classroom, one of the objectives has been merely to get electricity in every school. We've got close to that now. One experiment we have done is to have a truck deliver digital pads for a morning or afternoon to schools and project a lesson from an expert teacher. This is a more economical option than just giving every school a lot of computers, since it can reach each school by traveling, and computers are often not used at all times during the school day. There is also, in Punjab, the Punjab Information Technology Board, which is a very well led organization and it's bringing many new projects to fruition. So we're beginning to use technology for the teacher development process, we're beginning to use it in the data collection process, and we're beginning to experiment with it in the education process, but so far it hasn't been central.

Sorry State Of Education In Pakistan

December 09, 2014



In a recent UN report, Pakistan has been ranked 141st among 142 countries in terms of educational excellence. More distressing is the fact that no Pakistani university is included among world's top 500 universities. Isn't it embarrassing for us that many underdeveloped and poor countries of the world are far ahead of us when it comes to education? The answer is ashamedly in positive. No one would disagree that this state of affairs is quite appalling and calls for serious, strenuous efforts by the government; which unfortunately has been and is still apathetically indifferent.

Education, the most important as well as productive sector for any society, opens new vistas for the people to distinguish between things in different magnitudes. A nation cannot achieve national aims and goals if the majority of the people remains uneducated and illiterate. They cannot comprehend the value of unity and discipline in life and remain naïve of the latest advancements in the world around them. Education uplifts humanity, physical and other resources which further improve the factors of production. So, it is indispensable for each country to set up a robust education system.

Despite tall claims of relentless efforts in the realm of education, it is a stark reality that Pakistan is one of the eight countries in the whole world which spend less than two per cent of their respective GDPs on education. Moreover, educational opportunities accessible in Pakistan are of a very sundry nature. There are deep divisions based on regional disparities, rural/urban location, gender, income and wealth of parents, medium of instruction in schools, curricula and syllabi, ideological divides, type of schools and access to extra coaching, to name some. In the last couple of decades, as income and wealth inequalities have increased in Pakistani society in general, and our society has become more and more polarised on various socio-economic lines, the disparities in education have also increased concurrently. The rapid growth of the private sector, over this period, has also added to the diversity and inequality of educational opportunities. In addition, significant differences in access to education are also prevalent. Dropouts and proportion of out-of-school children, as well as learning achievements of children are some of the instances of this aggravated problem.

These differences should be of vital concern to the policymakers in Pakistan. Where they are a reflection of the existing disparities and divisions in the country, the schooling system will cause these disparities to exacerbate manifold in coming years, if they go on unchecked and unchallenged.

There has always been a hierarchy of schooling in Pakistan. However, the increasing range of private schools means the difference between high and low quality education is growing. There is a mushrooming growth of English-medium schools, especially at the primary level. English still fascinates parents who feel euphoric when their children demonstrate verbal skills in English. However, the high tuition schools that give good quality education are meant mainly for the elite and they are indirectly perpetuating class differences as they mainly cater to the upper strata of society.

In Pakistan, employment opportunities are dictated by the type of school attended. Schools, which might confer economic opportunities on students, are beyond the reach of normal citizens. Consequently, the school system reinforces the social gap.

Private educational institutions attract 34 per cent of total enrolment in the country. The number of private schools has increased substantially in Pakistan. Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have witnessed a significant growth in private schooling in both urban and rural areas; but interior Sindh and rural Balochistan have very few private schools. The major constraint on opening private schools in various areas seems to be the availability of teachers locally. Private schools have opened up in large numbers where there has been an available and ready supply of individuals who have done only matriculation, or in some cases, have education up to intermediate level. These have mainly been females in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This partially explains the expansion in these two provinces, aside from demand

factor differences, and it also explains the constraint in interior Sindh and Balochistan. It also explains why most private school expansion has happened at the primary level. If we want similar expansion of private schooling in other areas we have to find the supply of teachers, local or ways of transporting teachers from other areas into supply-constrained areas.

Private schools cost more than their public counterparts. Parents from all income brackets send children to private schools but there is a strong correlation between wealth and enrolment. Parents from lower income group cannot afford to send all their children to private institutions. Some data also show that children from private schools also get more paid coaching and after school hours than their public school counterparts. All of these trends will aggravate educational, later opportunity and income/wealth disparities in the society.

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The Cure Education | By Shahrezad Samiuddin

December 15, 2014



EVERY educated Pakistani (and many an uneducated one) knows that a large part of the current crisis facing our nation can be put down to the much-harped-about-and-little-done-about problem of illiteracy. Pakistan's literacy figures indicate that the government must act now on a war footing to boost school enrolments, and improve school facilities and the quality of education.

Is it any surprise that one of the strategies employed by the Taliban to destroy the fabric of society is to target schools? In a convoluted way, they understand (perhaps better than the elected government) that if you are to change society, you should target the education system.

In many ways, successive governments are more responsible for the current education emergency than any war-mongering extremist. But first, a look at the shining promises.

Article 25A of the Constitution states that all Pakistani citizens aged between five and 16 years have the right to free and compulsory education. In addition, Pakistan is a signatory to the

UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 26 of the Declaration requires all signatory member states to provide free education to children.

And now, a look at the bleak education landscape and the stark challenges ahead. According to a report compiled by Alif Ailaan (an alliance that is campaigning to get more Pakistani children into schools), there are an estimated 25 million children in the country, aged between five and 16 years, who ought to be attending school but are not or, rather, cannot. Of these, 11.4 million are boys while 13.7 million are girls.

In another estimate, 57pc of all children who are out of school live in rural areas. And overall school enrolments at the primary level stand at a low 73pc.

In contrast, India and Bangladesh boast enrolment figures of 92pc at the primary level. These figures highlight the urgency and the massive level at which Pakistan needs to invest in education. Otherwise, we risk condemning a large percentage of our population to a life of unemployment and poverty.

When it comes to explaining the yawning gap between the promise of education and the ground reality, it is no surprise that rhetoric abounds in an attempt to bridge the variance in the two. By now, jaded Pakistanis have really heard it all. This year in March, at an international conference in Islamabad titled 'Unfinished Agenda in Education: the Way Forward', Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif said that for Pakistan, education is "not merely a matter of priority, it is the future of Pakistan, which lies in its educated youth".

