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New cartoon fuels US-Israel tensions, feeds 9/11 conspiracy theories

The CSS Point November 1, 2014



A new cartoon showing Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was behind the 9/11 attacks has heightened the recent tensions between the United States and Israel.

Israeli artist Amos Biderman drew the cartoon that shows Netanyahu was the pilot of an airplane that hit the World Trade Center in New York on September 11, 2001.

Israel's newspaper Haaretz published the controversial cartoon on Thursday.

"The message is that Bibi [Netanyahu] is arrogantly and want only destroying Israel's ties with the US and leading us to a disaster on the scale of 9/11," Biderman said in a tweet in Hebrew.

"It was certainly not my intention to insult or upset anyone," he told Haaretz. "I wasn't sufficiently aware of the great sensitivity that 9/11 holds for Americans."

The publication of the cartoon came a few days after a senior Obama administration official described Netanyahu as a "chickenshit."

"The thing about Bibi [Netanyahu] is, he's a chickenshit," the unnamed official told the Atlantic when asked about the foreign leader who seems to frustrate President Barack Obama the most.

In a strong reaction to the cartoon, National Director of the pro-Israeli Anti-Defamation League (ADL) Abraham Foxman said it was offensive on many levels.

“Not only does it completely misrepresent any tensions which may current exist between the US government and Mr. Netanyahu, it disrespects the memories of thousands of innocent Americans and others who tragically perished on 9/11,” he said in a statement.

Foxman also argued that the cartoon feeds conspiracy theories about the 9/11 attacks.

“Furthermore, as anti-Semitic conspiracy theories charging that Israel and/or Jews were behind the attacks are still believed by large swaths of the Muslim world, it is particularly jarring and incredibility irresponsible that an Israeli newspaper, especially one whose journalistic standards are widely respected, would resort to publishing such a highly offensive stereotype in the name of political satire,” he said.

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Islamabad says fight against militants in North Waziristan successful

The CSS Point November 1, 2014



The Pakistani army says the months-long battle against terrorists in North Waziristan region has been a success, as the militant death toll in the region hit 1,100.

The four-month-long military offensive in North Waziristan is going according to plan and its impact is being noticed across the country with a decrease in terrorist attacks, extortion and kidnappings, army spokesman, Maj. Gen. Asim Saleem Bajwa, confirmed on Wednesday.

“Most areas and roads in North Waziristan have been cleared and reconstruction is underway,” he told reporters in the city of Peshawar.

Troops have so far seized 132.5 metric tons (146 tons) of explosives, thousands of weapons and a large supply of ammunition in the region, Bajwa added.

The official, however, stopped short of saying when the operation would be finished.

This is while the Pakistan military has accused neighboring Afghanistan of failing to provide adequate support to the operation in North Waziristan as well as allegedly failing to take action against militants hiding among the Afghans.

Bajwa did not substantiate the accusations on Wednesday, but said the results of the campaign would have been better if Afghan authorities provided assistance.

The militant groups in Pakistan have carried out numerous attacks against Pakistani security forces and civilians.

Many Pakistanis have lost their lives in bombings and other militant attacks since 2001, when the Pakistani government entered an alliance with Washington in its so-called war on terror.

At least 86 Pakistani soldiers also have been killed during the operations since June when the army started its clean-up operations along the border with Afghanistan.

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US, UK Afghan involvement was futile: Opinion poll

The CSS Point November 1, 2014



A new opinion poll shows that the majority of the people in the United Kingdom and the United States believe that their countries' military involvement in Afghanistan was futile.

In a recent opinion poll commissioned by the state-funded BBC, 68 percent of the respondents in the UK and 51 percent of American participants said the intervention was not “worthwhile.”

The telephone poll, conducted on October 24-26, found that 42 percent of the people in the UK felt Britain had become “less safe” as a result of the 13-year war in Afghanistan. Another 39 percent said they noticed “no real difference” in their country.

About 25 percent in the UK said the deployment of soldiers to Afghanistan had left the war-torn country “worse off,” while 44 percent said there had been no real difference.

In the US, 25 percent said their country was “less safe” after America’s military intervention in Afghanistan. Also, 43 percent said they thought their country’s involvement had not brought about real changes.

Another opinion poll commissioned by the BBC found that Republicans were more likely to consider Washington's involvement in Afghanistan worthwhile than Democrats.

The opinion polls come just days after British combat troops left Camp Bastion – the last British-run camp – in Afghanistan's Helmand Province and handed it over to Afghan security forces.

The United States, Britain, and their allies invaded Afghanistan on October 7, 2001, as part of their so-called war on terror. Although the offensive removed the Taliban from power, insecurity continues to rise across the country.

India-China Border Standoff: High in the Mountains, Thousands of Troops Go Toe-to-Toe

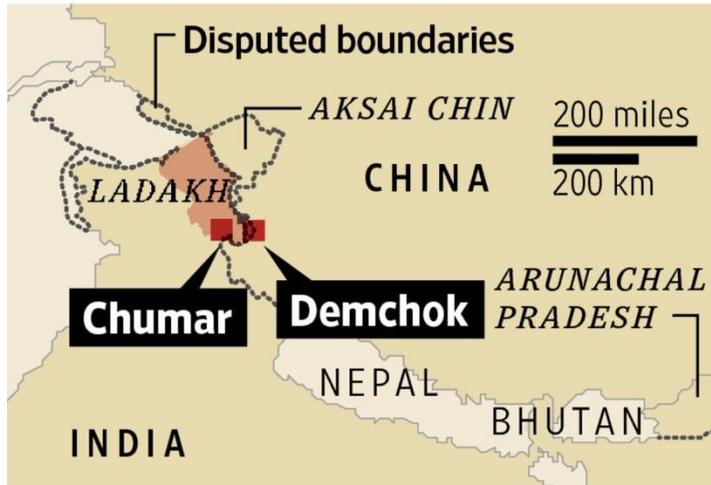
The CSS Point November 1, 2014



KORZOK, India—It was dusk when the herdsmen reached their Himalayan village bearing ominous news: They had spotted dozens of camouflage-clad Chinese soldiers inside territory India considers its own.

Indian security forces poured in, beginning a [face-off last month](#) that grew to involve more than 1,000 troops on each side at an altitude of roughly 15,000 feet, according to Indian officials, making it the biggest border confrontation between the two nations in decades.

The mountain standoff lasted weeks and at times involved tense shoving-and-shouting matches, according to Indian border-patrol troopers who participated. Both armies called in helicopters. The scale and duration of the clash are signs of mounting friction between the world's two most-populous countries.



Source: The Times Atlas of the World
(disputed boundaries)

The Wall Street Journal

“The Chinese have become more aggressive,” said Jayadeva Ranadé, a member of India’s National Security Advisory Board. “They were trying to send a message that they can pressure us at a time and place of their choosing.”

Beijing says its forces didn’t cross the “line of actual control”—a boundary that has separated the two sides since a 1962 border war and whose exact location remains a subject of bitter dispute—and played down the encounter’s significance.

Without a clearly demarcated border, “it is quite natural for some incidents to happen,” Chinese Defense Ministry spokesman Col. Geng Yansheng said afterward at a news briefing in Beijing.

Locals were caught in the middle. “Everybody was worried and asking if we should stay or go,” said Gyaltsan Tsering, the headman of Chumar, a village near the standoff. “We were afraid hostilities would break out.”

Much of the global attention paid to China’s territorial assertiveness has focused on maritime conflicts in the East China Sea and the South China Sea that have stoked tensions with Japan, the U.S. and some Southeast Asian nations.

But China is also making a less-noticed push in the west to enforce claims along its 2,200-mile (3,400-kilometer) frontier with India. India says the number of what it describes as Chinese “transgressions” across the two countries’ ill-defined boundary has climbed sharply—to more than 400 last year from 213 in 2011.

At times the disputes have revolved around issues as minor as the location of a hut to shelter herders. Many details of the most-recent standoff, based on Wall Street Journal interviews near where the incident occurred, haven't previously been reported.

China's Defense Ministry didn't respond to questions about India's figures and declined to say if Indian troops cross into the Chinese side. Both countries say their forces don't leave what they consider to be their own territory.

India's new government has pledged a tougher foreign-policy stance. Last week, Home Minister Rajnath Singh said India would build 54 new outposts along the eastern section of the India-China border and invest \$28.5 million in other infrastructure to catch up with construction on the Chinese side.



Although New Delhi wants to resolve boundary disputes through dialogue, “peace cannot come at the cost of honor,” he said.

On Thursday, a spokesman for China's Defense Ministry, Yang Yujun, reacted, saying: “We hope the Indian side can strive to uphold peace and calm in the border region, and not take any actions that complicate the situation.”

The long-running quarrel hasn't involved armed conflict in recent years and both sides say they are determined to keep the peace. But analysts say more encounters between the two sides' armed forces raise the risk of accidental escalation.

Defense analysts attribute the increasing tensions in part to the fact that both sides have built roads and other infrastructure that ease the movement of troops and supplies, despite the border areas' inhospitable geography.

China has also shown greater willingness to press its territorial claims and show its displeasure with its neighbors as its economic and military power has increased.

ENLARGE

The two countries have long harbored strategic misgivings about each other. India resents China's

close relations with rival Pakistan and its growing influence with India's other neighbors. China says its interests in the region are commercial, not military.

For its part, Beijing is wary of the emergence of a strategic partnership among India, the U.S. and Japan, which some in Beijing see as aimed at hindering China's rise. India's decision to let the Tibetan spiritual leader the [Dalai Lama](#) use the country as a base also rankles with China.

While Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi wants Chinese investment to help revive India's economy, he hasn't shied away from steps that could anger Beijing. On Tuesday, India said it would sell navy vessels to Vietnam, which has its own territorial feud with China, after earlier signing an energy-exploration deal with Hanoi.

Today's border situation has its roots in the fact that for centuries, the sparsely inhabited belt of mountains between what are now India and China existed as a sort of buffer zone between empires. Since a brief 1962 border war between the countries that left several thousand soldiers dead or missing, tension has waxed and waned.

China asserts claims on India's Arunachal Pradesh state, while India claims a region it calls Aksai Chin that connects Tibet with Xinjiang in northwest China. More than a dozen rounds of talks since 2003 haven't made much visible progress toward a settlement.

Now, local leaders from Indian border areas say they believe China is making a creeping advance, in some cases forcing herders off traditional grazing grounds. Assessing the situation on China's side is more difficult, because China limits the access of foreign journalists to militarily sensitive border areas.

Chinese troops “come some meters, or a kilometer, at a time,” said Gurmet Dorjay, a member of India’s Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council. “Our side doesn’t push back. That’s how you lose ownership.”

Kiren Rijiju, a minister of state in India’s Home Ministry, said Mr. Modi’s government would “respond appropriately” to incursions.

Villages like Chumar in the arid, high-altitude region of Ladakh, part of India’s northern Jammu and Kashmir state, are on the front line.

A settlement of stone and whitewashed, mud-brick houses and corrals for livestock, Chumar is home to about 35 families who eke out a living raising goats, sheep and other animals. They earn money selling cashmere wool.

People speak a Tibetan language similar to that spoken across the border in China and practice Tibetan Buddhism. Prayer flags flutter over the village and locals worship at a nearby monastery.

Residents say they are Indian citizens and would leave if the area falls under the control of Chinese authorities, whom they view as hostile to their religion and ways of living.

Locals used to have little contact with China’s military, said Mr. Tsering, the headman, who is his 40s. That changed in recent years, he said.

Chinese soldiers on horseback entered areas around Chumar multiple times in the summer of 2013, locals said. This spring, Mr. Tsering and other local leaders said, several herdsmen from Chumar were attacked by about a dozen mounted Chinese soldiers.

The soldiers beat them with whips in an area near a group of generations-old Buddhist monuments, said Messrs. Tsering and Dorjay. “Nobody’s been challenging them, so they just keep coming,” said Mr. Tsering.

China’s Defense Ministry declined to comment.

Then came the September standoff, ahead of a visit to India by Chinese President [Xi Jinping](#).

Indian security forces discovered Chinese soldiers using heavy earth-moving equipment to build a dirt road into territory India considers its own. Dozens of Chinese soldiers also took up positions at an area of high ground known to India’s military as 30R, near Chumar.

India has long considered 30R to be on its side of the line of actual control and Indian forces use it to monitor Chinese operations.

Convoys of olive-drab troop trucks rushed in Indian reinforcements and China sent in more troops. Forces—for the most part armed with assault rifles and pistols—at times pushed, shoved and shouted at each other, participants said.

“This is the biggest confrontation I’ve ever seen,” said one veteran Indo-Tibetan Border Police officer, who declined to be named. “It’s obvious they want to come farther.”

Chinese officers showed maps to their Indian counterparts indicating that the 30R hill and Buddhist stupas closer to the Chumar monastery were in Chinese territory, the officer said.

“That is a new claim. Next year they’ll be back with a map that moves the border even further,” he said. “They keep changing the maps and intruding again and again.”

Ma Jiali, an India watcher at the China Reform Forum, a think tank affiliated with the Communist Party’s Central Party School, said India’s construction of outposts around Chumar, where India’s army and the Indo-Tibetan Border Police have bases, had forced China’s hand.

“China didn’t provoke the latest standoff,” Mr. Ma said. He blamed India for “creating a new point of contention and forcing the Chinese side into taking action to defend its position.”

A few years ago, India built a paved road to the Chumar area and an observation tower. During the standoff, China also objected to what Indian officials described as a hut, erected to shelter patrols, that India says is within its territory. The Chinese in the past have also objected to a shelter for herders near another village.

It took several rounds of talks between military commanders and a meeting of the countries’ foreign ministers before the two sides pulled back.

Such face-offs could become more common as India moves to close the gap with China in terms of border roads and infrastructure. China has made big investments in border regions and connected Lhasa, Tibet’s capital, to the country’s east coast by rail.

India is making its own infrastructure push. In the Ladakh region in late September, crews were blasting away the side of a mountain to widen a road to border areas and doing other construction work. The military has started using airfields near contested border areas to spotlight its ability to airlift reinforcements.

“India is trying to catch up,” said C. Raja Mohan, a foreign-policy specialist at the Observer Research Foundation, a New Delhi think tank. “Both militaries are now operating much closer to the border. That could mean more incidents and more intense incidents.”

The Best Source for CSS Current Affairs



Islamic State fears grow in Pakistan and Afghanistan

Sana Wiki November 2, 2014



ISLAMABAD: The Islamic State organisation is starting to attract the attention of radicals in Pakistan and Afghanistan, unnerving authorities who fear a potential violent contagion.

Far from the militants' self-proclaimed "caliphate" in Iraq and Syria, the name of IS has cropped up several times in militant circles in recent weeks in Pakistan and Afghanistan, the historic homeland of the Taliban and Al-Qaeda.

Leaflets calling for support for IS were seen in parts of northwest Pakistan, and at least five Pakistani Taliban commanders and three lesser cadres from the Afghan Taliban have pledged their support.

Pro-IS slogans have appeared on walls in several cities in both countries and in Kabul University, where a number of students were arrested.

Militant, security and official sources questioned in recent weeks say these are local, individual initiatives, and at this stage IS has not established a presence in the region.

But the success of IS in the Middle East is unsettling many of those charged with keeping a lid on Afghanistan and Pakistan's myriad extremist groups.

“ISIS is becoming the major inspiration force for both violent and non-violent religious groups in the region,” Pakistani security analyst Amir Rana said.

Warning letter

Earlier this month Pakistan’s National Counter Terrorism Agency wrote to a dozen government agencies warning them to be on their guard against IS.

“The successes of ISIS play a very dangerous, inspirational role in Pakistan, where more than 200 organizations are operational,” the agency said.

The letter came as the Pakistani army fights a major offensive in insurgent bastions of the tribal areas, which appears to be weakening its major enemies, the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and allied Al-Qaeda fighters.

Following the army offensive, the TTP, a coalition of disparate militant groups, has fragmented into rival factions over recent weeks, fueling rumours the movement could be overtaken by IS.

The TTP say they broadly support both IS militants and Al-Qaeda.

They also say they have sent 1,000 fighters in recent years to help the militant struggle in Syria — an estimate confirmed by a Pakistani government source — and plan to send 700 more.

But if IS militants one day envisage extending their influence in Afghanistan and Pakistan, they will have to either defy or find an accommodation with the two countries’ Taliban movements.

Currently both the TTP and the Afghan Taliban officially recognise only one leader, Mullah Omar, and a senior Afghan cadre said that IS was wrong to declare a caliphate.

“The Taliban and their supporters say that ‘amir-ul-momineen’ (the commander of the faithful) has already been chosen,” the commander said, rejecting IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

Money, money, money

So far the Taliban and Al-Qaeda's new South Asia wing have steered clear of criticising IS, maintaining a united front against "Western aggression".

US officials say the group is generating tens of millions of dollars a month from black market oil sales, ransoms and extortion.

This financial heft is proving a big draw — including for the five Pakistani Taliban commanders who announced their support for the IS group.

"The splinter groups are facing financial crisis, so they are contacting Daesh," a senior militant said. Daesh is another name for IS.

To spread in the region, IS must also eat away at the authority of the state — but, unlike Iraq and Syria, Pakistani state structures look solid and are supported by a powerful army.

Afghanistan, much more fragile, is more worrying — particularly Kunar and Nuristan, mountainous provinces on the Pakistani border, which have long been refuges for militants.

"The authorities' fear is that IS will join up with the TTP and other extremist groups and from there spread on both sides of the border," said analyst Rana.

Several sources say that in Kunar there is at least one camp training hundreds of fighters sympathetic to IS.

Away from the camps, there is a danger that the IS militants could attract more and more young Afghans and Pakistanis through their propaganda on Facebook and Twitter.

"People here face problems with the lack of justice, the corruption and the inefficiency of the state, and therefore they need a counter-narrative, and ISIS provides one with religious content," said Tahirul Ashrafi, head of the Pakistan's Ulema Council, seen as close to the authorities.

In the short-term the big fear in Pakistan stems from the IS group's sectarian agenda, more extreme and more explicit than that of Al-Qaeda, heightened by its fight against majority Shia governments in Iraq and Syria.

Violence against minority Shia Muslims, who make up about 20 per cent of Pakistan's population, has hit record levels in recent years and there are concerns IS could energise sectarian groups even further.

Showing the way | By Margot Wallström

The CSS Point November 2, 2014



IN recognising the State of Palestine on Thursday, the Swedish government has taken an important step that confirms the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination.

Sweden's traditionally close ties with the State of Israel are now complemented by an equivalent relationship with the other party in the two-state solution that Israelis, Palestinians and a united international community see as the path to lasting Middle East peace.

Our decision comes at a critical time. Over the last year, we have seen how the peace talks have again stalled, how new settlement decisions on occupied Palestinian land have hampered a two-state solution and how violence returned to Gaza.

Thursday's recognition is a contribution to a better future for a region that for far too long has been marked by frozen negotiations, destruction and frustration.

By recognising Palestine, we want, first of all, to lend our support to moderate Palestinian forces — those who will manage the complex Palestinian state-building process and those who will soon again have to sit at the negotiating table.

Sweden's recognition of Palestine comes at a critical time.

Secondly, we want to facilitate an agreement by making the parties in these negotiations less unequal.

The objective is to enable Israel and Palestine to live within mutually recognised borders, with the 1967 borders as the basis and Jerusalem as the capital of two states, and where any land swaps will only be accepted if negotiated by the parties.

Thirdly, we want to contribute to creating more hope and belief in the future among young Palestinians and Israelis who might otherwise risk being radicalised in the belief that there is no alternative to violence.

We want our recognition to say the same thing to the six-year-old in Gaza who has already experienced three wars as to six-year-olds in Israel: we still believe in a peace agreement based on the state of Israel living side by side in peace and security with a democratic, cohesive and viable Palestinian state.

Sweden considers that the international law criteria for the recognition of Palestine have been satisfied. There is a territory, albeit with non-defined borders.

There is a population. And there is a government with the capacity for internal and external control. Also, the global community has deemed Palestine to have the capacity to assume the obligations of a state.

It is true that the Palestinian Authority does not have full control over Palestine in the West Bank and Gaza. Where Gaza is concerned, following the formation of a Palestinian technocratic unity

government and the reconciliation accord between Hamas and Fatah, the capacity for internal cohesion has been enhanced.

Not to recognise Palestine because of the Israeli occupation would be contrary to the international law principle of ‘no fruits of aggression’.

The government’s assessment that the international law criteria have been fulfilled is shared by international law experts.

Sweden has previously recognised states — Croatia in 1992 and Kosovo in 2008 — even though they lacked effective control over parts of their territory. Palestine is similarly a special case. Now as then, there are strong political arguments for why recognition — a decision regarding Palestine already taken by more than 130 states — is the right way to go.

In 2009, EU member states reiterated their readiness to recognise a Palestinian state, when appropriate.

We are now ready to lead the way. In view of the difficult situation in the region and in the light of international law analysis, the government sees no reason to further delay a Swedish decision. We hope this may show others the way forward.

Our recognition of a Palestinian state will be followed by enhanced efforts to support the development of democracy and human rights in Palestine.

Recognition also entails greater responsibility. We will make clear demands on Palestine, as we do on Israel.

These will include fighting corruption, respecting civil and political rights and increasing the influence of women. Obviously, this also means a complete renunciation of violence.

There are those who will argue that our decision is premature. If anything, I fear it is too late. The government will now, together with the other EU countries, the US and other regional and international actors, work to support renewed negotiations on a final status settlement.

Such a settlement must be negotiated in accordance with the principles of international law and guarantee both the Palestinians’ and Israelis’ legitimate demands for national self-determination and security.

Israel and Palestine are already living side by side. The goal is to be able to do so in peaceful coexistence with secure and recognised borders. The purpose of Sweden’s recognition is to contribute to such a future.

The writer is Sweden's minister for foreign affairs. Minister for Foreign Affairs. This is a translated, shortened version of the original article that appeared in the Swedish daily Dagens Nyheter on Oct 30.

Drones, Pakistan's worst kept secret

Sana Wiki November 2, 2014



The current surge in drone strikes in [FATA](#) has reignited the infamous ‘drone debate’ and ‘Pakistan’s tacit agreement’ on intelligence sharing with the United States.

Only a few months ago, [Peter Bergen](#), a US expert on drones, had revealed that the CIA drone campaign in Pakistan may have finally come to an end. Not only Bergen, but even the current Nawaz-led PML-N government boasted of lobbying against drones and convincing the Obama administration to cease the strikes.

Till June this year, one could believe these reports and revelations as there was a long hiatus in predator strikes. However, it was on [June 11](#) when, negating such reports, a predator drone

targeted the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in Dargah Mandi, North Waziristan, raising speculations of a joint US-Pak strike to avenge the IMU for their role in the [Karachi Airport attack](#).

And it was then that a new wave of drone strikes kick started in FATA.

A total of [16 drone strikes](#), since June this year, have allegedly killed close to 110 people – all of whom were tagged as militants by the media.

According to Washington-based New America Foundation, the CIA has conducted a total of [384 drone strikes](#) since 2004, killing more than 3500 people – most of whom were reported to be militants.

These strikes have also been lethal in taking out more than fifty high profile al Qaeda, Taliban and Haqqani leaders. But even with their ‘apparent’ success and effectiveness, drones still remain a contentious issue in Pakistan, raising a number of legal debates both nationally and globally.

Pakistan, along with international human rights organisations, has called these strikes illegal and illegitimate – with the [foreign office](#) in Islamabad making ceremonial protests after each strike.

The United States, on the other hand, has time and again categorically denied such claims.

[Harold Koh](#), the US State Department’s legal advisor, during his speech at the American Society of the International Law annual meeting, justified the drone strikes and called them in compliance with all forms of laws, including the laws of war. Furthermore, officials from the US State Department have also denied the claims that the US is violating any international law while conducting its drone strikes.

The US narrative was backed by memos and documents obtained from Pakistan and CIA, according to which more than [60 attacks between 2007 and 2011](#) were carried out with mutual consent of Pakistan.

With Pakistan’s apparent silence over the previous nine drone strikes in the wake of operation [Zarb-e-Azb](#) in FATA, one could conclude that the government may not only have a tacit drone agreement with the US but may also be sharing active intel on militant targets.

This rumoured cooperation comes on the back of a decade long protest by policy makers and politicians in Pakistan, accusing the US and CIA of adding fuel to the raging spiral of militancy through its drone strikes.

According to a report published in [The Express Tribune](#) in August, 2014, regarding a project by the [Bureau of Investigative Journalism](#) called ‘Naming the Dead’ it said that only 12% drone victims in Pakistan have been identified as militants. In essence, it means that of the 2,379 people who have been killed during drone strikes only 704 have been identified of which 322 are reportedly civilians (99 children), and 295 are alleged militants.

The ISPR termed operation Zarb-e-Azb, which started in June, 2014, as being a success and stating that the military now has a firm hold on the undertaking.

As per ISPR figures, more than [1000 suspected terrorists](#), many of which include second tier leaders of the TTP, have been killed in the operation. On the other hand, the army has also been successful in keeping a low casualty rate of its own personnel – mostly because of the use of sophisticated technology such as fighter jets.

What now needs to be seen is how the TTP leaders, allegedly fleeing to neighbouring Afghanistan, will regroup, recruit and reorganise against the Pakistani military. It is yet to be seen whether TTP's silence is momentary or permanent. And with six top TTP leaders pleading allegiance to [ISIS](#) and al Baghdadi, it may also suggest that TTP, and other local militant splinters, may be looking to move to newer and greener pastures in the Middle East.

But more importantly, will this latest string of drone strikes dictate a new path for the Pakistani military establishment and the intelligence agencies in their dealings with the drone issue on a socio-political level? Can drones become the best-used counter terror tool rather than a worst kept secret?

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Resetting Pakistan's Relations with Afghanistan

Sana Wiki November 2, 2014



Pakistan's relations with Afghanistan have been largely characterised by mutual mistrust and devised through a narrow security prism. While it will require considerable effort to end deep-seated animosity, both countries share close ethnic, linguistic, religious and economic ties. Longstanding Afghan migration to the territories that now compose Pakistan makes them an integral part of Pakistani society.

Yet, military-devised interventionist policies, based on perceived national security interests, including support for Afghan, mainly Pashtun, proxies, have marred the relationship. The incoming Afghan President Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai has offered to expand bilateral ties, providing Islamabad fresh opportunities to improve the relationship. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has responded positively, but the Pakistani military and civilian leadership's preferences toward Kabul are diverging further as Afghanistan's transition draws closer.

By recalibrating relations toward economic ties and seeking solutions to the presence of millions of Afghan refugees on its soil, Pakistan could engage more constructively with its neighbour.

Sharif's top priority, stabilising a faltering economy, will be elusive in the absence of security and hampered by an unstable neighbour; hence his government has reached out to Afghanistan, hoping to reduce bilateral tensions and contribute to post-transition Afghanistan's stabilisation.

The Pakistani military high command, however, continues to hedge its bets, either actively or tacitly supporting a resurgent insurgency, which threatens to undermine Afghanistan's transition.

Since the Taliban's 2001 ouster, Afghan insurgents have found safe havens in Pakistan. The command and control of the three main militant groups – Mullah Omar's Shura (council), Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hizb-e Islami and the al-Qaeda-linked Haqqani network – are based in and operate from Pakistan.

These havens have and could continue to undermine Afghanistan's efforts to confront the insurgency after the security transition in December 2014.

Pakistan's interventionist policies are also undermining the peace at home. The Afghan insurgents are aligned with home-grown Pakistani tribal extremists, who in turn are part of a syndicate of sectarian, regional and transnational jihadi groups. With the support of their Afghan counterparts, Pakistani tribal extremists are challenging the state's writ, particularly in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) province, bordering on Afghanistan.

Military-led initiatives to counter such threats, based on appeasement deals or heavy handed-military operations against Pakistani Taliban factions, have proved ineffective.

The opening of spaces for Pakistani extremists, using their ties with their Afghan counterparts, to attack Pakistani targets from safe havens in Afghanistan, underscores the importance of ending all support, direct or covert, to Afghan proxies.

Yet, much depends on the ability of civilian governments in Pakistan to wrest control over national security and foreign policy from the military in a fragile democratic transition.

Since Pakistan's democratic transition began in 2008, two successive governments have wanted to mend fences with Afghanistan, including through a policy of non-intervention, failing in the face of military intransigence. The first ever transfer of power from one elected government to another, after the May 2013 elections, provided an opening to strengthen civilian control over national security and foreign policy, including in the relationship with Afghanistan.

However, ongoing anti-government demonstrations, begun in August 2014, led by Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) leader Imran Khan and cleric-cum-politician Tahirul Qadri, have strengthened the military's ability to extract concessions from Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government, particularly regarding one of the most sensitive regional relationships, that with Afghanistan.

Yet, there are still opportunities, not least because of the new government in Kabul that is reaching out to Pakistan, for Sharif to reset the relationship by expanding ties beyond a narrow security focus. Until the democratic transition stabilises, enabling the government to end tacit or direct support for Afghan proxies, Sharif should work with Kabul to expand economic ties, including by upgrading and expanding infrastructure, including road and rail links connecting the two countries, reducing cumbersome security measures, combatting corruption and beginning talks on a free-trade agreement.

The two countries would also benefit from easing cross-border movement and providing economic opportunities to their citizens. Improving the relationship would, however, require Pakistan to ease the uncertain and insecure lives of the millions of Afghan refugees on its territory. Islamabad should sign and ratify the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol. Until it does, it should enact a national law for refugees that codifies long-term protections and rights, and respects the right of *non-refoulement*.

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Analysis: In Syria, No Good Options for West

Sana Wiki November 2,



With the U.S.-led assault on the Islamic State group, the world community is acting in Syria, but not in the Syrian civil war. When it comes to the issue that has undermined the region — the survival or fall of Syrian President Bashar Assad — there is still no plan.

And that means the West’s goal to defeat the militants of IS may also be doomed to fail.

Syria’s four-year civil war has killed hundreds of thousands and displaced millions in what began as a movement to replace Assad with a more democratic state. As the government’s control weakened, militants rallying around Islamic slogans carved out a vast safe haven for themselves – recruiting, training and building fighting capacity. From Syria this year, they then struck deep into Iraq, with devastating effect, and now also threaten Lebanon.

Yet any concerted effort to oust Assad and restore stability to Syria does not appear to be on the horizon.

What emerges instead from the actions and words of Western policymakers is a glum resignation that there is nothing that can be done about Assad for now, and the fight is only with the Islamic State.

For many world leaders, allowing Assad to remain in control in Damascus appears to be the least-bad option.

That's striking, given the disaster he has overseen.

In an ideal world from a Western perspective, an army of “moderate” rebels headquartered in Istanbul would be an attractive choice to march into Syria and defeat both the Islamic State and the Syrian government. There are some rebels who are pro-Western and largely secular. Some even can be heard on Israeli radio stations promising a future of regional peace.

But upon inspection, these rebels are few, badly divided, and barely control the Free Syria Army, which purports to be their force on the ground and has little political support inside Syria. In reality, Free Syria Army fighters are often militant Islamists; in some cases, they have fought alongside al-Qaida's branch in the country, the Nusra Front, or other jihadi groups. On the whole, they are far more motivated to fight against Assad than against the Islamic State militants.

So when Assad says that his is a fight against terrorists and radical Islamists, even to his staunchest critics the charge rings partly true.

All that is left is a disagreement over how Syria got there: European and other critics charge that Assad's brutal suppression of an initially peaceful and largely secular protest movement created the space for jihadis to move in. Assad claims they were there all along.

The current reality is that Syria has been divided into three or four parts. Assad controls most of a strip of land from Damascus to the Mediterranean coast, where his Alawites and other minorities are dominant. The Islamic State group controls the river corridor to Iraq and much of the northeast; the Kurdish minority controls a corner near the Turkish border; and an array of other rebel groups including the Free Syria Army and various Islamists control parts of the northwest.

Here are four possible ways the conflict could go:

A COMPREHENSIVE POLITICAL SOLUTION

Believe it or not, there is a peace process that could be revived. The so-called Geneva communique, a roadmap agreed on by major powers in June 2012, calls for the establishment of a transitional governing body for Syria. But the document is open for interpretation, and two rounds of peace talks between government and opposition representatives in Switzerland this year ended in failure. Assad then orchestrated a vote in government-held areas of Syria and claimed another seven-year term in office.

Stillborn as it seems, many still see this plan as the best framework for a settlement once the war runs out of steam. But for now it appears to be a non-starter. At best, it would take renewed heavy international pressure on Assad, including both carrots and sticks, to bring him back to the table.

ASSAD STAYS, SYRIA CONTRACTS

A complete military victory by Assad is highly unlikely. The Syrian army simply does not have the firepower or the manpower to reconquer all the territory lost to the rebels, and the Islamic State maintains a hold over much of the country. But Assad can claim success just by continuing to hang on to his power base in Damascus, Homs and the Alawite stronghold on the Syrian coast. This could go on for some time, and essentially change the definition of what is Syria.

THE REBELS REGROUP WITH WESTERN HELP

Congress has already approved \$500 million to train up to 5,000 Free Syria Army fighters. Some CIA-trained fighters have been gaining ground against Assad in southern Syria and in some places around Damascus.

Turkey and other U.S. allies have proposed a no-fly zone inside Syrian territory, which could give pro-Western rebels the seeds of their own secure buffer within Syria. But the rebels would also have to be protected both from Assad and Islamic State fighters, and eventually defeat them both, which for now appears a remote possibility.

THE WORLD STEPS IN

President Barack Obama has ruled out U.S. boots on the ground, at least for now, and no other nation has offered troops for a military solution to the civil war. But that could change if the situation deteriorated. An Islamic State takeover of Damascus might make the grade, or a truly dramatic uptick in casualties, or a collapse of government control in Lebanon. So would a doomsday scenario that's almost never discussed: Israel — armed with nuclear weapons, watching with horror, a stone's throw from Damascus — being somehow dragged into the fray.

Is the world still afraid of Iran by Rachel Shabi

Sana Wiki November 3,



When Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stood in front of the UN General Assembly and pronounced Iran to be a greater threat than ISIL, it wasn’t a huge surprise. After all, the Israeli leader’s main mood music in office has been to warn about evil, on-the-verge-of-nuclear Iran, which, he told the UNGA, is of greater concern than the “militant Islamists on pick-up trucks” currently terrorising chunks of Iraq and Syria.

Indeed, the case of Iran being foreshadowed by ISIL would be of grave concern if Netanyahu’s appraisal were accurate – but even some of his own top security and intelligence officials have disagreed with him on that.

In December last year, former Shin Bet director Yuval Diskin, said that the threat posed by Iran, rather than being bigger than ISIL, is in fact dwarfed by the [dangers posed by Israel](#) failing to reach a peace settlement with the Palestinians.

Diskin joined other former high-ranking officials, such as former Mossad head Meir Dagan and former Israeli army chief of staff, Gabi Ashkenazi in having openly urged their prime minister to [stop banging the drums of war over Iran](#).

Netanyahu's fears are focused on the P5 + 1 talks between Iran, the five permanent UN Security Council members and Germany. Having already reached a transitional deal over Iran's nuclear programme in January, these negotiations are now pushing hard for a final agreement.

Bogeyman of choice

But talking fear about Iran is nothing new. For decades, the nation has been the bogeyman of choice for the West – a role its own former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad alas played into well. The casting of Iran as arch enemy is notionally based on various factors – one being Iran's appalling human rights record, which is often presented as supporting evidence that the country hates the West because of its freedoms.

Iran's nasty nation status is what facilitates the ease with which it has been dismissed as partner in the quest to deal with ISIL – despite vacuum that allowed the group to flourish.

Few would deny the severity of Iran's track record on human rights violations: In 2013 it ranked 167 in the world, according to the International Human Rights Indicator.

But the trouble is that a cursory glance at US allies present and past – Mubarak, Gaddafi, Saddam Hussein, at one point – shows us that human rights are not a membership requirement for America's client state club.

Compliance with foreign policy agendas, on the other hand, clearly is: Egypt's former dictator Hosni Mubarak showed his worth to the West by not opposing Israeli military assaults in Lebanon or the occupied Palestinian territories while granting the US free access to the Suez Canal.

Libya's late former tyrant President Muammar Gaddafi was a rehabilitated friend of the West until he started talking about nationalising Libya's oil – in which so many other countries had too big a stake. Meanwhile, Iran's evil enemy rap sheet is further fleshed out by its suspicion of the West, which is depicted as an inherently hateful Iranian state of being (the dire Hollywood blockbuster *Argo*, excelled at this portrayal), as opposed to a fairly understandable reaction to a US coup of a democratically elected government and installation of a brutal puppet ruler in 1953; a deadly war with US-backed Iraq and the imposition of what have been described as the harshest sanctions in history.

Curious claims

Oh, and also: the country can't be trusted, according to Netanyahu and a string of commentators; the gist being that any charm and approachability currently emanating from Iranian President Hassan Rouhani is all manipulation. But that's a curious claim because Iran, given its history with the US,

could just as easily make the same observation. In fact, why would any nation trust any other? International law and agreements made between signatory nations are established precisely to forestall and pre-empt any absence of trust.

Still, Iran's nasty nation status is what facilitates the ease with which it has been dismissed as partner in the quest to deal with ISIL – despite it being blindingly obvious that Iran is crucial to that. Western air strikes can't rid the region of ISIL, or address the power vacuum that allowed the group to flourish. Unless there is an unacknowledged interest in perpetual instability in the Middle East, then the goal must be immediate political solutions in the region. And that means talking with Iran, not least because its influence over Shia leaderships in both Syria and Iraq make it a vital stakeholder.

It should by now be clear that the strategy pursued in Syria by the West and some of its Gulf allies – backing groups perceived as “moderate” – has made the situation worse. And, as Ellie Geranmayeh, policy fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations, writes: “It is clear that the rise of [ISIL] has presented [new possibilities for regional engagement](#) between the West and Iran.”