"It has, in fact, become a national emergency. More than half of the country's population is below 25 years of age. With proper education and training, this huge reservoir of human capital can offer us an edge in the race for growth and prosperity in the age of globalisation. Without education, this resource can turn into a burden," he added.

'National emergency', 'human capital', 'edge', 'growth', and 'prosperity', the prime minister used all the right words in his speech.

In practice, however, the actions lag far, far behind. Our government spends a measly 2.4pc of GDP on education. To add insult to injury, gimmicks such as using the precious little money reserved for education to hand out laptops (akin to doling out handouts to families of victims of terror attacks), only serve to divert focus from the real issue. The former hardly makes a dent in the literacy rate, just as handouts do nothing to prevent terrorism.

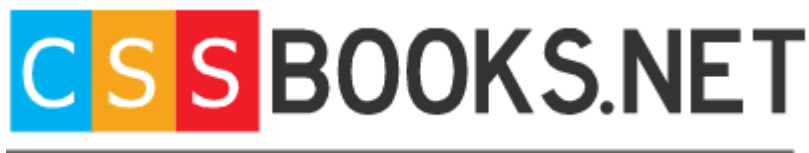
The writing on the wall is clear. An effective struggle (and it will take a struggle, no less) to increase literacy is going to be all about hard work: the hard work of building schools, the hard work of training teachers and the hard work of conceiving and undertaking effective campaigns to boost school enrolments.

We know that developing a skilled workforce is vital to sustaining a vibrant, strong and healthy economy. We also know that education is crucial if we are to achieve the dream of a healthy and tolerant society.

Yet all around us and every day, we see illiterate Pakistanis who face a lifetime of low wages and other issues related to living in poverty. They are at a greater risk for health problems, are vulnerable to exploitation and their children grapple with cognitive delays.

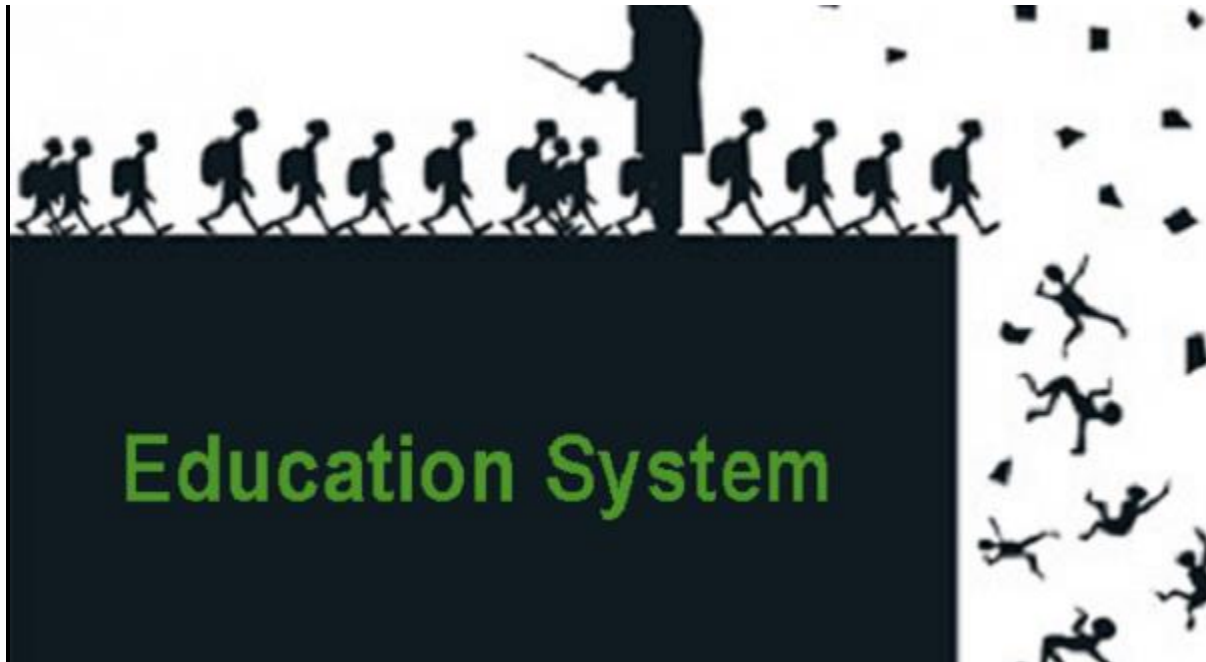
While there can be no one remedy that can deal with all the issues that ail this beleaguered nation, education comes close to being a panacea to our problems. For when we raise our voices and take steps to eradicate illiteracy from society, we are also raising our voices and eradicating related scourges such as poverty, hunger and disease.

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Education System In Pakistan Good Or Bad

December 20, 2014



Currently, education system in Pakistan is truly having an awful configuration right now. There is undoubtedly in tolerating the way that education stands the spine for the advancement of countries. Taking a gander at the historical backdrop of countries, we might securely achieve the conclusion that the progressed countries of the world could achieve the apex of eminence and force taking backing from education. The distributions for education are excessively pitiful, and despite distribution, the sum is not used for what it was implied for as the debasement is found in all the levels of education. Furthermore, as a result of the same conveyance from the administration establishments that is much beneath the craved and sought levels. Private schooling in Pakistan is expansive for the poor and the turnover of this quality instruction does not serve the nation the way they should. Getting ready for education does not run in compatibility with the needs and implement remains ever overlooked, so by this way the framework is getting more ruined as opposed to thriving.

Our colleges and universities have failed to produce the organizers, engineers, implementers and chiefs. Relatively the turnover is a bungle with the ground substances, the half sponsored persons we are delivering are of no use to us. The students we usually interact are degree seekers instead of the

information. The increment in the number of schools and colleges does not imply that we are passing by the standards rather these are intensifying, a basic confirmation of which is that no Pakistani college could discover a space among the main 1000 colleges across the world. The financial situation is straightforwardly connected with the status of Education in the nation. The created world figured out how to scale up their training in accordance with the needs and business necessities. In spite of the late accomplishments, much more is expected to be carried out as the country still confronts various difficulties which cause prevention. We are under commitment to raise the education of our populace to the level of our South Asian neighbors, to battle our own particular social and financial needs to the agreed level. There are a number of problems in education system of Pakistan. Let's have a look on a few of them!