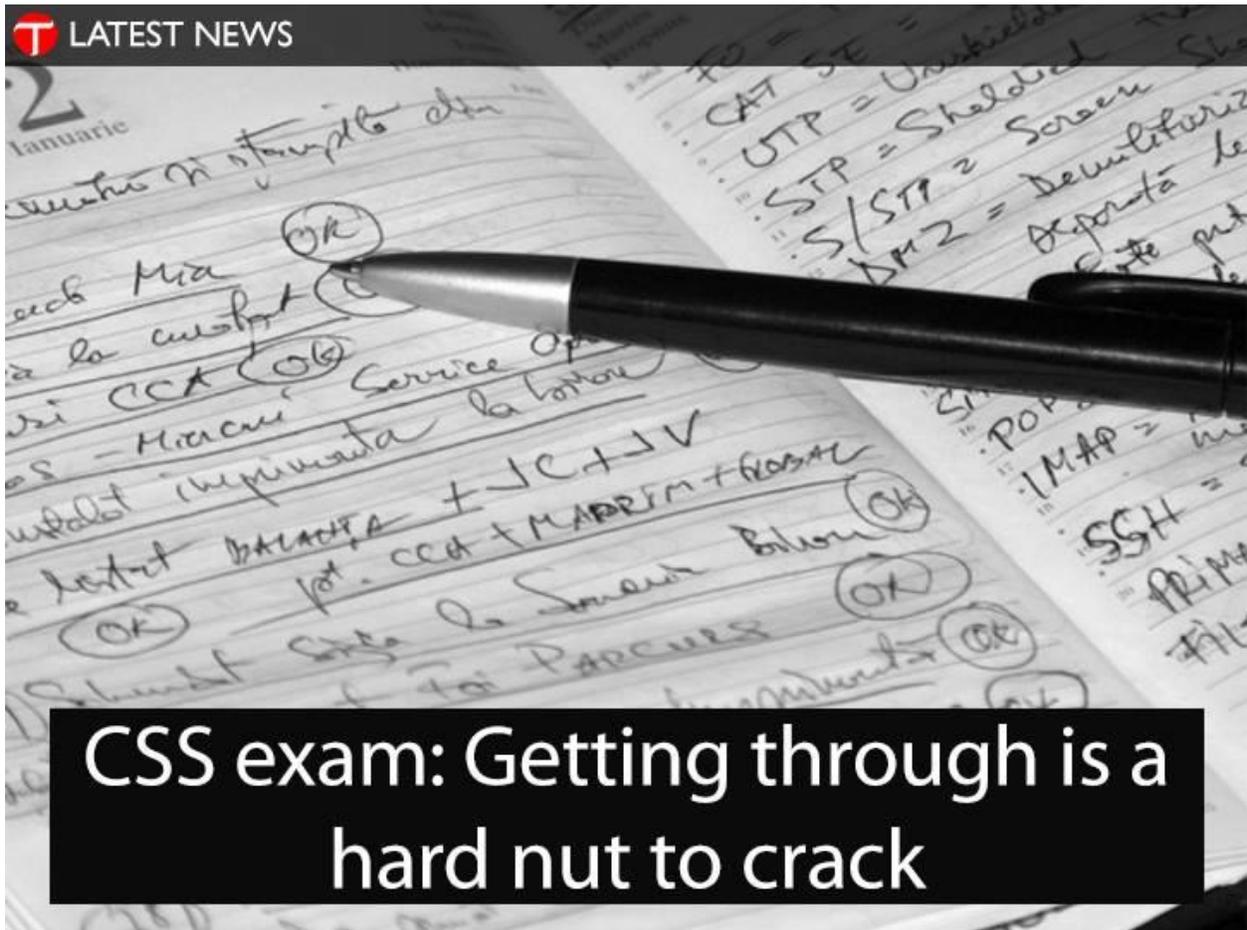
Conversations between the US and Iran are presumed to be happening behind the scenes. And some are taking place in public: British Prime Minister David Cameron met with Rouhani in late September – the first time the heads of those two countries had met since 1979. At around the same time, the foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia and Iran held a meeting. Writing in the *Telegraph*, the British Labour party MP and former Foreign Secretary Jack Straw, urged that, for the greater good, the West should [“risk” a deal with Iran](#) over its nuclear programme.

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CSS exam: Getting through is a hard nut to crack

The CSS Point November 3, 2014



ISLAMABAD: A report by the Federal Public Service Commission (FPSC) paints a gloomy picture of the Central Superior Services (CSS) results of the last many years.

According to the report, which has been submitted in Parliament, a total of 71 seats remained unfilled in 2013 as compared to 30 seats in 2012 and 45 in 2011. Moreover, the pass percentage in the written exam was 30 per cent in 2002, but came tumbling down to 7.83 per cent in 2012, 1.93 per cent in 2013 and 3.3 per cent in 2014.

52%

is the quota in civil service for Punjab

According to the report, in 2012, the government could only fill 240 posts out of 285 positions that were available to candidates.

“There were not enough qualified and eligible candidates to fill out the remaining 45 positions,” the report says.

Disparities

According to the report, the number of vacant vacancies for minorities is also on the rise.

Of the 30 vacant posts in 2012, 17 of those allocated for minorities against their quota remained unfilled. In 2011, the number of vacant posts (for minorities) was 13 out of a total of 45 vacant posts.

The report also sheds light on the glaring provincial disparity in terms of quota, which leads to disagreement between the provinces.

Of the 10,066 candidates in 2012, 788 qualified for the exam with 67 per cent seats allocated to candidates from Punjab, 12 per cent to Sindh (rural), five per cent to Sindh (urban), nine per cent to Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P), three per cent to Balochistan, as many to Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) and Fata and one per cent to Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK).

The region-wise share of allocated quotas remains, according to the report, at 52 per cent for Punjab, 15 per cent for Sindh (urban) and 13 per cent for rural, 10 per cent for K-P, five per cent for Balochistan, three per cent for G-B and Fata and two per cent for AJK.

Diminishing English, current affairs’ skills

According to the report, in 2012, around 82 per cent of the qualified candidates obtained 60 per cent marks in Islamic Studies and 77 per cent candidates in Every Day Science, two per cent in English Essay, 11 per cent in English Precise and Composition, one per cent in Current Affairs and Pakistan Affairs.

Preparation mistakes

Moreover, the report reveals that of the 52 per cent (5,244) students who opted for journalism in 2012, only nine per cent (488) had prior knowledge of the subject. The same trend was reported in other subjects.

Similarly, 97 per cent of the candidates opted for British History, 96 per cent for International Law, 96 per cent for Public Administration, 94 per cent for Forestry, 93 per cent for Geography, 93 per cent for Indo-Pak History, 90 per cent for International Relations, 91 per cent for Sociology and 91 per cent for Urdu, but none of the candidates had studied these subjects before.

The report concludes that the result indicates the non-seriousness of candidates in selection of optional subjects, influence of training academies which run crash preparatory classes and the notion of high scoring subjects.

“Most of these academies tutor potential candidates through selective study and reading which can barely get them through the exam. Quite often, candidates resort to guide books or old notes. Resultantly, most of the candidates end-up with a combination of optional subjects of which either they do not have any academic background or there is no relevance to civil services,” said the report. It also points out that a majority of candidates rely on substandard study material available in the market. “They have demonstrated glaring flaws both in comprehension and expression as they have abruptly jumped to writing a topic without comprehending its meaning and consequently, loose, lengthy and jumbled stuff is produced without any sense of relevance, clarity and structure.”

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US exit strategy

Sana Wiki November 3, 2014



Will history repeat itself?

With foreign fighting forces in Afghanistan returning to their own countries by the end of the year, Pakistan-US relations have undoubtedly entered a new phase. This was quite evident from the recent visit of US special representative for Afghanistan Daniel Feldman to Islamabad.

Feldman, after meeting COAS General Raheel Sharif and foreign office officials, while briefing a group of journalists at the US embassy in Islamabad, spelt out the new parameters for ties with Islamabad. According to him Kerry-Lugar legislation, under which Washington provided about \$5 billion civilian assistance to Pakistan in five years, will not be renewed. He made it clear that the new mantra would be trade instead of aid.

The US envoy was rather sceptical about ongoing operation Zarb-e-Azb. He termed the military operation against terrorists in North Waziristan as a welcome development, but at the same time insisted that, “more had to be done”.

Ostensibly, with only 12,500 foreign troops to be left behind, mainly for non-combatant roles like training and advising, Afghanistan and Pakistan will be largely on their own to sort out the mess. In a sense history might repeat itself from February 1989, when Soviet combatant forces quit Afghanistan. The US, after using Pakistani military and the ISI to actively support the Afghan Mujahideen, left the region and never looked back.

A number of analysts blame Washington’s post-Soviet detachment from Afghanistan for the mess that later became the precursor for creation of the twin menace of al Qaeda and the Taliban. In the

post 9/11 scenario the Bush administration threatened Islamabad with a clear message: either you are with them or us – and Pakistan was left with little choice.

Now are we back to square one? Perhaps not. But the kind of noises Feldman made the other day in Islamabad, unfortunately, pointed towards the same scenario being re-enacted.

The ‘do more’ mantra is nothing new for Pakistan. Nonetheless, in the post Narendra Modi’s sojourn to Washington, it assumes a new meaning. The joint communiqué issued at the conclusion of the Indo-US summit specifically named terrorist groups ostensibly operating from Pakistani territory.

Much of this could be American posturing as well. After the heavy price it paid for abandoning Pakistan and Afghanistan, a repetition of the same mistake will again be at its own peril

Another aspect of Feldman’s remarks is that the terrorists being flushed out from the badlands have moved into southern Afghanistan. Once the US withdrawal is complete the Taliban of different hue and colour will play havoc there. The poorly trained Afghan army will fall like ninepins facing the onslaught of the Taliban just like the Iraqi army’s capitulation at the hands of Islamic Stat (IS) troops.

Much of this could be American posturing as well. After the heavy price it paid for abandoning Pakistan and Afghanistan, a repetition of the same mistake will again be at its own peril.

The bilateral visit of the COAS on the invitation of the US Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Martin Dempsey, scheduled for mid-November, is taking place at a very crucial juncture for Pakistan. This will be a good opportunity not only to test the waters but to engage Washington as well.

As a result of ISAF forces quitting Afghanistan, certain sources of funding for Islamabad are surely going to dry out. The Coalition Support Fund (CSF) – apart from the backlog – will not be available to the government. The CSF in any case was mostly used for budgetary support rather than directly by the military.

Similarly, the US will no longer need the NATO supply route to Afghanistan through Pakistan. This was a leverage that Islamabad would use as a bargaining chip in negotiating with Washington. Naturally the transporters plying the NATO supply route will also be adversely affected.

General Sharif will be the first military chief visiting the Pentagon since his predecessor General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani accompanied foreign minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi as part of the delegation for the strategic dialogue with their American counterparts in February 2010.

At that time termed by the US media as ‘Pakistan’s most powerful man’, there was little doubt that the leading player in the Pakistani delegation was the army chief and not the foreign minister. Qureshi, now PTI’s leading light, was perfectly happy at the time with getting an opportunity to play second fiddle to Kayani.

Obviously, the hardliner Modi government in Delhi raising the ante on the LOC (line of control) and working boundary will be on the top of the agenda of the COAS while engaging his hosts in Washington

The military chief, while briefly meeting the US President Barak Obama, handed him a fourteen page ‘non-paper’ about the Pakistani military’s strategic concept about the region. General Kayani later shared the paper with a select group from Pakistani media specially invited to the GHQ.

General Kayani used to famously say to the Americans: you have the watches and they (Taliban) have the time. Reluctant to launch a putsch against militants holed up on our western borders, Kayani would retort, “We cannot wish away our neighbours. Once you leave we still have to deal with them”.

The intellectual general would often brief the Pakistani media that it was not possible to launch a military operation against the Taliban in North Waziristan, as they would spread their activities all over the country. With the eastern border not secure, the army will be spread too thin to deal with the blowback, he contended

When General Sharif visits Washington his hosts will find a different man, one who has no pretensions of being an intellectual. He is a soldier plain and simple.

So far as the operation against the terrorist in the badlands, Zarb-e-Azb was launched some five months ago. Contrary to the perception being created in the US and Indian media, the military has targeted terrorists of all hues and colours without discrimination.

Surprisingly, those who were predicting a blowback have been proved wrong. On the contrary, there has been a marked decline in terrorist activities across most of the country since the launch of the operation. The TTP is fragmented and in disarray.

Despite this, the US is sceptical about Pakistani designs. It still thinks that the military is harbouring India and Afghan specific groups. In this context statements and movements of Jamaat-ud-Dawa’s Hafiz Saeed do not further Islamabad’s cause.

Obviously, the hardliner Modi government in Delhi raising the ante on the LOC (line of control) and working boundary will be on the top of the agenda of the COAS while engaging his hosts in Washington. Pakistan is facing the conundrum of securing its western borders from terrorism and its eastern from a jingoistic neighbour.

For the time being, at least, the military and the civilian government, if not entirely being on the same page, are at least talking to each other. Sharif's paranoia that the military is out to get him has also somewhat subsided.

Nonetheless, if little or only half-hearted attempts are made to build on the military gains against terrorism, things can fast slip back into chaos. More than the military it is the civilian Sharif's job to take charge instead of fighting ghost wars.

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AIIB and Pakistan

Sana Wiki November 3, 2014



The China led initiative for setting up Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) became a reality on 24 October, 2014 when 21 Asian countries including Pakistan formally launched the venture at a ceremony held in Beijing. China would contribute US\$ 50 million to the initial capital of US\$ 100 billion while the rest of the money would be provided by other members. Though the AIIB capital is far less than the financial resources of the World Bank, Asian Development Bank and the IMF, considering its region specific agenda it should be good enough to meet the requirements of the member countries.

As against IMF objectives to promote international economic cooperation, international trade, exchange rate stability and to meet balance of payment needs of the member countries, AIIB would provide finances to the member countries for the development of necessary infrastructure. It would provide finances to the member countries on less stringent conditions than the IMF and create healthy competition amongst the lending institutions to the benefit of the borrowing countries who would be in a stronger bargaining position with regards to required loans. Since lending policies

would be framed by the representative of the Asian countries, it is hoped that they would be formulated keeping in view the economic situations of the member states, the requirements and aspirations of their people rather than being at cross purposes with their needs. China is inclined to make the lending process hassle free, making sure that borrowing countries do not have to jump through a layer of hoops to get their money. The human and cultural aspect of the economic policies is indeed very important to ensure peace, harmony and progress. It is now firmly believed by the economists and social scientists that development is always ‘culture bound’.

The US virtually enjoys a veto in the major decisions and policies of the existing international lending institutions by being a major contributor, especially the IMF. Thus the policies framed by these agencies are heavily tilted towards serving the interests of the developed nations and geared to strengthening the existing global economic order. They lack recognition of the cultural sensitivities and moorings of the borrowing nations. The US and its allies view the establishment of AIIB as a threat to the existing international financial institutions. They fear that the establishment of AIIB will relax their hold on the economies of the developing countries of Asia and undercut international institutions like the World Bank, IMF and ADB by relaxing fiscal discipline and good governance. The US reportedly also used its influence with Australia and a few other countries of the region to stay away from the venture. However, the US and its allies conveniently refuse to acknowledge the fact that while speaking to the delegates after the inauguration ceremony, the Chinese President Xi Jinping stated in unequivocal terms that the new bank would use the best practices of the World Bank and ADB and other existing multilateral development institutions.

Nevertheless, the AIIB would surely enhance international stature of China. US is also worried about any move by China to shift world attention from existing lending institutions as both are engaged in fierce competition for pre-eminence in Asia. Some circles believe that the formation of AIIB was China’s reaction to being continuously relegated to second class status at existing institutions. China also is supporting another alternative institution, the New Development Bank sponsored by BRICS countries. The idea being that if the US and its allies will not make room for China at the table, then Beijing could take its own initiative.

The IMF loans also have political repercussions as they are given on very stringent conditions which almost dictate to the borrowing countries the policies initiatives they should take to improve the health of the economy. It is more discernible in Pakistan where the IMF is insisting on enhancement in the prices of electricity and gas, phasing out subsidies and increasing regressive sales tax. Pakistan is currently spending a big chunk of its budget on debt servicing.

The establishment of AIIB is indeed a very imaginative and prudent move on part of China and member countries. China’s phenomenal rise as an economic power has generated excessive savings which can be productively employed for the benefit of all countries of the region. The move also has the potential of building strong economic linkages and the creation of a regional economic fraternity contributing to the health of regional economies as well as the global economy. Finance minister

Ishaq Dar was right on the money when speaking to the Chinese media. He said, “We believe the bank will constitute an important platform to convert the abundant savings available in the region into investments to help regional economies in sustainable and rapid development and to contribute to the world economy.” It is a landmark decision and will provide financial support to developing countries of Asia for infrastructure development in order to promote regional connectivity. Pakistan can greatly benefit from the establishment of AIIB as it badly needs resources to build necessary infrastructure to revive its economy as well as to kick-start a process of sustained economic development. It also needs enormous resources to tide over the energy crisis in the country and ensure energy safety in the years to come.

The entire focus of the Pak-China Economic Corridor initiative under which China would be making an investment of US\$ 34 billion is also on building the infrastructure which would not only provide easy access for Chinese products to the littoral states of the Indian Ocean and beyond, but also help in a big way to boost the economy of Pakistan. The decision by Pakistan to join hands with China and other Asian countries in the establishment of AIIB stems from the new narrative evolved by the present government for building economic and political linkages with neighbours and Asian countries. Pakistan’s security and economic progress is inextricably linked to the region where it belongs. Therefore the emphasis on finding solutions to the security and economic challenges confronting it, through the collective efforts of the countries of the region is a pragmatic and visionary initiative.

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India-Pakistan Relations: A Destructive Equilibrium

Sana Wiki November 3, 2014



The seven-decade rivalry between India and Pakistan is often portrayed as intractable – with good reason. The countries were birthed out of a bloody partition that encouraged each to define itself in opposition to the other, and they have fought four wars since.

Even during peacetime, tensions are high. This year, though, encouraging overtures by newly elected prime ministers Nawaz Sharif and Narendra Modi led [some observers](#) to cautiously hope that the two countries would step up cooperation on trade, energy, humanitarian, and environmental issues.

Unfortunately, other actors, most notably the Pakistani defense establishment and its terrorist proxies, are derailing the process. There are two reasons. First, they see further cooperation and integration between India and Pakistan as putting off negotiations to settle the Kashmir issue. Second, from a broader perspective, closer relations between India and Pakistan would undermine the perception, held by a [substantial portion](#) of the Pakistani public, that India poses an existential threat to Pakistan. Both the military and terrorists would lose their *raison d'être* if this were to occur.

Thus, a destructive equilibrium has emerged, in which both cooperative overtures and displays of deterrence by the Indian government have the potential to lead to a further deterioration of Indian and Pakistani relations. However, a new and more cooperative equilibrium could be achieved if India and reconciliatory elements within Pakistan's government were able to establish patterns of cooperation on non-securitized issues, and prevent those issues from becoming securitized.

How did India and Pakistan arrive at this equilibrium? The answer starts, of course, in Kashmir, which has always been the primary point of contention between the two countries. Unfortunately, the Kashmir question is unlikely to be answered soon. While territorial disputes between states are usually bitter and persistent – states usually [perceive competition](#) over territory as a winner take all, zero sum proposition – Kashmir presents a particularly difficult case.

For India, its claim to Kashmir rests on three main arguments. First, during Partition the ruler of Kashmir “choose” India over Pakistan (albeit in distress), giving India a legal claim to the territory. Second, retaining control over Kashmir is essential to India’s identity as a secular democracy, which can accommodate different ethnic and religious groups across a wide geographic area. And third, if India lost control of Kashmir, it would encourage separatist movements across the country.

Pakistan counters that India’s claim is illegitimate because, as a Muslim country established for Muslims, Pakistan should control a region like Kashmir that is predominantly Muslim and that culturally shares more with what is now Pakistan than it does with India. Moreover, Pakistan refutes India’s claim to Kashmir on the grounds that India’s first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru promised Kashmir a UN administered plebiscite in 1956. This promise was not kept, denying Kashmir the right to self-determination.

Unfortunately for Pakistan, Kashmir isn’t going anywhere. India has [500,000 soldiers in the region](#), and withstood a brutal insurgency in the 80s and 90s to retain control. Pakistan also [lacks the military prowess](#) to coerce India into ceding Kashmir, as evidenced by the wars Pakistan (largely) fought and lost in a bid to coerce India into making *any* substantive concessions on the issue.

Unfortunately for everyone else, Pakistan is unwilling to accept this reality. One of the few issues that a [majority of Pakistanis](#) rally around is Kashmiri independence. Adopting an unyielding stance on Kashmir helps tap into this popular support. However, the real problem stems from the Pakistani defense and intelligence establishment, and their terrorist proxies, exemplified by Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT).

In her recent book *Fighting to the End (The Pakistan Army’s Way of War)*, C. Christine Fair of Georgetown [argues](#) that “The ‘strategic culture’ of the Pakistan army is essentially unremitting hostility against India. The Pakistan Army believes that it is locked into a permanent, existential, civilizational battle against India.”

The Pakistani defense establishment is split between those who believe India merely seeks to undermine Pakistan and its security at every turn, and those who believe India has nefarious designs to “reunify” the subcontinent. The conflict in Kashmir serves as a salient symbol of this civilizational struggle; Pakistan’s loss of Kashmir to India plays a crucial role in the narrative that casts India as a threatening, unjust, and unreliable “other.”

More importantly, since Kashmir is such a potent symbol of India’s menace, it enables the Pakistani army to justify the massive amounts of resources devoted to it, and the outsized role played by the

defense establishment in Pakistani society. Terrorist organizations like the LeT, which was established (and generously [patronized](#) by the Pakistani establishment) to wage covert war against India in Kashmir, are even more dependent on the conflict in Kashmir to justify their existence. Thus, even though Pakistan will never possess Kashmir, the Pakistani defense establishment and Pakistani terrorist groups have strong psychological and material incentives to continue the conflict there.

With the elections of Modi and Sharif, it seemed that Indo-Pakistan relations might turn a corner. Sharif, who [expressed](#) his “earnest hope” in a “brighter future” between India and Pakistan made normalizing relations with India a “[central plank](#)” of his platform, and attended Modi’s inauguration. When India cancelled talks between the foreign secretaries in retaliation for Pakistani meetings with Kashmiri separatist organizations Sharif [sent a box](#) of the “choicest Pakistani mangoes” to Modi in a bid to patch things up.

Unfortunately, “mango diplomacy” could not block the Pakistani defense establishment, which had been empowered after protests forced Sharif to beg for the army’s help, which he got in return for handing it control over the country’s [defense and foreign policy portfolios](#).

The flashpoint, of course, was Kashmir. Many analysts, [including](#) Farahnaz Ispahani, a public policy scholar at the Woodrow Wilson Center and a former member of Pakistan’s parliament, argue that “[Sharif’s] moves towards better ties between India and Pakistan” angered the military and “may have resulted in the renewed clashes on the Line of Control.”

For its part, India is pursuing a “tit-for-tat” strategy, in which it is willing to cooperate if Pakistan shows the willingness, but will respond to aggression with aggression. Unfortunately, Pakistan’s defense establishment has no interest in cooperation.

The military will also use political means to stymie cooperative arrangements. For instance, while Sharif [promised](#) to extend Most Favored Nation trading status to India without preconditions, the agreement remains un-ratified; the Pakistani government now holds that India must restart a comprehensive “composite dialogue,” which includes the issue of Kashmir, before Pakistan will consider ratifying the agreement.

While populist protectionist impulses and distrust of India are partially explain this backtracking, a “substantial part of the business community, in particular small and medium sized enterprises fear being overwhelmed by cheap Indian goods.” Notably, [many](#) former Pakistani soldiers and officers own or are employed by these enterprises. Thus, the military has an incentive “protect their own” by pressuring the civilian government against ratification.

External factors also militate against movement towards a cooperative equilibrium. The NATO drawdown in Afghanistan is creating a space for [increased competition](#) between India and Pakistan, which both view Afghanistan as strategically important. Analysts also fear that the drawdown in Afghanistan will result in an influx of militants into Kashmir, something the Pakistani defense establishment may encourage, to prevent them from coming to Pakistan instead.

The recent incursion by the Pakistani military into North Waziristan [pushed](#) a variety of terrorist organizations, including the Punjabi Taliban, into Afghanistan, undoubtedly worrying India, as these organizations will work with the Afghan Taliban in their insurgency against the Indian-supported government.

Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent and the Islamic State also threaten to exacerbate conflict. Both groups are [recruiting in Kashmir](#), and AQIS has threatened to launch attacks in India. Undoubtedly, increased militant activity in Kashmir, or Islamist terrorist attacks in India would deteriorate the relationship between India and Pakistan.

Glimmers of Hope

Still, there are glimmers of hope. Pakistan and India have managed to cooperate on “non-securitized,” non-zero sum issues like disaster response and energy, and the countries have made good faith efforts to deepen trade ties. India [pledged relief](#) to Pakistan after the latter’s devastating 2010 earthquake, and [Pakistan reciprocated](#) after recent floods in Indian administered Kashmir. The two countries have also [discussed a proposal](#) to share information about the level of rivers that run between the two countries to form an early warning flood system.

India and Pakistan also [inked a gas sharing agreement](#), which encourages efforts to bind South and Central Asia together through the proposed TAPI pipeline, which would run through Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, India and Pakistan. The pipeline could help alleviate Pakistan’s chronic gas shortages, which cost the country 6 percent of its GDP a year.

These areas present opportunities for small clusters of Pakistani and Indian officials, businessmen, and think-tankers to cooperate on low-profile issues, and discuss the benefits of, and terms for, deeper cooperation on more substantive issues. Small wins in Track II diplomacy settings could spill over and push India and Pakistan towards a more cooperative equilibrium. A landmark [study](#) by David Axelrod of the University of Michigan found that the introduction of small clusters of individuals committed to establishing cooperative equilibriums, with a sufficiently high expectation of cooperating again in the future, can push large groups from non-cooperative equilibriums to more cooperative ones. Why? Over time, small cooperative clusters create broader institutional change, because those who employ them are ultimately more successful than those who employ uncooperative strategies.

While a full explanation of this phenomenon requires a background in game theory and a bit of math, an oversimplified “toy model” for this context would predict that cooperation between Indians and Pakistanis on non-securitized issues would heighten expectations that the two countries would cooperate on more issues, and more frequently in the future. This would give players more of an incentive to choose cooperative strategies when interacting with their counterparts. The higher the likelihood of future cooperation, the higher the incentive to pursue cooperative strategies in the present, since pursuing an uncooperative strategy in the present would place you at a disadvantage in future interactions.

However, the parties involved must prevent nascent clusters of cooperation from becoming “securitized.” Issues of national security are traditionally viewed as “zero-sum”: One party gains from the other party’s losses. Thus, if diplomats or technocrats allow the Indian or Pakistani defense establishments to securitize issues like water sharing or energy cooperation, compromises will become that much harder to reach, as any concession will be painted as possibly undermining national security. Thus, discussions over these issues should be kept quiet (and preferably held in Track II settings like think tank symposiums) and achievements should be publicized little, if at all.

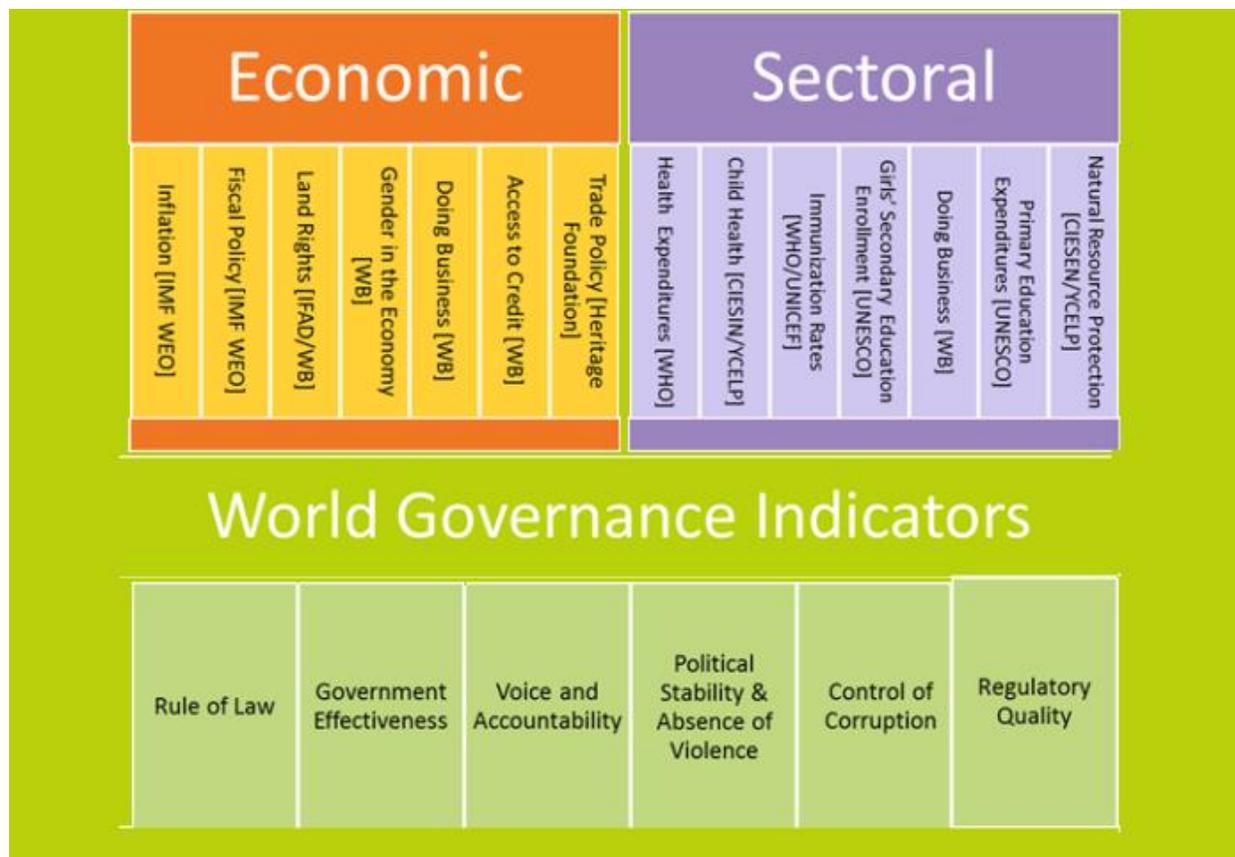
The United States could help create an environment that is more conducive to cooperation by maintaining the largest possible military presence in Afghanistan that its agreement with Kabul allows until 2016, dissuading Pakistan and India from exacerbating their competition there (at least in the short run).

While this may not end the enduring rivalry between India and Pakistan, it’s imperative for the prosperity and stability of the region that opportunities for cooperation be pursued further. The most pressing issue is climate change, a transnational threat that requires transnational responses. For instance, Pakistan’s water supply is expected to [shrink](#) by 30 percent over the next 20 years, while its population is projected to [nearly double](#) by 2050. This could severely strain the vital Indus Water Treaty, which governs water sharing between the two countries. India also stands to [gain through greater cooperation](#): Climate change threatens to wipe out 8.7 percent of India’s GDP through an increase in floods and droughts unless adaptation and mitigation measures are taken. India could become more resilient to floods by sharing river level information with Pakistan to form an early warning system, and by discussing best practices for making land and communities more resilient to climate change. The two countries could also jointly lobby major powers to reduce their carbon dioxide emissions further.

While traditional overtures between India and Pakistan may not help the relationship, discreet and adept diplomacy between NGOs and technocrats on non-securitized issues like energy, humanitarian operations, climate change, and trade could establish patterns of cooperation that steer Pakistan and India towards a less antagonistic, more cooperative, strategic equilibrium.

Pakistan’s weakening global linkages

Sana Wiki November 3, 2014



IF Pakistan fails to act swiftly, it is feared that the nominal export growth and declining capital inflows could further shrink because of its current ranking in the World Governance Index.

The index covers the business environment, better work standards and respect for human rights. The annual assessment exercise is based on data from 215 countries compiled by the World Bank.

According to a source in an economic ministry, a strongly worded letter has been received by the government from the International Labour Organisation Secretariat in Geneva, lamenting Pakistan’s performance and urging it to make measurable gains towards implementing 27 UN Conventions.

We believe that if overseas buyers really care for our people and their welfare, they need to devise a mechanism where they share the cost of social compliance — Webcop Chairman Ahsanullah Khan

The ILO has even pushed the date for initiating the ‘Better Work Programme’ in Pakistan from 2015 to 2016, the source told this writer.

Pakistan has already lost textile business of about \$200m this year, when Walt Disney removed it from the list of permitted sourcing countries in April. Business circles feared that other Western companies may also withdraw from the country for similar reasons.

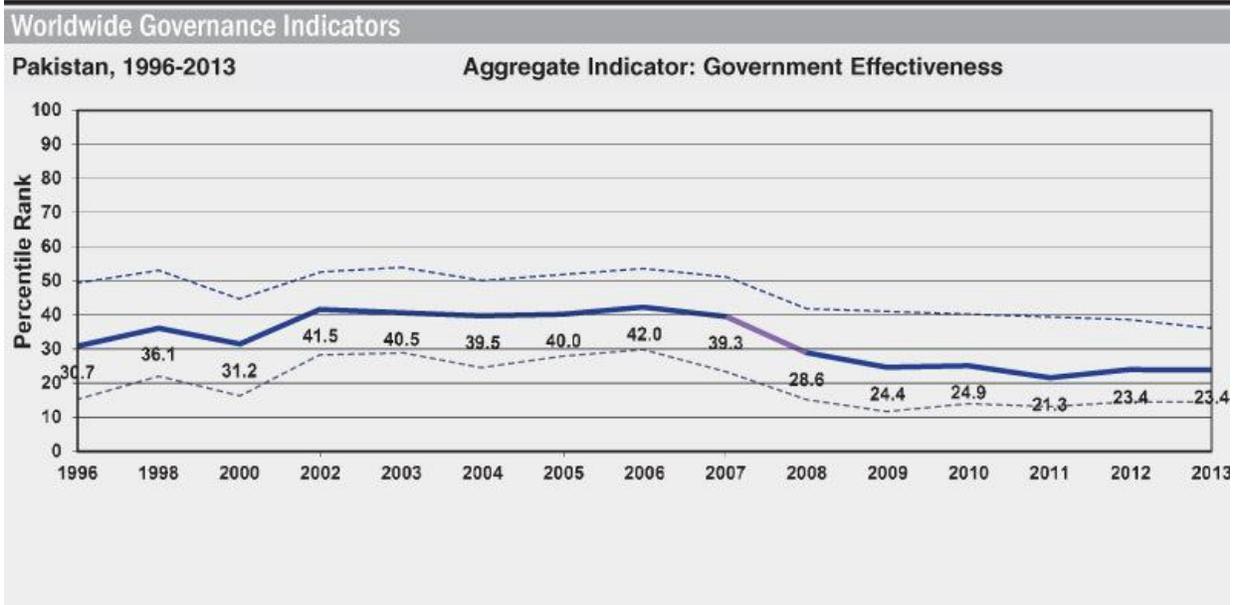
“The Walt Disney decision has turned an already hostile trading environment more challenging for our exporters,” a leading textile tycoon said. “The sword is dangling over our heads. To me, it is only a matter of time before others follow Disney.”

According to information gathered, Walt Disney has not shown any inclination to revisit or revise its decision. This is despite the fact that the country’s diplomats in the US directly approached the corporate giant. “We interacted with the company, just as the government wished,” Jalil Abbas Gilani, Pakistan’s Ambassador to the US, recently told Dawn in Washington.

The gentleman, however, declined to share the outcome, and asked the scribe to seek comments on the follow-up from the relevant ministries in Islamabad.

“Losing business hurts, but Pakistan’s image at multilateral forums is also damaged. The country will have to raise its ante at economic diplomacy,” commented Khurram Dastagir Khan, federal commerce minister.

“We can’t let others play with our vulnerabilities. We have approached the IFC to organise a meeting with the ILO in Pakistan to allay its concerns,” he told this writer over telephone from Islamabad.



The minister said the government will launch a fresh diplomatic initiative to make a case for progress on implementation of the legal framework that is already in place.

“The focus was temporarily lost after the 18th amendment, which led to devolution of power to the provinces. There are still issues associated with the pace of progress, but the provinces are persistently moving in the desired direction,” he said while responding to a question over the decision to stop inspections of industry to monitor implementation of labour laws.

Farhan Khawaja, Punjab’s labour secretary, confirmed that the province revived the practice of physical annual inspection of industrial units. His department e-mailed a brief overview giving details of surveys conducted during the past three years.

“To improve the reporting process that had earlier lacked transparency, the department decided to computerise its manual system, with ILO collaboration. A software was developed for this by the labour market information and resource centre,” the overview stated.

According to details, 5,527 establishments were inspected in 2012, 4,273 warnings were issued and 547 units were prosecuted. In 2013, inspections increased to 9,198; 4,848 companies were issued warnings and 1,177 were prosecuted. During the current year till September, 6,891 inspections were carried out, 4,603 warnings were issued and 2,829 cases were forwarded for prosecution.

The response from Sindh was weak. The provincial labour secretary Noor Ahmed Leghari was out of the country, and other officers were either reluctant or did not have a report ready to share.

Ahsanullah Khan, chairman of the Workers Employers Bilateral Council of Pakistan (Webcop), spoke at length about the widespread corruption in departments vested with the responsibility of ensuring implementation of laws related to social compliance by businesses.

“We opposed unilateral action by the government as it used to be directed against businesses. The personnel of the relevant departments used to blackmail our members. They showed no interest in laws or their implementation, and used to focus on the money they could squeeze out of businessmen,” he lamented.

“Besides, I do not think it is fair to burden the manufacturer with the cost of providing social protection to his employees, given the challenges of doing business here. We believe that if overseas buyers really care for our people and their welfare, they need to devise a mechanism where they share the cost of social compliance,” Ahsanullah made a point.

“They want quality at the cheapest price. But even that is not enough for mighty trading partners. Now they want to dictate terms of employment for our workers. How is it fair?”

The situation for workers in sprawling industrial areas all over the country is far from satisfactory, say labour representatives. “In a country where there is no mechanism to check the violation of the minimum wage law, who cares for terms of employment or the quality of the working environment in factories,” commented a labour leader.

“The multinational companies offer comparatively better working environments, but local companies are trying to contain their cost of production by scaling down their spending on workers to the bare minimum. The government neither wishes nor even pretends to protect the workers from exploitation,” he added.

“As the world’s attention shifts to the Middle East from South Asia, the coldness of the West is too obvious to ignore. It seems to perceive Pakistan more as a problem than a partner,” said a minister who returned from a trip to the US, implying that it is politics that decides the nature of economic ties.

India-Pakistan vision of peace

The CSS Point November 4, 2014



Is Modi's belligerence and disproportionate use of force against Pakistan response or strategy? Or part of a deeper malaise gripping India in which Hindutva has morphed from being a deviation from an alleged secular norm into a mainstream ideology that is setting the national agenda? Accordingly, is Modi pursuing 'another Mahabharat' which risks nuclear confrontation? Or is he conducting a populist diversion to avoid the political and electoral costs of real structural reforms?

How should Pakistan respond? There are the usual red lines no sovereign and independent country can disregard. But they constitute limits, not strategy or policy. Pakistan's response to security challenges should not lose sight of the longer-term perspective. Otherwise, India's greater size and international influence will always count against it. Unfortunately, Pakistan's national policies have seldom had longer-term coherence mainly because it has been prevented from developing democratic and responsible governance. No military ruler of Pakistan is positively remembered.

Pakistan's nuclear deterrence does not provide an equaliser vis-à-vis India except in extremis. This allows India to gain from limited conflicts and confrontations such as have recently occurred. India's superior conventional military strength and international image enable it to raise the ante in such situations without incurring significant diplomatic costs. Pakistan does not have this liberty. Modi

wishes to convert this advantage into a Kashmir settlement on his terms. If Pakistan's decision-making can become more democratic, responsible and transparent this will not happen.

Nawaz Sharif is being advised not to take any initiative to meet Modi or explore possibilities for the resumption of an agenda-based dialogue. He has been badly bruised by recent political developments and feels vulnerable to charges of weakness vis-à-vis India. He appears so risk-averse he will not even pursue his own preferred policies. This reduces his credibility at home and abroad. Accordingly, the advice given him is wrong. It neither enhances Pakistan's diplomatic nor military options. Instead, it compromises Pakistan's development prospects which would certainly diminish in an environment of active hostility with India.

The two countries should cease to categorise each other as an 'enemy'.

Former foreign secretary, Riaz Mohammad Khan, has written "None of the disputes and problems that bedevil relations between the two countries are ideological or inherently intractable; they are essentially political and, thereby, resolvable". Accordingly, the only conditions for movement are political will and reciprocity. But reciprocity should not rule out initiatives, especially in critical times. Nevertheless, they do need to be reciprocated in order to sustain the necessary political will for movement on 'intractable' issues.

The adverse environmental impact of the Siachen stalemate through an accelerated melting of the glacier on millions of people in both countries and the implications of water disputes, water scarcity and possible crop failures are potentially greater threats to peace than the unresolved Kashmir dispute. Both countries have a huge stake in more rationally handling these issues.

There is, of course, no reason to bow to Indian intimidation and intransigence or abandon principled and legitimate positions as a condition for structured dialogue. But there is very much an argument for adopting longer perspectives. Indian provocations, short of crossing red lines, should not be allowed to derail strategies for a more predictable and sustainable relationship with a difficult and larger neighbour.

Pakistan will need to eschew its own provocations. Its denials and counter-arguments carry little international credibility because of its international isolation. This has to change if it is to garner greater international understanding for its policy positions.

Ultimately, these strategies will not work if India refuses to accord priority to improving relations with Pakistan and seeking negotiated and mutually acceptable solutions to issues that can further 'bedevil' the relationship. Modi does not appear to be a likely partner in such an endeavour. Hopefully, this is not a given. Many in Pakistan compare him unfavourably with Vajpayee forgetting that Vajpayee finally accused Pakistan of 'stabbing him in the back' in Kargil shortly after Lahore.

Moreover, this happened on Nawaz Sharif's watch. The mutual perception barrier is real. It has to be overcome. Both prime ministers will need to demonstrate they are up to the task of normalisation and reconciliation. Accordingly, Pakistan should not forego any opportunity to make a beginning.

The Shimla Agreement envisages the establishment of durable peace "without prejudice to the recognised position of either side". This 'recognises' Pakistan's position regarding the relevance of UN resolutions, which in any case cannot be superseded by a bilateral agreement. On this basis, ensuring uninterrupted and productive dialogue is a joint leadership obligation and responsibility. A better international image of Pakistan's policies will help in dealing with any Indian intransigence in this regard. Far-sighted leadership based on commonsense, imagination and commitment can overcome adverse 'initial conditions' and 'intractable' differences. This attitude should inform public opinion in both countries. Accordingly, the media of both countries should refrain from promoting zero-sum attitudes.

Within these parameters a whole range of agreed, interrupted and postponed measures need to be consistently implemented. Line of Control/Working Boundary flare-ups can and should be avoided. Political leadership and military command structures must ensure this. Personal understanding and trust, based on frequent contact, needs to develop between the prime ministers. Preparations for an exchange of visits should be priority. These should help restore the LoC ceasefire and change the history of sterile exchanges on unresolved issues. The two countries should cease to categorise each other as an 'enemy'.

The back-channel talks in 2004-06 produced a document for an interim solution. The contents remain controversial. But as Riaz Mohammad Khan rightly observes, if there is to be a Kashmir settlement acceptable to all the parties, including the Kashmiris, it will need to include elements that were addressed in the back channel. They should be revisited, possibly in a more open format, provided both prime ministers and credible representatives of Kashmiri opinion publicly commit themselves to the process.

A bilaterally negotiated final settlement would require an agreed modality for Kashmiri participation and approval. If and when achieved, the settlement could be embodied in a unanimously adopted UN Security Council resolution superseding existing resolutions.

US mid-term elections: Polls about ‘nothing’ and ‘everything’

The CSS Point November 4, 2014



Foreign news outfits term polls as ‘election about nothing’ while Republicans say elections are about ‘everything’

Opinion polls put President Obama’s public ratings in 40s, suggest Republicans faring better at grabbing Senate majority

Anxiety over a string of challenges – ranging from partisan politics in Washington to another open-ended conflict in the Middle East to Ebola fears – and not optimism for improved political performance underpins the American public mood ahead of Tuesday’s midterm elections, which will ultimately be decided by local voters in each state.

Republicans, who have controlled the House of Representatives since 2010, appear to be faring better than Democrats in wresting a majority in the Senate as well, according to opinion polls on the eve of the election.

ABOUT NOTHING OR EVERYTHING?

The poll is also being termed invariably in the mainstream press including *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times* as a “Seinfeld Election,” and “an election about nothing.”

Analysts say such observations stem from a combination of several factors including voters’ discontent with the performance of Democrats and a traditional lack of interest in the midterm elections, as well as an absence of a clear-cut Republican agenda of priorities.

But Republicans, sensing the public mood, stress that the “election is about everything,” and take a swipe at performance of the Democratic administration on internal and international issues, including jobs and national security. Polls reveal that despite some upbeat economic figures, President Obama’s public ratings remain in 40s.

In addition to all 435 House of Representative seats, 36 Senate seats and 36 governorships are up for grabs.

Yet analyses on political gridlock suggest that voters do not regard any party performing highly, after years of dysfunctional partisanship in the US capital that has blunted progress on national issues including immigration reform, and polarised the nation on other issues, like healthcare, along party lines.

At the same time, Republicans stress that midterm polls will be a referendum on President Barack Obama’s performance on an array of domestic and international ‘mistakes’ including the latest tenuous and precarious fight against the Islamic State (IS) in Iraq and Syria.

The possibility of a Republican control of Capitol Hill with a Democratic president into sixth year at the White House has prompted some critics to view the outcome of the election as being inconsequential since a major change on national issues could not be expected until the next presidential election in 2016.

WHO’LL GET MINORITIES’ VOTES?

As for the minorities, the urban-rural divide and demographic complexion that define US politics, is likely to be again on display with Democrats assured of solid performances in major cities and Republicans consolidating their gains in the Whites-dominated areas. An overwhelming majority of African-Americans, Muslims, Asians and Latinos live in major cosmopolitan centers like the East Coast that includes New York and adjacent states, Washington metro area and the West Coast, particularly California.

While Republicans are confident that the Latino vote would not make much of a difference in their calculations for control of both houses on the Capitol Hill from Tuesday’s election, the Democrats could see a slide in voting trend, if the minorities do not turn up in large numbers on account of their disaffection with the delay in immigration reforms and deportation issues.

RACE FOR SENATE:

The House of Representatives seem to be going the GOP way, and it is the Senate races that hold out some prospects for suspense, depending on the voters' turnout, particularly those still undecided.

In order to secure a majority in the Senate, the Republicans need to win six seats. Citing latest forecast, both *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times* reported odds favoring the GOP. Republicans are poised to take four seats held by Democrats — in Arkansas, Montana, South Dakota and West Virginia. Conversely, Republican-held seats in Georgia, Kansas and Kentucky – remain close.

According to the *Times*, the other Senate races that will likely determine the balance of power are in purple states currently held by Democrats – Alaska, Colorado, Iowa, New Hampshire and North Carolina.

EFFECT ON FOREIGN POLICY:

In terms of US foreign policy in the last two years of Obama presidency, it is the White House, which will continue to lead and make decisions on hot button issues including the fight against IS, Afghanistan, implications of the unrest in the broader Middle East, Ukraine, relations with Russia and China.

Yet a Republican-controlled Senate will mean the total GOP hold on Congress and the strings of the financial purse. Obama will need the Capitol Hill approval for any new major assistance and security programs in the conflict situations, and with long-term allies. The GOP approach will be determined by domestic and international considerations that may ultimately dictate the outcome of 2016 presidential election.

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‘China supports improvement in Pakistan-India relations’

The CSS Point November 5, 2014



BEIJING: Assistant Foreign Minister of China, Liu Jianchao said Monday that China strongly supports improvement in Pakistan-India relations, and that is ready to help resolve outstanding issues through dialogue between the two countries.

“We strongly support improvement in relations between Pakistan and India. We appreciate Pakistan’s efforts for normalisation,” he said.

The comments from the Chinese foreign ministry follow a recent spike in tensions and deadly clashes along the disputed Kashmir border between Pakistan and India.

“We hope both sides put aside their differences and come to the negotiating table to resolve their outstanding issues,” said Liu.

Liu said the Chinese leadership was eager to receive Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in his upcoming visit to China, during which the two countries would sign important agreements to further enhance bilateral cooperation.

“These agreements would further expand and deepen relations between China and Pakistan,” he told a delegation from Pakistan led by Parliamentary Secretary on Finance and Economic Affairs, Rana Muhammad Afzal.

“Whatever the situation evolves, we will remain committed to maintain strategic partnership with Pakistan,” he added.

Speaking of the postponement of the Chinese President’s recent expected visit to Pakistan, he said: “The President’s visit was delayed to enable Pakistan concentrate on domestic affairs. We are hopeful that the visit of Chinese President would materialise on new dates,” he said. He said that the Chinese president will soon visit Pakistan on agreed dates.

Liu also denounced a recent suicide attack and resulting loss of precious lives near the Wagah border in Lahore, and hoped that Pakistan would soon overcome the menace of terrorism.

Both China and Pakistan are facing the threat of terrorism and China has received great support from Pakistan in eliminating the terrorist elements on its soil, he said.

“We are thankful to Pakistan for their valued support against the ETIM. China will also support Pakistan’s efforts against the scourge of terrorism,” he maintained.

‘Pakistan can play positive role in Afghan stability’

Commenting on the Afghan situation, he said that Afghanistan is an important neighbor of China and Pakistan and his government is closely monitoring the developments that have emerged after the recent elections there.

While welcoming the formation of national unity government in Afghanistan, he said: “We also recently hosted newly elected Afghan President and during his stay the two sides exchanged views to bring peace and normalcy in Afghanistan.”

He said that China supported the peace and reconciliation process in Afghanistan.

“Pakistan has a special influence in Afghanistan and therefore we look forward to a positive role of Pakistan for durable peace and stability in Afghanistan. Peace in Afghanistan is in interest of all countries and we will strengthen cooperation to push for peace and stability in the country,” he said. Emphasising the importance of the Pak-China Economic Corridor, the Chinese Assistant Foreign Minister said that the corridor would greatly help boost regional development.

He said that the corridor aimed at better connectivity between the neighbours and Pakistan may take advantage of the leverage to Chinese policies.

Zarb-i-Azb alone won't save Pakistan by Zeresh John

Sana Wiki November 5, 2014



If maintaining ties with militants has brought us to this point, what would severing them do? How much worse could it get?

That's what I found myself asking, as body after body of the deceased arrived at various hospitals across Lahore last Sunday night; a mounting by the hour, a seemingly unending aftermath of the [devastating attack near the Wagah border](#).

Like most Pakistanis across the country, conscious through paralysis, unwilling to see yet unable to move, with equal parts disbelief and anger, I sat in front of the TV, watching the utter chaos and carnage.

... 24 dead, they shouted! Then, 37.

... 42 ... 55 ... *when would it stop?*

... [60](#).

Family members, otherwise hurriedly walking around, could be seen cautiously slowing their pace on approaching a dead body; allowing the dread to fill up their hearts completely before lifting the white sheet; as if postponing the lifelong impact of their grief, for just one more moment.

The Wagah border, among the dwindling recreational venues for Pakistanis, is a place where many flock to tend to a case of tapering patriotism.

Armed with flags and cheers for their country, all strata of our society unite here to pay homage to their own separate versions of an unyielding patriotism.

Sixty people enraptured by the intense Beating Retreat ceremony are now dead in the biggest attack yet by militants since the military operation, Zarb-i-Azb, was launched in North Waziristan five months ago.

Sixty people with an all new surge of pride and commitment for their country, walked out of the parade avenue and right into the mouth of the blast.

It is especially painful to realise how swiftly the shouts of '*Pakistan Zindabad*', the sounds of foot stamps, high kicks and marching soldiers morphed into the wailing of ambulance sirens, the sobs of a husband and the cries of a mother – a time of elation marred by terror; a sight all too familiar.

Despite this, Pakistan's descent into darkness furthered as it typically does: when TV channels aired self-congratulatory messages for reporting the tragedy first; when [multiple militant outfits clamoured](#) to take responsibility; when our leaders made [empty condemnations](#), just like all the other attacks.

In this state of complete ferment, do we dare ask:

Which attack on our people is going to be the one that determines the cost of our outlook on militancy?

The Wagah attack has highlighted the state's incapacity to rid Pakistan of this seemingly incurable disease.

The sheer scale and the apparent ease with which the attack was carried out leaves many of us pondering about the breach at the site of the attack.

[News reports point](#) to a denser police presence elsewhere in the city due to Muharram processions that could have made Wagah a relatively 'easier' target.

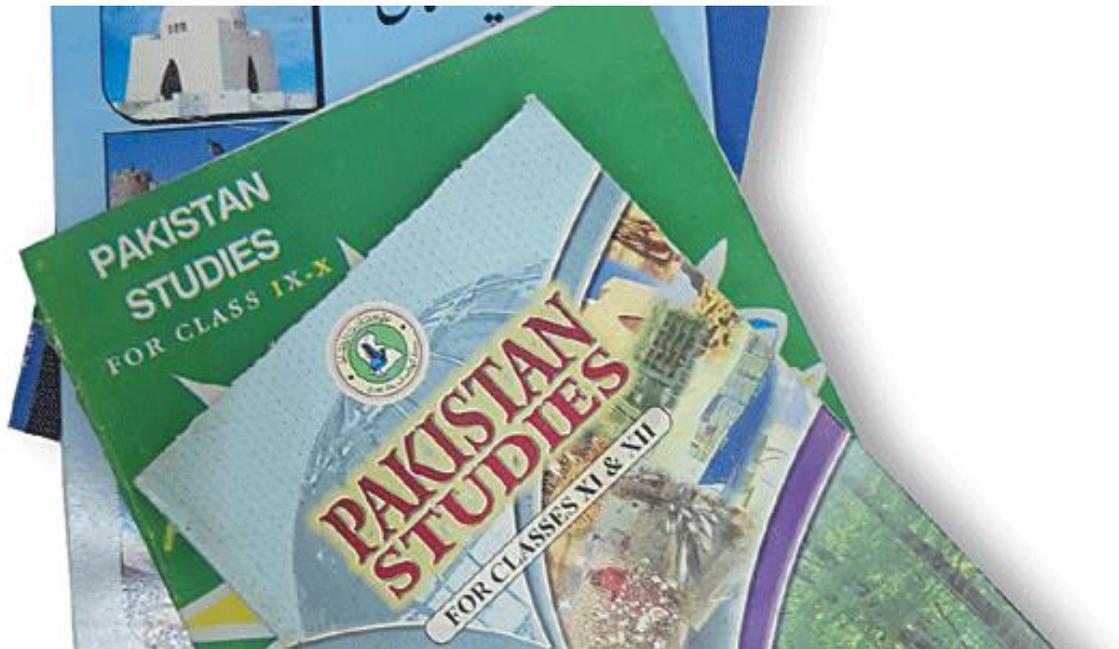
But since the GHQ attack in 2009 (and subsequent military base attacks), should we really wonder if there are any 'difficult' targets left in Pakistan anymore?

It appears then that we have also been wrongfully addressing the question of whether or not we were ready for a fallout of Zarb-i-Azb.

Instead, we should have been addressing the critical question of whether or not Zarb-i-Azb would work without a coherent anti-militancy narrative.

An ideological education

Sana Wiki November 5, 2014



The recent controversy regarding [curriculum reform in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa](#) (K-P) is not a mere instance of political compromise and appeasement, but rather a struggle to yield ideological power and control through the instrument of instruction.

The eventual victor appears to be the Jamaat-e-Islami, with the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) acceding ground. Yet, it remains unclear against whom our criticism ought to be directed.

The Jamaat's demand for a return to the 2002 school curriculum developed under the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal regime and its doctrinaire emphasis on the espousal of a certain ideology is unsurprising.

In the words of the K-P Minister for Local Government Inayatullah Khan, the Jamaat's call extends only to the *re-inclusion* of the subject matter allegedly expunged from school curricula under the

previous ANP provincial government: principles of jihad, theories of creationism articulated in Quranic verses and an emphasis on the Two-Nation Theory.

The PTI may have put up some resistance against the [Jamaat's educational agenda](#), or at least the protests registered by the Islami Jamiat-e-Talaba and the JUI-F certainly suggest so.

As a result, young children in K-P, to state one instance, will no longer be exposed in their textbooks to the culturally aberrant image of 'girls in skirts', to be replaced now by the more acceptable depiction of a girl child donning the head cover.

The Jamaat's concern, it is argued, is the development of a school curriculum reflective of the culture and ideology of Pakistan.

While the actual nature and the exigencies of such compromise remain uncertain and debatable, this debacle has clearly highlighted the ideological exploitation by political forces of the state's authority over the process of education. An ideologically driven state educational agenda is problematic.

Its end is defined and is thereby assessed in terms of the degree of conformity and adherence to a particular ideology, politics or belief system that it is able to engender in the young minds it educates.

History is tweaked, images altered, literature selected, all to reinforce and perpetuate a particular mindset.

That school education is a powerful tool capable of fashioning student's beliefs and attitudes is widely acknowledged.

A recent study conducted by the US National Bureau of Economic Research has concluded a [direct causal effect of the school curricula](#) introduced by the Communist Party of China from 2004 to 2010 on children's political, social and religious views.

We are all too familiar with the tailored lessons in political and religious history fed to us through school. The selective and often obscure account of the 1971 war and the subsequent secession of Bangladesh and the complete erasure of the Jamaat's opposition to Partition of the subcontinent are just some instances of the skewed instruction, which has modelled us into the conforming nationalists our education system sought to produce.

A pre-occupation with feminine virtue is again not unique to the Jamaat's educational agenda. Studies of school texts published over the years in Pakistan demonstrate the elevation of obedience, domesticity and docility in women, thereby laying down acceptable boundaries of gender roles in society.

Yet surely, the purpose of education goes beyond such mental fashioning? What of intellectual growth, curiosity and critical thinking? An ideologically driven curriculum may still be informed by such objectives, but positions them only second to its higher prioritisation of conformity.

What do we lose out from such instruction? Indoctrinated through a selective account of our values and our past, we are made intolerant of diversity and difference, robbed of the capacity to reason, to critique existing power structures and conceive our surroundings in a creative fashion.

The deployment of ideological education as an instrument of nation-building may not be unknown even in states which term themselves secular. But where the processes of education are ideologically determined, the objective of human development is put on the back burner, at great loss to the developing minds of a state.

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For Israel, Two-State Is No Solution by Naftali Bennett

Sana Wiki November 5, 2014



Recent events in the Middle East are a reminder of how the old models of peace between [Israel](#) and the [Palestinians](#) are no longer relevant. The time has come to rethink the two-state solution.

This past summer, Hamas and its allies fired over 4,500 rockets and mortars at Israel, demonstrating once again what happens when we evacuate territory to the so-called 1967 lines and hand it over to our adversaries. Peace is not obtained. Rather, we are met by war and bloodshed.

The rise of the Islamic State, also known as ISIS, and other extreme elements in Iraq, Syria and Lebanon, make the risks just as clear. Israel cannot afford to gamble with its security. There are no second chances in the volatile Middle East.

That is why, for its security, Israel cannot withdraw from more territory and cannot allow for the establishment of a Palestinian state in the [West Bank](#). If we were to pull out of the West Bank, the entire country would become a target for terrorists who would be able to set up rocket launchers adjacent to the Old City of Jerusalem and on the hills above the runways of Ben-Gurion International Airport and the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange.

Take the Jordan Valley. The Palestinians demand that Israel withdraw from this narrow piece of land, which borders Jordan. But if we do so in today's climate, we potentially open the door for the Islamic State and other extremists to flood into the new Palestinian state. We cannot take that risk.

How do I know? Because it happened. Not once, not twice, but three times.

In the mid-1990s, we pulled out of Palestinian cities as part of the Oslo agreement. In 2000, the second intifada erupted and over 1,000 Israelis were killed in attacks carried out by terrorists, many of whom came from the very cities we had evacuated.

When we pulled out of Lebanon in 2000, we saw a significant strengthening of Hezbollah, the Iranian-backed militia. During the second Lebanon war six years later, Hezbollah fired more than 4,300 rockets at our cities.

And in 2005, we withdrew from the Gaza Strip and handed it over to the Palestinian Authority. We were told that Gaza would turn into the Singapore of the Middle East and that peace would grow out of the greenhouses the Jewish residents had left behind.

Instead, those greenhouses were used to cover up terrorists' tunnels dug across the border into Israeli towns and villages. Gaza quickly turned into a fortress of terror.

But this does not mean all hope is lost. There is still much we can do to improve ties with our Arab neighbors, to generate peace and to cultivate economic prosperity for all people who live in this land. The secret is bottom-up peace. After more than two decades of working on a single solution for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict — the establishment of a Palestinian state — it is time to realize that

coexistence and peaceful relations will not be obtained through artificial processes imposed on us from above. Instead, I propose a four-step plan.

First, we would work to upgrade the Palestinian autonomy in the West Bank, in the areas largely under Palestinian control (known as Areas A and B, according to the Oslo Accords). Ideally, this will be done in coordination with the Palestinian Authority.

The Palestinians will have political independence, hold their own elections, select their own leadership, run their own schools, maintain their own social services and issue their own building permits. They should govern themselves and run their day-to-day lives. Israel should not interfere. Much of this already exists, but we can do better.

This Palestinian entity will be short of a state. It will not control its own borders and will not be allowed to have a military.

Gaza already functions like a state, but the Hamas government in control there is bent on Israel's destruction. As long as Gaza remains on this path, it cannot be a party to any agreement.

The second step will see the massive upgrade of roads and infrastructure, as well as the removal of roadblocks and checkpoints throughout the West Bank. The objective will be to ensure freedom of movement for all residents — Palestinian and Israeli — and to improve their quality of life.

No peace, though, can last without economic viability. So the third step will be to build economic bridges of peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

In my former career as a high-tech entrepreneur, I saw how diverse people from different backgrounds could learn to work together in pursuit of economic prosperity. Already, there are 15 industrial zones in the West Bank where Israelis work alongside about 15,000 Palestinians. These zones pump about \$300 million a year into the Palestinian economy. Imagine what another 15 industrial zones could do.

Lastly, I propose applying Israeli law in Area C, which is the part of the West Bank controlled by Israel under the Oslo agreement. The Palestinians who live there would be offered full Israeli citizenship. We can start with the known settlement blocs that everyone agrees will remain part of Israel even under a final status agreement. By applying Israeli law and asserting national sovereignty in those blocs, while upgrading Palestinian autonomy in Areas A and B, we will reduce the scope of territory in dispute, making it easier to reach a long-term agreement in the future.

I am aware that the world will not immediately accept this proposal. It seems to go against everything Israel, the Palestinians and the international community have worked toward over the last 20 years. But I will work to make this plan government policy because there is a new reality in the Middle East, which has brought an end to the viability of the Oslo peace process.

The regional upheaval and disintegration of nation states oblige us to act responsibly. We must work toward realistic goals that are capable of providing real security and economic prosperity.

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Iran: U.S. Is Still ‘Number One Enemy’

Sana Wiki November 5, 2014



Iran calls for ‘the prosecution, trial and punishment of the White House.

The United States remains “the great Satan” and Iran’s “number one enemy,” Iranian military and defense officials said over the weekend in statements that also called for “the prosecution, trial, and punishment of the White House.”

The inflammatory comments, released over the weekend by Iran’s Defense Ministry and the Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), come as nuclear negotiations between the United States and Iran reach a critical juncture.

Talks between Iran, the United States, and other Western nations remain tense as the Nov. 24 deadline grows closer.

“The U.S. is still the great Satan and the number one enemy of the (Islamic) revolution and the Islamic Republic and the Iranian nation,” the IRGC said in an organizational [statement](#) released Saturday to Iran’s semi-official Fars News Agency, which has close ties to the group.

The IRGC called for economic sanctions on the country to be lifted, as well as for “the prosecution, trial and punishment of the White House leaders for their crimes against Iran in the nuclear talks over the past decades.”

The Iranian Defense Ministry issued a similarly sharply worded statement on Sunday.

“In compliance with the will of the late Imam Khomeini and the wise guidelines of Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution (Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei), the Iranian nation still sees the US as the number one enemy of the Islamic Revolution,” the Defense Ministry [statement](#) reads.

The IRGC said that it would defend Iran against Western efforts to make the country more democratically oriented.

The IRGC “will never allow the dignity and independence of the Islamic homeland to be threatened and harmed by the will of the enemies,” the statement said.

It went on to blame the United States for the creation of the Islamic State (IS, ISIL, or ISIS) and other terrorist groups in the region.

“Contemplation on the bitter realities of today, specially the ISIL and Takfiri plots in Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon more than any time before shows that the U.S. is the house of the world’s plots and corruption that never intends to compromise and have real friendship with a popular and independent system that manifests the powerful existence of the beloved Islam,” the IRGC said.

The Iranian Defense Ministry also said that it is willing to take action against any country that threatens Iran’s “national integrity.”

“The Iranian nation does not allow the arrogant front and the enemies of the Islamic Republic to make any (hostile) move by maintaining its unity, national integrity and empathy as well as supporting active, wise, and revolutionary diplomacy, and it will give a hard and repenting lesson to them in case they (the enemies) make any miscalculations,” the statement said.

It is unclear how these hostile comments will impact ongoing negotiations between Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif, the European Union, and Secretary of State John Kerry.

The three parties are [scheduled](#) to hold critical talks next weekend as they attempt to reach a final nuclear deal before the deadline.

The issue is likely to dominate Congress’ agenda as well, with many lawmakers seeking to exert some sort of oversight over the deal, which the White House is attempting to avoid.

AIIB can play important role in Asia's infrastructure development: Experts

Sana Wiki November 5, 2014



The upcoming Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank was initiated by China, and has the backing of 20 other economies. Experts believe other countries will eventually join as well.

SINGAPORE: The upcoming Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) can play an important role in infrastructure development in the Asia Pacific, as it complements efforts undertaken by other multilateral organisations like the World Bank and Asian Development Bank (ADB).

However, consultants have said some key areas that the bank needs to consider include its governance structure and identifying alternative sources of capital.

The proposed AIIB was initiated by China, and has the backing of 20 other economies, including Singapore. First announced on Oct 24, it will have an authorised capital of US\$100 billion (S\$125 billion), and will be formally set up at the end of 2015 to help fund infrastructure projects across the region.

Right now, the World Bank and ADB help to support such funding, focusing on poverty reduction. With the Asia Pacific region estimated to need about US\$800 billion every year for the next 10 years in infrastructure investment, analysts said there is room for the AIIB to step in.

Last year, the ADB and World Bank collectively put in about US\$45 billion towards funding projects, noted Richard Warburton, the Asia Head of Infrastructure, Industry and Utilities at Arcadis.

“But relatively speaking, there is still a big gap. There are 360 million people in the region who do not have access to clean water, and about 160 million who do not have access to permanent power and basic social infrastructure,” he said.

ROLE OF PRIVATE SECTOR

Consultancy KPMG believes the AIIB needs to encourage the private sector to be more active in infrastructure investment and to find new sources of capital. Currently, the private sector only accounts for 10 to 15 per cent of such investments in Southeast Asia.

Said KPMG’s head of Power and Utilities for Asia Pacific, Sharad Somani: “Over the next three to five years, as Basel III requirements kick in, banks will obviously shy away from long-term debt. That will be a bit of an unfortunate situation for the region because while we have time, we have not developed alternative sources of capital.

“That is where I think the capital markets and institutional money will become very important, to be a catalyst now, so that they are ready when there is need.”

Three nations that are conspicuously unrepresented in the AIIB are Australia, South Korea and Indonesia. But consultants said they may eventually sign up as well. Said Harsha Basnayake, managing partner of Transaction Advisory Services (ASEAN) at EY: “When I look at the landscape and the infrastructure space, South Korea is a big player in infrastructure and Indonesia is a huge recipient of infrastructure needs. As a result, these countries will have to join in eventually.

“Given that there is a much broader participation, it just reflects that there are a lot of buy-ins, regardless of their political alliances that the countries would want to have. The economic aspect of this is huge.”

Mr Warburton noted: “China has over the last 20 years consistently invested more of their GDP in infrastructure growth, about 8 to 8.5 per cent against the developing world’s average of 2 to 4 per cent. The benefits are clear to see.”

“Once other countries see the positive impact the bank is having, I am sure we will see other countries coming in to join the bank well. There is a lot of talk about it being China’s bank, but there are 21 founding members of this bank. All would have a say and all would have an influence, so potentially, it is a more controlled way of spending that money in that region,” he added.

The AIIB is expected to be formally set up at the end of next year, with its headquarters in Beijing. As it begins to take shape, analysts said it will have to ensure that there is consistency in the way it structures projects and adopts best practices of other development banks

The UK Recognition of the Palestine statehood-a change in the UK policy towards conflict Middle East?

Sana Wiki November 6, 2014



The UK Parliament passed a motion, recognizing the official status of the Palestine statehood. While the vote itself can be considered as a positive step in a right direction, it raises two fundamental questions, which should be addressed.

The first question is over the significance of this vote in international context, particularly considering that Palestine was already officially recognized by approximately 100 governments.

Clearly, the recognition of Palestine is meant to signal to the Israel's officials that the international community is getting increasingly dissatisfied with Israeli reluctance to cooperate with the Palestine state representatives.

Yet, the problem is that Israel might fail to react to this signal. The Israeli policy towards Palestine is formed by the Netanyahu and his close aides, which show little concern for the views of the

international community. On the contrary, the Netanyahu government is more preoccupied with the demonstration to its regional rivals that Israel has the sufficient resources to combat any possible threat against its security and demonstrating to Palestinian officials that it can engage in a bilateral negotiation only once certain conditions are adopted and implemented by the Palestine side.

Thus, it is rather unlikely that the current government will shift dramatically its policy towards Palestine only on the basis of this fragile international pressure.

The second important question is whether Palestinian recognition through this motion will bring a fundamental change of UK policy towards Israel and the Palestine conflict. While there might be some ground for optimism, few factors suggest that this would be highly unlikely. Legally, the motion itself had a non-binding legal status, which means that it signifies a sentiment or slight change of attitude rather than a uniformed willingness to bring about a change in the policy.

Furthermore, many senior government officials, including the official and shadow cabinet of ministers decided to abstain from the voting on the motion in order not to be drawn on this debate and to demonstrate their neutral or undecided stance towards the issue. Indeed, the Conservative minister for the Middle East Affairs Tobias Ellwood declared that UK will only recognize officially and legally the Palestine state only when it will deem such action as the beneficial for the establishment of peace in the Middle East.

Thus, the decision to introduce the motion should be attributed to the intensive political pressure either of the renowned NGO's such as Oxfam or the local pressure group, heavily interested in the recognition of the Palestine statehood, such as Labour's friend of Palestine and the Middle East.

It should also be noted that the current Coalition government, particularly its Conservative "component", strongly supported the Israeli government even during its controversial military operation against Gaza during this summer, which means that it requires a much clear and cohesive set of evidence even to consider the change of its traditional approach towards Middle East.

Economically, Israel is one of the key economic allies for Britain and a sudden & radical change of the policy towards the Middle East might offset the rapidly growing economic partnership and might create serious obstacles for the future of bilateral relationship.

Thus, while the recognition of the Palestine statehood is certainly a step towards a right direction, the more extensive measures are required in order to change the UK policy towards Middle East and achieve a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict.

Why is there such an explosion of violence across the Middle East? Here's an alternative view...

Sana Wiki November 6, 2014



What on earth has descended upon the Middle East?

Why such an epic explosion of violence? It feels strange to ask these questions of Dr Bouthaina Shaaban, one of President Bashar al-Assad's close advisers and former translator to his father, Hafez. Her office is spotless, flowers on the table, her female secretary preparing a morning round-up of the world's press on the Middle East, the coffee hot and sweet. At one point, when she spoke of the destruction in Syria and the mass attacks on the region's Arab armies, it was difficult to believe that this was Damascus and that a few hundred miles to the east Isis have been cutting the throats of their hostages. Indeed, Shaaban finds it difficult even to define what Isis really is.

Not so with America and the war in Syria. "Right from the beginning of this crisis, I never truly felt that the issue was about President Assad," she says. "It was about the weakening and destruction of Syria. There has been so much destruction – of hospitals, schools, factories, government institutions, you name it. I think the Americans take their battles against leaders and presidents – but only as a pretext to destroy countries. Saddam was not the real target – it was Iraq. And it's the same for Libya now – America told everyone it was about Gaddafi. The real issue is about weakening the Arab armies, whoever they are. When the Americans invaded Iraq, what was the first thing they did? They dissolved the Iraqi army."

Shaaban, of course, reflects Syria's regime. Thus she calls the war a "crisis" and does not choose to reflect on the regime's responsibility for this – or the numbers killed by the regime forces as well as by the rebels. What she does have is a very clear analytical brain which can shape an argument into coherence however much you disagree with her. She showed this in her research through Syrian presidential and foreign-ministry archives when she was writing a remarkable book about Hafez al-Assad's peace negotiations with the Clinton administration, in which the old "Lion of Damascus" turns out to be a lot shrewder than the world thought he was –and his betrayal by America much deeper than we suspected at the time. She talks on about the destruction of the Iraqi army, the losses in the Syrian army, the massive suicide attack against Egyptian troops in Sinai and the killing of Lebanese troops in the Lebanese city of Tripoli. And you have to listen.

"Now all Arab armies are targeted – and the purpose is to change the nature of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Arab-Israeli conflict is the crux of all that is going on in the Middle East. I am not saying these tactics will work. I am saying 'they' are targeting the Arab armies. The Egyptian army is very strong. It is a logical army that is defending its country. And then it received this huge attack in Sinai. It's my opinion that the target is to eliminate the threat that Arab armies represent for the liberation of Gaza and the West Bank and Golan and to make Israel's occupation easier and less costly. This is a major dimension of the cause of the 'Arab Spring'. In fact I call it an 'Israeli Spring'."

Of course, it's not difficult to argue with this. Why should the West – presumably the author of these Arab military calamities – want to weaken an Egyptian army which is, by proxy (or directly) protecting Israel itself? Why would the West want the new Iraqi armies to be crushed by Isis – which Shaaban, even though she is speaking in English, naturally refers to by its Arab acronym of 'Daesh'? Why, indeed, would the West be bombing Isis if it wished to weaken the Syrian army?

"The Americans are the major power in the world and they are weighing this power. But what is 'Daesh'? I feel it could be the thing it is now without financial and political help from leaders. How does it sell its oil and get its money? In Syria, we are under sanctions and we cannot transfer a penny through New York. So how does 'Daesh' get financed in such a huge way? Let me ask you something. When Mosul fell to 'Daesh', the Americans did nothing. The Americans intervened only when Kurdistan was threatened – which means the US supports the partition of Iraq. So the US move against 'Daesh' is a political move for other objectives. It's interesting that the Syrian people in Ain al-Arab" – this of course refers to the Syrian Kurds in the Isis-besieged town they call Kobane – "have been more successful in fighting 'Daesh' than the Americans."

Shaaban looks at me sharply. There is no mention of the constant US air strikes against Isis around the town. But she is also contemplating the darkness of that throat-cutting institution, the woman stoned to death in Idlib, the extraordinarily effective propaganda campaign which it runs. "This is propaganda made by very professional experts. There are professional media people involved. It is being 'directed' by professionals. And once those who are behind 'Daesh' achieve their goals, then they can dispense with it, take off the black clothes and become a 'moderate' opposition."

Shaaban laughs. She knows this is a clever conceit – the Middle East has been littered with monstrous “terrorist” organisations– the PLO, the Muslim Brotherhood, Abu Nidal – which have either been turned into pussycats or eliminated themselves. The next line I was waiting for. “And by the way, what is this ‘moderate’ opposition which is supposed to exist here in Syria? ‘The moderate armed opposition’, they say. How can someone who is armed and puts a gun to your head be a ‘moderate’? Our army is defending our people.” I interrupt. The world would say that civilians have a right to bear arms when they are killed by the government’s forces. No reply. The people of Syria fight for their president, she says, morale is high, the destruction of their enemies – to the health and education systems and to the architectural heritage – is enormous. And so it goes on. President Bashar al-Assad, needless to say, gets a clean bill of health.

But then Shaaban turns to Saudi Arabia, the “Takfirist”curricula in Saudi schools, the culture of head-chopping criminals in Saudi Arabia, its support for the Taliban. “It is a culture very similar to the ‘culture’ of ‘Daesh’. So why was ‘Daesh’ created?” But as an Arab nationalist, does Shaaban want to restore the old Sykes-Picot colonial border between Syria and Iraq which Isis symbolically destroyed?

“I hope the new generation of Arab nationalists will break these borders and help to create a new Arab identity, the emergence of a different reality, to be a real player in international politics. I hope young Arabs will not cling to these borders. Why should Lebanese and Syrians have to stop at their border when the terrorists can move freely across? As Arabs, we should sit down and think how we can face these challenges together. There is a master-plan, a ‘maestro’ – yes, I know people say that this is a ‘conspiracy theory’. But what I’m saying is that the the conspiracy is no longer a ‘theory’ – it is a reality we must confront together.”

This was a bit like the end of a long symphony concert, the rousing send-off as Arab nationalism is reborn. Surely that is what the original Syrian Ba’ath party was supposed to be about. Shaaban condemned Turkey for its “lies” and President Erdogan’s desire for another “Ottoman military hegemony” in the Middle East. She takes comfort from the ease with which Sunni refugees from Idlib and Aleppo have settled among Alawites and Christians around Lattaki and Tartous – although she at no point names these religious groups. And she talks about the vast number of families who have lost loved ones – no blame attaching to anyone at this point – but then she utters an irrefutable truth. “When you kill a member of a family, you kill the whole family.” And there really is no answer to that one.

Our Education System Good , Bad Or Ugly ?

Sana Wiki November 6, 2014



Pakistan is placed at 136th exposed by human development report for having 49.9% educated population and more sadistic is among the 120 registered member of UN ranked at 113th position. Our education system is based on unequal lines. Major flaws of our education system include, we follow two major educational systems that includes national education system that include metric and intermediate and British educational system that comprises of O-levels and A-levels.

One cardinal blemish in our education system is that it is divided into Haves and Have not's. The Haves only have access the best education. This is very unfortunate that educational system has two classes which are being differentiated on the basis of economic and financial strengths.

Here double standards in the medium of education in both public and private sector. This is fabricating sort of divergence among people, by dividing them into two segments. Such a distressed infrastructure is primary and giant cause of illiteracy rate in the country and this leads to high dropout rates in public schools in rural areas.