Medium of Education

The system of Pakistan's education system is functioning in match with the local necessities and ground substances. It is practically a conclusive component that the education in the local or mother language surrenders more profits, however, we have the framework more isolated and enhanced simply as opposed to our prerequisites. A perfect example of it is that we neglect to choose about the Medium of training over the compass of 64 years. Diverse mediums are operational in both, open and private sector. This makes a kind of divergence among individuals, isolating them into two sections.

Gender Discrimination

We ought to know how the populace containing females, lamentably their education is not going to the way it was esteemed fit. The gender segregation is a cause that is helping towards the low support rate of young ladies at the essential level of instruction. The male and female investment proportion is anticipated at the grade school fit as a fiddle of degree of young men and young ladies as 10:4 individually. In the decade passed, the government welcomed private area to shoulder the obligation of instruction of the adolescent. The purpose was likewise to give the instruction at the doorstep to the youngsters particularly the female understudies. The private area responded to the call and there was an increment in the development of tuition based schools yet this step didn't result in the increment in the understudies or the quality. The masses couldn't be pulled in light of valuable instruction. It made obvious levels of society and made a hole among those with the wealthy and have not's.

Technical Education

There is a rage for the cubicle jobs for the same students. Select the general trench of education; however, they have the slightest tilt or the ability to adapt to the requests. China, Japan and Germany have the trenches for the individuals who have a taste for and don't attain the greatness in the general

trench of training. We have kept the opportunities open for all to take part in the general training at all levels, particularly the college level. We couldn't pull in the general masses towards specialized instruction making them to procure of their own go about as the business people and make their living without being the load on the administration. An educational framework is expected to be patched up making a space for the science, administration, IT and student with the incredibleness to go to the advanced education seeking after the instruction of their own decision. Lesser accentuation on specialized instruction implies the lesser labor for industry and consequently the lesser money generation.

Source: <http://www.taleem-e-pakistan.com/education-system-in-pakistan-good-or-bad/>

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Pakistan On The Brink Of An Economic Transformation?

December 08, 2014



Pakistan's 67 years of suffering can be attributed to one tragic flaw: Failure of imagination.

A country so gifted with great potential, suppressed and stymied to a point where day to day survival is a herculean effort for the people and for the state itself.

A nation so full of resources and vivacity, doomed to a life of mediocrity.

A country where mediocrity is now celebrated and exceptionalism both feared and looked down upon.

Imagination liberates a people from the mundane hardships of everyday to help us plan for a better future. But a careful look at our history reveals we have barely ever thought things through. Why else do you think we use the democratic argument to undermine democracy and market dictatorship?

Not convinced? Think about how, for the past six years, a substantial segment of the country's thriving media has stopped at nothing, reminding us that the country's leading democrats are essentially dictators; that the last dictator to rule the Islamic Republic was much more democratic in comparison.

And that is not all.

The discourse of each country has a political argument, a religious argument along with societal and cultural arguments. But the economic argument, the one most critical for survival, easily beats them all. Sadly, in the Islamic republic, even the flimsiest notion is allowed to trump the economic argument.

You want the country to thrive as a tourist destination? Sorry, can't do, because our value system does not allow us to be competitive as a tourist spot.

You want banks to introduce venture capitalism? But don't you know that interest (read usury) is *haram*? How about women empowerment and inclusion in the country's productivity? Isn't it imperative that in this age of economic competition, half of the country's population should be made part of the workforce that contributes directly to the GDP? No. You don't you get it. How can we lose honour and let our women work?

Want to have better trade relations with the neighbours? Well, why should we allow that before the resolution of our political disputes with them. And, the examples go on and on.

A nation that cannot pay for its meals can ill afford the luxuries of morality, independent politics, religion and a unique culture. As a consequence, the process of nation building has suffered. Owing to the disparate economic climate in the four provinces, we still lack a common thread to unite us in a collective struggle to survive.

It is time to embrace the primacy of the economic argument.

This country is so badly broken that the state hemorrhages money at every level. The incidence and persistence of corruption doesn't help. But there are far bigger issues to contend with; for instance, the spectre of uncontrollable fiscal deficit every year.

Pakistanis show little interest in paying taxes or in demanding accountability and transparency in the use of their tax money. The state, in return, not only fails abysmally to provide welfare and services to the masses, but refuses to trim fat from its non-developmental budget.

In the absence of a coherent approach towards reform, the country's outdated bureaucracy and governmental departments fail to put investment in the public and private sectors to any good use. Little to no development, scanty enterprising, miserable job and wealth creation and insufficient flow of money are a few results of that.

Let there be no doubt that the country stands on the brink of an economic transformation as improved connectivity with Central Asia and China will change us into a regional trade hub. It will bring wealth and great opportunities for prosperity beyond our imagination.

But then, billions of dollars flowed in during the heyday of the war on terror in Musharraf's rule, and vanished without a trace. When the state and society lack the capacity to absorb this much money, it incentivises corruption and misuse of funds.

Before new opportunities knock at our door, we need to build the capacity to accept them. Only then will the newly created wealth trickle down to the common man. In view of this, political parties within and without the parliament need to agree on a 10-year general framework for economic growth, stability and capacity building.

No economy can grow in an unstable political environment. Repeated military takeovers, untimely interruptions of the democratic cycle and destabilised political campaigning have decimated the chances of the country's political evolution.

As angry protesters led by a few opposition leaders and thoroughly facilitated by the country's private media threaten to derail the process again, fears grow that lessons learnt through hard labour might be forgotten once again. This cannot be allowed to happen.

Who rules the country is not totally irrelevant, but what is far more crucial is the continuation of the process. That's what all the labour, all the sacrifices have been for.

Given that democracy is a soft power, even the country's powerful military and judiciary need to stand unflinchingly by the process. If the democratic cycle continues uninterrupted, the end of every five year term will bring incremental maturity to the system.

The voters will get the opportunity not only to vote governments in but also to vote them out, the masses will gradually realise their responsibility and start owning their choices. Thus, slowly but eventually, the quality of their decisions will improve.

Strategically, the country has always oversold its geography, underperformed in reaping benefits of regional integration, rendering the neighbourhood extremely hostile for us. It is time to indulge less in marketing and invest more in building regional synergies.

It will not be irrational to suggest that on regional political matters, instead of projecting ourselves as regional experts, we could try to be less conspicuous for a change and try being better regional partners. Our regional disputes can wait. All we need to do for now is to harden our existing borders. Once again, the economic argument should be given prime importance. In doing so, however, attention should be given to preserving interests of domestic businesses.

Social mobility is another key element lacking in our society. Movement between classes is tiresome and often impossible. Quality of education, research and development facilities, access to resources, banking

laws and the overall business environment, all need to evolve at a fast pace. Key stakeholders need to develop a broader consensus in order to make this possible.

Finally, a word on the need for moderation. Usually, democratic process in itself works as a catalyst for moderation. However, given our interesting history, moderation in our country needs a special emphasis from the state. Thus far, our state has invested heavily in a religious identity. This has not stopped despite the loss of over fifty thousand citizens to terrorism. The state needs to detach itself from religious matters and invest substantially in a holistic Pakistani identity.

If a broader consensus on these matters is reached, the country may realise its full potential sooner than expected.

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CurrentAffairs

Wars And The Economy | By M Ziauddin

December 10, 2014



The war on terror, which around 2004, became our own from somebody else's is officially estimated to have caused the country a loss of as much as \$80 billion dollars in the last 10 years. These losses seemed to have devoured more than the gains that had accrued to our economy during the eight years beginning December 2001 when we joined the UN-sanctioned war against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. However, it took almost five years for our economy to begin showing signs of wilting under pressure from the rising cost of our own war on terror, as until 2009 when we sent our troops to South Waziristan and Swat, the generous compensation that we had been receiving from various bilateral and multilateral sources during the preceding years in return for our services in facilitating foreign troops' invasion of Afghanistan was taking care of these losses adequately. But as the war against our own terror groups assumed a do-or-die dimension by 2010, the foreign handouts simply could not keep up with the escalating domestic cost our economy had begun suffering from as a result.

This is not the first time that our economy had collapsed because of our own wars. But interestingly enough, every time we had fought somebody else's war, our economy had performed like a tiger and at times, even when wars were fought too far away from our boundaries. The three-year Korea war in the

early 1950s is a good example of how a distant war had helped boost our economy. Jute was in great demand during this war and we being one of the world's largest exporters of the golden fibre made huge windfall gains by meeting this demand. It is another story that the money earned from export of East Pakistan's jute was spent on West Pakistan, sowing the seeds of mistrust between the two wings very early in the day that finally led to the country's dismemberment in 1971. Our economy made further gains when we signed two regional defence pacts with the US (cento and seato) in the mid-1950s to jointly contain the presumed expansion of Soviet communism and Chinese socialism.

But the three wars that we fought against India — the one in 1965, next in 1971 and the third fought on the Kargil heights in 1999 — had proved to be too costly for our economy. It was mainly the post-1965 war related socio-economic and political crises that had led to the 1971 war which further aggravated the economic environs forcing the residual Pakistan to suffer economic stagnation for the next five years. And by the time the Soviet Union had invaded Afghanistan in late 1979, our economy had almost nosedived. But suddenly, it went spiralling up as we agreed to fight the US war as a frontline state of the free world against the occupying Soviet troops in Afghanistan. For the next nine years, as the war raged on across the Durand Line, Pakistan's economy grew at the rate of six per cent per annum on an average thanks largely to the almost \$100 billion or so unencumbered that came our way from all over the world. When General Zia died in an air crash in 1988, there was nothing on the ground to show where all that money had gone. Next, perhaps, egged on by a false sense of invincibility ensuing from a self-serving notion of our role in the Soviet collapse, we chose this juncture to launch our own two low-intensity wars, one on the side of the Taliban against the Northern Alliance and the other on the side of Indian Kashmiris against the occupying troops.

As if on cue, the US chose the timing to invoke the Pressler Amendment against Pakistan for crossing the nuclear red-line. And Washington soon followed up by turning the country into one of the world's most sanctioned countries after Libya because of our nuclear tests and the Kargil war. But as soon as former president Pervez Musharraf agreed to join the US-led war against terror in late 2001, our economy began picking up once again showing a six per cent growth rate per annum on an average during the next eight years thanks to the inflow of generous compensatory US dollars only to take a nosedive once again as someone else's war increasingly became our own by 2010.

Most Targets Missed

December 13, 2014



The Finance Ministry always says that things are getting better, but the figures in the annual State Bank report always signal otherwise. Here are the good things that happened: the above-target mobilisation from the Eurobond and the successful divestiture of UBL shares. The report also said that the increase in electricity and gas tariffs was smaller. Though it does not take into account the false additional charges put on the electricity bills that have been a national pain for customers to get rid of. It also mentioned that inflation and food prices have been lowered by December. Yet this may have less to do with economic policy and more to do with the global fall in the prices of fuel. The issue of the Rs 235 billion circular debt is still not settled. The targeted GDP growth of 4.1 % was actual 3.4% (a typo error as indicated to IMF by our FM), agriculture 2.1% against target of 3.8% and services 4.3% against target of 4.6% and inflation 8% against target of 8.6%. Our foreign reserves may have improved, but this is only because of a new IMF programme. External inflows from other international financial institutions (IFIs) also began after a gap of almost three years hindering the depletion of reserves.

Finance Minister Ishaq Dar's closeness with the PM and his spinning of numbers has made everyone sceptical of anything that the Finance Ministry has to say. This report proves this point and so does the

state of the economy. Additionally, the protests have not helped the economy. The container drama was a big blow to the transport sector as well as to food producers. Investment plans also suffered when already, setting up a business in Pakistan has a long time delay attached. There has been some manipulation by the Finance Ministry in its reporting of a fiscal deficit at 5.5% of GDP, being significantly lower than both the 2013-14 target of 6.5% as well as the overall trend in the past three years. The report says that a one-off grant of Rs157bn was treated as a statistical discrepancy, which reduced the overall deficit, a 1.5 percentage point reduction. The energy sector turns out to be the bane of our existence. It is behind the high fiscal deficits over the past three years, and is the biggest burden on the economy.