Secondly regional discrepancy is utmost reason. The schools of Baluchistan (by the area sizable province of the country) are not that much groomed as that the province of Punjab.

If we have a look of Gender discrimination in our education system, you will see that the things are deepened down than our perception. The current primary school ratio of boys and girls is 10:4, which is a cause of huge concern. It is suspected that Pakistan is among the most prominent states affected by gender discrimination.

Unfortunately lack of technical education is biggest flaw in education policy that has never been focused before. Less technical people means low standard of life and it's a reality good public schools, good public universities and good technical training can give us a workforce better than any in the world. Our future depends what we do in present, Pakistan is agriculture land and what is the progress of our education in agriculture? We import tomatoes onions and many other kind of vegetables and even sugar from India.

We have to prepare the professionals to meet the need of tomorrow. Now come to the budget of education, It is only 1.5 to 2.0 percent of the total GDP. It should be around 7% of the total GDP. At that budget allocation, the illiteracy rate in Pakistan would not decrease but rather increase.

The federal and provincial governments need to cut down their expenditures in other areas and spend a bigger proportion of income on education. What is the tragedy with our education system by increasing education budget every year our illiteracy rate and dropout rate also increasing? The answer is that we change the definition of literacy every year why? Just because we want funds from international platforms consistency and continuously.

And again hierarchy of human needs where stand? First and foremost need of all humans is food, shelter and clothes, and our more than fifty percent living below poverty line according to the world bank, how it is possible to decrease illiteracy rate .decrease the hunger and thirst of people and ensure them to enough food so they can stable and provide them a copy and a pen, a book so they can read, write and learn.

In the end I will like to give proposal, medium of instruction should be English and national language should be for communication facilitation and everyday pursuit. at least primary education should be free and compulsory, it is free already but not compulsory so it should be. Scholarships and financial support and exceptional and monetary packages , betterment of education policies and conduct proper workshops for the teachers, talented qualified selected on merit and political appointments of teachers should be stopped. Increase teachers incentives on performance, virtual and vocational – skilled based education should be promoted. Education serves as a backbone for the developments of the nations.

If we want progress, peace, prosperity then we as collectively change our attitudes towards education and collectively make efforts to educate each and every child of the Pakistan because, one child, one teacher, and one book and one pen can change the world.

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Fata: From Heroism To Terrorism

Sana Wiki November 7, 2014



The tribal belt of Pakistan never escaped from the implication regional games. The regional turmoils have shad its impact on the image of tribal people and their faces have been painted accordingly. The history of face-painting dates back thousands of years, and has been used for all manner of purposes: camouflage for hunting, war paint for intimidating the enemy, magical designs for use in religious ceremonies, and, of course, beautification.

These paintings are made by individual own consent or some time individuals or groups faces are painting by other to convey the hidden meaning to the rest. The face of Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) have been painting by foreigners and indigenous scholars, politician and media personnel with different colours. They spelled it the land of heroes to the most disguised picture portrayed today. Tribal's faces are painting with different colour and description. In 1948 the tribal people took part in Kashmir war and part of Kashmir was liberated. Since 1948 till Afghan war their faces were painted as courageous, brave, loyal nationalists and asset of Pakistan defence. With Russian's invasion in Afghanistan a sudden change occurred to the world politics.

Pakistan sided with the capitalist world, and stood against the communist Russia. The invasion in Afghanistan was considered a threat to Pakistan security by the than martial law administrator Zai ul Haq. The USA started pouring weapons and money into Pakistan to fight back Russia from

Afghanistan. Pakistan and US intelligent agencies, ISI and CIA started a venture of recruiting Mujahideen from Pakistan and training camps were established in the tribal belt, FATA. Islam was used as a tool to achieve the established goal of defeating Russian forces in Afghanistan and to help out Afghan forces against czarist. A propaganda campaign was started against red armies in which Islam was used to serve the Pak-US strategic objectives.

Pakistanis were misled and were sent to Afghanistan in the name of holy war. More than a decade the recruitment of tribesmen and Pakistani continue to be fuel of great game between two super powers. However, CIA got its objective, defeating czarist forces resultings in the disintegration of Russia. The mujahideen support had vanished and with support of Pakistani intelligentsia Taliban rise on the horizon in Afghanistan to capture the power. they got success within a short time and Kabul fell in the hands of Taliban. Pakistan recognized TALIBAN government in Kabul. Again the faces of tribal peoples are painted new brush having green colour of lovers of Islam. In the national and international media tribesmen were hailed a heroes of Islam and Afghan war. These painters soon changed the colours and again with Americana invasion in Afghanistan the brushes got changed. The wind started blowing in opposite direction.

Their services and sacrifices not only went waste and rotten but a dark colour was chosen to paint them. Now lets see in the given line what happened. Pakistan became a non-NATO ally of US in the so called war on terror and their own created mujahideen and Taliban becomes terrorist. With the toppling of Taliban government, Taliban were in search of shelters and safe heavens from where they could create trouble for American led afghan government. The pakistani Mujahideen, recruited in 1980s slipped into the tribal region along with some companions. The Pakistan army under some internal and external compulsion entered into FATA to kill the Taliban and dismantle their network. Again political and security analysts started painting the post 9/11 scenario. One political analyst draw a terrible picture of FATA and write on it “wild west”.

Our security agency brushed it with black and called tribal region an ‘intelligent black hole’. While others do not waste time writing the face of FATA, a Terrorist Hub, NO Go Area, Bad Land, Al-Qaeda and Taliban Sanctuary, Most Dangerous Place, and so many names it has today on its desolate face. The people of fata, qabaili or tribesmen collective and individual faces painting is continues. Brutal, terrorist, Taliban, militant, inhumane, traitors, etc are painted on individuals and collective faces of the people. Within the country and abroad these notorious painting created issues for tribesmen and everyone looks at them with disguise and hatred.

The painter might have fun or some economic or political interest but for the tribal people it has bitter repercussion. The political and security analyst, journalist or anchors, political leaders and army establishment have left no stone unturned to prove them against the state. Every bomb blast, firing or killing in the country has been linked to the region of unprivileged people, FATA. Even some scholars do not hesitate to malign their culture and blindly targeting them. A religious scholars

Javed Ahmad Ghamidi called tribal culture the most vulgar, brutal in the world. He termed decapitation a tribal practice where 6 years old children can decapitate men without fear and hesitation.

They still proud on such shameful presentation of FATA and are looking for honours and titles. This is very unfortunates that tribesmen faces are always painted by other which are too much different from the real picture. The non tribal presentation can not be free from biasness and bias presented picture confuse the world so much that they even do not believe in the real faces of the tribesmen. All the dominant and real qualities of tribal society and culture of hospitality, sincereness, friendliness, love, respect and peace are buried under the projected face of brutality, terror and wilderness. No doubt the dominants forces turn history in their own favours and present it what best suit for them. The same happened to FATA and the heroes of the past are today's traitors and terrorists.

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Security In The Digital Age And Policy Options For Pakistan

Sana Wiki November 7, 2014



Art of War opens with a warning, “The Art of War is of vital importance to the State. It is a matter of life and death, a road either to safety or to ruin. Hence it is a subject of inquiry which can on no account be neglected”. At the strategic level, a leader must take the necessary steps to prevent a surprise military attack.

Regarding offensive military operations, Art of War states that they are justified only in response to a direct threat to the nation. In 2010, first time the United States Air Force launched more unmanned than manned aircraft. This shows the IT application in the military sectors and the more investment on technology. It is possibly that the war fighting in the ground will be accompanied by invisible battle of bits. This may be state sponsored hackers over the IT infrastructure. Cyber warfare is unconventional and asymmetric warfare. The nations who are weak in conventional military

power are likely to invest in it as a way to balance conventional disadvantages. Good hacker software is easier to obtain than a tank or a rifle. Some analysts argue convincingly that the threat from cyber warfare is overstated.

Modern militaries, the governments and economies are increasingly reliant on IT infrastructure and it must be protected. A major challenge with IT technology is that it changes so quickly it is difficult to follow let alone master all of the latest developments. National security planners cannot afford to underestimate its potential. In the near term, international security dialogue must update familiar with attack, defense, deterrence and escalation, to encompass post-IT Revolution realities. Cyberspace is such a new arena of conflict that basic defense and attack strategies are still unclear. This is because of some reasons; first there have been no major wars between modern, cyber capable adversaries. Second, cyber warfare tactics are highly technical by nature it can only understand by computer professionals. Third, Hacker used same tactics as traditional terrorist found success in pure media hype but it is very difficult to trace out the hackers.

Fourth, Cyber attack is challenging to retaliate against an asymmetric threat. Finally, the sensitive nature of cyber warfare capabilities and methods used to conducted cyber attack. From Pakistan's point of view, it is currently a new field and straightforwardly talking Pakistan is not ready to give strong reaction if any cyber attack happens. Seven years back, Pakistan used \$3 million on creating a department for cyber crimes. "The reason for creating the National Response Center for cyber crime (NR3C) is to stop the abuse of Internet and follow those included in cyber identified crimes," Iftikhar Ahmed, spokesman for Pakistan Interior Ministry, told the press at that time. NR3C handled case related to email hacking, financial crime, denial of service attacks, ATM fraud, Mobil communication, anti Islamic/Pakistan material, credit card fraud etc.

It is mainly consists of eight wings including forensic lab, media projection, technology development services, network operation and security, legal regularity and issues, seminar and training. In Pakistan, as contrasted with the satisfactory measures being taken for the upkeep of the conventional forces and the wellbeing and security of the strategic assets, it is alerting to see the nonappearance of any tough risk observation in the theater of cyber warfare. The government and the armed forces appear to have neglected this risk for too long now and are not ready to promptly react to this unique challenge of cyber attack. Pakistan would not be able to bear any more complacency in this regard and preferred take instantaneous steps to react to this sneaking risk on exacting war. The CIA contractor Edward Snowden has disclosures the U.S secret that how it is used to monitoring the different countries. According to reports Pakistan is the second largest target of U.S.

In this regard the Chairman Senate Standing Committee for Defence, Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed called on important meeting. In this meeting it was decided to work together for the Cyber Security of Defence, economy and citizens and that it is need to induct required skill sets and experience and professional people in various security organizations. Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed also admitted that Pakistan doesn't have any Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT), so

having required experience PISA may help Senate Defence Committee to establish Pakistan National CERT. To conclude, Weapons like E-shells have developed as another danger to challenge the military communication network system by transforming enormous electromagnetic pulse. In this domain state must have the ability to collect, share, access and protect information and to make better in the process of correlation and fusion Pakistan has to collaborate in cyber domain through technological enhancement.

Pakistan needs to focus on pro-active command of cyber and information with Strong mechanism of cyber warfare in Pakistan could establish through coordination, collaboration and mutual working among various civil and military institutions. Nevertheless, there are various dimensions of cyber warfare like the propaganda war, satellite war and psychological war, internet war and war by nerves. Recently India-Israel had mutual working in the domain of cyber warfare and prism scandal of United States also create alarm for the security of Pakistan. So for Pakistan this is time to use these tools as bullets or weapons to make sure state's safety and security by all means. Pakistan should adopt various options to counter this threat. Some of these are first; strong co ordination should be established among various organizations. Secondly, it is need to create awareness about the danger of this threat.

Thirdly, professional and skilled person should be inducted in security organization. Fourthly, NR3C should be made more effective and work in proper direction. Fifthly, an emergency of computer response team should be established as many countries have already done. Sixthly, it is need to make perfect coordination between military and civilian organization to counter this threat. Seventhly, Cyber attacks can be launched during peace time at non military targets or at military targets by non military groups, these actions can undermine the Pakistan's nuclear command and control, hence risking the defense and security and strategic stability in region. Eighthly, Pakistan should not underestimate its effect and uses in warfare and also in order to achieve state's economical and political objectives.

The Drones-Will They Stop

Sana Wiki November 7, 2014



U.S. continues to launch offensive operations in the name of war against terror in and around Afghanistan thus triggering the fire of hate and war and in the process destroying the peace and economy of the region.

This nefarious activity by America has also engulfed Pakistan within its evil spread and caused billion dollar losses to us as well as done harm to thousands of lives. Undoubtedly thousands of lives stand adversely affected by the “Drone War” to the extent that people are forced to live in camps away from their houses.

On one hand, Pakistan had to face several incidents of severe violence, terrorism, sabotage and sectarian violence, on the other hand economy completely suffered due to which we faced unemployment, poverty and energy crises. According to the international law, government of Pakistan is not bound to allow use of its territory against any other country. But the Pakistani leadership of the past relented and failed to take a stubborn stand to stop foreign interference.

The result is that Pakistan’s political boat is unstable and the nation and its citizens insecure. The adversely affected ones blame Pakistan for taking a very weak stance against the drone attacks.

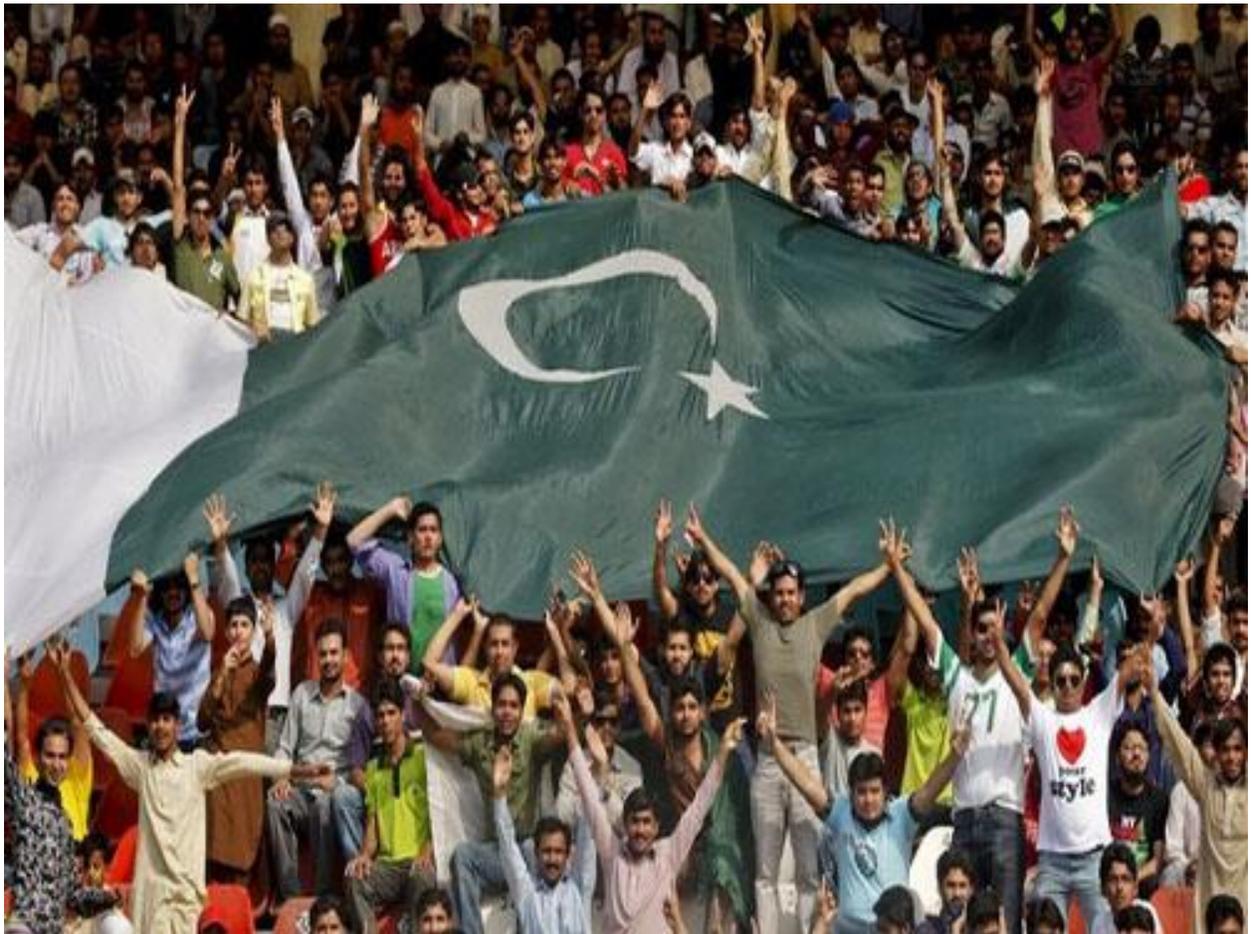
These Drone attacks were the cavil of Musharaf's regime; he adopted aggressive policies against radicals (extremist) and made a real enemy in the shape of the Taliban.

War is not a solution; negotiation is the only option to bring in lasting peace. Realizing this newly elected Government is pursuing this policy, but then there exists lack of trust. According to chairman of JUI Molana Sami-ul-Haq green signal was received by Taliban for table talk but they sought guarantees that after the pact signing all the important stakeholders of the country will abide by the settled terms.

Pakistanis to get rid of this war, and are unanimous in their demand for peace. It's the responsibility of newly elected to take bold steps against drone attacks force the Americans to discontinue them. This might involve the risk of annoying a super power but in the long run it will prove useful by ushering in peace in the region. Already the damage has been extensive and the region has lost money, lives and future aspirations of the people.

Should We be Optimistic about Our National Future?

Sana Wiki November 7, 2014



The metamorphosis the world is going through is posing a serious question: are we seeking any dignified place in the transformed world or would happily remain in obscurity? The nations that have ruled, the world economy, during the past several decades are beginning to crumble under their own weight and, their glory, will soon be a tale from the past.

The ever mounting burden of their own over-grown economic, political, and in some cases the military spreads have found them reeling. Today, it does n't require one to be a Harvard economist or in possession of Platonic wisdom to see that the old realities are fast losing ground and the world is settling into a different groove. However, one dose need to be a great visionary to navigate through

this greatest of the transformations of our times and to make sense of the tumultuous events that are terribly fast and furious. While some of the nations around us are positioned strongly and safely to make their way through this tide and spearhead the new world order, we are adamantly clinging to the status quo and appear all set to miss yet another opportunity. A recent research lead by **Willem Buiter** of the Citigroup titled “*Trade transformed:*

The emerging new corridors of trade power” estimates that the world trade, represented by the sum of all exports and imports taking place in a year, is expected to rise to \$122 trillion by the year 2030 from the \$37 trillion level in 2010. The report further forecasts that China will overtake USA by 2015 to capture the top slot and will keep on widening the gap to command about 17.4% of the total world trade as opposed to that of US at 8.2% in the year 2030. US is expected to slip further to 3rd place losing ground to the rising India before we reach the middle of the century. The biggest two trade powers in 2050 would be in the East rather than the west and those will be China at the top (trade estimated at \$52.2 trillion) with India trailing at number two with almost half the size of China (trade estimated at \$25.7 trillion). US, the crumbling giant, will, at the best, hold only one third of as much trade power in the world in 2050 as that of China and will trail behind India. In the new world order, by the size of trade, 2030 will see the West having lost its ground to the East and several of the Asian nations will have risen to the pinnacles of glory. Prominent among them are expected to be China, India, Korea, Hong Kong, Japan and Singapore. In other words Asia will occupy six out of the ten top slots and by 2050 even Indonesia will have joined this elite club with a big bang, elbowing its way up to the 6th place on the list of top 10.



Pakistan economy grows beyond targets

By 2050, the only western nations, still expected to have their place on the list of 10, will be US at #3, Germany at 4 and UK at 10. By any stretch of imagination, this is going to be the biggest of the paradigm shifts since the WWII and will define the world for our next generations. So, for my grandchildren, Pakistan would be a country having more than one fourth of all the world trade taking place just across its borders on the East & North. The big question, however, is: what this change holds for them in its folds? Will they be just onlookers? The answers, if there are any, are not encouraging at all. We, as a nation, have yet to set the sail – what to talk of taking up the cudgels, facing the challenges head-on and assuming a respectable position in the new world order. The governance, as everybody says, is nowhere visible, the so-called power elite creates a lot more problems than they solve and an unholy alliance of nobility, clergy and privileged commoners, like the one seen in Christian Europe of the Mid level times, is playing quid-pro-quo aimed at looting and plundering to proliferate their personal interests which often conflict with the good of the ordinary. In order to demystify the whole dilemma and to disentangle the problem that has assumed an epic magnitude, I divide the whole nation into three segments. One, a relatively small but extremely powerful, the ruling elite that consists of political, military and bureaucracy leadership joined by ranks in judiciary, intelligentsia and clergy. They are often found to work together, hand-in-hand, and

even though, at times, giving impression of locking horns with each other on matters of public interest, most often it turns out to be a clever stratagem carefully choreographed for grabbing bigger share in the pie. They have invested heavily in terms of wealth, property, manipulative intelligence and even life (of their dear ones and many others) and, have thus converted the state into a beneficial enterprise. Therefore, they are never interested, in real terms, in bringing sanity and order to governance or establishing the much desired rule of law – something absolutely necessary to start off on the right path – establishing rule of law would mean drawing curtains on their personal gains, a proposition that they wouldn't go for even in the wildest of their dreams. Second, the downtrodden masses who are, by design, kept illiterate, poor, without any worthwhile skills, knowledge or resources.



Negotiating the future: Pakistan

They, just under one half of the population, have actually started to believe that they have to live in the circumstances they inherit regardless of how the rest of the world changes. They, in most cases, live their lives on day-to-day bases, so, if today they get enough to eat they will immediately forget the hunger of yesterday. They are conveniently lured by short-term reliefs wrapped nicely in silken promises of the elite who, can then, easily buy their favors. Thus, they gleefully play into the hands of the elite sometimes only for a one-time nice meal. Their handlers would be happier if they are

greater in numbers. Third is the middle class, the educated lot that has sustainable livelihoods in terms of employment or business. This is the only segment of the society that thinks of the change and aspires to see the state as: where justice is easily and quickly available; where there is peace and rule of law; everyone has equitable access to education and health; resources are abundant and – at the least – being whose citizens is not embarrassing in any manner.

This is the only segment of population that truly wishes that the things must change for the better, but, instead of making an attempt, to bring about the change they want, they choose to withdraw and sit back. They often talk about the bad governance, curse the rulers, criticize the systems and desire that the ruling elite must mend its ways and drive the state on the road to development, failing to realize that it would be self destructive for the elite so they would do everything to protect rather than change the system on which they prosper. If this remained the state of affairs our grandchildren will certainly be mere onlookers in the largest and busiest market place on the face of earth. Peace, prosperity and respect in the comity of nations are not the things that can be attained overnight so we can't hope to get them in a jiffy. We need to toil long and hard and be willing to pay the price it takes, and most importantly, it is the educated middle class, who needs to take the lead and come out of the cozy comforts of their TV lounges – or else another big opportunity will be lost.

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Redesigning Democracy

Sana Wiki November 7, 2014



Pakistan has suffered since its inception from a lack of political stability. Democracy has not taken root. In the past, military and civilian governments have played a game of musical chairs with the nation's destiny. The first ever handover of power from one democratic government to another after the 2013 elections led many to believe that the pattern of the past had been broken. But the recent dharnas and resulting instability have once again raised the spectre of a return to the past.

Is Pakistan congenitally indisposed to democracy? I think not. Our problem has to do with the sort of democratic system we have rather than democracy itself. What is wrong with our existing system? And what should replace it?

Start with the fundamentals. Ideally, in a democracy, the assemblies make the laws, the courts interpret and implement them, and the executive manages the country. It clearly makes sense to keep all three players as independent of each other as possible. In Pakistan things do not work this way.

People who are elected to our assemblies know little, and care less about law making. They seek election because they perceive that becoming an MNA or an MPA entitles them to power,

protocol, and money. Since they are not interested in legislation, little takes place in the assemblies. Instead they become talk shops where scheming and idle chatter replace the serious legislative business of the nation.

Matters are made worse because the executive – the prime minister and his cabinet – is drawn from these assemblies. So one critical barrier separating the executive from the legislature is breached by design. The prime minister, in our system, acquires almost unchecked power. He becomes head of the executive and legislature at the same time. The system then requires him to draw his cabinet – the nation’s management team – from elected members of the legislature.

Assume, for a moment, that we get the right person as prime minister – with the vision, sincerity and management skills needed to lead a complex country like ours. Is it likely that he will be able to find competent people in the assemblies to run the government? These are people who will – as ministers – sit atop large, unwieldy bureaucracies critical to the functioning of the state. Does it make sense to put, for example, a scion of a large land owner, or a ‘gadi nasheen’ with little or no relevant work experience in a position that requires a very demanding set of skills?

Our system of elections is what is known as the ‘first past the post’ (FPTP) system. It is a winner take all system. So if two people are on a ballot then the one who gets a simple majority is declared the winner. If three or more people are contesting then the one who gets the most votes wins. The ‘losers’ though they may have collectively garnered more votes than the winner have no further say in the process.

There is something about this system that seems to go against the essence of democracy. In a tight two person race, for example, the person who gets a shade over half the vote wins. So about half the people in the district get the representation they want. The other half are in effect disenfranchised. Is this a democratically acceptable result? Whatever the answer, it is safe to say that a more ‘democratic’, and in Pakistan’s specific context, a more appropriate electoral system can be designed.

We in Pakistan replicated the British FPTP system. Little, if any, thought was given to whether such a system would work for us. The consequences are evident and painful. Sixty years have passed since independence and Pakistan is a nation literally at war with itself.

A suitable solution for us has existed for a long time. It is Proportional Representation or PR. The basic principles underlying proportional representation elections are that all voters deserve representation and that all political groups in society deserve to be represented in parliament in proportion to their strength in the electorate. In other words, everyone should have the right to fair representation.

PR systems divide up the seats in assemblies according to the proportion of votes received by the various parties. Thus if the candidates of a party win 40% of the popular vote, for example in a 100

seat assembly, they get 40 seats. If another party wins 20% of the vote, they get 20 seats, and so on. One more design element needs to be added for the system to work: The Executive must be directly elected by the electorate. And he must have the authority to choose his cabinet not necessarily from the assemblies but from the best people in the land.

Politicians would then realize that being elected to parliament is not a ticket to ministerships and power. Instead it calls for them to think and work hard on the serious business of legislation, and of budgetary and executive oversight. And once this becomes clear, only those people who are interested and qualified will seek to enter parliament. What a change that would be.

Iran is set to reclaim its role as regional leader

Sana Wiki November 8, 2014



Once US troops go home, Iran has the most battle-ready military force to offset regional challenges.

Most commentary on the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) point to the challenges it presents to the Middle East. Sectarian tensions may have been a fact of life in the region. But ISIL has made it the number one threat to the political order – it cost Iraq’s Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki his job.

The implications of the scourge of sectarianism are far reaching for Iran too. As a constitutionally Shia Muslim state, Iran is mindful of the restricting framework of sectarianism. Since its inception, the Islamic Republic of Iran has been eager to project an image that transcends sectarian differences. This has been a key pillar of Iran’s regional policy. Speaking to the Muslim masses and voicing

popular angst against the Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands, or against US arrogance and political domination of the international order, have been at the heart of Iran's message to its neighbourhood. Of course, this has antagonised neighbouring regimes, which accuse Tehran of destabilising the region.

Saudi Arabia was quite vocal in protesting against Iran's message following the 1979 revolution. But Tehran turned such criticism to its advantage. By supporting Hamas and Hezbollah in an apparent attempt to challenge Israel, which it calls the "Zionist entity", by proxy it gained political credibility on the Arab street. Having Hamas in this alliance was very important, as it offered Iran an example of an inter-sectarian alliance against a common enemy.

Trans-sectarian

policy

The notion of the "[axis of resistance](#)" applied to the political congruity of Iran, Syria, Hezbollah and Hamas, was celebrated in Iran as a successful case of its trans-sectarian policy, emphasising the political unity of all Muslims. Iran clearly saw itself as the champion of all Muslims and with the sprouting Arab Spring, the Iranian leadership was self-congratulatory for providing a model for the Muslim world to follow, even though the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt appeared very reluctant to follow the Iranian model.

But the Arab Spring has now turned to winter and given rise to devastating carnage in Syria and Iraq. ISIL has galvanised the international community to act. The US-led aerial bombardment of ISIL assets have offered the Kurdish Peshmerga and the Iraqi forces some reprieve.

Ironically, the common threat of ISIL has put old foes on the same side of the fence. Iran and the US have an enemy in ISIL. So why is Iran not part of the international coalition?

The Iranian leadership operates in its own political and psychological sphere, and responds to a range of factors beyond the geo-strategic needs of the day. The parameters of this sphere dictate that Iran cannot afford to be seen as a minor player in a US-led operation. Iran sees itself as an equal player, and in many ways a more critical player because of its geographical location. While this does not rule out ad hoc contact between the two sides on practical issues, it does make entering into a military alliance with the US highly problematic for Iran's sense of its own regional role.

Suspicious

The Iranian leadership is also suspicious of US intentions and sincerity in the fight against ISIL. The US is accused of sponsoring rebel groups in Syria, and having a hand in the emergence of what Iran calls "takfiris" (apostate groups). A recent statement by [US Secretary of State John Kerry](#) about the role of Saudi Arabia, UAE and Turkey in the rise of ISIL seemed to vindicate Iranian cynicism. Saudi Arabia is now part of the international coalition to stop the ISIL land grab. The Iranian authorities, especially the conservatives, see this as disingenuous. Indeed, Washington's continued commitment to deposing Bashar al-Assad in Syria, which is at war with ISIL, is seen as evidence of its deceit.

Instead, Iran sees its ties with the central government in Baghdad and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) as leverage in the push against ISIL. Iranian authorities celebrate what they see as Tehran's immediate response to aid Iraq against ISIL, and have published images of [General Qasem Soleimani](#), the Commander of Quds Forces, in Kurdistan.

From Iran's point of view, history is on its side: Once all is said and done, once US troops return home, Iran maintains the most battle-ready military force to offset regional challenges, buttressed with strong political ties with Iraq, Syria and Hezbollah. The Iranian leadership remains confident that this alliance will allow Tehran to shift the focus back on Israel, and allow Iran to reclaim its role as regional leader.

Obama's foreign policy after the midterms

Sana Wiki November 8, 2014



The midterm elections in the United States do not have the dramatic fanfare and theatre of the presidential elections, but they are no less important in their impact on the rest of the world. The US president for all of his constitutional power still has to work with Congress to implement and fund his policies. Nowhere is this more prominent than in foreign policy where Congressional approval is crucial to ratify treaties and fund military actions abroad. In the wake of the Republican takeover of the US Senate the world could see some fundamentally different foreign policy coming out of the Obama administration for its final two years. And these changes will likely influence how the Obama presidency is viewed for decades.

President Barack Obama has staked a lot of his international credibility on the JPOA (Joint Plan of Action) a UN-sponsored plan to freeze Iranian nuclear development in exchange for easing US-backed sanctions. The US and Iran [have until November 24](#) to finalise the deal, but with Republicans taking over the US Senate, Obama's ability to back up the deal may be weakened.

There are already about 67 votes (out of 100) in the Senate including many in Obama's Democratic Party, who are very hawkish on increasing sanctions on Iran. Thus far, Democratic leaders have

stalled votes on any tougher sanctions on Tehran but come January when the new Senate takes over, a tougher bill will likely get passed. This will force Obama to either veto a sanctions bill against Iran, which would be political suicide, or take a harsher stance in nuclear negotiations with Iran to appease the Senate back in the US.

Former Republican presidential nominee John McCain will take over the Senate Armed Services committee and he's been very clear that he wants US troops on the ground in Syria and fighting ISIL.

More aggressive with Russia

There is no love lost between Obama and Vladimir Putin, and their relationship has soured even more since the Russian soft invasion of Ukraine earlier this year.

Obama was quick to impose sanctions by executive order because ultimately those can be reversed or amended should the conditions in Ukraine get better or worse.

Now that Republicans have taken over the Senate, Obama's hand will be forced. The US only pledged an additional \$53m to aid Kiev after an impassioned plea for help in September, and Obama will have a hard time getting more funding to the Ukrainian government with a Republican-controlled Senate that controls funding to foreign policy endeavours.

Worse than little or no funding to Kiev, the new head of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Republican Bob Corker, [wants to put harsher sanctions](#) on Moscow essentially picking a fight that Obama would rather avoid. If Russia gets more aggressive in the coming months, expect Republicans to pressure him for sanctions that are more binding than executive orders.

ISIL – boots on the ground?

The US [doesn't really have a plan](#) on how to fight ISIL because it is still not entirely clear how big or how powerful it really is. However, that hasn't stopped many Republicans from calling for putting "boots on the ground" all throughout the Middle East, including Syria, to battle ISIL no matter where they may be operating.

Former Republican presidential nominee John McCain will take over the Senate Armed Services Committee and he's been very clear that he wants US troops on the ground in Syria and fighting ISIL. Very few Senators (in either party) are willing to go that far to fight ISIL but any of the president's plans going forward will likely have to put troops into play in order to get full support from the Senate.

Relations between Benjamin Netanyahu and Obama have only been a shade better than those with Putin. With Republicans controlling the Senate, Israel will have more allies to lobby to obstruct any efforts by the Obama administration to put pressure on Israel to limit or stop building new

settlements. US involvement in the Middle East peace process may slow to a crawl in the next two years.

The US has its political or military tentacles in just about every part of the globe right now and that won't change due to midterm elections. However, if the Republicans have their way, the grip of those tentacles across so many crucial foreign policy issues might get a little tighter. The world will soon see just how much fight Obama has left in his last two years as president.

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US-China Relations: Attitude and Attitudes

Sana Wiki November 8, 2014



Chinese President Xi Jinping [has been speaking recently](#) of the importance of partnerships rather than alliances. His encouragement of a new model of international relations comes at a pivotal moment in China's modern history. While the country's economy is slowing, growth appears to have stabilized at a comfortable level. Meanwhile, China is growing more confident in regional politics while expanding its circle of influence.

As U.S. President Barack Obama's trip to China to attend the APEC Summit approaches, close inspection reveals the stakes are high for U.S.-China relations during what is quickly becoming a significant era.

[In a recent poll](#) by The Chicago Council on Global Affairs (disclosure: I work at the Council, but am not involved in polling), Americans rated China just behind the U.S. as the most influential country in the world, ahead of the EU as a whole. But as China's influence grows, the Council's polling shows that Americans have less interest in engaging China. Only 33 percent of Americans encourage developing stronger ties with China – down from 40 percent in 2012. And the majority of Americans

are willing to risk relations with China for developing stronger relations with regional allies. Finally, a large majority, 77 percent, propose spying on China.

Obama's policies appear to be following the public's perceptions, making a path toward engagement a rocky one. A focus on U.S. alliances in Asia is understandable, especially as China continues to flex its muscles. But there may be no better time than now to take a page out of Xi's burgeoning emphasis on partnership.

Why? Because while there is no doubt that China has decades of growing pains still to endure, signals suggest that the Xi-era is bringing about real, systemic change.

While most countries are still stocking up their foreign reserves, China's record-breaking acquisition of U.S. dollars appears [to have topped out](#). In fact, China's acquisition of all foreign currencies appears to be falling away, while the renminbi has slowly appreciated with some countries [beginning to stockpile it](#).

The change continues. China appears to be serious about privatizing major industries. It has fixed its employment reporting, while it has hand-slapped or imprisoned more than [200,000 corrupt party leaders](#). And Beijing is continuing to push the "New Silk Road," first formalized in 2013, in an effort to extend economic partnership [to the south and the west](#) over land and sea.

Regionally, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) has taken steps toward increased relevance by opening the door for India, Pakistan, and Iran [to become full members](#). And relations with Russia continue to develop, not least of which with a natural gas deal that will help to [fuel China's environmental for decades to come](#).

While China continues to develop its strategy (sometimes fumbling, sometimes impressive), U.S. representatives have continually stated that the pivot to Asia [is not about containment](#). Fair enough – the U.S. has alliances it must uphold. But there is a great opportunity to set a new course in U.S.-China relations while still acknowledging regional balance between Beijing's vision and Washington's. Obama's second trip to China would be a good opportunity to rekindle that process.

IS SIMLA AGREEMENT DEAD? | By Tariq Khalil

Sana Wiki November 9, 2014



Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Mrs Indira Gandhi signing the Shimla agreement.

There is escalation on the control line and working boundary and it is to be seen why the escalation? In the changing world since 9/11, India made maximum use of the word terrorism. 9/11 changed the US perspective; India succeeded convincing the USA and other European powers that Pakistan is the hot bed of terrorism and exporter of terrorism and thus has been successful to get branded Kashmiri resistance as terrorists. It got facilitated by religious extremists who in the name of Islam took up arms against on country to impose their brand of Sharia. Unfortunately large rural population and even in urban centers always looked toward Maulvi as source of inspiration. They were looked upon as religious scholars. Foreign funding during Afghan war, termed as Jihad, helped mushrooming

growth in madaris. Vested interests soon took over the direction and major cause been RAW. RAW managed to penetrate among these organizations and became major source of material and training. TTP in RAW papers by themselves is mentioned as their foot soldiers. Balochistan is another playing ground where for understandable reasons many out side powers are interested.

Afghanistan provided the space for such elements .Delhi and Bombay incidents gave an excuse to India to escalate tensions on the Pakistan borders and movement of forces. It is shrouded in mystery were Bombay and Delhi Parliament incidents were the hand work of RAW to achieve their strategic interests as earlier in the case of Bangla Desh creation. It therefore pertinent to examine the ups and downs since Simla ,which in the last over forty years has been invoked whenever tensions arose, though both countries, for their own reasons has different interpretations .Even at the time it was signed the opposition blamed Indra Ghandi having lost the war on the negotiating table to Zulfikar Ali Bhutto but she silenced the criticism saying she successfully converted ceasefire line to line of control ; and with Bhutto's promise to make it a permanent boundary (verbal promise) to which India ever since stressing in any parlays.

As India interpreted the matter of line of control settled, both countries now to put this issue behind, and, build relations bilaterally on other issues. Any deviation is considered violation of the agreement. Although the first clause spells out that all issues will be resolved under United Nations Charter thus Pakistan interprets, if bilateralism fails, she has a right to go back to UN or third party. It is not acceptable to India. Indian interpretation is entirely are opposite, for them door for any outside mediation or UNO is closed. They will always purport to show willingness to talk but central theme remain that the Kashmir is settled and talk on present line of control, as they interpret.

In the last two decades they economically leaped forward much faster than Pakistan due to war on terrorism within and political turmoil and consequently weakening economy. Thus they were in a position to up grade defence capability to a great extent and thus more rigidity in their stance. 9/11 changed the course of history world over and Pakistan came under the line of fire and following years saw it getting sucked into war not of its making. Pakistan internally got embroiled with terrorism partly home grown and mainly foreign export to Pakistan .It on one side shattered the Pakistan economy on the other embolden India to behave like a super power , though actually it is not so. In spite of its internal and external difficulties, Pakistan braved the situation due resilience of its people not withstanding the weak and corrupt leadership, a strong army committed to Pakistan ideology.