Source: <http://nation.com.pk/editorials/12-Dec-2014/most-targets-missed>

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The Economy In 2014 | By Dr Pervez Tahir

December 26, 2014



Looking at the economy in a calendar rather than fiscal year is a bit problematic in terms of data. This does not preclude informed comment on major developments.

The year started with the news coming in January of a surplus on the external accounts in December, signalling the end of the free fall of the rupee by 8.2 per cent in July-November 2013. The finance minister's frantic efforts to mobilise reserves by bringing in \$1.5 billion of Saudi money in February and March 2014, \$2 billion of the Eurobonds receipts in April, \$1 billion from the World Bank in May, 3G/4G auction and the sale of remaining government shares of UBL divestiture led to the rise of the rupee by 9.8 per cent in December 2013-June 2014. So long as the country can borrow, which it could with an IMF programme in place and remittances remaining steady, fire-fighting is not beyond the realm of

possibility. The source of these frequent fires lies in poor export performance, ballooning imports and the failure to revive growth and investment. Growth was in the range 3.5 to four per cent and investment, the main driver of growth, has actually declined. Large-scale manufacturing growth in 2013-14 was 3.5 per cent, not 5.3 per cent assumed earlier. The largest contribution to growth was made by the wholesale and retail trade. So much for the economic revival.

” The economic message of 2014 is that the government wakes up when a challenge presents itself. Otherwise, it lives in the 1990s

The election promises and the speedy action on the circular debt raised hopes that the government was dead serious about the energy crisis. However, the first full year shows that the government lacks a strategy. In the short to medium term, it could have focused on energy conservation and fuller utilisation of existing capacity. Improved governance to reduce theft and pilferage and investment in transmission to curtail losses would have done it. But the start has been made by making or seeking investment in creating new capacity. As the IMF programme imposes subsidy reduction, the consumer pays more without much relief in load-shedding. Despite reducing subsidies, circular debt has piled up again.

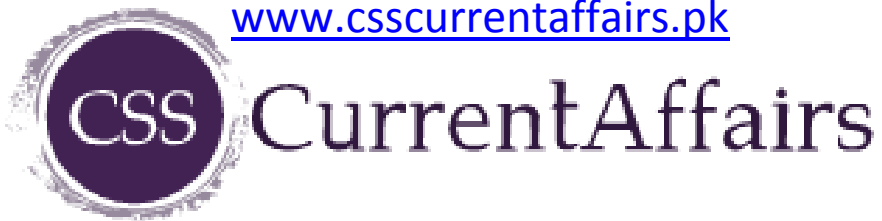
The privatisation policy has focused on selling the shares of profitable entities. The loss-making units are neither being restructured to make them profitable, nor is there any effort to sell them off. Indecisiveness prevails in the face of the breakdown of the democratic consensus on privatisation. All opposition parties and most allies are opposed to privatisation. Dwindling employment opportunities in a slow-moving economy are mobilising workers against privatisation. It is time to end this uncertainty and let the public sector play a productive role in the economy.

Although the average inflation for January-November 2014 was still high at 7.5 per cent, there is rapid improvement since September in all price indicators. In November 2014, the Consumer Price Index, food inflation and the Wholesale Price Index rose by four, 2.1 and 0.02 per cent, while the Sensitive Price Indicator declined by 0.3 per cent. All these indices were in double-digits in November 2013. The achievement is attributable to falling prices of palm oil and oil. A government borrowing heavily and taxing timidly caved in again to the dharna pressures to adopt a policy of appeasement to pass on the benefit to the consumers. A fiscal deficit of around six per cent may not be an unsafe prediction. This is exclusive of the expenditures necessary to mount a serious counterterrorism strategy.

The economic message of 2014 is that the government wakes up when a challenge presents itself. Otherwise, it lives in the 1990s.

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Religion Under Our Constitution | By Yasser Latif Hamdani

December 06, 2014



The most important reason why it is not supposed to be a theocratic constitution is because it seeks to enable Muslims to live according to Islam and not force them to live according to Islam. Very few lawyers, jurists and members of the religious clergy make that distinction

The Constitution of Pakistan, 1973, does not purport to be a secular constitution. Indeed, it has a more definite Islamic character than the Constitutions of 1956 and 1962, a reflection of the changed geography of Pakistan post-1971. The only truly secular constitution Pakistan had was the Government of India Act (GOIA), 1935, which was in force from partition to the promulgation of the Constitution of 1956. GOIA 1935, as adapted by Pakistan in 1947, had no state religion and no discrimination between Muslims and non-Muslims in terms of the high offices of the state. The 1956 Constitution declared Pakistan to be an Islamic Republic with a parliamentary democracy, but more or

less was a secular constitution in its practical implementation. The 1962 Constitution initially declared Pakistan simply the “Republic of Pakistan” but that was changed through the first amendment to that constitution. Significantly, neither of these constitutions had a state religion but both constitutions reserved the office of the president for Muslims. A president under the 1956 Constitution was a figurehead and the office of prime minister was left open for all citizens without discrimination. The 1962 Constitution was a presidential constitution.

Bangladesh’s separation affected the debate around religion in Pakistan in three significant ways: it was a blow to Pakistan’s self-identification as a Muslim homeland, forcing it to seek its *raison d’être* not in the Two Nation Theory of the Muslim League but the Islamic ideology of those religious parties that had opposed the Muslim League during the Pakistan Movement. It stripped Pakistan of the bulk of its non-Muslim minorities. Finally, it elevated religious parties, particularly Mufti Mahmood and Maulana Maududi, to the status of a national opposition. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and his PPP as the government were forced to coopt their agenda time and again during the next decade as a matter of expediency. The 1973 Constitution thus represented more the compromise between a larger religious opposition and the secular or mainstream parties in Pakistan than what was possible in a united Pakistan.

Yet, while the 1973 Constitution purports to be an Islamic constitution with a state religion and offices of both the president and prime minister reserved for Muslims, it is not technically supposed to be a theocratic constitution for several reasons. Legislation is to be done by parliament that represents the general will of all citizens of Pakistan. The ultimate arbiters of what is Islamic or un-Islamic are the members of this parliament. Laws are to be interpreted by the Supreme Court (SC) and not some religious council. The Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) has an advisory role and not a legislative one. However, the most important reason why it is not supposed to be a theocratic constitution is because it seeks to enable Muslims to live according to Islam and not force them to live according to Islam. Unfortunately, very few lawyers, jurists and members of the religious clergy make that distinction. In practice, therefore, we have converted Pakistan into a theocracy.

Last week, I raised the question of whether Islamic law could apply to non-Muslims and, in my opinion, neither the spirit of the constitution nor Islamic jurisprudence allows it. Here I argue that Islamic law under the Pakistani constitution can apply to only those Muslims who opt into it and that too in strict accordance with their own school of thought. Now, while on the face of it this may seem impractical an idea, it is already happening with respect to zakat and ushr. Under the law, as it stands now, you can

legally declare through an affidavit that, according to your belief, which may be Sunni or Shia, the compulsory zakat deduction does not apply to you and therefore you are exempt. It follows logically therefore that it should be possible for a Muslim to differ on the state's interpretation of Islam as a matter of conscience legally.

As a member of the Viceroy's Council, Jinnah, the founding father of this country, had argued in favour of the bill to allow members of different communities to marry each other without compulsorily renouncing their links with their parent community. When a law member of the council objected on the grounds that this would be un-Islamic, Jinnah opined that as a matter of policy the legislature had the right to overrule religious and customary laws where necessary or where it is a matter of public policy. His eloquent speech is part of the record and can be found on page 369 of the Collected Works of Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, Volume I, published by the National Institute of Pakistan Studies, Quaid-e-Azam University.

Jinnah asked: "May I ask the honourable member, is this the first time in the history of the legislation of this country that this council has been called upon to override the Musalman Law or modify it to suit the times? This council has overridden and modified the Musalman Law in many respects." He went on to state the various occasions in which the council had abrogated Islamic law before declaring, "This is an entirely optional character of legislation and it is not at all compulsory that every Muhammadan shall marry a non-Muhammadan or that every Hindu shall marry a non-Hindu. Therefore, if there is fairly a large class of enlightened, educated, advanced Indians, be they Hindus, Muhammadans or Parsis, and if they wish to adopt a system of marriage, which is more in accord with the modern civilisation and ideas of modern times, more in accord with modern sentiments, why should that class be denied justice?" He went on to state a few opinions in the speech that may well have attracted the epithet of 'blasphemer' in today's Pakistan. Salmaan Taseer was assassinated for much less.

Nevertheless, this was a lifelong position of the Quaid-e-Azam. Contrary to the myth drummed into our heads through Pakistan Studies, Jinnah had no real religious objection to his daughter's marriage to a Parsi turned Christian, but a practical one. It would have meant his daughter could no longer identify as a Muslim under the law and that would put him, as the president of the Muslim League, in an embarrassing position. It was for this reason and more that Jinnah remained a supporter of the inter-communal marriage bill till the end. The idea was to leave the decision to the individual without necessarily impugning his or her self-identification as a Muslim or Hindu or what have you.

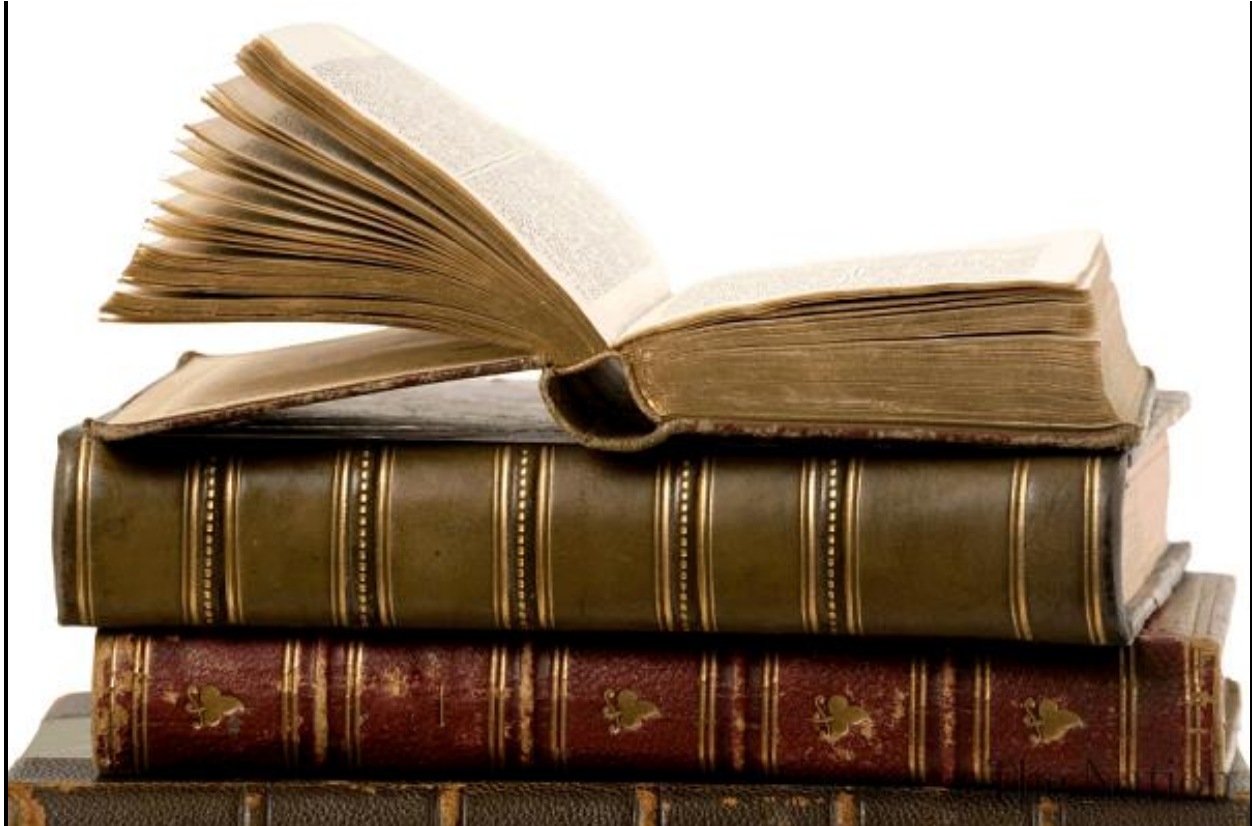
If you strengthen the individual's sense as an individual with rights and obligations and enable the individual to live according to his rights, many of the problems we face in Pakistan will wither away.