Never the less in the changed geo political scene Indian leadership is intoxicated with new found international environment and enhanced military prowess. A hot debate is ensuing in their think tanks, intelligence, politicians especially BJP new breed, India can afford a surgical strike, capture maximum territory before Pakistan use nuclear response. Is it possible? It is a separate debate. But under these circumstances what is the fate of Simla Agreement, is the validity of the agreement still stand when India is blatantly violating since 1980s when it occupied Sichen in 1984 and amassed its forces on Pak borders in a failed effort, and again tension mounted to the point of open war, it was

averted by American diplomacy. Kargil was the result of this advancing posture of India. Again, India accusing Pakistan supporting terrorism, in the follow up of Indian Parliament attack. It is still not clear who were actual purporters. India is not prepared to accept that training and launching Mukht Bahni an act of terrorism , more or less all the ex Indian diplomats and present RSS politicians insist there were no takers of Pakistan stand and rightly so.

1974 tri country, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, agreement as follow up of Simla had settled the issue of war crimes and Pakistan recognized Bangladesh. General amnesty was declared as prelude to accept Bangladesh. After forty years to fortify her hold Hussina Wajid simply shattered that agreement and blatantly trying aged Jamiat leadership and hanging them. India and international community, and the US are silent. Mujib and its family were eliminated by the Bangladeshi themselves due to immense frustration after separation and Bangla Desh under total Indian control. Does it mean the death of Simla Agreement?

Out of all the clauses India remember only bilateralism. BJP government wants to close all doors on Pakistan. They feel Pakistan embroiled politically, army fighting terrorism, religious right harboring sympathies for the militants, economically in trouble and internationally isolated can be targeted as in 1971. Large defense procurements to implement surgical war are ominous and immediate need on the part of Government, all parties, civil society defense establishment to take note of the situation before it is too late. Pakistan must open the evidence of RAW involvement to the world forums which for unknown reasons we are not doing. Let history not repeat itself.

Opinion: The West must demand changes to Pakistan's blasphemy laws

The CSS Point November 9, 2014



Once again terrible news is coming out of Pakistan. The country's strict blasphemy laws are once more at the focus of attention after yet another spate of recent extra-judicial killings, writes DW's Grahame Lucas.

In the last few days, the continuing abuse of Pakistan's blasphemy law has been there for all to see. Again. A Pakistani policeman, whose job it is to uphold law and order, bludgeoned a man accused of insulting companions of the Prophet Mohammad to death in a holding cell in a police station in the city of Gujrat. By way of an excuse, the police claimed the accused was mentally imbalanced. But there can never be an excuse for such a blatant violation of human rights. A proper judicial investigation into the incident is unlikely to go anywhere.

Just days earlier, another horrific killing made the headlines. After being accused by the local mosque of committing blasphemy, a Christian laborer and his wife were beaten to death by a mob and thrown on a furnace for allegedly desecrating a Koran. The woman was pregnant. The charges were obviously trumped up by local religious leaders and the laborer's employer. Although

Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif condemned the incident, he clearly has no mandate and certainly no ambition to repeal the controversial blasphemy law. He knows only too well that aspirations of this kind can be fatal in Pakistan. In 2011, the federal minister for minorities, Shahbaz Bhatti, who sought to abolish Blasphemy Law, was murdered by the Pakistani Taliban.

Pakistan's blasphemy laws have long been contentious. Introduced originally under British rule, they were tightened up by General Zia-ul-Haq in the 1980s. The times were fortuitous. The Islamic Republic of Pakistan was helping the US to fight the communists, the non-believers, in Afghanistan. Haq, a religious hardliner who had seized power and then had Pakistan's deposed prime minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto executed, sought to subject public life in Pakistan to Islamic rules. His policies also did much to make the introduction of Shariah fashionable in other Muslim countries. More than anything else, Haq's reforms strengthened the position of religious zealots in Pakistan to the extent that today they are free to whip up public sentiment on any issue that appears to be in their interests.

Ostensibly, blasphemy against any religion is prohibited under Zia's reformed Penal Code. In practice, however, it is open to abuse and is used primarily against anyone deemed to have insulted Islam. Seeing as it only requires one witness for charges to be filed and that information about the evidence cannot be disclosed because that in itself would constitute blasphemy, the process of prosecution is fatally flawed from the outset. Moreover, lawyers shy away from defending the accused. After all, they might be killed too. A fair trial is impossible.

Thus, the present law is an open invitation to religious zealots or simply opportunists to use Islam to attack anyone for the most primitive of reasons. Not surprisingly, most of the cases are, in the view of human rights experts, based on revenge, hatred or the desire to grab someone's property. It comes as no surprise to learn that most of the accused are the weakest members of society – members of religious minorities like Ahmadiyyah-Muslims, Christians or Hindus.

Just recently a Christian mother of five, Asia Bibi, who was sentenced to hang in 2010, had her final appeal to the Lahore High Court rejected. Her case illustrates just how absurd blasphemy allegations usually are: Bibi was out picking berries with a group of Muslim women who accused her of drinking from the same water bowl. As she was viewed as an "unclean" Christian, this constituted blasphemy. Bibi was then reported to the local Imam who triggered blasphemy charges. A courageous politician, Punjab's former governor Salman Taseer, who intervened on Bibi's behalf, was shot dead in 2011 by a crazed security guard.

What is very obvious from the outside is that Zia-ul-Haq took Pakistan down a road from which no return appears possible at the present time. Extremist religious leaders and fanatics have attained such influence in and over the public domain in the last thirty years that political action to curb their arbitrary abuse of power appears beyond the reach of the present political setup. All western countries can do is to draw attention to the abuse of blasphemy laws at all levels and the damage it is doing to Pakistan's already sullied reputation. They must continue to demand change. Germany now has an opportunity to do this. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif arrives in Berlin at the weekend.

Obama ready to accommodate Assad's men in new Syrian set-up

The CSS Point November 11, 2014



WASHINGTON: The Obama administration wants Iran to support a new political set-up in Syria, which could include some elements of the current Syrian governments, aides say.

President Barack Obama's "aides are suggesting that Iran could also support a new attempt to reach a political settlement in Syria — one that would leave at least part of the current, Iranian-backed regime in place," writes Jackson Diehl, a deputy editor at The Washington Post.

Other media outlets reported on Monday that President Obama had linked support for a new set-up in Syria to a nuclear deal with Iran.

According to these reports, in his second secret letter to Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, sent in mid-October, President Obama emphasised "a shared interest in fighting Islamic State militants in Iraq and Syria".

The Wall Street Journal, which published excerpts from the letter late last week, reported that President Obama would accommodate Iran's interests in a future deal in Syria only if Iran reached "a

comprehensive agreement with global powers on the future of Tehran's nuclear programme" by Nov 24.

The five permanent members of the UN Security Council and Germany, who are negotiating a possible nuclear deal with Iran, have set a Nov 24 deadline for reaching an agreement.

But in an interview to CBS on Sunday evening, President Obama indicated that he was more interested in ensuring that "Iran does not obtain nuclear weapons" than in meeting the deadline.

The president also clarified that he had informed the Iranians — "publicly and through back channels" — that they should not expect any concession on the nuclear deal in return for their support to the fight against the Islamic State militants.

The Washington Post, however, noted that President Obama was "doubling down on a bet that his Iran strategy will yield a spectacular payoff".

The newspaper pointed out that the proposed nuclear deal with Iran "restrains but does not eliminate Tehran's ability to produce a weapon for a decade or so".

The Post also reported that senior Obama administration officials viewed the nuclear deal "in the context of a larger effort to stabilise the shattered Middle East with Iran's cooperation". Diplomatic observers in Washington say that such moves indicate the Obama administration's desire to completely redo America's traditional Middle East policy.

"So far, the United States has depended on a coalition of Arab states to contain Iran," said a Washington-based diplomatic observer. "But now the administration wants to use Iran to contain the growing influence of religious extremists in the Arab world."

The planned move has alarmed the Republicans, who now control both chambers of the US Congress and have pledged to prevent President Obama from implementing his strategy.

"The consequences of this ill-conceived bargain would destroy the Syrians' last, best chance to live in freedom from the brutal Assad regime," said two senior Republican senators John McCain and Lindsey Graham.

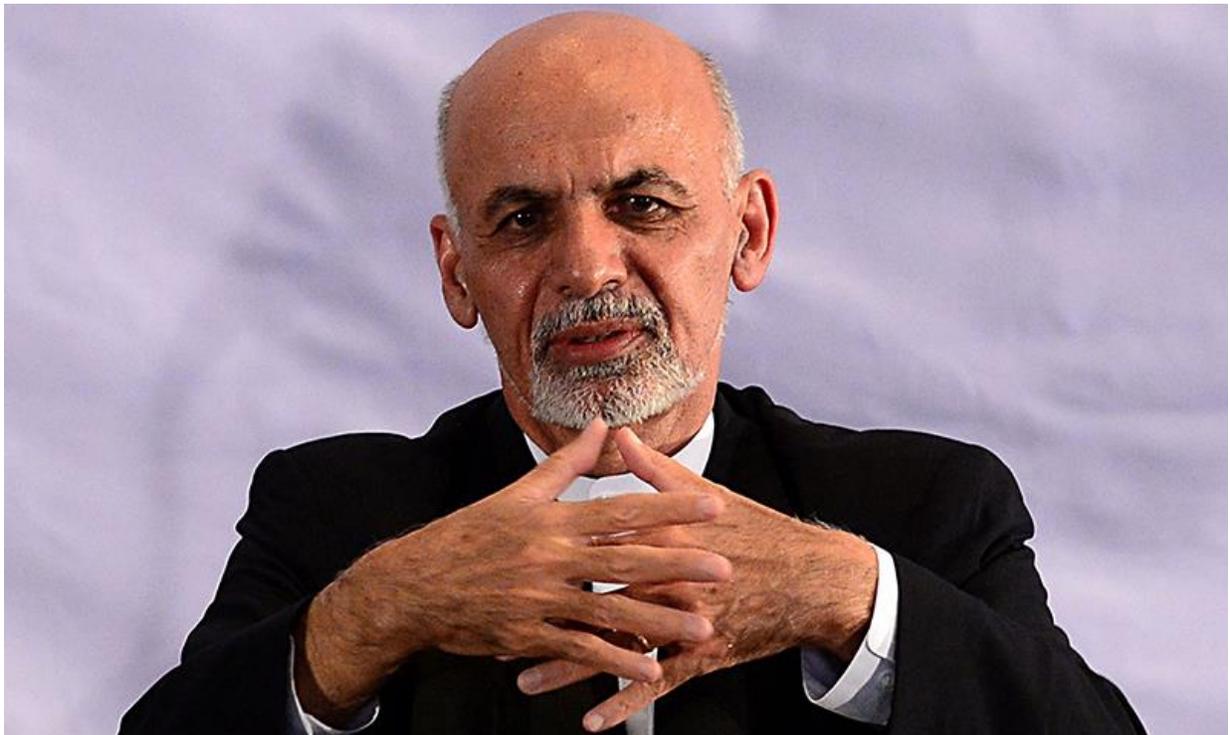
They rejected a suggestion that Iran was helping the Americans fight extremists in Iraq and could also help forge a peace deal in Syria. CNN pointed out that in the new Congress, Senator McCain would head the powerful Armed Service Committee of the US Senate and could use his influence to make it difficult for President Obama to execute his plans.

Senator Bob Corker, a Tennessee Republican, would head another key Senate body, the Foreign Relations Committee. Last year, he urged the administration to launch a military strike in Syria to

unseat President Assad and would oppose any move to accommodate the current Syrian government in a future political arrangement.

Ghani wants ‘real, honest friendship’ with Pakistan

The CSS Point November 11, 2014



New York—Afghan President Ashraf Ghani wants to build a “real and honest friendship” with Pakistan during his visit to Islamabad later this week, his spokesman was quoted as saying in a dispatch published in the Wall Street Journal on Sunday.

Reporting from Kabul, the newspaper said the visit was aimed at resetting ties with Pakistan.

Nazifullah Salarzai, the Afghan president’s spokesman, said the Afghan leader would visit Pakistan this week for an official meeting with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. Salarzai added that the talks would focus on bolstering economic ties and security cooperation.

“Afghanistan wants to build a real friendship with its neighbouring country,” Salarzai said. “As the president has said, we have this window of opportunity; we want this window to be transformed into a door, then into a corridor and then into a highway.”

Ghani would undertake his first visit to Pakistan from Nov 14 on the invitation of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. During his two-day visit, Ghani would also meet President Mamnoon Hussain.

Prime Minister Nawaz would receive the Afghan president on Nov 15 at his official residence where formal bilateral talks would take place followed by a joint press briefing.

Broad range of issues including security, defence, economy and post withdrawal of Nato, Isaf forces from Afghanistan would be discussed between the two countries. “Afghanistan wants to have real and honest cooperation and friendship with this neighbouring country,” Salarzai said.

Ghani, who was inaugurated in September, faces many challenges on the foreign-policy front, but managing the relationship with his country’s powerful neighbour —with which it shares a porous, 1,500-mile-long border— promises to be one of his biggest tests.

Under the presidency of Ghani’s predecessor Hamid Karzai, ties between the two were particularly strained. Karzai routinely accused Pakistan of providing support to the Taliban.

Pakistani, Afghan and British leaders early last year put in place a timeline for establishing a peace deal with the Taliban.

However, those efforts were in vain as accusations over cross-border shelling were exchanged between Kabul and Islamabad.—Agencies

The Best Source for CSS Current Affairs



Revisiting Pak-Afghan Relations | By Iqbal Khan

Haris Maqsood November 12, 2014



PAKISTAN'S leadership has time and again reiterated its desire for peaceful resolution of multifaceted problems faced by Afghanistan. It has also been offering all possible cooperation in the process of Afghan national reconciliation, suggesting that it should be Afghan owned and Afghan led. Afghanistan has been expressing concerns over presence of some groups on Pakistani soil for their alleged anti-Afghanistan activities. Now there are persistent reports that terrorists fleeing from North Waziristan are seeking refuge in Afghanistan. The fate of the two countries is intertwined and they have no option but to cooperate with each other for mutual benefits.

Pakistan keenly looks forward to the upcoming visit by President Ashraf Ghani and hopes for a fresh and refreshing beginning between the two brotherly countries. Efficient border management could be a good starter, as most of the events leading to mistrust have their roots in unregulated and uncontrolled movement across Pak-Afghan international border. Pakistani military launched the all-out offensive ‘Operation Zarb-e-Azb’ against local and foreign militants in the North Waziristan region in June, which has also been a long-running demand from Washington and its allied forces in Afghanistan. The operation has successfully eliminated most of the terrorist hideouts and is directed against all militants. Lieutenant General Joseph Anderson, a senior commander for US and NATO forces in Afghanistan has said that Pakistan’s ongoing military operation in North Waziristan has helped disrupt the Haqqani network’s ability to launch attacks on Afghan territory. When operation Zarb-e-Azb began, the Afghans and the Americans were asked to take corresponding action on other side of the border against the terrorists, who may flee. It is unfortunate that Pakistan did not receive requisite cooperation. In this background, these baseless allegations essentially sound hollow, and are unacceptable to Pakistan.

Army Chief’s trip to Kabul marks the first high-profile military visit from Islamabad since the formation of unity government in Afghanistan. General Raheel Shareef was the third top Pakistani leader to visit Afghanistan in less than two months. Earlier, President Mamnoon Hussain had represented Pakistan in the inaugural ceremony of President Ashraf Ghani. Later, Adviser to Prime Minister on National Security and Foreign Affairs Mr Sartaj Aziz visited Kabul and invited President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah to visit Islamabad. President Ghani is likely to visit Pakistan this month. These visits are a part of Pakistan’s continuous engagement with Afghanistan at various levels.

When Sartaj Aziz visited Afghanistan, a vision for Pakistan-Afghanistan relations was discussed. It comprised of economic cooperation, people to people contact and enhancing political engagements as well as interactions between security officials of the two countries. Pakistan had also presented a proposal to Afghanistan on how to better manage the international border between the two countries. Vision incorporated security contours as well. Afghanistan has indicated its readiness to pursue negotiations on these proposals. For both countries, time is now ripe to take a fresh look at their bilateral relations and make a paradigm shift from blame throwing and zero sum approaches. General Raheel has, once again conveyed that Pakistan wants to “open a new chapter” in relations with Afghanistan.

During his visit, General Raheel held separate talks with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Dr Abdullah Abdullah. He discussed a host of issues with new Afghan leadership, including the post-2014 scenario. Reportedly, there is a ‘visible change’ in Afghanistan’s attitude towards Pakistan following the formation of the new unity government and “there is a huge basis for being positive”. Now, Pakistan has offered a “new partnership agreement” to Afghanistan during Army Chief’s visit. Understanding well that Afghan National Security Forces (AFNS) have institutional as well as capacity issues, Pakistan has since long been offering help to overcome this

shortfall. An earlier offer of US dollar 20 million remained untapped by the Afghan side; now a fresh proposal was floated by the Army Chief. He offered ‘full range’ of training courses and facilities in Pakistan’s training institutions to Afghan security forces. Specific offer included capacity enhancement of an infantry brigade, including provision of equipment. General Raheel was briefed by Afghan military officials about the latest security situation in Afghanistan, including transfer of security responsibility to the Afghan National Security Forces. Army Chief raised the issue of terrorist sanctuaries of the TTP in Kunar and Nuristan provinces. The Afghan Defence Minister Bismillah Muhammadi, while referring to a proposal for joint military exercises, said a decision is likely to be taken soon.

Timed with Army Chief’s visit to Afghanistan, the US Department of Defence submitted a report to the Congress titled ‘Progress Towards Security and Stability in Afghanistan’, it carried critical comments on Pakistan’s alleged use of “proxy forces to hedge against the loss of influence in Afghanistan and to counter India’s superior military”. Report accuses Pakistan of using militant proxies to achieve its foreign policy objectives in Afghanistan and India. It blames Pakistan of using militants who launch attacks: “Taliban attacks in Afghanistan launched from sanctuaries in Pakistan remain a serious problem. These sanctuaries exist primarily in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and Balochistan...Afghan- and Indian-focused militants continue to operate from Pakistan territory to the detriment of Afghan and regional stability...These relationships run counter to Pakistan’s public commitment to support Afghan-led reconciliation”. America having failed on multiple counts to bring sustainable peace to Afghanistan feels it convenient to scapegoat Pakistan. This report is yet another such example.

Sartaj Aziz has done well by summoning the US Ambassador and lodging a strong protest over uncalled for report that contains unwarranted and unsubstantiated allegations against Pakistan. The US is seeing terrorist sanctuaries in Pakistan but is unable to spot sanctuaries under its nose from where anti-Pakistan activities are planned and executed. It is also known and repeated at the highest level in Pakistan that India is involved in terrorist activities, even at tactical level— especially in Balochistan; and that primary function of Indian consulates from across Pak-Afghan border is to plan and sponsor terrorist acts in Pakistan; the US never talks about this. Despite seeking, needing and enjoying Pakistan’s cooperation on Afghanistan, the US think tanks and policy making entities continue to make stereotype and dated comments about Pakistan.

Pakistan pursues a policy of non interference and strict neutrality in Afghanistan, and believes that it is for Afghans to decide how they want to proceed on reconciliation and other matters. Pakistan’s primary concern is that Afghan soil should not be used against Pakistan. Army chief has assured the Afghan leadership that: “We are ready to work with the new Afghan government. The two neighbours can bury the past and enter into a new partnership agreement.” It is satisfying that the Afghan side too reciprocated the goodwill sentiments of the Army Chief; and President Ghani said

that his country greatly values its relations with Pakistan. Hopefully, visit of General Raheel has paved the way for achieving meaningful objectives during the forthcoming Pak-Afghan summit.

US Efforts in Fight Against Islamic State Insufficient: Russian Diplomat

Haris Maqsood November 12, 2014



The UN Security Council should take on the leading role in fighting the Islamic State (IS) as all US efforts to solve the problems in the Middle East have so far failed, according to an adviser to the deputy head of Russia's Federation Council.

MOSCOW, November 11 (RIA Novosti) — The fight against the Islamic State (IS) extremist group must be maintained by the UN Security Council, since the efforts of Washington and its allies are not enough to defeat terrorism, adviser to the deputy head of the Federation Council, Ambassador Andrei Baklanov said Tuesday.

“On the back of all these developments [in Iraq], politico-diplomatic and propaganda efforts are clearly insufficient,” he said at a press conference held at the press center of International Information Agency Rossiya Segodnya.

“We should return the issue to the UN Security Council to help the Americans ease the burden of these no longer regional problems that they’ve decided to bear themselves,” the diplomat stated. He added that the Syrian and Iraqi population living on the territories controlled by the IS must not be left in an information vacuum.

Baklanov concluded that the US attempts to solve the problems in the Middle East, dating back to the previous decade, have so far failed.

“They have marred in their military initiatives; even if they try to drastically change their course, it is not that easy because one mistake drags into others ... Moreover, the United States have not yet re-assessed what had happened and have no desire to make up for their mistakes made over the past 10 years,” Baklanov said.

The IS extremist group has seized large swathes of land across Iraq and Syria and declared an Islamic caliphate in June on the territories under its control.

The US-led international coalition is currently carrying out airstrikes on the IS targets in Syria and Iraq.

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Afghanistan: What Withdrawal?

Haris Maqsood November 12, 2014



Bilateral pact actually has potential to widen NATO presence

Any idea that NATO and US forces will be out of Afghanistan by the end of 2014, as President Barack Obama promised, is a chimera, most probably a casualty of the deteriorating situation in the Middle East, where the Islamic State has rushed into the vacuum left by the departing US presence.

The Bilateral Security Agreement signed in September with newly-installed Afghan President Ashraf Ghani will keep much of the past intact and deeply entrenched for another decade at least. Despite the widespread wishes of the Afghan people themselves, the pact means that the US and its allies will remain on Afghan soil for years to come and that the war will not end. Even the so-called historic “democratic transition” doesn’t mean much. On the contrary, it is this very “democracy” that has facilitated prolongation of the “war on terror.”

The people of Afghanistan didn't have to wait for long to see their newly elected president finalizing the security agreement with the US, just a day after he was sworn in. In fact, he and other candidates for the presidency had already vowed, during their election campaigns, to sign it.

Notwithstanding its critical importance both for the US and Afghan governments, the Afghan people themselves think of it differently. For them, the agreement won't do any good for their already demoralized situation; rather it will most likely prolong what is already the US's longest war and so will increase their own problems and miseries on both sides of the Durand Line, the porous, ill-defined border between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

What is now being called "good" for the people of Afghanistan was not acceptable to the previous government. As such the mood at the signing ceremony was in marked contrast to the increasingly intense and even hostile exchange of expressions between the officials of the Karzai and US governments. Among other things that turned Karzai against signing this agreement, one of the most important was that this agreement will in no way bring an end to the ongoing war.

The agreement allows 9,800 US and at least 2,000 NATO troops to remain after the international combat mission formally ends at the end of next month. Most of them will help train and assist the struggling Afghan security forces, which show not a sign of being able to defend the country, although some US Special Operations forces will remain to conduct counterterrorism missions.

Under the agreement's annexes, the US military also will have access to nine major land and airbases, including the massive airfields at Bagram, Jalalabad and Kandahar, staging areas not only for air operations in Afghanistan but also for drone strikes across the border in tribal Pakistan. If a clinching argument is required to argue that the war isn't actually ending or that there isn't going to be a "post-withdrawal" scenario, the agreement provides it. Nothing in it prevents a US president from increasing the number of US troops in Afghanistan again, well beyond the stipulated number of troops and increase the extent as well as nature of operations in Afghanistan.

This is not the end of the story. In his attempt to bring peace back to Afghanistan, Ghani also expressed his willingness to sign a separate garrisoning accord with NATO forces, known as a Status of Forces Agreement, which would allow the NATO forces to stay a bit longer.

Still another aspect of the agreement is illusive enough to cast shadows on the issue of withdrawal. This undecided question is the role of US airstrikes in the post-2014 scenario. Outraged by civilian casualties, Karzai had all but banned air attacks, which many Afghan commanders say have contributed to the high civilian casualty rate. Ghani has, unlike his predecessor, showed his willingness to reverse that stance. In a way, given these factors, the war in Afghanistan is going to remain as deadly for the common Afghan as it has been in the past year or so.

While the president might have thought of the crucial need of foreign troops for maintaining his authority, the fact that Afghanistan's economy would have crumbled without foreign aid—which

would have stopped flowing if the pact hadn't been signed –also prompted the new government to sign. As a matter of fact, Karzai's government did not need the money because it was leaving office, The incoming government, however, certainly can't be expected to function without foreign assistance.

Notwithstanding these internal constraints, the signing of the agreement and the possibility of some other agreements has, to a great extent, been facilitated by the global context as well. Over the past few months, things have dramatically changed in the Middle East. The chaos in Iraq following the US withdrawal has taught crucial lessons to US planners and has forced them to rethink their withdrawal strategy. The very clause allowing the US President to increase the number of troops as and when needed is certainly an indication of what the US planners have in mind: a possible escalation of conflict. It is obvious that the Taliban have not and will not stop attacking US/NATO forces or the Afghan national Army. It can thus be concluded that the pact, the main purpose of which was training the Afghan forces, is now actually to be used as a hedge against the Taliban.

US ambassador James Cunningham said the agreement is the choice of the Afghan people decided via their newly elected leadership. But talking to Afghan refugees in the suburban areas of Islamabad and Peshawar in Pakistan, one thing that is crystal clear is that nobody thinks the agreement is going to do any good. For them, the war is simply not ending; it is entering a new scenario. They have no hope that either the US or the new Afghan government to finally end the war. For them, it will go on for at least another decade.

To them, this is just a matter of politics. Ashraf Ghani and M. Abdullah, divided on the election results, were unanimous on signing this agreement well before the elections, said an elderly farmer from eastern Afghanistan. Sharif Ali, who was a University student and well informed about the situation in the Middle East, was quick to link the current Afghan scenario with the Middle Eastern situation. Muhammad Ibrahim, a lawyer by profession, said there is not going to be any “post-withdrawal” scenario, given that thousands of troops will still be patrolling Afghan soil and doing so under the shadow of legal immunity. He said that under these circumstances, the foreign troops will cause more devastation than they have since the US invasion in 2002 and that they will keep killing people in the name of counter-terrorism.

The nature and extent of these counter-terrorism operations remains shrouded, adding to uncertainty already prevailing concerns. In fact, their nature and extent is to be decided by the troops on the ground. State Department officials in Washington did not specify the scope and nature of the ongoing operations, which are to be conducted in partnership with Afghan forces. The vagueness is undoubtedly adding to the fears of Afghans about at least a decade-long extension of the war. This agreement has at least ensured that Barack Obama, who was elected as the US president in 2008 on a wave of anti-war sentiment, will conveniently pass off both the Afghanistan war and his new war in

Iraq and Syria to his successor, notwithstanding that in 2010 his vice-president, Joe Biden had publicly vowed that the US would be totally out of Afghanistan “come hell or high water, by 2014.”

All talk of withdrawal seems meaningless when it comes to answering the question of presence of more than 10,000 foreign troops –a number that can and will most likely go up if the Taliban intensify attacks. The Afghan question, as such, cannot be viewed in isolation. The US’s Afghan policy will most probably change according to the Middle Eastern situation. Afghanistan as such hangs between two poles: the Taliban and a decade long US/NATO presence.

Given that, it matters very little what the common Afghan citizen thinks. For him, “post-withdrawal” will be the day when there are no foreign troops, and when he is in a position to take the matters of his country into his own hands.

“We have a long history replete with numerous examples of dispute resolution, solely done by our elders,” said 24-year-old Sharif Ali. If we were able to bring peace in the past, we can do the same now also. But the question is: would foreign powers let us do this?”

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US-Pak relations are of great importance for regional stability: US envoy

Haris Maqsood November 12, 2014



ISLAMABAD: United States Ambassador to Pakistan Richard Olson said a strong relationship between the two countries was of great importance for regional stability and in achieving a prosperous future for its citizens.

“One of the most critical ingredients for achieving regional stability and prosperity is creating a peaceful and stable future for Afghanistan,” Richard Olson said during his address to students at the National University of Science and Technology (NUST) in Islamabad.

Ambassador Olson in his remarks emphasised the importance of cooperation between the US, Afghanistan, and Pakistan in order to support regional stability and prosperity.

The Ambassador spoke about the results of the Declaration of Enduring Partnership signed between the Government of Afghanistan and Nato in 2010 to provide a long-term security, economic, and political support to Afghanistan and the importance of regional efforts in its continued success.

“An increasingly stable Afghanistan that is at peace and enjoys productive relations with its neighbours will be an effective counter-weight against extremism. A stable Afghanistan is also conducive to economic development in South and Central Asia,” Olson remarked.

Ambassador Olson also highlighted that the US and Pakistan have to “set future events on a positive course and seize opportunity for a brighter future in Afghanistan”.

The US envoy encouraged Pakistan to continue its efforts in strengthening relations with Afghanistan, adding, “There is much work to be done together on important issues, such as security, trade and economic ties, reconstruction and rehabilitation, and regional cooperation.”

Olson reaffirmed the enduring US commitment to Pakistan and the region, saying, “The United States will remain engaged; we see our role in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the region as one of a sustained commitment that is in our own national security interest as well as that of the countries of the region.”

The US ambassador called upon the students at Nust to play their role in leading Pakistan towards a more stable and secure future.

“You have an opportunity now to choose a better future, and put aside the differences of the past. Pakistan is a young society, and so is Afghanistan. Young people in both countries can make the choice now to set the course for a positive and constructive direction.

“I hope you will seize this opportunity. Rest assured, the United States is committed to support you in your critical role in helping Afghanistan through this period of transition,” Olson concluded.

Political Islam has nothing to offer the region except bad choices and worse | By Galal Nassar

Haris Maqsood November 13, 2014



The Brotherhood, Erdogan and ISIS

It is an old strategy to present two grim alternatives and force people to choose the lesser of two evils. This was how the Muslim Brotherhood presented itself in Egypt, regionally and internationally through their international organisation. They were the model of moderate, tolerant Islam, capable of restraining the hardliners. In assuming power, they would be in a position to serve regional and international interests by keeping the rank and file of extremist groups in check because with them in the limelight they would put paid to the extremists' claims and pretexts that Islamic rule had to prevail in countries that had majority Muslim populations. The Muslim Brothers have succeeded in marketing this notion in Egypt and elsewhere in the Arab world even among some liberal and leftist leaders who advocate accommodating the Muslim Brotherhood as a means to halt the violence and

end terrorism, and who argue that to fight the Muslim Brothers, in spite of the fact that they have taken up arms against the state, aggravates tensions, violence and bloodshed. In other words, once again we are to choose between the lesser of two evils: by embracing the Muslim Brothers we avert the dangers of Ansar Beit Al-Maqdis and ISIS.

The line of argument ignores the well-known fact that the Muslim Brotherhood has always been the official sponsor of takfiri thought. The ideas of Hassan Al-Banna, Sayed Qotb and other Brotherhood ideologues are brimming with intolerance, discrimination, hatred of the other (among fellow Muslims if they are Shia) and vilification of all who disagree with their thinking. The Muslim Brotherhood version of Islam is a far cry in form and substance from moderate Islam as epitomised by the outlook and attitudes of Al-Azhar and by the ideas of famous Islamic scholars such as the illustrious reformist the Imam Mohamed Abdu.

This brings us to another pair to compare and contrast: Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, self-proclaimed caliph over the self-proclaimed Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), and Recep Tayyip Erdogan, newly elected president of Turkey seen by an Islamist current in Egypt and elsewhere in the region as the Muslim who most merits the caliphate. So argues that Muslim Brotherhood spiritual leader, the Egyptian/ Qatari Sheikh Youssef Al-Qaradawi who points out that Turkey was the seat of the caliphate. The rise of the Muslim Brothers in most countries of the Arab region following the Arab Spring revolutions was to be the step that preceded Erdogan's rise to that throne. Erdogan and his clique couched this in different terms to his friends in Washington and other Western capitals. By means of the Muslim Brotherhood regimes in the Arab region he would be able to keep this region under control, curb the reach of the Iranian ogre, promote democratic transformation in a way that would not harm Western interests and that would draw Islamist extremists back from European countries.

When confronted with the Baghdadi image next to the Erdogan one, the observer abroad and the citizen at home is certain to leap for the latter as the lesser of two evils if not as the model for spearheading development, the fight against corruption and the drive for economic growth. When faced with a choice like that, how easy it becomes to turn a blind eye to Erdogan's dictatorial tendencies, to his repression of civic freedoms and suppression of all opposing voices, to the corruption of his family and political party, to his designs to craft the law and the constitution in ways to augment his personal powers and promote his neo-Ottoman imperial project.

It is difficult to find any difference between the logic of the pro-Erdogan camp and the argument espoused by some Egyptian elites in favour of embracing the Muslim Brotherhood as a way of checking Islamist extremists in spite of the fact that the Muslim Brothers have proven their incompetence in political office and have demonstrated how their way of thought and behaviour is inappropriate for those at the helm of a society that has long been plagued by corruption and repression under many glorious sounding banners and emblems and that must now free itself of

subjugation to all authorities, even to authorities that fly the pennants of religion, the imam, the supreme guide or the guardian of the faith.

With regard to Erdogan's neo-Ottoman imperial project, no major Turkish obstacles stand in its way theoretically due to the nature of the radical changes brought by the ruling Justice and Development Party (JDP) during its decade in government. Economically, the per capita income tripled and the Turkish economy soared to the 15th strongest in the world and Erdogan has pledged to bring it up to tenth before another decade is out. Politically, the JDP has succeeded in eliminating the army from politics and breaking long established taboos with regard to the Kurdish and Armenian problems (without having gone so far as to offer viable solutions to either). Along with such inroads, the Erdogan-led governments have decimated all opposition and ruthlessly repressed protest demonstrations, an approach consistent with his thinking that he made explicit when he was mayor of Istanbul to which he was elected in 1994. At the time, Erdogan was a member of the Islamist Refah (Welfare) Party headed by Necmettin Erbakan. In December 1997, during a rally in Siirt, he chose to recite a poem that included verses by an Islamist and pan-Turkish nationalist poet that have been translated as: "The mosques are our barracks, the domes our helmets, the minarets our bayonets..." He was arraigned and found guilty on charges of incitement to criminal offences and incitement to religious or racial hatred, and stripped of his mayoral position. After serving a 10-month prison sentence he was released and soon became head of the Refah Party's successor, the JDP, and then prime minister.

Like his policies towards the Armenians and the Kurds, Erdogan's expressed desire to push his country's EU accession bid is something of a smokescreen. Realising how slim his chances have become, he is set on what may have been his original grand design, which is to re-establish Turkey (under his leadership) at the head of the Arab and Islamic world under the banner of a resurrected caliphate or any other sign that ensures Turkey's place as the uncontested commercial, economic and political gateway to the Middle East.

If parties of whatever ideological trend in this region support or feel they can live with Erdogan's mighty political ambitions they are fooling themselves, for they are overlooking four centuries of history during which Arab capitals such as Cairo, Baghdad and Damascus steadily declined from being beacons of civilisation, prosperity and enlightenment to rural wastelands and cultural backwaters by the end of Ottoman hegemony.

Political and intellectual elites in the Arab region should also bear in mind that the most important weapon in the propaganda and military arsenal of the countries that are targeting this region is the Islamist trend. In large measure, the danger of this weapon resides in the considerable amount of wool that blinds large segments of the intelligentsia and the general public to the true nature of this trend that continually reproduces its ideas and roles. It is sufficient here to conclude with the words of the eminent thinker, geographer and historian Gamal Hamdan: "Extremist Islamist groups are a

recurrent plague that periodically infests the Islamic world... Political Islam is a manifestation of a psychological and mental illness... ”

We do not approve the harsher judgement of this man who was one of the most vehement opponents to the Egyptian peace accord with Israel: “The condition for the progress of Egypt, the Arabs and the Islamic world is to hang every member of every last Islamist group by the intestines of every last Israeli.” However, to all who are running after the Erdogan sultanate or the Al-Baghdadi caliphate we will echo the cruel truth that Gamal Hamdan reached in his research: “The Islamic world is a geographic fact but it is a political myth.”

The Best Source for CSS Current Affairs



Human rights and diplomacy | By I.A. Rehman

The CSS Point November 13, 2014



A THREE-DAY discussion on planning foreign policy decisions from a human rights perspective revealed that this important subject has been neglected in Pakistan by state and civil society alike.

The Third World has unhappy memories of the use of human rights as a weapon in big-power conflicts. However, the discussion organised in Jakarta over the weekend by the Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development brought out possibilities of promoting peace, justice and good governance in the world, especially in the global south, by harmonising foreign policy with human rights.

The objective of the workshop was to enhance the capacity of civil society organisations to monitor the desired nexus between diplomacy and human rights. In order to ascertain whether a state was

paying due attention to human rights as a determinant of its foreign policy decisions, the participants from Asian countries were offered a set of indicators. Let us see how Pakistan responds to these indicators.

The Constitution's silence on external ties limits the scrutiny of foreign policy.

The first question was whether there had been any engagement between the Pakistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Mofa) and NGOs. If any engagement had taken place, was it regular or sporadic, broad or restricted to certain groups only? A truthful answer might be embarrassing for both the Mofa and the NGOs as the former is one branch of the executive that keeps civil society organisations and the people at large at an arm's length.

The next question was about the parliament's ability to hold the government accountable for its foreign policy through standing committees and briefing of MPs. Now we do have standing committees but their ability to hold the executive accountable for Mofa's decisions and its attitude to human rights is debatable, to put it mildly. The heads of these bodies may consider the necessity of providing positive answers.

Another question related to the judiciary's intervention on foreign policy issues. A safe answer would be that the Constitution does not take notice of foreign policy at all and so far the judiciary has avoided taking the government to task for its foreign policy bloomers.

One was also asked as to how the foreign service in Pakistan was structured, how much of governance reform had taken place and how much capacity the foreign affairs' ministry had in terms of human and financial resources.

All one knows is that recruitment to the foreign service is done through competitive examination for the civil services and to qualify for senior positions the foreign service officers have to undergo some training at the National School of Public Policy. There have been reports about a foreign service academy but little is known about its accomplishments.

As for reforms, ambassadors have been harangued now and then by the top man in authority, and quite a few stories have been going round about Ziaul Haq's stamina for sitting through such sessions and taking copious notes, but one doubts if any reform of the foreign service has ever been attempted or that a link between human rights and diplomacy has been discussed.

The issue certainly deserves to be examined by all concerned. There must be some clear objectives, besides paying homage to aid-givers and keeping faith with the ‘good’ Muslim states, that Pakistan’s diplomats should respect.

An interesting question was: “To what extent do national security and defence legislation, bylaws and motivations regulate public participation in foreign policy and free movement of people?” What a query. Who does not know that all actions and thoughts of a Pakistani citizen, intentional or unintended, are regulated by national security myths of the establishment?

The extent of media interest in foreign policy and its effect on human rights was also discussed. The media does often question the government on its foreign policy choices but rare must be the occasion when it has assessed foreign policy options from a human rights perspective. The issue certainly deserves the attention of media associations.

The final question was whether one saw a link between the government’s positions on thematic issues internationally and domestic conditions. The themes specifically mentioned included freedom of expression and freedom of assembly and association.

An answer to this question was available in the record of Pakistan’s voting on a recent resolution in the Human Rights Council on the freedom of peaceful protest. Pakistan joined China, India and Saudi Arabia in trying to dilute the resolution through a series of amendments.

The first amendment called for a state’s right to regulate the freedom of peaceful protest under national legislation: the ground in the second amendment was threat to national security; and the third amendment sought to make the organisers of protest responsible for the consequences. Pakistan was also said to have argued that no protest that affected the glory of Islam could be allowed.

That all these amendments were rejected by the council should have caused considerable embarrassment to the people if the government had fulfilled its obligation to inform them of what it says in Geneva or New York. This is a serious issue and civil society organisations must urge the government to respect transparency and if this demand is not heeded they should start informing the citizens of their government’s voting record at international forums.

All institutions are handicapped in their task of scrutinising foreign policy decisions by the Constitution’s silence on Pakistan’s external relations. The point will become clearer if we study Article 4 of the Brazilian constitution, which says: “The international relations of the Federative Republic of Brazil are governed by the following principles; i) national independence; ii) prevalence of human rights; iii) self-determination of the peoples; iv) non-intervention; v) equality among the

states; vi) defence of peace; vii) peaceful settlement of conflicts; viii) repudiation of terrorism and racism; ix) cooperation among peoples for the progress of mankind; and x) granting of political asylum”.

Official spokespersons are likely to assert that Pakistan’s foreign policy is in fact based on the principles quoted above. Such statements do not have the force of a constitutional commitment that would make deviations justiciable. There is indeed much need to break with retrogressive forces and for strengthening respect for human rights through diplomacy.

Interesting Turns in Global Politics | By Muhammad Ali Sattar

The CSS Point November 17, 2014



So it's fast happening. The sudden burst of activities of the world leaders has taken the world by surprise, if not fear. The president of America is flying around meeting leaders at various venues in the East. The fear of Chinese rise, or overtaking US, is very much there in Obama's mind. The latest debacle of the Democrats in the congress and Senate has turned the table for Barrack Obama. He is actually floundering all over. His speech has lost the bite and sting that once we heard so often only few week ago.

His last term in the office is sure to be an uneventful affair. The Obamacare is under heavy pressure. The Americans believe that it did not work. The outside world is somewhat weary with US. The

decision to fight or not to fight in the ME has been the mainstay of the US foreign policy. The issue of Israel is there. The Tel Aviv gunman is not listening to the US. That is clearly manifest.

John Kerry has been a failure all through. It was a wrong choice for President Obama. Kerry is just not fit to be the foreign affairs man. He lacks the wit and intelligence. He is not impressive on many counts. So the ME is not really under US control. Rather the President and the team are confused as to what to do with the current situation.

And we have Chinese power rising like the phoenix. President Xi Jiping is calling the shots, it seems. He has been trying to steal the global show everywhere. He has managed to a large extent. China will not sit idle on anything. The character of the past Chinese leaders should not be forgotten. The leaders were always aggressive and they had the intention of becoming a super power sooner than later.

The rise of China is simply awesome. Only fifty years, China now has become a real power to reckon with. US will have to knock the Beijing door quite often. When you become strong in economy, the political power settles in automatically. China is building its power all round.

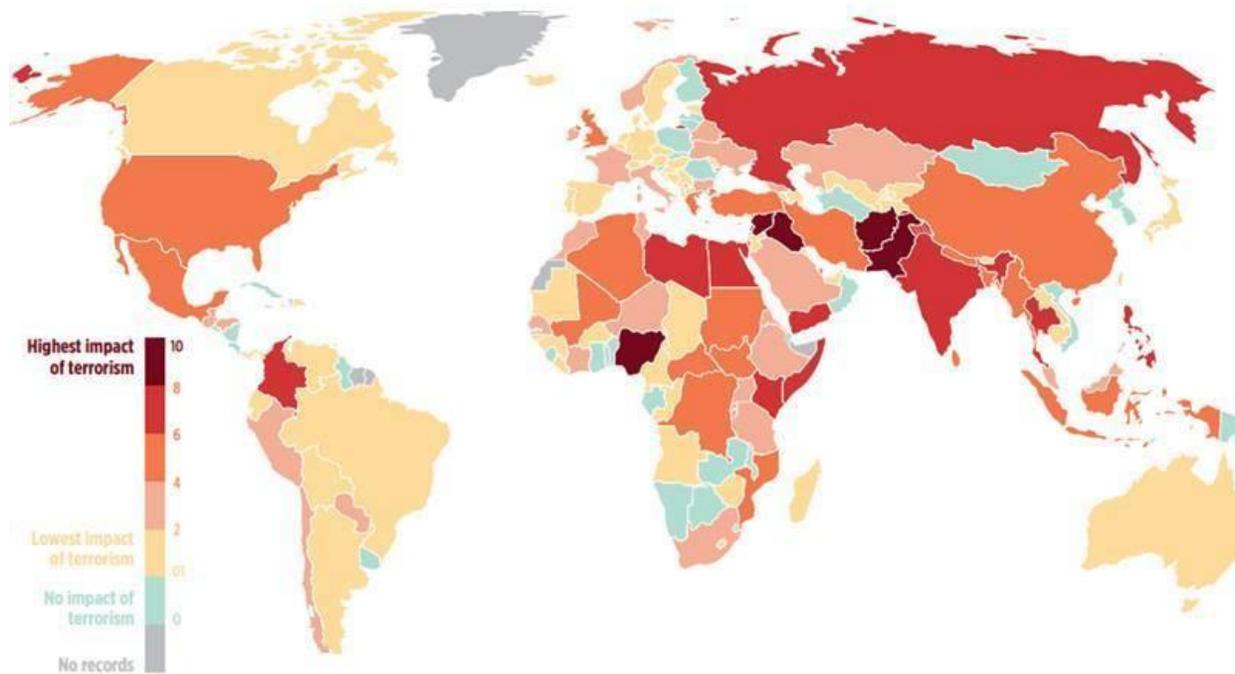
Japan is apprehensive. Japan will not be able to match china in any way. At least so it appears for now. India will have to come to terms with China as well.

Narendra Modi will have to plan accordingly. India hardly can play fool along the borders. Modi will have to team up with Jiping to be a partner for a stronger Asia. Modi's plan to rope in the smaller neighbors in his ring is Ok. But that will not serve the greater Indian purpose. Smaller nations, like Nepal Bhutan and Burma cannot be strong partners in fighting the biggies like China or US. Don't forget the sudden surge of the Russian power. Putin has made his intention clear. He has been playing his cards in the Ukraine. He is braving all odds against the NATO and the EU threats. Nothing could actually stop the ideological march of the Russians.

So it is interestingly poised, On the one hand, we have the US –Russia dual, EU-Russia animosity, US-China rivalry and India –China struggle, all going on at the same time. May be we have not witnessed this kind of situation for many years. We are witnessing a change in the global leadership.

Pakistan ranks third on Global Terrorism Index

Aamar Gul November 19, 2014



LONDON: A new global study by London-based Institute for Economics and Peace has ranked Pakistan third on the Global Terrorism Index (GTI) list.

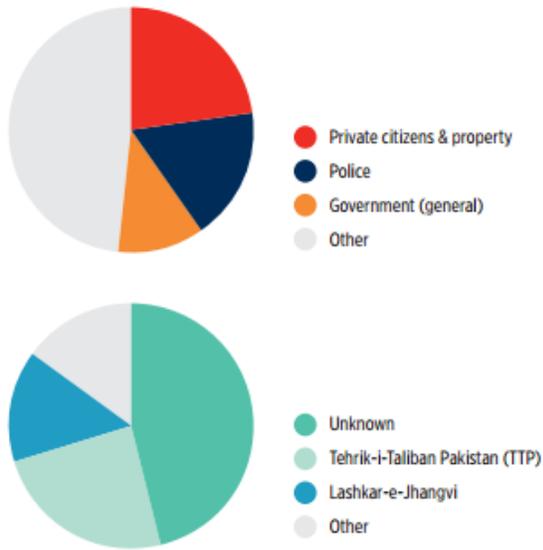
The [report said Iraq was the country hit hardest by terrorism](#), with 2,492 attacks that killed more than 6,300 people. It was followed by Afghanistan and Pakistan, with Nigeria and Syria in fourth and fifth place respectively.

With 10,000 worldwide attacks in 2013, the report says Pakistan in particular saw a 37 per cent increase in deaths and 28 per cent increase in injuries since 2012. The report also said that deaths resulting from terror incidents in Pakistan, Iraq, Afghanistan, Nigeria and Syria account for more than 80 per cent of the the total deaths from attacks.

The report also says that the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) between 2000 and 2013 has claimed 778 attacks, of which 12 per cent were carried out by suicide bombers. It also says that the Taliban have the highest number of fighters, estimated to be between 36,000 to 60,000.



GTI RANK: 3
GTI SCORE: 9.37/10

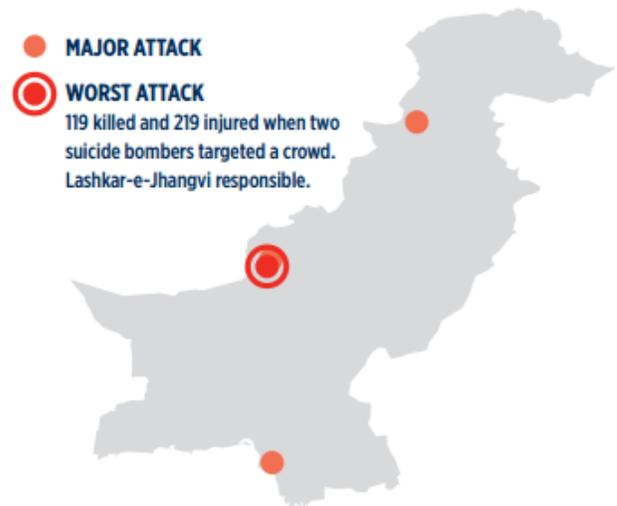
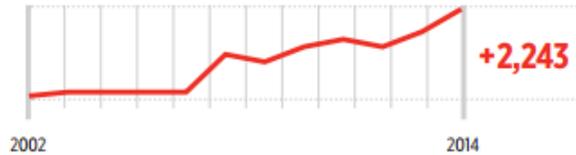


1,933 INCIDENTS

DEAD **2,345**

INJURED **5,035**

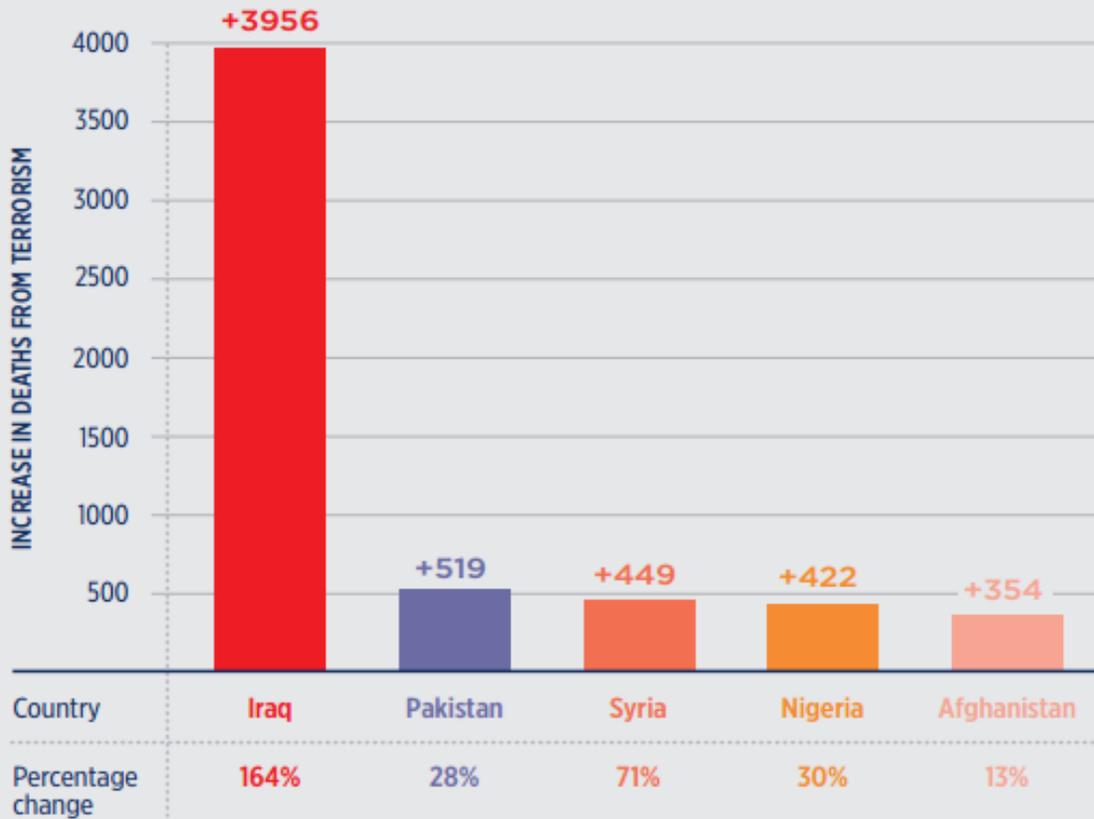
INCREASE IN DEATHS SINCE 2002



1: Pakistan is ranked third on the GTI list.

FIGURE 6 LARGEST INCREASES IN DEATHS FROM 2012 TO 2013

The five biggest increases in deaths were in the countries where terrorism has the biggest impact.



2: Over 80 per cent of the lives lost to terrorist activity in 2013 occurred in only five countries Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nigeria and Syria.

3: Terrorism in Pakistan is strongly influenced by its proximity to Afghanistan with most attacks occurring near the border involving the Taliban. Like in Afghanistan, terrorism increased significantly in Pakistan in 2013, with a 37 per cent increase in deaths and 28 per cent increase in injuries since 2012. Nearly half of all attacks had no groups that have claimed responsibility.

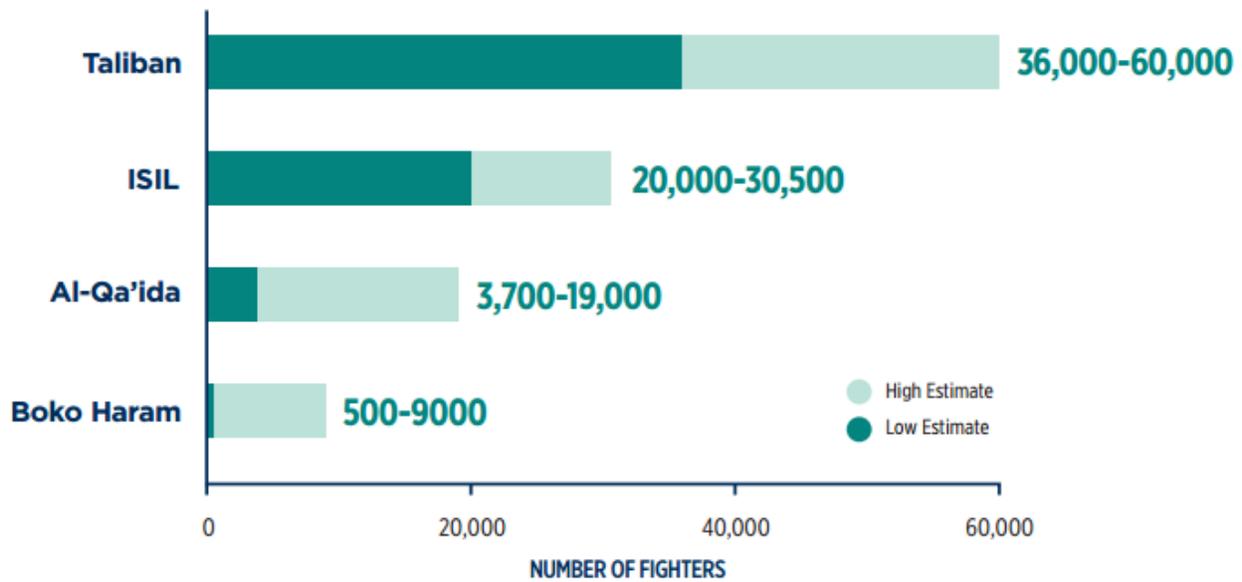
TABLE 1 NUMBER OF SUICIDE ATTACKS BY ORGANISATION FROM 2000 TO 2013

The Taliban, al-Qa'ida and ISIL have claimed the most suicide attacks in the period. However Hamas has proportionally used suicide attacks the most since 2000.

ORGANISATION	SUICIDE ATTACKS SINCE 2000			LAST ATTACK
	Total number of attacks	Number of suicide attacks	Percentage	
HAMAS (ISLAMIC RESISTANCE MOVEMENT)	195	46	24%	2008
AL-AQSA MARTYRS BRIGADE	152	35	23%	2008
AL-QA'IDA IN IRAQ	579	105	18%	2013
ISLAMIC STATE OF IRAQ AND THE LEVANT	492	84	17%	2013
AL-QA'IDA IN THE ARABIAN PENINSULA (AQAP)	298	42	14%	2013
TEHRIK-I-TALIBAN PAKISTAN (TTP)	778	97	12%	2013
LIBERATION TIGERS OF TAMIL EELAM (LTTE)	499	35	7%	2009
AL-SHABAAB	630	43	7%	2013
BOKO HARAM	750	37	5%	2013

4: The deadliest group in Pakistan in 2013, responsible for almost a quarter of all deaths and 49 per cent of all claimed attacks, is Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), the Pakistani Taliban.

CAPACITY, NUMBER OF FIGHTERS*



Note: al-Qa'ida includes al-Qa'ida and all major affiliates.
 * Sources detailed in endnotes.

5: Terrorism in Pakistan has a diverse array of actors. In 2013 there were 23 different terrorist groups, down from 29 groups in 2012. However, 11 groups account for the majority of the 270 claimed attacks. While many of these groups are Islamist there are also other organisations such as separatist movements for Baloch, the Bettani tribe and Sindhi people.

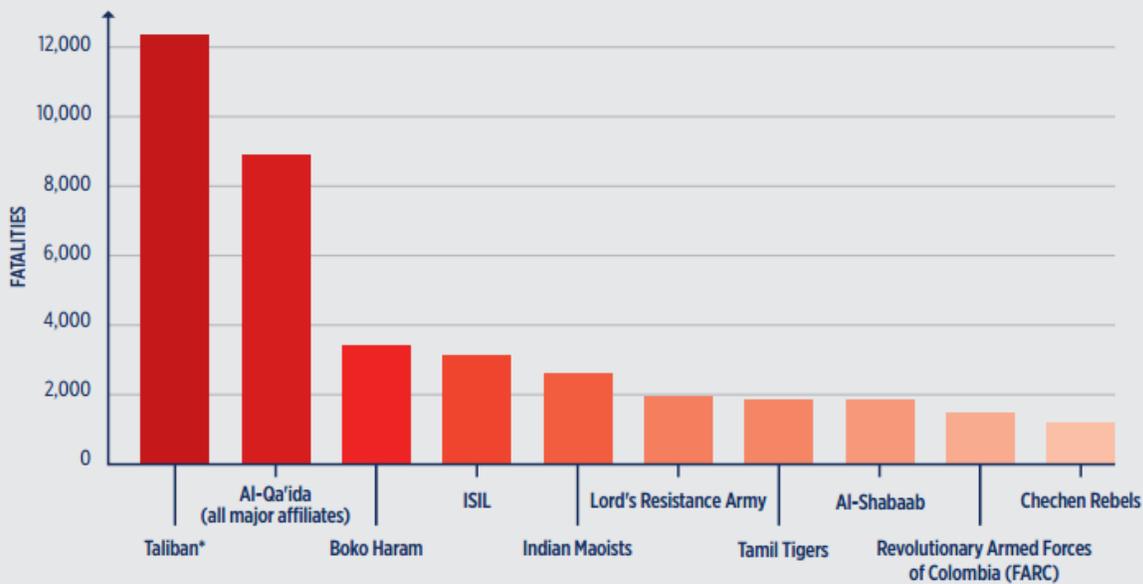
6: Over 60 per cent of fatalities were from bombings and explosions and around 26 per cent from firearms.

7: A quarter of targets and deaths were against private citizens, with police accounting for 20 per cent of targets and deaths. The deadliest attacks were against religious figures and institutions which, on average, killed over five people and injured over 11 per attack.

8: In 2013 there were over 100 attacks on educational institutions, with a total of 150 casualties.

FIGURE 24 10 MOST DEADLY TERRORIST ORGANISATIONS BY NUMBERS KILLED (2000-2013)

The four biggest terrorist groups in 2013 are also the deadliest groups of the last fifteen years.



Source: GTD Note: Taliban includes Afghanistan and Pakistan Taliban.

9: In 2013 there were 71 suicide attacks responsible for around 2,740 casualties.

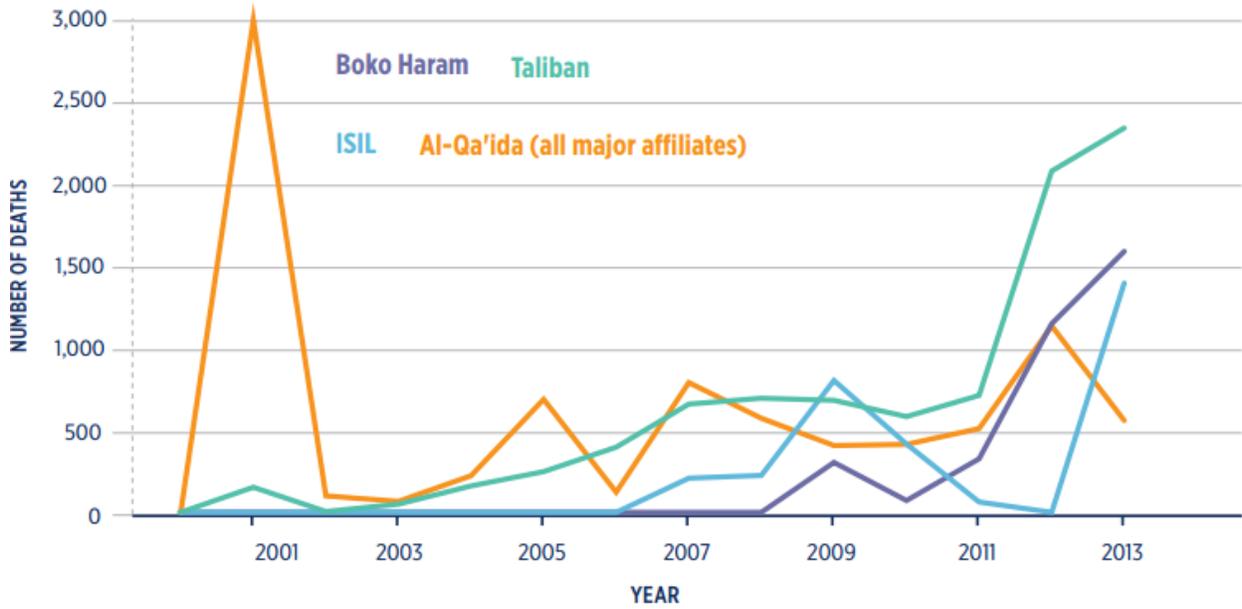
10: More than 500 cities in Pakistan had at least one terrorist incident in 2013, with two or more incidents occurring in 180 cities. Of all attacks 16 per cent occurred in the largest city of Karachi in the south.

11: The city of Parachinar in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, the closest point in Pakistan to Kabul in Afghanistan, has among the highest rates of deaths per incident in Pakistan with 87 people killed from seven incidents.

12: Generally, the dispute with Pakistan over Jammu and Kashmir is the source of terrorism. In 2013 three Islamist groups were responsible for around 15 per cent of deaths. This includes Hizbul Mujahideen, an Islamist group allegedly based in Pakistan with a membership of around 15,000.

13: The country with the second largest increase in the numbers of deaths was Pakistan. However, Pakistan saw a much smaller increase than Iraq with 520 more deaths in 2013 than 2012.

TRENDS, 2000-2013



14: Pakistan saw a substantial increase in the number of deaths per attack. In particular, the second and third biggest terrorist groups, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and Jundallah, averaged 20 more fatalities per attack in 2013 than the previous year. This highlights the grow

THE 20 WORST ATTACKS OF 2013

DATE	COUNTRY	LOCATION	F*	I*	GROUP	DESCRIPTION
17/09/2013	Nigeria	Beni Shiek	142	-	Boko Haram	Gunmen dressed in military uniforms set up illegal checkpoints and shot civilians.
22/07/2013	Syria	Khan Al-Assal	123	-	Al-Nusra Front	Assailants attacked soldiers and civilians in the town of Khan al-assal.
10/01/2013	Pakistan	Quetta	107	169	Lashkar-E-Jhangvi	Suicide bombers detonated inside of a snooker hall and attacked responders to the first explosion.
16/08/2013	Pakistan	Quetta	91	169	Lashkar-E-Jhangvi	An explosives-laden water tanker detonated in a vegetable market.
22/09/2013	Pakistan	Peshawar	87	131	Jundallah	Two suicide bombers detonated outside of all saints church in Peshawar City.
2/08/2013	Afghanistan	Sherzad District	82	-	Taliban	Assailants ambushed a joint military and police convoy.
18/08/2013	Afghanistan	Gulistan District	82	22	Taliban	Assailants attacked a police convoy in Gulistan district.
21/09/2013	Kenya	Nairobi	72	201	Al-Shabaab	Assailants with automatic weapons and grenades attacked the westgate mall in Nairobi and held patrons hostage.
11/06/2013	Syria	Hatla	70	-	Al-Nusra Front	Gunmen attacked the shiite village of Hatla.
20/12/2013	Nigeria	Bama	70	-	Boko Haram	300 Assailants attacked a Nigerian army barracks and kidnapped some soldiers.
16/01/2013	Algeria	In Amenas	69	8	Al-Mua'qi'oon Biddam Brigade (Those who Sign with Blood)	Terrorists seized a British Petroleum gas complex and held 800 people hostage.

* F= FATALITIES, I = INJURIES

ing lethality of the groups.

What ails the civil service? | By Tariq Mahmud

The CSS Point November 20, 2014



What ails the civil service?

Over the years, questions have been raised in Pakistan about the working, efficacy and responsiveness of the civil service as a key state organ. It is perceived that the civil service is often used as a tool by the political leadership to further its own ends. It is not perceived as a neutral and autonomous institution and is considered an adjunct of the political leadership. It has to [conform to the decisions of political leaders](#) without questioning them or their intent. The matter does not end here. There is reward for the ‘doer’, who stands out amongst the rest. A ‘doer’ is someone who does not wait for a formal signal from the political leadership to go ahead with a certain decision; he is swayed by the political instincts of the powers that be and swings into action even without waiting for a formal cue from the leaders.

All over the world, the civil service is known for its role as a game-changer. A proactive and responsive civil service plays a distinct role as preserver of social order, provider of services and

purveyor of growth and development. Singapore, to give an example, is one of the most competitive nations in the world. Its civil service is largely credited for the country's excellence and competitiveness in various sectors. The role of the civil service in the city state is not merely confined to providing information for a policy option to the political leadership, but it is also required to perform a qualitative analysis of an issue before a policy decision is taken.

The question is: does our work culture give freedom of analysis to civil servants? Evidence in this regard is mixed: civil servants in Pakistan, by and large, have been relegated to the status of mere implementation machines. Agenda-setting and prioritisation, on balance, stays within the political domain, which is at times driven by grandiose visions. There is no harm in nurturing grand designs, but such ideas need to be weighed in terms of their opportunity cost. At times, there is a difficult choice between making a [populist decision and the right decision](#). It is here that we require professional advice of the bureaucracy, as well as technical input. As agenda-setting is exclusively a political preserve, thinking minds having an inclination towards making independent judgments, are often nudged away to the sidelines, and a breed of 'doers' is brought to the centre stage. Merit, competence and the Weberian tradition of seniority give way to the 'virtues' of familiarity and fealty. I am not questioning the competence of those who currently form the inner cordon of our ruling elite. The point I am making is that fealty takes over competence and the political ruling class starts drawing on a limited pool of people it can trust, and the presence of a large bureaucratic reservoir becomes of peripheral interest to it. A mix of poorly conceived priorities and a reliance on kinship widens the gap between those who govern and those who are governed, creating disconnect and administrative diseconomies within the bureaucratic apparatus. Tasks become person-specific rather than specific to the system. As a result, everybody ends up performing everyone else's job: you have a situation where a civil servant performs tasks not aligned with his job description.

It will, however, be unfair to put the entire blame at the doorsteps of our political decision-makers. Civil servants, over the years, have abdicated their responsibility and control freaks from the top have brought in such a dependency syndrome that they [keep waiting for signals from the top](#) before carrying out even their own basic functions. The other day, I was going through the joint investigation report on the Model Town firing incident. There were some disturbing allusions about the working of our system at the operational level. According to the report, when the situation got out of hand, the SP in-charge ordered the Elite Force to open fire at the "legs" of the people in the rioting crowd. The reply he got from the in-charge of the Elite Force was: "*Hamaray banday itney trained nahi hain*" (Our men are not trained well enough). This is indeed a startling revelation about the level of training and handling of firearms by a force, and that too the Elite Force, which had been raised for a specific purpose. Training of professionals has been lowest on the agenda, which is poor showing on part of the top bureaucracy. In Punjab, the political leadership had been favourably inclined towards meeting the budgetary requirements of the police. The question is: what stopped the Punjab police from setting apart a reasonable sum for its training needs? In the good old days, there were firing ranges for firearm practice, something that seems to have fallen into disuse.

Civil servants have now reached a stage where they see a lot of benefit in being malleable rather than in putting across a counterpoint or an advice, which may not go down well with the political leadership. The prime minister's recent visit to the UN General Assembly session has been in the spotlight. A lot of questions were raised about the [efficacy of the visit](#). More importantly, one wonders what kind of professional advice was tendered by the foreign office in this regard, especially on an occasion when the US was up on its feet to welcome the Indian prime minister. The UN General Assembly session is a lacklustre occasion. Therefore, the prime minister's visit should have been a multipurpose one to leverage dividends. Did the foreign office put in earnest efforts to arrange meetings for the prime minister on the sidelines, and with what results? Were there any serious moves to arrange meetings with the US leadership to discuss regional issues in the wake of the US drawdown? Such visits are also occasions to establish a connect with the expatriates, but nothing to that effect was arranged, while Narendra Modi rode high like a rock star at the Madison Square Garden.

We live in an information age where every move of our ruling class, which includes both the political leadership and the civil bureaucracy, is under minute scrutiny. Members of this class have to justify and be open about every move they make. The more crucial role rests with the political leadership for making room for a model, which is sustainable and institutional. Above all, the political leadership needs to develop the habit of hearing 'no' from the bureaucracy, a daunting task indeed for both parties.

Pakistan to talk to Kashmiri leaders before dialogue with India: Nawaz

Aamar Gul November 20, 2014



MUZZAFARABAD: Pakistan will speak with Kashmiri leaders before it enters into dialogue with India, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif said Thursday.

Nawaz was speaking at a session of the Kashmir Council in Muzaffarabad, where he earlier arrived for a one-day visit.

“Blaming Pakistan’s agencies for involvement in extremism is an utter lie,” the prime minister said, adding that Pakistan itself was “the biggest victim of terrorism”.

He expressed satisfaction with the international community’s acknowledgement of India’s “biased attitude” towards its neighbour. “The United Nations should play its role in this regard.”

“It is our fundamental belief that the Kashmir issue should be resolved through dialogue. My government initiated dialogue with India but India cancelled the scheduled foreign secretary talks,” he added.

The prime minister was referring to the cancellation of secretary level talks between India and Pakistan, which India called off following criticism of a meeting between Pakistani High Commissioner to New Delhi Abdul Basit and Hurriyat leader Shabir Shah in August.

Nawaz also said that the international community must play its role in bringing India to the dialogue table on the Kashmir issue.

He added that Pakistan's main stance was to resolve the Kashmir issue through talks, adding that India could be brought to the table for talks with the help of international institutions.

"Before dialogue with India, I have decided to engage with Kashmiri leaders," he added.

Nawaz also mentioned the recent skirmishes on the Line of Control (LoC), which he said the army befittingly responded to and politicians condemned unanimously.

The Best Source for CSS Current Affairs



Religion and democracy

Aamar Gul November 20, 2014



Engaging in a process of reform, the proponents argue for the compatibility of Islam and democracy by pointing to traditional Islamic concepts

In his historical survey *Democracy in America* (1831), Alexis de Tocqueville (the French political thinker and historian) discussed what he calls the “great political problem of our times”. The “organisation and the establishment of democracy in Christendom”, according to him, “is the great political problem of our times”. This almost two centuries old observation reminds us, in the words of Dr Nader Hashemi (of the University of Denver) that the “problem of religion’s relationship with democracy is not an exclusively Muslim phenomenon” but one of those problems that other religions and religious traditions — Christianity in particular — “have had to struggle with” in the past.

Dr Hashemi, commenting on this observation by Tocqueville, from a Muslim point of view in the 21st century, argues that to the extent that Tocqueville’s observation is correct, it could be extrapolated that in the same sense that the “great political problem” facing Europe in the 19th century was a question of democracy in Christian lands, in the same way in the 21st century,

arguably “the great problem of our time is the establishment and organisation of democracy in the Muslim world”.

Not only in the 21st century has the issue of the compatibility of religion and democracy or otherwise (in the Islamic world) been discussed. From the final decades of the 20th century and from the 1990s especially, there has been a growing tendency in debates and discussions to question the relationship between Islam and democracy, or the compatibility and coexistence of the teachings of Islam with the principles of democracy. After the events of 9/11 and the subsequent war on terror, this issue came to be discussed with much fervour. In this period, Islam has been frequently described as a “violent” and “terrorist” religion, unconcerned with peace, human rights, justice, tolerance, pluralism and democratic values. This has provoked widespread discussion (within and outside the Muslim world) on this question. With the Arab Spring — the uprisings and protests for the promotion of democracy and dignity in the Middle East and North Africa from December 2010 — these issues have become focal points of worldwide public debate, in the Middle East, North Africa, Asia, the west and the rest of the world.

Generally speaking, one finds two main ‘poles’ that have extensively debated and discussed this issue: rejectionists and supporters. On one side, there is an opponent group, including various western academics as well as extremists and hardline Islamists who believe that Islam and democracy are totally incompatible. Among the various western scholars and writers — varied but marginal — who have made attempts to argue that both are irreconcilable and contradictory, there are Bernard Lewis, Francis Fukuyama (famous for his book *The End of History*), Benjamin Barber, Robert Kaplan, Ernest Gellner, Daniel Pipes and, most influentially, Samuel P Huntington (known for his self-evident thesis in *The Clash of Civilisations*). All of them and others collectively reinforce and strengthen the idea that the Muslim faith and Islamic civilisation are incongruent and incompatible with liberty, democracy, human rights, gender equality and other emancipating principles.

On the other hand, there are a growing number of intellectuals, both Muslims and non-Muslims — the proponents — who have called for compatibility between Islamic socio-political concepts, institutions and western democracy. The prominent academicians who have written (and are writing) extensively and optimistically on the compatibility between the two include Professors John Esposito, John Voll, Dale Eickelman, James Piscatori, Noah Feldman, Abdulaziz Sachedina, Asef Bayat, Khaled Abou el-Fadl, Abdelwahab el-Affendi, Abdou Filali-Ansary, M A Muqtedar Khan and Nader Hashemi.

Based upon — of course, with modern (re)interpretations and (re)readings — the Quran and Sunnah (traditions of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)), there are ample and abundant interpretations that have been fully developed by those who promote the ideals of democracy and human rights in the Muslim world. The majority of moderate Muslim intellectuals of both Muslim and non-Muslim countries adhere to democratic principles based upon their (re)interpretations of the Quran.

Engaging in a process of reform, the proponents argue for the compatibility of Islam and democracy by pointing to traditional Islamic concepts like shura (mutual consultation) between ruler and ruled, ijma (community consensus), ijihad (personal reasoning), bayah (oath of allegiance), mas?lah?a (public welfare) and other such ideas and ideals that have roots in the primary sources of Islam. These mechanisms can be used to support parliamentary forms of government with systems of checks and balances among the executive, legislative and judicial branches. For example, Professors John Esposito and John Voll (authors of Islam and Democracy) say: “Consultation (shura), consensus (ijma) and ijihad (independent reasoning) are crucial concepts for the articulation of Islamic democracy within the framework of the oneness of God (tawhid) and the representational obligations of human beings (khilafah),” which provide “an effective foundation for understanding the relationship between Islam and democracy in the contemporary world”.

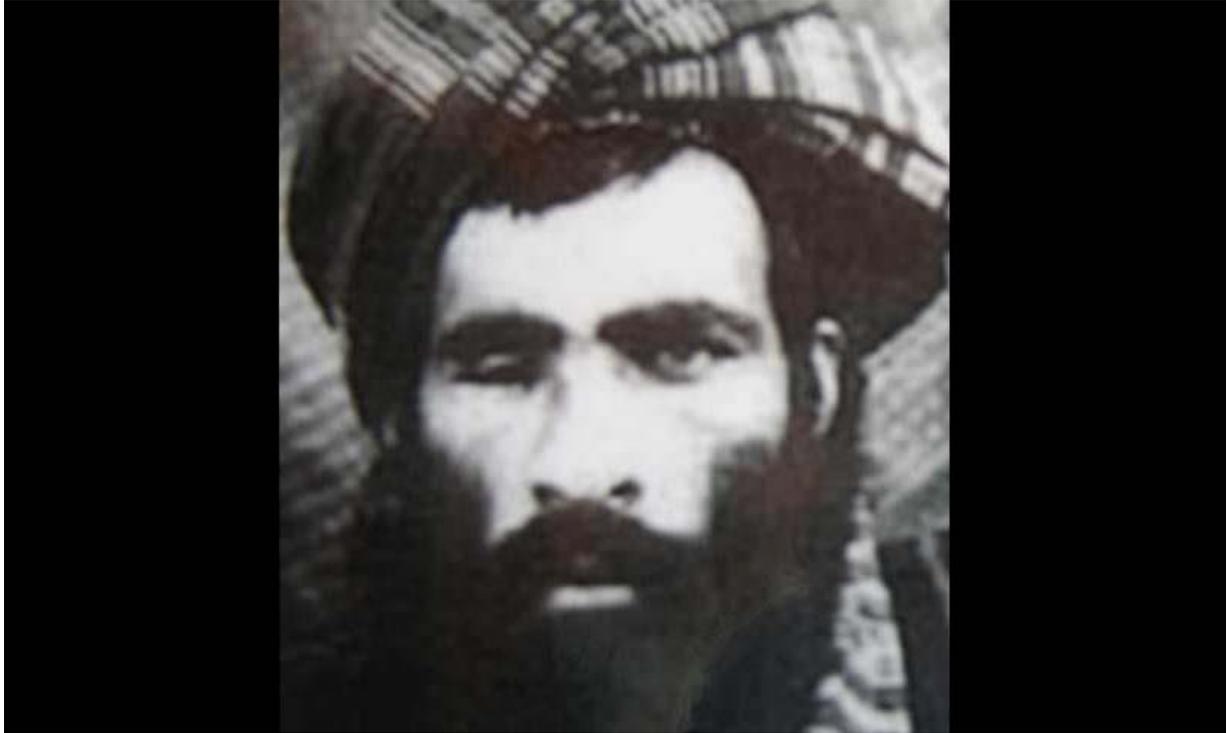
On the basis of these interpretations, the majority of modernist or reformist Muslim intellectuals insist on compatibility between Islam and democracy with a reinterpretation of key Islamic political concepts and values, institutions and legal principles, embedded in the primary sources of Islam, albeit democracy here is conceived of with certain qualifications and limits prescribed by shariah (religious law). Thus, taking into consideration the ‘spirit’ rather than merely the ‘process’ of democracy, it is quite feasible and reasonable to propose that the relationship between Islam and democracy, “complex and nuanced as it may be, is not inherently problematic even by western standards”. At the same time, no one is arguing for the wholesale adoption of western democracy and hence it is safe to conclude that while there are important and profound differences between Islam and democracy, a synthesis of sorts between the two is eminently possible.