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Religion And The Law | By Saad Rasool

December 14, 2014



Hard as it might be for us Pakistanis to accept, but those who propagate the 'Religion of Peace', at least in present day Pakistan, have become the very instrument of violence in this land. Almost as a direct consequence of this religious intolerance, minorities in our country (including minority sects within Islam) have been subject to an unprecedented wave of persecution in Pakistan. According to a recent report published in August 2014, by the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, in the twelve (12) months ending June 2014, a total of 122 attacks have been carried out against religious minorities in Pakistan, totalling 435 fatalities and 773 injuries. Perhaps even more sadly, the highest amount of attacks, fatalities, and injuries has been targeted against fellow Shia Muslims. These, and other such atrocious statistics and events, take up a few columns in the newspapers every so often, but no longer have a heart-wrenching impact on our national conscience. Those among us who have the ability to voice bereavement against such events (what to say of doing anything to fix the rot!) are either too immune, or too afraid, to heed the voices within.

It needs to be asked how we, as a society, have deprecated to the point where such occurrences no longer burn our collective moral fiber? Is it simply that our religious sentiments have become so ionized that we see such events as the natural outbursts of religious fervor? Or is it that our national conscience has become so galvanized with scenes of horror that violence no longer penetrates through it? And why is our system of justice (law-enforcement as well as the judiciary) impotent against such atrocities? Have we, perhaps, institutionalized religion in our constitutional framework to the extent that difference of religious interpretations can now warrant one side spilling the blood of another? Each of these issues requires a deeper analysis.

The first set of questions can probably be answered in one word: Yes. We, as a society, have grown increasingly intolerant of religious differences and theological biases. And as a result, a fraction among us (albeit on the fringes of the spectrum of beliefs) has resorted to violence against anyone who disagrees with their particular brand of religious interpretation. And this does not always refer to conflicts of one religion against another (like the Crusades). Frequently, the violence is a result of intra-religious Crusade, where within the same religion, one school of thought is killing the other. And there can also be no doubt as to our increased societal tolerance to such events in the society – each of them making one or two day news-story at most, only to be distracted some hours later by issues of ‘national importance’ such as the Dr. Arsalan saga and or the latest PTI disclosure and dharna speech (thank God we have our preferences straight!).

While reasons for our intolerance of religious differences, and consequent imperviousness to religious killings, is an issue that falls within the sociological sphere of our society’s analysis. And I, for one, am not an expert in deciphering the causes behind it.

For the present purposes, however, it is pertinent to analyze how our Constitutional paradigm is structured in a manner that institutionalizes one brand of religion over all others. This is different from giving preference to Islam over other religions; instead our Constitution is drafted in a manner that gives preference to a particular interpretation of Islam over other competing ones – in essence creating a de facto minorities out of certain factions of ‘other’ Muslims (making them an easy target for persecution and violence).

To begin with, the Preamble (text of which has been made a substantive part of the Constitution through Article 2-A) declares the supremacy of Quran and Sunnah over all other things. This actually works well in a country where over 95% of the people claim to be Muslims, and where Article 2 of the

Constitution clearly declares, “Islam shall be the State religion of Pakistan”. Furthermore, Article 19 of the Constitution, which guarantees freedom of speech and press, limits these freedoms short of hurting the glory of Islam (as subjectively interpreted by any individual). But the real influence of subjective interpretation of religion comes into play in Article 203-A through 203-J (which establishes the Federal Shariat Court, and gives it the power to declare any law “repugnant to the Injunctions of Islam.”), and in Part IX of the Constitution (Islamic Provisions) which endeavors to bring all laws “in conformity with the Injunctions of Islam”. For this purpose, Article 228 establishes a Council of Islamic Ideology, with up to twenty members. Benevolently, Article 228(3) of the Constitution stipulates that “so far as practicable various schools of thought [shall be] represented in the Council”, and that “at least one member [shall be] a woman”. The interpretation given by this Council, along with the Federal Shariat Court, for all Constitutional purposes, is the declarative interpretation of the injunctions of Islam in our country.

One of the problems with this structure, to begin with, is that for large periods of our history, no woman has served on this Council. For a country with 52% women population, and aspirations of becoming a progressive nation in world, this fact is extremely discouraging and increasingly leads to (binding) interpretations of Islamic law that are biased against the female gender. Additionally, a cursory look at the members of this Council would reveal that just a minimal number of schools of Islamic thought have been represented on this Council, making their interpretation of the injunctions of Islam bend in favor of certain sects of Islam and against others. Now while it is perfectly acceptable for an individual to pick one interpretation of the religion over the other, it hardly seems reasonable that the State should deem one interpretation of Islam preferable to the other.

This systematic bias in our constitutional structure, when read together with the provisions of law that make injunctions of Islam (as subjectively interpreted) superior to all other laws, opens the door in our society to (legally) prefer certain Muslims (and their approach to Islam) over others. When this argument is carried to an extreme, the law in effect sanctifies certain schools of Islamic thought, while ostracizing others. In such a case, can we really blame certain extremist elements in our society, if their brand of Islam (or some diluted version of it) gains legal legitimacy and Constitutional cover? Should the State be in the business of telling an individual that he or she is less Muslim than the other? Can Shias, or followers of Ahmed bin Hanbal, Muhammad Idrees Shafi or Malik bin Anas feel as protected in their religious beliefs and practices if the Constitution does not prescribe to their interpretation of the religion?

This is not to say that equal representation in the Islamic Ideology Council or the Federal Shariat Court would suddenly rid our country of the extremism problem. The extremist elements would have to be fought, on their turf, through the intellectual, ideological and physical ammunition in our arsenal. However, in the meantime, what we must not do is to enable a Constitutional mechanism that prefers one school of Islamic thought over the others... making certain (legitimately held) religious views and practices to be unconstitutional.