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Taliban Supreme leader Mullah Omar has possibly died

Aamar Gul November 20, 2014



The Taliban supreme leader Mullah Mohammad Omar has possibly passed away amid reports that the group has divided into three different parts.

The Afghan Intelligence – National Directorate of Security (NDS) said Wednesday that Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansoor has initiated appointment of his friends as group's top figures.

Hasib Sediqi, spokesman for the National Directorate of Security (NDS) told reporters on Wednesday that senior Taliban figures have divided into three groups are having major differences among them.

Sediqi further added that the first group is led by Mullah Qayum Zakir and Tayeb Agha is also a member along with Hafiz Majeed, Amir Khan Haqqani, Mullah Mohammad Esa, Khadim Abdul RAuf, Zia Agha and Torak Agha.

He said the second group is led by Mullah Agha and Mullah Samad Sani, Mawlavi Nani, Sadar Ibrahim, Sheikh Mawlavi Abdul Hakim and Mawlavi Mohibulalh are members.

How to improve Pakistan's future prospects? |by talat masood

Aamar Gul November 20, 2014



This is a question that is on the minds of millions of Pakistanis and many of the country's detractors and well-wishers abroad. Considering the enormous challenges that it is facing in terms of political instability, economic stagnation, sectarian and ethnic violence, terrorism and extremism, and strained relations with neighbours, especially with India, the reason for anxiety is comprehensible. The concern gets further aggravated when we find that people are neither united nor prepared to face these challenges. Political leaders are advancing their parochial personal, sectarian, ethnic or sub-nationalist agendas at the cost of the national interest. Clearly, the prime responsibility of combating these multiple challenges rests with the government, but the opposition parties also have a huge obligation in countering them, especially as the passage of the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution has devolved a lot of responsibility to the provinces to provide synergy to maximise the meagre resources of the state.

To defeat terrorism and militancy, the success of the military operations in Fata, the situation in Afghanistan and the management of the border are essential prerequisites. While the army has launched a major operation in North Waziristan and a subsidiary one in Khyber, and these have been successful, to what extent the military gains will be sustained and the civilian administration effective so that the IDPs could return and the people are able to lead a normal life, would determine the future

trajectory of Pakistan. Many political parties, which include the PTI and the Jamaat-e- Islami have been indifferent or have opposed military operations. Even the PML-N was initially hesitant in giving the go-ahead to the army, not realising that unless the government is able to regain control over its territory, terrorists will rule the roost and Pakistan's sovereignty will remain compromised in many areas. The whole nation has to stand united against the militants to defeat them in totality. This shows that some of our political leaders, due to personal fear, warped ideological orientation or narrow expedient motives, are prepared to compromise the integrity of the state. Defeating terrorism and extremism is critical if Pakistan's economy is to be revived. Local and foreign investment is contingent on peace and stability in the country.

Major economic reforms have to be undertaken to rid the country of foreign debt, achieve currency stability and reduce inflation. Significant improvement in the quality of governance and policies is required for achieving sustained growth and to meet the laid-down targets of human and infrastructural development. Economic recovery will largely depend on how the energy shortfall is managed. The Pakistan-Iran gas pipeline has been deliberately stalled due to fear of US sanctions. Investment prospects and future completion of the Tajikistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India pipeline, though agreed by all parties, will again depend on the overall security situation of the regional countries. Without meeting the energy needs of domestic, industrial, agricultural and service sectors, Pakistan's economy will stagnate and disruptive forces could come into play.

Meanwhile, for the interim, the government is planning to import LNG from Qatar or Malaysia to fill the huge gap between demand and supply. Due to the sharp decline in the price of oil in the international market, LNG prices have also correspondingly come down and thus become an attractive alternative source of energy. The insurgency in Balochistan has also put a brake on the development of the province and has adversely impacted the national economy. Balochistan's rich economic potential in the form of mineral resources and full benefits from the development of the Gwadar Port that sits astride the Strait of Hormuz, cannot materialise until there is peace in the province. All this illustrates the critical importance of security.

Relations with neighbours, in particular, will greatly influence Pakistan's internal dynamics. Troubled relationships with India and Afghanistan seriously impact Pakistan's security and economy. Scant resources and vitality of the nation is dissipated in countering these forces. There is growing optimism that relations with the new government in Afghanistan, led by Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, will improve. With India, prospects in the near term do not look good despite Pakistan's best intentions, due to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's intransigence.

Pakistan's future will be shaped by how political parties strengthen democracy by moving away from dynasties and patronage to merit-based politics. And the vision of the leadership and its ability to address problems will depend on how political parties reform themselves. Will the military, in the coming years, distance itself from politics and power-play and reduce its economic clout, as is being reflected by the conduct of the new military command? It is crucial that all major institutions work

and remain within their defined constitutional parameters. If the military continues to influence the foreign, defence and security policies in a dominant manner as in the past, then Pakistan's institutional weaknesses and decision-making will remain flawed. Pakistan has to move away from being security-oriented to a broader concept of a state to actualise its potential.

Equally significant is the quality of governance and policies of civilian governments that will shape Pakistan's future. As of now, the performance of the police force and other law-enforcement agencies is far from satisfactory and there is no culture of accountability and pride in performance.

In the long term, it is quality and the spread of education that will determine productivity of the people. The general foundation of science and technology, which has been the driver of change in many developing countries, is very weak in Pakistan and little attention is being paid to address this. Independent research institutions are practically absent. Similarly, the health sector is in complete disarray and grossly neglected, especially in rural areas. Pakistan is one country that is shamelessly reminded every day of its inability to control the rising menace of polio. Lack of education and the poor security situation are the primary reasons for its spread. Serious and sustained effort in improving the standard of education, developing a viable health sector and making concerted effort to defeat insurgency can greatly influence the destiny of Pakistan.

Unequal before the law| By Imran Ahmad Khan

Aamar Gul November 22, 2014



“Oh but do you know what the Israelis are doing to the poor Muslims of Palestine? Will you ever see a Muslim be in a position of power in the US? Do you know about the plight of our poor Muslim brothers in India?”

We are all prone to making such arguments full of fallacies and we often let our egos stand in the way of what is right and what is wrong. The statements quoted above are just some of the reactions that I have faced when I have tried to reason for a non-Muslim Pakistani to be given the same rights as a Muslim Pakistani. So, who exactly do we fool when we claim that minorities are protected, in letter and spirit, by the laws of Pakistan? In this momentary glorification of our society, we tend to

forget that we are meting out the very same treatment to our minorities that necessitated the formation of Pakistan in the first place. A 'separate' homeland for the Muslims of the subcontinent was never going to be an issue had there been basic freedom and equal economic opportunities for the minority in the Indian subcontinent. But the economic imperative aside, are we even giving our minorities their basic rights in Pakistan? Basically, are we following our own Constitution?

No, I don't care about what India and Israel do, and I don't care about how the West stereotypes Muslims. I am concerned about my own country — a country where we are not protecting our own countrymen. I never asked you about Israel or India or the US. You want to know who the real heroes of Pakistan are? It's the Christians living in Joseph Colony, who continue to live in Pakistan, knowing fully well that the 100 odd houses in the colony can be burnt down at the behest of an angry mob. I covered the area for a documentary so I don't mind repeating it here. Two friends, a Muslim and a Christian, party in many vices, had a fight. The Muslim accused the Christian of having committed blasphemy. Lo and behold, the entire colony was burned down. Everything. There was only one judge, jury, and executioner in this case.

The real heroes of Pakistan are the Hazaras living in Quetta. They live in this land of the pure, knowing fully well that the state is doing absolutely nothing to ensure their safety. Those who kill them continue to get state patronage and we sit here in our comfort zones, almost resigned to our fate. All of my passionate 'Pakistan Zindabad' chants become meaningless in front of these brave souls for I have never even ventured into the territory of patriotism that is theirs and theirs alone, just because you and I are too scared to protect them. Only a true Pakistani can stay here knowing what is in store for him or her as a Hazara.

The real heroes of Pakistan are the Ahmadis who stay here, knowing fully well how much their lives are valued in this land of the pure. They never seem to give up and yet here we are, you and I, lying to each other and to the entire world, living a life of hypocrisy. No we will not share their grief, nor will we ever come out to protect them. We are too scared to say a very simple truth: killing someone is wrong!

The Joseph Colony example is the equivalent of the Americans droning innocents in their pursuit of killing terrorists. Or, for the elite, the 'random' security checks that you face at American airports just because your name is Khan. People will come out in huge numbers to condemn America. There will be people who will make sure that they remind you of Israel's atrocities in Gaza. There will be those who will tell you that Ahmadis are non-Muslims — as if somehow this justifies killing them, and ignores the fact that false allegations of blasphemy are also a crime under the laws of the land. All this will happen and we will have the same 'this too shall pass' attitude towards it. You can't miss the trend though. It should worry us; even cause us to lose sleep. If these were one or two cases of injustice, we could still claim to be a tolerant society. But the path we have taken now is going to lead us to extreme intolerance. When we lost Salmaan Taseer, people defended his murder and

felicitated the murderer. Shahbaz Bhatti's murder was also defended openly. Now we have lost a Christian couple in Kot Radha Kishan, burned like pieces of coal fuelling a fire. But why do we act surprised now? What did we do to reverse the dangerous trend when Salmaan Taseer was killed? What did we do to protect the Ahmadis when they were killed? What did we ever do to protect the Hazaras of Pakistan? We did nothing. Why do we expect any kind of reward then?

The next time you see the right speaking of Israel's atrocities in Palestine, remember their silence on this. Replace the Palestinians with Pakistan's minority and Israel with Pakistan, and you will see similar trends of injustice and persecution. We remain adamant on pointing out India's transgressions in Kashmir, yet we remain silent on the brutal treatment meted out to fellow Pakistanis. No, I am not a RAW agent. I am an average Pakistani, concerned about Pakistan.

Remember that you and I, our families and our friends, we are all living in a state of oblivion, tacitly colluding to set in motion a systemic demise of our society.

Let us not fool the world anymore. Pakistan has a problem: we are narrowing down the space for our minorities.

Our Constitution guarantees: "[t]o enjoy the protection of law and to be treated in accordance with law is the inalienable right of every citizen, wherever he may be, and of every other person for the time being within Pakistan."

Either we stop the trend or we say that this constitutional guarantee does not apply to Pakistan's minorities.

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Join hands or perish| By Abbas Nasir

Aamar Gul November 22, 2014



AT a time the country is facing an existential crisis of scary proportions and the troops are finally taking on the militants in North Waziristan, there appears an urgent need to fine-tune many aspects of the strategy if the challenge is to be confronted successfully.

Where the disconnect between the military and the civilian leadership doesn't present a happy sight, the government's lethargic, foot-dragging in key areas and the thinking of some elements in the army don't provide much comfort either.

Having a profile in mind of Sartaj Aziz, the foreign affairs and national security adviser to the prime minister, it was unlikely that he was deliberately trying to embarrass the GHQ when he told the BBC that Pakistan was targeting militants selectively as it had no cause to go after groups that didn't threaten the country.

The Foreign Office jumped in with a damage limitation statement while Mr Aziz himself said he was quoted "out of context". Both feeble attempts if you ask me. Frankly, the statement didn't even show the army in a bad light necessarily even though it has definitely played favourites until recently but actually spotlighted how out of touch the man in charge of the Foreign Office appeared.

The government, army and opposition must be on the same page if Pakistan is to survive as a viable entity.

In an interesting coincidence, the statement came almost simultaneously with an army-facilitated media visit to North Waziristan where the officers in command of the operations left no stone unturned to impress upon the journalists how all groups were being targeted including the Haqqani Network and the erstwhile ally and now actively hostile Hafiz Gul Bahadur.

All other factors notwithstanding, the army commanders' view, as reported in newspapers, that the entire population of the two major semi-urbanised centres of North Waziristan was a willing participant in the 'crime economy' as it aided and abetted illegal activities including kidnap for ransom, was a bit rich too.

Yes, a bit rich because these were the words of the representatives of an institution which abandoned this very population to bloodthirsty hordes in its strategic depth obsession via numerous 'peace deals.'

How can they now blame helpless civilians who must have been forced to do many things they did to save themselves and their families from the wrath of the Taliban? Is this the reason that the return of the IDPs is being delayed indefinitely or are there other reasons?

It is really important for the long-term success of the operations that the army commanders on the ground, even as they remain under constant fire and take casualties, do not give sweeping, contemptuous statements against a whole population.

This thinking and how it manifests itself in actions can drive a permanent wedge between the locals and the soldiers who are there to primarily clear the area of the murderous fanatics who had taken it over unchallenged and return it to normality before handing it back to its owners, the residents.

In the long-term this counterterrorism operation will succeed or fail, and with it the fortunes of the state, on the quality of intelligence gathering. And intelligence gathering, without the bulk of the local population backing the action or worse still hostile to it, will always be found wanting.

As for the government, how much importance it attaches to the ongoing fight against militancy in the country is evident from the fact that the body created to collate and centralise all terrorism-related information/intelligence and possibly direct action against it, the National Counter Terrorism Authority, remains dysfunctional.

Some anti-terrorism legislation may have been passed but the investigation and trial elements of serious crimes, including terrorism, have received little, if any, attention. The result, as so competently recorded in this newspaper by reporter Imran Ayub on Thursday, is a spate of extrajudicial killings, all put down as deaths in the so-called encounters.

Even though Imran Ayub's report kept its focus on the ongoing operation in Karachi, it won't be far-fetched at all to extend his argument to all troubled areas of the country including the tribal areas and Balochistan.

There is no denying the fact that Karachi is losing a policeman a day to terrorists and unidentified hit squads and the soldiers involved in operations in the tribal belt are also taking constant casualties. But if the government were to act with vision, enforcement of the law could be ensured with the people's basic rights also intact.

If the governing party ignores this aspect, it'll do so at its own peril. Mounting public anger at both no improvements in the law and order situation and denial of basic rights could eventually pose a challenge much more real and potent than for example the Imran Khan 'dharnas' that the government appears so obsessed with.

The dharnas should provide good reason for improved quality of governance, for better delivery to the people, rather than a cause for paralysis. If the government chooses to react to this challenge as if it were besieged it'll write its own obituary.

In the ultimate analysis, the government and the army, and even the opposition, will have to sing from the same hymn sheet if Pakistan has to survive as a viable, vibrant, pluralistic state in the comity of nations for such are the existential challenges it has brought upon itself.

The militant threat is real. Very real. We need only look at what's happening in many parts of the Muslim world to understand what ramifications unchecked intolerance, hate-filled ideologies coupled with denial of rights can have. The question is will we learn from the tragic travails of others? Or wait till we experience every ugly consequence of not doing anything ourselves.

China: Socialist, Democratic, Harmonious by 2050?

Aamar Gul November 22, 2014



“I have never heard a Chinese leader declare that his country would be fully democratic by 2050,” said Tony Abbott, the Australian prime minister, on Monday evening as he toasted Xi Jinping. “I have never heard a Chinese leader commit so explicitly to a rule-based international order founded on the principle that we should all treat others as we would be treated ourselves.” And Abbott said this: “I thank you, Mr. President, for this historic, historic statement, which I hope will echo right around the world.”

What prompted the effusive compliment? Earlier in the day, Xi had addressed the Australian Parliament, and he did make sweeping statements. “We have set two goals for China’s future development,” the Chinese leader said. “The first is to double the 2010 GDP and per-capita income of urban and rural residents and build a society of initial prosperity in all respects by 2020. The

second is to turn China into a modern socialist country that is prosperous, democratic, culturally advanced, and harmonious by the middle of the century.”

Xi did use the word “democratic” and he talked about “the middle of the century,” but it is unlikely the Mao-spouting autocrat had a recent change of outlook. After all, during his tenure as China’s supremo he has intensified a prolonged attack on civil society begun by predecessor Hu Jintao.

Moreover, Xi has made it clear he believes China can progress only under the firm tutelage of the Communist Party, which he heads as general secretary. Most China watchers even think he has reversed the multi-decade trend toward weaker central leadership, a trend beginning with the historic transition from Mao Zedong, the founder of the People’s Republic, to economic reformer Deng Xiaoping. If anything, the return to something resembling one-man rule under Xi has to be considered a move away from what most of the world considers “democracy.”

In these circumstances, it is clear Xi made no commitment to democratize by 2050, or for that matter, any date. Unfortunately, in Xi’s speech there was “nothing new” about China’s political system, as Jean-Pierre Cabestan of Hong Kong Baptist University noted in comments to London’s Guardian. “I’m afraid Abbott has been a bit too optimistic.”

It appears most observers, like the oft-quoted Cabestan, believe Abbott was taken in by Xi’s verbiage. There is, however, one other possibility, that the Australian leader was creating a marker by which the actions of his Chinese counterpart would be measured. Foreign presidents and prime ministers have, by employing this tactic, often tried to goad the Chinese political establishment to move in better directions.

Yet whatever is the truth—whether Abbott assigned too much significance to the words he heard or was being diplomatic for good ends—the prime minister missed an opportunity. Ronald Reagan did not praise Mikhail Gorbachev at first; he called the USSR what it was, an “evil empire.” He did not plead with the Soviet boss. Reagan demanded he “tear down this wall.”

“Here’s my strategy on the Cold War: We win, they lose,” Reagan said. And the world, as a result of the determination evident in those words, won soon after. Xi Jinping, for all his apparent strength, is insecure. We can see that from the Communist Party’s coercion at home and hostility abroad.

We need clear-thinking, plain-speaking leaders who will challenge those who seek dominion over others, even if—especially if—they are considered to own this century.

Sharif asks Obama to play role on Kashmir issue |By MUNIR AHMED

Aamar Gul November 22, 2014



SLAMABAD (AP) — Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on Friday asked the U.S. President Barack Obama to play a role in resolving the issue of Kashmir when he travels to neighboring India, the Pakistani foreign ministry said.

In a statement, the ministry said Sharif made this request when Obama called him on Friday. It said Sharif and Obama discussed recent incidents of Indian troops firing across the Line of Control that divides the disputed Kashmir region. The two leaders spoke hours after Pakistan blamed the Indian army for killing a soldier in Pakistan-administered Kashmir.

The statement said Sharif told Obama that the recent cancellation of ministerial-level talks by India and the cross-border gunfire incidents indicated that India was averse to normalization of relations with Pakistan. The White House confirmed that Obama called Sharif from aboard Air Force One while en route to Las Vegas, saying the two leaders discussed efforts to “advance shared

interests in a stable, secure, and prosperous Pakistan and region.” Read aloud by White House spokesman Eric Schultz, the statement made no specific reference to Kashmir.

“Thus, while we remain open to the resumption of bilateral dialogue, the onus is on India to create a conducive environment in this regard,” the Pakistani statement quoted Sharif as telling Obama. Sharif urged “Obama to take up the cause of Kashmir with the Indian leadership, as its early resolution would bring enduring peace, stability and economic cooperation to Asia,” it said.

It said Obama assured Sharif that he would visit Pakistan soon.

Earlier on Friday, the foreign ministry announced that a Pakistani soldier was killed a day earlier in the Pandu sector along the border, which splits Kashmir between Pakistan and India.

It said Pakistan has a lodged protest with India “over the unprovoked firing and mortar shelling by the India forces”.

Exchanges of fire are common along Kashmir’s heavily guarded Line of Control. But such incidents intensified last month when violence erupted in the region during the Muslim festival of Eid al-Adha. Both sides often blame each other for initiating the incidents.

Indian and Pakistan have fought two wars over control of Kashmir since gaining independence in 1947.

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Afghanistan does not need Indian boots on its soil: Karzai

Aamar Gul November 22, 2014



Former Afghan president Hamid Karzai said Afghanistan did not need Indian boots on its soil, only to add later that it did not need any boots on its ground, he said this in a NDTV interview, reports The Dawn. Speaking to Indian journalist Barkha Dutt during the Hindustan Times Leadership Summit 2014 in New Delhi, the former Afghan president also said that India was well situated to train Afghanistan's officers, civil services as well as fulfill its needs of military equipment. Meanwhile, referring to Pakistan, Karzai said the discovery of former Al Qaeda chief Osama bin Laden in Pakistan proved that US was waging war against the wrong country. Bin Laden was killed by US Navy Seals inside his compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan in May 2011. In an address to a think-tank in New Delhi earlier this week, Karzai had also rejected warnings by former military ruler Gen (ret'd) Pervez Musharraf that India and Pakistan could co-opt allies among Afghanistan's main ethnic groups to effectively wage war against each other, saying such claims were "hurtful". "Of course Afghanistan will not allow a proxy war between Pakistan and India," Karzai had said, saying he was "sure" India wouldn't allow such a scenario either.

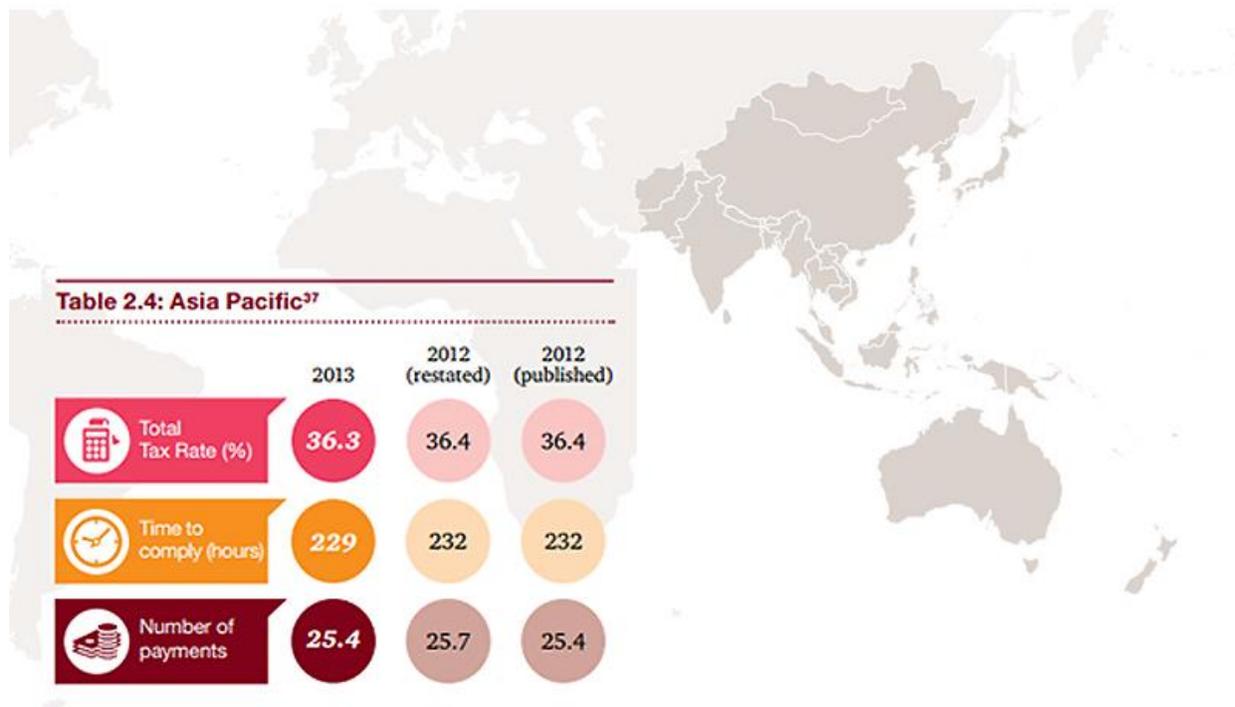
In an AFP interview earlier this week, Musharraf had warned that Pakistan would look to use ethnic Pashtuns to counter if India tries to achieve its goal of creating an “anti-Pakistan Afghanistan”. India and Pakistan have long accused each other of using proxy forces to try to gain influence in Afghanistan. Pakistan was one of only three countries that recognised the mainly Pashtun Taliban regime that ruled in Kabul before being toppled in late 2001 after a US-led invasion in the wake of the September 11 attacks. The Taliban’s downfall led to Karzai’s installation as Afghan leader and he remained in power until standing down as president earlier this year.

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Pakistan ranked 172 in ease of paying taxes: study

Saira Mustafa November 23, 2014



ISLAMABAD: As paying taxes has become easier for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) around the world, a report of World Bank Group and a multinational professional services finds that tax filing time has increased by 17 hours in Pakistan due to the introduction of a new provincial VAT (value-added tax) system.

In 189 nations Pakistan is ranked 172 with an average of 44.46 in terms of ‘distance to frontier’, according to the [‘Paying taxes 2015 study’](#), jointly released by the World Bank and PwC.

In the current report, for the first time, ranking on the ease of paying taxes is based on the distance to frontier score rather than on the percentile rank.

The distance to frontier score benchmarks economies with respect to a measure of regulatory best practice, showing the gap between each economy’s performance and the best performance on each indicator.

In 2010, Pakistan increased the VAT rate from 16 per cent to 17pc and raised the minimum tax rate from 0.5pc to 1pc levied on turnover.

‘Paying Taxes 2015’ measures all mandatory taxes and contributions that a medium-size company must pay in a given year.

Taxes and contributions measured include the profit or corporate income tax, social contributions and labour taxes paid by the employer, property taxes, property transfer taxes, dividend tax, capital gains tax, financial transactions tax, waste collection taxes, vehicle and road taxes, and other small taxes or fees.

For the first time since the ‘Doing Business’ publication was introduced, a second city is measured in the 11 economies — Bangladesh, Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Russian Federation, and the United States — with more than 100 million inhabitants.

The study notes that the average total tax rate for Asia and the Pacific is largely unchanged though this is the net result of the total tax rate reducing in some economies.

For the total tax rate the threshold is defined as the highest rate among the top 15pc of economies in the distribution of the total tax rate for all economies since 2006.

This year’s threshold is 26.1pc.

The study finds that on average, the standard company studied has a total tax rate of 40.9pc of profits. It makes 25.9 tax payments per year and takes 264 hours to comply with its tax requirements. Over the ten years of the study, 78pc of the 189 economies covered in the report have made significant changes to their tax regimes at least once.

Time and no. of payments required to comply with tax obligations have fallen over the ten-year period, as has the average total tax rate. The fastest rate of decline for the total tax rate occurred during the financial crisis 2008-2010 with an average of 1.8 percentage points per year during that period.

The rate of decline then started slowing in 2011.

The average time it takes a medium size company to deal with its tax submissions has fallen by nearly a week and a half over the ten years of the study; reflecting the increased use of electronic filing and payment systems around the world. Of the 379 tax reforms recorded in the reports since 2004, 105 relate to electronic filing.

In its conclusion, the study says that financial crisis had a substantial impact on national tax revenue, leading in many economies to larger government deficits and higher levels of public debt.

This may have helped trigger efforts to redesign tax systems, with governments aiming to strike the right balance between raising additional revenue and avoiding a greater tax burden on businesses.

The study says: “It is time for a new era of tax reform across the key regions of the world economy. “The success will depend on addressing four key challenges: supporting losers as well as rewarding winners; avoiding the temptation to put off change; looking at the tax system as a whole; and fighting the temptation to make tax system more complicated for very understandable economic and political reasons.”

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Debatable quota | By Javed Hafiz

Aamar Gul November 23, 2014



WHAT is common between the incumbent chief secretary Punjab, chairman NAB, just retired chairman Federal Public Service Commission and our ambassador in Paris? It is their military background. They entered the civil services through a separate process devised for young military officers, bypassing the CSS examination.

Under this system, 10pc seats are given to armed forces in the DMG, foreign and police services. However, a minimum of two military officers must be inducted every year into each service. Since I belonged to the Foreign Service, my comments will largely be confined to that group.

The induction of military officers into the civil service started soon after the creation of Pakistan. However, this was supposed to be a one-time measure as Pakistan got only a few officers of the

erstwhile ICS. There were hardly any inductions from the military in the 1950s. In 1960–61, Ayub Khan inducted eight young captains into the then CSP. After a long interlude, Bhutto inducted a large number of military officers in the civil and foreign services through lateral entry in 1972. However, the credit (or discredit) for institutionalising these inductions on a regular basis goes to Gen Ziaul Haq.

An esprit de corps is essential to every service, civil or military. The Foreign Service of Pakistan had assumed a fairly harmonious character by 1970. Bhutto's lateral entry disturbed the harmony of this service group which had come to be considered as one of the best in the world. While the lateral entry did bring in its wake some bright officers, the induction of 100-plus officers to a cadre of about 200 had a demoralising effect. It affected the promotion prospects of regular officers. And for many years, the Foreign Service remained an inharmonious group. Should military officers, even if retired, be part of the diplomatic corps?

The lateral entrants into the Foreign Service included 35 officers of military background. And then Ziaul Haq's mandatory quota ensured that military officers would continue to come into the Foreign Service. All services, civil and military, keenly guarded their turfs.

A rear admiral, howsoever bright, cannot command an army division. Young civil servants cannot join the armed forces bypassing the ISSB tests. Then why are young military officers allowed to join the three services without taking the CSS examination? This aberration is reflective of lopsided civil-military relations in Pakistan. Officers coming from the two streams have very different educational backgrounds. It is quite difficult to retrain the hard-wired military officers who tend to see everything only in black and white.

Affirmative action is practised by many countries to help the underprivileged. In the United States, affirmative action was used to bring African-Americans into the services. In India, the Mandal Commission reserved a number of civil services seats for Dalits and Other Scheduled Castes. The provincial quota in Pakistan aims at giving equitable representation in services to all regions.

The question that arises here is whether the military officers are an underprivileged segment of our society. And as they are not, is their induction not in violation of constitutional principles? The Constitution stresses the globally accepted principle of equal opportunities for all citizens.

In the Foreign Service of Pakistan, the number of officers with military background now is about 75 in a cadre of around 500. This gives them a distinct identity of a sub-group and they tend to look after the interests of each other. This is an unhealthy development within a larger group that is Pakistan's first line of defence.

In case a military officer wants to take the CSS examination, an NOC from the respective headquarters is needed. Such a request is invariably refused citing shortage of officers. But

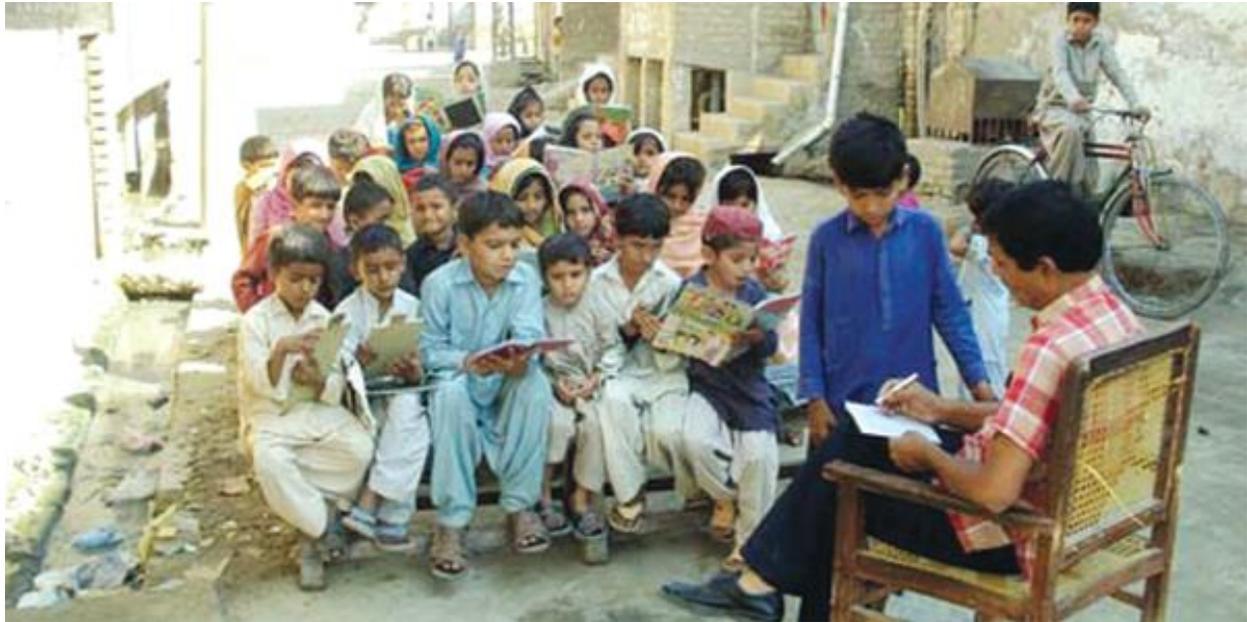
simultaneously the armed forces do spare some officers annually to join the civil services through a special procedure which is not so transparent.

At the moment our ambassadors in Bosnia, Jordan, Libya, Mauritius, Brunei, Nigeria, Sri Lanka and Ukraine are retired military officers. This arrangement is now peculiar to a few security states like Pakistan. The EU countries refuse to accept our retired military officers as ambassadors. In the mid-1990s, Pakistan fielded Sahibzada Yaqub Khan as candidate for the director generalship of Unesco. He had good credentials but lost because of his military background. The international message was clear. Military officers, even if retired, should not become part of the diplomatic corps.

Gen Ziaul Haq, the brains behind military quota in civil services, is long gone but this peculiar legacy of his endures to this day. It is time to revisit this arrangement. Fairness and merit-based policies of induction are the need of the hour.

Quality education or bust |By Syed Bakhtiyar Kazmi

Aamar Gul November 23, 2014



In order to impart a good education it is necessary that teachers themselves are well educated, which in turn requires that the cream of society adopt this noble profession.

The plan for this week was to write about the forthcoming demonstration at the end of the month and the government's very recent and intrepid response thereto. I even thought up the title, 'Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never harm me'. However, as is the case with all manmade plans, a disturbing comment at a networking gathering changed all that: "One out of every three children not in school on this globe is a Pakistani." On the lighter side of the phrase, this brings to mind a joke from a television sitcom where, upon the expected birth of a fifth sibling, a child suggests a Chinese name with the logic that every fifth person in the world is Chinese. On a serious note, however, the statement has sinister connotations.

One must confess not having Googled the statistic to confirm its accuracy simply because it would not have made a difference. Irrespective of whether Pakistan tops the list or not in this statistic, the mere fact that the nation is a contender is deplorable. One more confession: I never had any intention to write on the dharna (sit-in), best left to expert media analysts more practiced in concocting conspiracy and doomsday theories. In retrospect, it did make the beginning of the article amusing. The advent of the Industrial Revolution brought about a fundamental change in a world trapped by a Malthusian economy; manpower was substituted by machine power, which allowed mankind in

general to enjoy better quality, healthier, longer lives and, for those nations that led the aforementioned revolution, the result was a bonanza. Guns, germs and steel, identified by at least one theory as the primary catalyst behind the rise of the empire, were a direct by-product of industrialisation.

The Information Age, on the other hand, has substituted brainpower with computing with the consequent effect of migrating mankind into couch potatoes fiddling with handheld devices and, at the same time, has facilitated the dawn of a new kind of imperialism. Once again, the nation leading this technological evolution rules the day.

While Pakistan's modest aspirations, at least in the medium term, might not include being the globe's only superpower, they, on the other hand, cannot be limited to being a colony of one or the other empire either. Having always held the view that it is well nigh impossible for a developing nation like Pakistan to jump a few rungs on the ladder of growth and move from an agrarian economy to a technology-led service economy, the drift of the arguments in these columns has been to suggest a focus on export-oriented and import-based manufacturing. In addition, one has always advocated that while trade is absolutely necessary, developing nations need a mercantilist mindset to ensure that they are not relegated forever to producing raw materials for the world, and hence abject economic slavery; comparative advantage does have its disadvantages. However, deliberations on growth conclude with one critical realisation: an education trumps everything else, even trade.

Unskilled labour can only plough farmland; skilled labour, a literate population in the true sense, is the one ingredient necessary for growth, if Pakistan wishes to ever achieve the status of a developed nation. Democracy might be better than dictatorship or, perhaps, vice versa. It really does not matter except that Pakistan has tried them both and neither was or has been successful in improving the education sector; the amount spent out of the annual budget on education was, is and for the foreseeable future appears to be pathetic by any standard for a populace this size. Even the amount spent on education, including aid money, is wasted. Building schools and paying parents to ensure student attendance does not ensure quality education; only good teachers will accomplish that task. The difference between education and quality education is the same as the difference between electricity and cheap electricity; it is of no use. A constitutional requirement to provide primary education to every child is not worth anything if such an education does not enable the child to read or write or do simple math. Let us not even venture towards higher education.

So, what is the solution? Can the government train teachers or force them to impart better education? Perhaps, if the government puts a gun to every teacher's head, which in itself would be a tall order given the cost of guns. Were I to venture a guess, I would say it is highly unlikely. In order to impart a good education it is necessary that teachers themselves are well educated, which in turn requires that the cream of society adopt this noble profession. Will that ever happen? In a society where

teachers are paid a pittance, are not respected, are made a spectacle of in the media, are bullied by parents and are dependent on politicians and the bureaucracy for their sustenance and survival, never!

So, what can motivate gifted students to opt for this profession? Respect, authority and independence are necessary and would make a huge difference but at the top of this decision matrix is (once again) money. The debate about whether a free market economy is better than a planned and regulated economy or whether maybe the golden mean lies somewhere in between the two extremes aside, in this particular case man's innate greed is good. Everyone will agree that a student's choice of career path is fundamentally driven by hopes of lucrative employment in the future. In the good old days, medicine, engineering and government service led the options.

Today, the best of the best probably choose journalism or to be a politician or perhaps the government administrative services, including the police. Does anyone want to be a teacher by choice? Certainly not! So, take a guess who is teaching the future generations of Pakistan; it is definitely not the brains of the country.