A rethinking of religion in our Constitutional framework is required. And the debate must start now.

Source: <http://nation.com.pk/columns/14-Dec-2014/religion-and-the-law>

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Women Have Still Some Distance To Go | By Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein

December 04, 2014



ALMOST two decades ago, in Beijing, 189 countries made a commitment to achieve equality for women, in practice and in law, so that all women could at last fully enjoy their rights and freedoms as equal human beings.

They adopted a comprehensive and ambitious plan to guarantee women the same rights as men to be educated and develop their potential. The same rights as men to choose their profession. The same rights to lead communities and nations, and make choices about their own lives without fear of violence or reprisal.

No longer would hundreds of thousands of women die every year in childbirth because of healthcare policies and systems that neglected their care. No longer would women earn considerably less than men. No longer would discriminatory laws govern marriage, land, property and inheritance.

In the years that followed, the world has witnessed tremendous progress: the number of women in the workforce has increased; there is almost gender parity in schooling at the primary level; the maternal mortality ratio declined by almost 50pc; and more women are in leadership positions. Importantly, governments talk about women's rights as human rights and women's rights and gender equality are acknowledged as legitimate and indispensable goals.

Women have still some distance to go.

However, the world is still far from the vision articulated in Beijing. Approximately, one in three women throughout the world will experience physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime. Less than a quarter of parliamentarians in the world are women. In over 50 countries there is no legal protection for women against domestic violence. Almost 300,000 women and girls died in 2013 from causes related to pregnancy and childbirth.

Approximately one in three married women aged 20 to 24 were child brides. In many parts of the world, women and girls cannot make decisions on their most private matters — sexuality, marriage, children. Girls and women who pursue their own life choices are still murdered by their own families in the dishonourable practice of so-called honour killings. All of our societies remain affected by stereotypes based on the inferiority of women which often denigrate, humiliate and sexualise them.

Today we have the responsibility to protect the progress made in the past 20 years and address the remaining challenges. In doing so, we must recognise the vital role of women who defend human rights, often at great risk to themselves and their families precisely because they are viewed as stepping outside socially prescriptive gender stereotypes.

We must recognise the role of all people, women and men, who publicly call for gender equality and often, as a result, find themselves the victim of archaic and patriarchal, but powerful, threats to their reputations, their work and even their lives. These extraordinary individuals — women's human rights defenders — operate in hostile environments, where arguments of cultural relativism are common and often against the background of the rise of extremist, misogynistic groups, which threaten to dismantle the gains of the past.

Attacks against women who stand up to demand their human rights and individuals who advocate for gender equality are often designed to keep women in their 'place'. In some areas of the world, women who participate in public demonstrations are told to go home to take care of their children. Consider the recent example of a newspaper publishing naked photos of a woman, claiming she was a well-known activist — an attack designed to shame this defender into silence.

In other places, when women claim their right to affordable modern methods of contraception, they are labelled as prostitutes in smear campaigns seeking to undermine their credibility. Online attacks against those who speak for women's human rights and gender equality by so-called trolls — who threaten heinous crimes — are increasingly reported.

These attacks have a common thread — they rely on gender stereotypes and deeply entrenched discriminatory social norms in an attempt to silence those who challenge the age-old system of gender inequality. However, these defenders will not be silenced, and we must stand in solidarity with them against these cowardly attacks.

This is why my office has decided to launch a campaign to pay tribute to women and men who defy stereotypes and fight for women's human rights. The campaign runs from Human Rights Day, Dec 10 this year, to International Women's Day, March 8, 2015. We encourage everyone to join the ranks of these strong and inspiring advocates, on social media (#reflect2protect) and on the ground.

As we approach the 20-year anniversary of Beijing, discrimination and violence against women, and the stereotypes that confine them into narrowly fixed roles must end. Women have the right to make their own decisions about their lives and their bodies. Guaranteeing and implementing these rights are non-negotiable obligations of all states.

Women human rights defenders were instrumental in securing the ambitious programme laid out in Beijing. Their work, their activism and their courage deserve our recognition, our support and our respect.

Women Empowerment Through Education

December 22, 2014



Education is the right of every human but unfortunately in Pakistan women are still mostly deprived of education. For a strong society the role of an educated woman is very important. Education is the only tool that can break the cycle of abuse, and poverty. It has the power to transform societies. Educated women are more aware of their rights. A greater participation of educated women in the economy and political process would lead to a better world today as well as future generations.

One in ten of the world's primary age children who are not in schools live in Pakistan, placing Pakistan second in the global ranking of out-of-school children. According to UNESCO, 30 percent of Pakistanis live in extreme educational poverty having received less than two years of education.

In Pakistan, there are about 19.5 million children of primary age group, out of which 6.8 million are out of school and 60 per cent of these are females. At least, seven million children are not in primary schools. That's around as many people as live in the city of Lahore. Three million will never see the inside of a classroom at all.

In Pakistan, girls face some of the highest barriers in education. It has been estimated that nearly 62 per cent of out of school girls are unlikely ever to enroll in schools as compared to 27 per cent of boys in the country. 43 per cent of women faced religious discrimination at workplace, educational institutions and neighbourhood.

Major cause of women illiteracy is the increase in population which is playing a negative role on female education. A family having more number of children and less income will prefer to educate the boys of the family while the girls will be given embroidery or sewing skills.

Traditionally, women are considered as a source of strength for males of the family, and they are responsible for taking decisions about their lives. In most cases, males do not allow their sisters or daughters to go to schools or universities. Additionally, some families do not like their daughters to study in co-education institutes thus depriving them of higher education.

Every government talks about the importance of female education but none of them has given attention to it. In Multan, the plan of a separate women university and women medical college was announced yet these plans have not seen the light of the day.

The government should develop partnerships with NGOs and private sector to handover responsibility effectively to achieve universal primary education. It can improve education administration.

The most important factor in improving education in Pakistan is to spread awareness amongst the rural population about the necessity of education for girls. An annual survey should be conducted to maintain a check on the progress made. No society can progress by restricting more than half of its population in the depth of ignorance.

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