Admittedly, these are not the views of an educationalist and obviously the experts may have lots of game plans for improving education in Pakistan, although nothing seems to be working and, yes, there are many people who are running numerous programmes in the sector. However, as the famous saying goes, pay peanuts and you get monkeys. So, how does the change come about? The first step is recognising the problem and while the simplest answer is to pay teachers more, things are never that simple. Even so, if we do not want to be controlled, quality education, not education, has to be our top priority.

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Putin says Russia will not isolate itself behind ‘Iron Curtain’

Saira Mustafa November 23, 2014



MOSCOW: President Vladimir Putin said in an interview published Sunday that Russia did not want to isolate itself behind a new Iron Curtain, which he said would be disastrous for the country.

Asked if Russia wanted to build new fences, he said, “We don’t. And we won’t do this. We understand the disastrous consequence of an Iron Curtain for us.

“In other countries there have been periods when countries tried to barricade themselves off from the rest of the world, paying a very high price for this,” Putin said in the interview with TASS news agency.

He argued that Russia “simply does not need to compete with the West” and should “peacefully carry out its agenda”.

But at the same time, Putin said that he was not bothered by being personally isolated by world leaders after he faced a hostile reception at the G20 summit in Brisbane over Russia's actions in Ukraine and left early.

Putin said he was not interested in the opportunity "to slap each other on the shoulder, call each other friends, go on visits to each other and go to the G8" if world leaders did not take Russia's position into account.

"I didn't become president of a country to satisfy my personal ambitions. It's absolutely no use to me, if they neglect Russia's interests. That means then we won't go to visit them, but meet at other forums, in a business-like atmosphere," Putin said.

Pakistan's leaders have no vision or plan for national development|By Munir Akram

Aamar Gul November 23, 2014



The title of Oscar Wilde's novel about late 19th-century British society also aptly sums up the most essential requirement for the effective governance of nations and states. History testifies that peoples, nations and empires rose to greatness when they were well governed and decayed and declined when they were not.

By this yardstick, Pakistan is in dire straits. The evidence of its serial mis-governance almost since its birth are palpable.

Today, Pakistan's democracy is dysfunctional, its economy stagnant, its society divided between the few rich and the mass poor. Justice, jobs and security are unavailable for a growing population of uneducated and alienated youth.

Meanwhile, Pakistan's leaders, caught in petty power plays, have no vision or plan for national development. Pakistan — the world's sixth most populous country — was not invited to any of the three summits held in Asia earlier this month, illustrating its decline and marginalisation.

The demands for reform made in the recent protest movement led by Imran Khan and Tahirul Qadri have been lost in the political melee.

The commission of inquiry into electoral fraud will only scratch the surface. It is unfortunate that the opportunity was not seized to promote wider and more essential governance reform to ensure that Pakistan can survive and prosper as a modern state.

There are at least 10 areas that need to be addressed urgently.

One, politics. The feudal and unequal structure of Pakistan's society is a major obstacle to representative democracy and economic development.

Repeatedly, elections have thrown up political leaders who are mostly ignorant, arrogant and corrupt.

Rules and mechanisms can be created to set high standards for political office and ensure that decent and qualified people of modest means can be elected to political office. Pakistan's leaders have no vision or plan for national development.

Two, law and order. Pakistan has become a violent place, afflicted by terrorism, criminal gangs and political thuggery. The state must re-establish its monopoly of coercive power.

The armed forces have a self-evident but not solitary role. Given honest purpose and adequate resources, the country's security apparatus can be cleansed and modernised to reassert state authority.

Three, the judicial system. The concept of an independent judiciary acting as a check on executive power has either failed at critical moments in Pakistan's history or been perverted to individual or political purpose.

Without hope of securing fair or timely justice, ordinary people have had increasing recourse to illegal and extra-legal, often violent, means for the settlement of disputes. A simpler system for the dispensation of justice and a modality for oversight of the judiciary would help in restoring the rule of law.

Four, local government. The daily lives of most people are deeply affected by the quality and responsiveness of local governments.

The present system is custom-made for corruption. Emulating successful examples, such as the Swiss communes and the panchayats of yore, and adhering to the rule of ‘subsidiarity’ — allowing as many decisions as possible to be taken at the lowest possible level — can simplify the administration of the entire country.

Five, the bureaucracy. Pakistan inherited a fairly good bureaucratic system from the British but has proceeded to politicise, corrupt and destroy it. It should be discarded and a new one created.

A modern state needs a functionally qualified, impartial and decisive bureaucracy, free of avarice and political fear or favour, to ensure its efficient administration and development. There is no dearth of Pakistanis within and outside the country who can form the core of such a new bureaucracy.

Six, government finances. The government is broke because only a small fraction of income earners — mostly the salaried class — pay their taxes. Successive governments have shied away from broadening the tax base and utilising coercive measures of tax collection because the delinquents either belong to the political class or have political connections.

A fair and effective system must be quickly implemented. Likewise, huge savings can be made by restructuring or privatising the 20-plus loss-making state corporations that are bleeding amounts equal to the country’s entire budget deficit each year.

Seven, human development. Pakistan’s growing population of the young, uneducated and unskilled is an economic and social liability, feeding radicalism and crime. A skilled population would be its greatest asset, generating income and consumption and accelerating economic growth. Education and skill creation should be Pakistan’s highest priority and deserve vastly expanded budget support.

Eight, infrastructure. Most of Pakistan’s physical infrastructure — transport, energy, irrigation — is over 50 years old. Economic growth and investment will continue to be constrained without modern infrastructure.

The greatest impediment to infrastructure development, apart from the paucity of resources and long-range planning, is the system of kickbacks and corruption surrounding public projects. An investment authority, free of political affiliation, should be constituted to oversee the effective and planned execution of infrastructure projects.

Nine, agriculture. Pakistan’s vast potential in food and agricultural production has been neglected. With its large population, agricultural production in Pakistan can be enlarged significantly by small farmers, not large conglomerates. This would also ease the unemployment and urbanisation

challenges. What is required? Land reform, to entitle small farmers, and technological and financial support to enable them to succeed.

Ten, industrialisation. Local manufacturing industries are essential to create jobs, substitute imports, enlarge exports and propel growth and general prosperity. For once, we should follow Mr Modi by proclaiming a 'make in Pakistan' slogan. To succeed, it will be necessary to review Pakistan's trade and investment regime which does not offer sufficient incentives and protections to domestic producers.

The ten tasks outlined here may appear too daunting at first sight. Yet, with serious and bold leadership, a planned and sequenced endeavour can be launched to implement the governance reforms that are vitally needed to save Pakistan from further decline and eventual political and social collapse.

To start, agreement should be reached to establish a high-level commission to identify the reform agenda. It could set up committees composed of reputable experts in each area to propose the reforms and the modalities for their implementation.

Unfortunately, it is not evident who can convince Pakistan's political establishment of the importance of being earnest.

Pakistan-Russian ties: The grass roots approach |By Mehak Ameer

Aamar Gul November 24, 2014



With bilateral relations between Russia and Pakistan gaining ground, Moscow has already opened up vistas in the relation through a well-settled Russian community living in Pakistan. This community is a sign of a whole lot of examples passing unnoticed, thereby advocating reliance on the radical measures introduced by the governments of the two countries only. This cooperation at grass roots level, involving individuals from both sides, truly complements the existing ties of the two countries in various fields.

This specific Russian community, many of them women, living in Pakistan for at least a decade, clearly manifests the readiness of these nationals to extend goodwill and mutual understanding amongst each other. In an attempt to dispel stereotypes across borders, the Russians have demonstrated open-mindedness without question for a long time, while embracing differences and respecting cultural diversity as well as perspectives of the Pakistanis. Indeed, both Russia and Pakistan are heading towards establishing sustainable ties that cannot be disregarded at all.

Furthermore, Russia's approval of selling MI-35 helicopters to Pakistan in order to help combat terrorism in the region shows commitment to defeat this scourge and make Pakistan a peaceful country. Earlier in 2013, Russian President Vladimir Putin had also condemned the Quetta terrorist attack as a criminal and barbaric act that was aimed at destabilising the situation in Pakistan.

Lately, Moscow has also expressed interest in enhancing cooperation in the energy sector, and working on projects like Casa-1000, development of the Gwadar liquefying facility and construction of a pipeline between Gwadar and Nawabshah in order to take the relationship to a new level.

Besides this, the world's largest country is actively involved in the process of accession of Pakistan to the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation as a full member, fostering improved ties of the two countries.

Moreover, the meeting of Pak-Russia Intergovernmental Commission scheduled to take place in Moscow, as well as the expected visit of Russian defence minister to Islamabad on the sale of defence equipment will definitely give new impetus to the bilateral relations of both the nations.

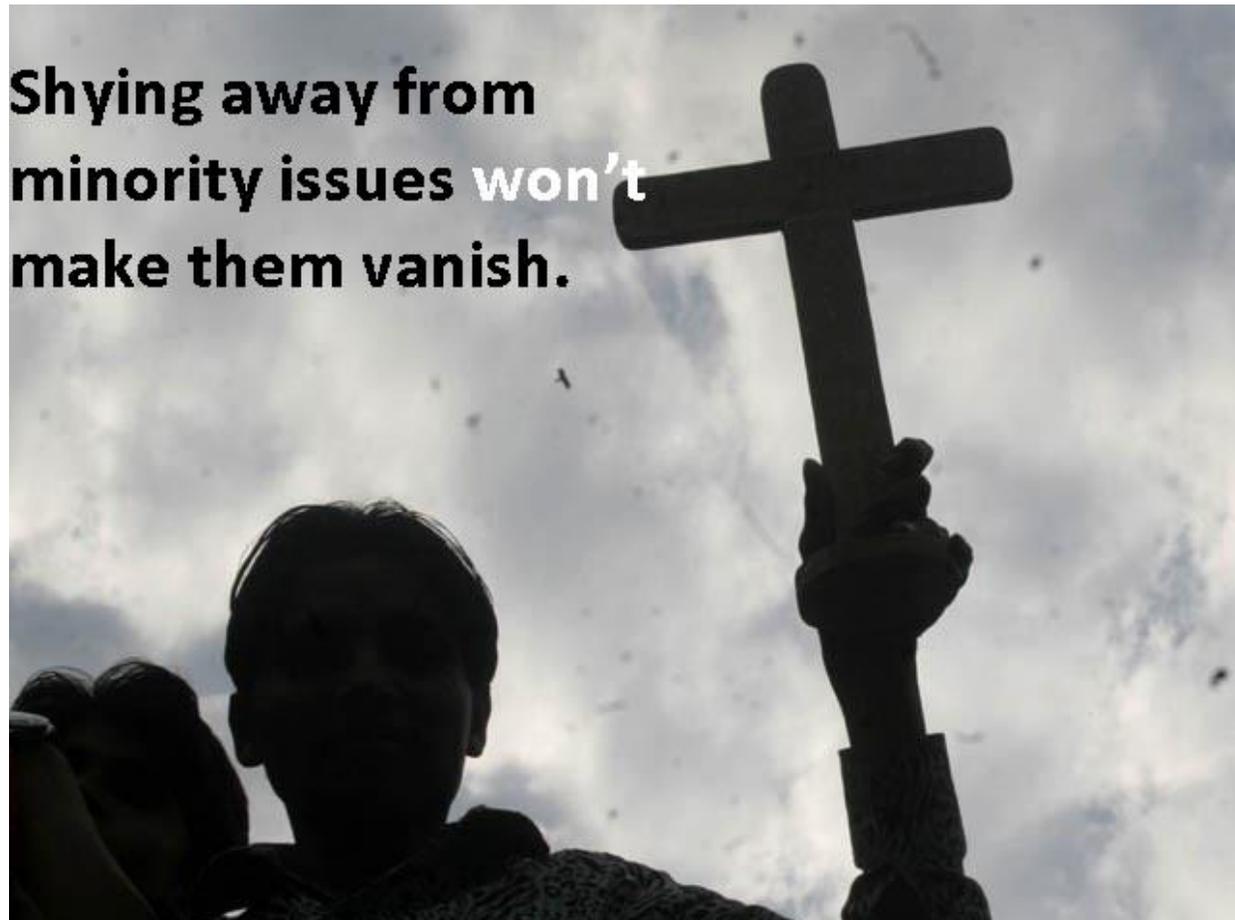
Published in The Express Tribune, November 18th, 2014.

The Best Source for CSS Current Affairs



Better Pakistanis' |By Hajrah Mumtaz

Aamar Gul November 24, 2014



TRAGIC irony, cruel joke or absurd contrast, it's hard to decide what to make of the distance between several of this country's grim realities and the self-proclaimed good intentions of those who have taken it upon themselves to do something about them — because, after all, no one was thrust into politics and everyone who sits in a position of administrative power, be it in parliament or at a lower tier, is there because they volunteered for the job.

Consider a couple of gems that have appeared in the news in the recent past. On Nov 16, in its ongoing effort to improve the lot of the people of minority religions whose fate it is to struggle on in this country's unedifying terrain, the PPP proposed that the word 'minority' should be replaced with 'better Pakistani' in all official correspondence. Yes, really.

At a seminar organised by the party's human rights wing in Lahore, PPP Senator Aitzaz Ahsan said that "the word 'minority' should be replaced with 'better Pakistani' as whenever it is attached with

anyone, it belittles the personality regardless of stature”. He added that the PPP intended to pass a resolution in this regard, and that it is likely to move a resolution carrying this demand in the National Assembly, too.

Shying away from minority issues won't make them vanish.

I'm sure that will go a long way to assuage the anguish of the families of Shama and Shahzad, whose screams have not yet died away in our consciousness.

There's no issue with the logic underpinning Mr Ahsan's observation: putting a person in a category other than the majority mainstream, based in fact though it may be, is the beginning of the process of converting them into a 'them' as opposed to 'us', and from there a slide into hostility is all too easy. But if only the problems with the Pakistani state and people's treatment of minorities, whether religious or ethnic, were so easily solved, prejudiced mindsets so easily changed. Let's send around a petition to get 'better Pakistani' Asiya Bibi out of jail, and to stop Hindu girls from being forced to marry persons beneath their stature, since the former are 'better Pakistanis'.

On the other side of the spectrum of the inexplicable, on Nov 9 the Senate Standing Committee on the Commerce and Textile Industry came up with a new idea to attract foreign investment: it advised the government to cast about for the attention of wealthy businessmen around the world who migrated — or whose families migrated — from Pakistan soon after Partition. According to a report prepared by a sub-committee, back in 1947 some five million people, Hindu, Sikh, Parsi and Christian, left what now constitutes this country and migrated to other parts of the world.

“Pakistan's neighbouring countries, especially India, are encouraging these emigrants to invest in India, instead of their ancestral lands in Pakistani Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan,” says the report, adding that such people in Canada, America, Europe, the Far East and the Middle East can be encouraged to invest in their “historical homeland”.

According to the account published in this newspaper: “The committee has called upon the government to highlight the cultural heritage of non-Muslims in the country so that all these non-Muslims who migrated from Pakistan ‘are able to develop a strong cultural, economical, social and religious bond with their homeland’.”

Reportedly, 431 such prospective investors have already been identified by the Board of Investment; one can only wish the government godspeed in its efforts to create strong links with people who left the country nearly seven decades ago, or their descendants. I can't speak for them, obviously, but it seems to me that anyone watching the systematic and systemic abuse of the country's minorities from afar would be aghast and, if their roots lay in this piece of land, be grateful that they are not here to potentially face the brunt of it.

Like so many other sectors, in this area too Pakistan's efforts towards improvement are piecemeal, tend to address symptoms rather than the causes, and, frankly, ostrich-like — as if refusing to look the issue in the face will somehow manage to render it without existence.

The solution to minorities' predicament here is on paper quite simple. A start could be made by making changes to legislation open to misuse such as the blasphemy laws. At the same time, improving access to education, poverty alleviation and investment in human resource would go a long way towards raising the profile and power of communities that are marginalised as much as a result of these factors as of being from a minority religion. Meanwhile, identifying and successfully prosecuting those that target people on the basis of religion would send out strong signals about the state's focus on inclusiveness.

Yet, somehow, all this seems a far cry in the context of this country. Better, then, to just leave it at 'better Pakistanis'.

6.7m Pakistanis used drugs in 2013: report

Aamar Gul November 24, 2014



QUETTA: Around six per cent Pakistanis — 6.7 million people aged between 15 and 64 years — used drugs over the past 12 months.

The Drug Use in Pakistan 2013 Survey Report released here on Saturday said that 4.25m people were thought to be drug dependent but treatment and specialist interventions were in short supply.

The treatment was available to less than 30,000 drug users during the period under review, the report said, adding that not all structured treatment was free of charge.

The survey on the prevalence and patterns of drug use among the population aged 15 to 64 aims to inform the government, civil society and private-sector organisations so that they could develop and implement effective prevention, treatment and care services in the country.

Balochistan Health Minister Rehmat Saleh Baloch launched the report prepared by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes (UNODC) in collaboration with the Narcotics Control Division, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics.

The report says that in a country where almost a quarter of the population is estimated to be living on less than \$1.25 a day, the barriers preventing access to structured treatment are exceptionally high.

It said 0.28m people used illicit substances in Balochistan in the past year whereas 17,000 drug users are estimated to be injecting drugs. “Cannabis was found to be the most commonly used drug (2.8 per cent). Vulnerability to HIV and other blood-borne diseases through injecting drug use is also considerable due to sharing of needles and syringes.”

Mr Baloch said his ministry was collaborating with the UNODC for prevention of both drug use and of HIV among people who injected drugs.

The ministry in partnership with the UNODC would continue its efforts for drug use prevention in the province, he said.

UNODC Representative in Pakistan Cesar Guedes said the survey had been conducted in Pakistan at the provincial level for the first time and it provided a comprehensive data on drug use “The information contained in the report will form baseline for future planning and designing of drug prevention and treatment programmes in Pakistan,” he said.

Pakistan has fastest growing nuclear weapons programme in the world: report

Aamar Gul November 24, 2014



Pakistan has the fastest growing nuclear weapons programme in the world and could have enough fissile material to produce more than 200 nuclear devices by 2020, an influential American think tank said in a report.

The special report by the the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) report, titled "Strategic Stability in the Second Nuclear Age", also identified South Asia as the region "most at risk of a breakdown in strategic stability due to an explosive mixture of unresolved territorial disputes, cross-border terrorism, and growing nuclear arsenals."

Pakistan, the report said, has deployed or is developing 11 delivery systems for its nuclear warheads, including aircraft, ballistic missiles and cruise missiles.

"Pakistan has not formally declared the conditions under which it would use nuclear weapons but has indicated that it seeks primarily to deter India from threatening its territorial integrity or the ability of its military to defend its territory," the report added.

Pakistan nuclear delivery systems, 2013

Delivery system	Year deployed (first tested)	Range (km)	Payload (kg)	Status
Aircraft	null	null	null	null
F-16A/B	1,998	1,600	4500	null
Mirage V	1,998	2,100	4000	null
Ballistic Missiles	null	null	null	null
Abdali (Hatf-2)	2,012	-180	200-400	Under development
Ghaznavi (Hatf-3)	2,004	290	500	Fewer than 50 Hatf-1,3,4 and 9 launchers combined
Ghauri (Hatf-5)	2,003	>1200	700-1000	Fewer than 50 launchers
Shaheen II (Hatf-6)	2,011	2,500	-1000	Unknown number of launchers
Nasr (Hatf-9)	2,013	-60	Unknown	Fewer than 50 Hatf-1,3,4 and 9 launchers combined
Cruise Missiles	null	null	null	null
Babur (Hatf-7)	2,005	600	400-500	Under development; ground launched
Ra'ad (Hatf-8)	2,007	350	Unknown	Under development; air launched

Further, the report said, while Pakistan is focused predominantly on the threat posed by India, it is reportedly also concerned by the potential for the United States to launch a military operation to seize or disarm Pakistani nuclear weapons.

“This concern is based in part on reported contingency planning by the US military to prevent Pakistani nuclear weapons from falling into the hands of terrorists,” said the report. Pakistani officials, however, deny that these concerns affect Pakistan’s nuclear force posture or plans.

The report, authored by George Mason University’s Gregory Koblenz, notes that India and Pakistan face more severe security challenges than those of the other nuclear weapon states due to their history of high-intensity and low-intensity conflicts, higher levels of domestic instability, geographic proximity, the dispute over Kashmir that has existential implications for both countries, and the history of cross-border terrorism.

“The next crisis between India and Pakistan could be sparked by a cross-border military incursion, a mass-casualty terrorist attack or a high-profile assassination,” the report added.

Further, the report said, the size and composition of Pakistan’s nuclear forces appear increasingly dictated by India’s growing conventional military capabilities.

“Pakistan’s reliance on nuclear weapons to compensate for its conventional inferiority will likely be an enduring feature of the nuclear balance in South Asia,” said the report.

The report also highlights a ‘worrisome’ development that the Indian and Pakistani practice of storing their nuclear warheads separately from launchers, which has provided a strong barrier to nuclear escalation in the past, may be eroding.

Pakistan’s deployment of tactical nuclear weapons on short-range missiles and India’s development of a sea-based deterrent may lead both states to loosen their highly centralised command and control practices, the report notes.

“The short flight times of ballistic missiles between India and Pakistan exacerbate these tensions by sharply reducing decision-making timelines for government officials during a crisis,” said the report.

The CFR special report calls for a long-term negotiating effort by the United States with the other six recognised nuclear states (China, France, India, Pakistan, Russia, and the United Kingdom) to address specific sources of instability, including missile defense, antisatellite weapons, and conventional counterforce systems.

Status of nuclear forces, 2014

Country	Operational warheads	Reserve/ Nondeployed	Awaiting dismantlement	Total stockpile
Russia	1,800	2,700	2,500	8,000
United States	2,100	2,530	2,700	7,330
France	290	10	0	300
China	0	250	0	250
United Kingdom	160	65	0	225
Pakistan	0	-120	0	-120
India	0	-110	0	-110

Further, to improve the prospects for stability in South Asia, the report recommends encouraging official and Track II dialogues among China, India, and Pakistan on nuclear issues, and building scientific and diplomatic capacity in India and Pakistan to enable discussions on these subjects.

The report also urged the Obama administration to deepen bilateral and multilateral dialogues with the other nuclear weapon states on strategic stability and build capacity within India and Pakistan to participate in such dialogues.

Democracy and Pakistani Political Culture

Aamar Gul November 24, 2014



While democracy requires attention to structural prerequisites – including a parliamentary system of government, regular elections, a strong judiciary ensuring checks and balances, and smooth relations between civilian and military institutions of the state – it also requires [a political culture](#) that is conducive to its consolidation. In other words, for a democracy to institutionalize and then consolidate, the beliefs and values of ordinary citizens count.

During the course of my lectures at the University, I would pose a question to students – asking whether a democratic system is best suited to the Pakistani political system? The answer most generally would be that during the phase of democracy, political leaders and parties are prone to corruption and mis-governance, and that periods of dictatorship, most recently under General Pervez Musharraf, guaranteed socio-political stability and – most crucially – economic development. Prodding them further, I would say: “But Pervez Musharraf was not a democrat,” and the answer again, generally would be: “That does not matter, we want good governance, not a disorderly and corrupt democracy!”

The political culture hence reinforces the argument that it is political and economic stability that ordinary Pakistanis desire and given the choice between good governance and democracy, people

will opt for good governance. Hence, good governance under an authoritarian government is better than the anarchy which besets Pakistan during a democratic political arrangement. The argument is then stretched further to reiterate that Pakistan is, in fact, not suited to democracy. This is what in Pakistan is called the *danda* (stick) theory. It goes something like this: Pakistanis are ignorant and illiterate and prone towards violence, law-breaking and felony. The only thing that keeps them in check is if a strong man, on the top of the political system, a [Leviathan](#), keeps the disorderliness of the masses in check and guarantees stability through force. Having heard this story of our political culture since my days as a student, I was forever opposed to it. Well, if the Pakistanis are ignorant and illiterate why not make them un-ignorant and literate.

In more ways than one, democracy in Pakistan in recent times has more often been the butt of jokes for citizens of the state. The 2008 elections ushered in probably one of the [most corrupt regimes](#) in Pakistan but one which survived and completed its five years in office. Interestingly, one could note that while people condemned Asif Zardari for his corruption and shady deals, they also came to appreciate him for his propensity to “survive.” While Asif Zardari survived his five years in power, a most crucial question was how and in what ways would people approach the general elections that took place in 2013? That they would display apathy and not vote in numbers in the coming elections was what conventional wisdom dictated at the time.

Interestingly, Pakistan’s political culture did not display pessimism with the democratic political process and [more than 50% of the population voted](#). This meant that despite the failings of a democratic government, under the PPP, the people of Pakistan reserved their faith in the democratic process as a means of change. This time, the voice of the people, was echoed by Imran Khan and his Tehreek-e-Insaf. Basing his campaign on accountability, an end to corruption, resuscitation of Pakistan’s fledgling economy and federalism in Pakistan, Imran Khan was able to mobilize one of the most politically conservative sections of Pakistani society, the middle and upper middle classes.

The general elections in 2013 can be considered as truly historic. For one, the elections signified a peaceful transfer of power with one government completing its full term in office, relinquishing power and making way for another. This was remarkable because it had [never happened before](#) in Pakistan’s entire political history. Second, the mobilization of the masses through a now revitalized Tehreek-e-Insaf, signaled that Pakistan’s national political space was moving beyond the mainstream politics of PPP and PML (N). A welcome development, the induction of the Tehreek-e-Insaf in Pakistani politics provides a strong incentive to both PPP and PML (N) to perform well or otherwise, risk losing political power in the next elections.

While the elections and rise of Imran Khan may be seen as a cause for optimism in Pakistan’s quest for democratic consolidation, the political culture in Pakistan is still in a state of flux and evolving. A good measure of recent thinking are the sit-ins and protests in Islamabad which have characterized Pakistani politics for the past four months. For some, the street sit-ins and protests are a sign of endemic political anarchy which visits Pakistan every time there is a democratic government in power. Come democracy, come political instability. For others, including the protestors themselves,

the protests are a maturing of Pakistan's democracy as protestors lay claim for more democracy to be instituted and are dissatisfied with the present state of democracy in the country.

This latter aspect of Pakistan's political culture is set on an interesting, yet dangerous, path. It is in more ways than one an aspiration for good governance, not necessarily, democracy. While it may be impossible to separate the two in any assessment of democratic consolidation in Pakistan, it is democracy which should take precedence over good governance. Why? Because good governance comes from democracy, not the other way round. While entities like Singapore and Hong Kong may be contrary examples to the argument being made here, it is virtually impossible, as recent protests in Hong Kong indicate to keep people subjugated for long in an authoritarian political system that guarantees good governance but not democracy.

While the average Pakistani voter yearns for good governance and socio-political and economic stability, it should be mindful of not injuring the nascent democratic process in the country through its street power. The maturing of Pakistan's political culture, in the first instance, requires abrogating the *danda* theory – for a *danda*, at the end of the day, tends only to injure and kill people, both physically and ideationally.

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Regional and Extra-Regional Contours of South Asia |By Beenish Altaf

Aamar Gul November 24, 2014



Despite being a poor region, South Asia stands prominent in international security architectures and the shifting dynamics of regional and global politics. India's burgeoning economy and world's [fourth largest](#) armed forces, equipped with a nuclear weapons capability, have enabled it to play a great power role beyond the region. Indo-US strategic relations are [being interpreted](#) as the [defining partnership](#) of the 21st Century.

Pakistan is embroiled in the global War on Terror (WoT) which has penetrated in its body-politics, especially in the western regions – Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK). A weak economy and poor governance and law and order undermine its political stability. As an ostensible paradox, it maintains the [seventh largest](#) armed forces in the world in terms of active troops and possesses an expanding nuclear weapons capability.

Nonetheless, India's policy to substitute the outgoing security architecture is strongly disliked by Pakistan. Seeing as India has already [called off](#) scheduled peace talks last month, the on-going situation on the LoC and Working Boundary (WB) is an additional blow to peace talks' efforts. The National Security Committee (meeting on October 10, 2014) [noted that](#) these developments have not only disappointed the people in Pakistan and India, but also the international community. In this regard, an endemic India-Pakistan conflict presently manifests itself in the recurrent LoC crossfires, casting serious doubt on the resumption of and prospects for the Composite Dialogue, peace, and regional stability.

Recent years have seen major developments and shifting in the South Asian region which would continue in 2014 and beyond. The 2013 elections and the change of military guard in Pakistan and 2014 elections in India are proving to be game changers for the sub-continental political landscape. 2014 elections in Afghanistan and the expected drawdown of the ISAF/NATO forces in Afghanistan are generating new undercurrents in the South, West and Central Asian politics – this region in its eastern fringe includes the seven SAARC countries and in the west Afghanistan and Iran.

However, post-2014, the capability of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) to maintain law and order post-ISAF is being sanguinely questioned. Besides recognizing the US exit as the major contemporary swing, the plan under the Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) is that some [10,000 US troops](#) can remain in Afghanistan after the international combat mission ends on December 31, 2014. Nevertheless, since the document itself does not establish how many US troops can be in Afghanistan during that time (it was actually an [announcement](#) from US President Barack Obama), it does remain to be seen how much of the NATO forces will be withdrawn, what type of military forces will be left behind, and under what genre of legal and political framework they will remain. In a broader vision, there would be a transformation of engagement in 2014, not [exactly disengagement](#).

A negotiated settlement of Afghanistan would inevitably lead to promoting peace in the region, with critical insinuations for international security. In addition, the imperatives of energy security intertwined with the pursuit of strategic power exhibited by alliances like NATO – who since late 2001 has emerged as a major institutional player in Central Asian security affairs – or the Shanghai Cooperation Organization ([SCO](#)) would be the crucial determinants of the shifting paradigms of regional politics in South and Central Asia. The extra-regional great-powers, e.g., China, the European Union, Russia and the US, and their regional partners, e.g., Afghanistan, India, Iran, Pakistan and Turkey are serious contenders in post-2014 Eurasian power-politics. Additionally, [IP and TAPI gas pipeline](#) projects have profound ramifications for South and Central

Asia. Burma as well has the “[potential to connect](#) the countries of South Asia with the countries of Eastern South Asia in an integrated economic landscape.”

An immensely important variable in the altering regional landscape are US bilateral and multilateral relations with India, Pakistan ,and China which will determine the regional dynamics and strategic power equilibrium in and around the South Asia region. These undercurrents of contemporary changes are the primary concerns of the South Asian security and strategic community.

Shifting strategic dynamics and emerging power competition in Eastern South Asia, Western South Asia, and Central Asia – while presenting challenging scenarios for the political-military leadership and strategic decision-making echelons – could also help surmount the political obstacles of the twentieth-century. It may possibly link efforts to address terrorism, education, economy issues, health, trade, gas pipeline projects, energy sector, security and bilateral and multilateral initiatives among states.

Pakistan-India nuclear arms race unabated

Saadat Agha November 25, 2014



WASHINGTON – Nuclear and missile arms race between India and Pakistan is showing no sign of abating even though atomic arsenals are shrinking in the rest of the world, a New American think-tank report

“Although both States claim to seek only a credible minimum deterrent, regional dynamics have driven them to pursue a range of nuclear and missile capabilities.” according to the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) report, entitled “Strategic Stability in the Second Nuclear Age”.

“While Pakistan is focused predominantly on the threat posed by India, it is reportedly also concerned by the potential for the United States to launch a military operation to seize or disarm Pakistani nuclear weapons,” the report says.

“This concern is based in part on reported contingency planning by the US military to prevent Pakistani nuclear weapons from falling into the hands of terrorists. Pakistan’s sensitivity to such a disarming operation was heightened by the 2011 Abbottabad raid that killed Osama bin Laden

because it revealed Pakistani vulnerabilities and highlighted the willingness of the United States to take unilateral military action on Pakistani soil,” CFR said

It says the “size and composition of Pakistan’s nuclear forces appear increasingly dictated by India’s growing conventional military capabilities.”

The report’s author Gregory Koblentz said India and Pakistan face more security challenges among nuclear powers due to a variety of factors including the decades-old Jammu and Kashmir dispute, which has existential implications for both South Asian nations.

“India and Pakistan face more severe security challenges than those of the other nuclear weapon states due to their history of high-intensity and low-intensity conflicts, higher levels of domestic instability, geographic proximity, the dispute over Kashmir that has existential implications for both countries, and the history of cross-border terrorism.”

“The next crisis between India and Pakistan could be sparked by a cross-border military incursion, a mass-casualty terrorist attack or a high-profile assassination.

Koblentz also notes that Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who entered office in May 2014, has pledged to review India’s nuclear doctrine. Since its first nuclear test in 1974, India has publicly adhered to a no-first-use policy.

According to its 2003 nuclear doctrine, India seeks a “credible minimum deterrent” to deter nuclear attacks on its territory and armed forces and vows that its response to a first strike would be “massive and designed to inflict unacceptable damage.”

In addition, this doctrine qualified India’s NFU policy to allow for the use of nuclear weapons in response to a major chemical or biological attack.

At the same time, CFR said Pakistan has the fastest growing nuclear weapons programme in the world and by 2020 it could have enough fissile material to produce more than 200 nuclear devices.

“Though many states are downsizing their stockpiles, Asia is witnessing a buildup. Pakistan has the fastest-growing nuclear programme in the world. By 2020, it could have a stockpile of fissile material that, if weaponised, could produce as many as 200 nuclear devices.

The report has identified South Asia as the region “most at risk of a breakdown in strategic stability due to an explosive mixture of unresolved territorial disputes, cross-border terrorism, and growing nuclear arsenals.”

Pakistan, the report said, has deployed or is developing 11 delivery systems for its nuclear warheads, including aircraft, ballistic missiles and cruise missiles.

“Pakistan has not formally declared the conditions under which it would use nuclear weapons but has indicated that it seeks primarily to deter India from threatening its territorial integrity or the ability of

its military to defend its territory,” the report said.

CFR said India is estimated to possess enough fissile material for between 90 and 110 nuclear weapons and is expanding its fissile material production capacity.

China, it said, is estimated to have 250 nuclear weapons for delivery by a mix of medium, intermediate, and intercontinental-range ballistic missiles and bombers.

The growth of nuclear and missile capabilities on the subcontinent since 1998 has increased the risk that such a crisis could escalate in unforeseen and dangerous ways,” the report said.

Since the conventional military imbalance between India and Pakistan is expected to grow thanks to India’s larger economy and higher Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate, Pakistan’s reliance on nuclear weapons to compensate for its conventional inferiority will likely be an enduring feature of the nuclear balance in South Asia, it said.

Another American think-tank report suggested that the US and Europe should work more closely to make Pakistan’s nuclear weapons a greater international priority as their proliferation pose a major risk to global security.

“The United States and Europe should work more closely together to make Pakistan’s nuclear development? specifically, its development of tactical nuclear weapons? a greater international priority,” says the report, ‘A Transatlantic Pakistan Policy’.

“The proliferation of these weapons presents a significant risk to international security simply by the increased possibility of their loss, theft, sale, sabotage, or accidental use,” says the report — a collaboration between German Marshall Fund and Swedish Defence Research Agency(FOI).

The report, to be released, has been authored by Dhruva Jaishankar, Andrew Small and Daniel Twining from German Marshall Fund, US, and John Rydqvist at FOI.

It provides recommendations to US and European officials to improve cooperation on policy towards Pakistan.

The report suggests the US and Europe need to clearly divide labour on counterterrorism issues, including a clear role for the EU.

A better understanding of the implications of Pakistan’s continued support for militant proxies is needed, as well as efforts to deepen Afghan-Pak cooperation.

The transatlantic partners, additionally, can help to increase civilian role in law-enforcement in Pakistan through training programmes and development assistance, which should be directed to

resource-starved police, rather than military. On civil-military relations and governance, the report notes that the US and Europe can focus their efforts on specific governance issues – such as energy and education.

“Western support could involve initiatives to empower Parliamentary standing committees and the judiciary. Better efforts can be made to shape popular narratives by supporting and educating members of the media and reforming school curricula,” it said.

The report recommends that the Pakistan government should be held accountable for human rights abuses by security forces or State-supported militias against religious and ethnic minorities, women, and other marginalised groups.

The US and Europe — the largest providers of development assistance and export destinations — have a role to play in transforming the Pakistani economy, the report said.

This would involve embracing and cooperating with a new wave of regional infrastructure initiatives and economic institutions, often driven by Gulf States and China, it said.

“The US and Europe can also use their bilateral and multilateral economic leverage to advance efforts at regional integration and connectivity. And they can use the military withdrawal from Afghanistan to reorient the relationship around economics and investment, in order to help Pakistan realise its potential as an emerging market,” the report said.

How to rethink ‘Pakistan isn’t made for democracy’ |By Sami Shah

Aamar Gul November 25, 2014



Democracy never sounded like a good idea to me. Not the way it was sold, anyway.

‘Government of the people, for the people, by the people,’ sounds less like a promising achievement and more like a warning.

It only works when you don’t think about the fact that the people really shouldn’t be trusted with anything, unless that thing has had all its edges sanded off and no small wiggly bits that they might accidentally swallow and choke on.

My point is, people really aren’t all that great.

And before you think I’m a snob for saying so, remember I am ‘people’ too. I know exactly what kind of an idiot I am. Just off the top of my head, I often forget to pull up my zip before leaving the house, I’m still not totally sure what relationship the Senate and the Parliament have in the government (although I pretend like I do), and I will shamelessly admit to liking the new Taylor Swift song despite being a 36-year-old man. And this is just the stuff that I’m willing to admit to.

Why should I be allowed any say in the way a country is run? My vote should be confiscated on the basis of musical taste alone.

Yet, democracy is what we want.

Pakistanis genuinely have a love for democracy that the rest of the world should admire, if the rest of the world wasn't so busy flinching every time we shifted in our seat.

It took Egypt almost 5000 years to try democracy, which they then screwed up. The rest of the Middle East is even more embarrassing in how they have yet to realise why it's a bad idea to let some random guy with all the weapons and money rule over you for the remainder of his bloated life. Most European countries have 'parliamentary democracies' (see how I threw that into conversation without being 100 per cent sure what it means) but also still have kings. In 2014. And they call us backward. At least we don't believe in Narnia.

And American democracy is vibrant and inspiring if you like the idea of a two-party system where both parties are owned by the same corporate lobbies and only about 12 people in the whole country bother to vote. Compared to all of them, Pakistan has thrown off every dictatorship that ever tried taking root here, returning time and again to the idea of democratic governance.

In the last decade we've seen the diminished power of the two-party system with a genuine third party rising up and becoming a genuine contender in the next election. And in last year's election, over 55 per cent of the country voted (according to most polling data). I'm surprised we haven't yet invaded America to install true democracy.

So, why is it so difficult? Why, once we achieve democratic governance, do we want nothing more than to get rid of it?

As soon as an election is over, everyone who didn't win starts agitating for a new election, voters start apotheosising the last dictator, and we generally act miserable about the whole set up. The favourite Pakistani refrain is,

Pakistan isn't made for democracy.

The problem, I believe, is that while we like the idea of democracy, the practical application is always a disappointment. It's much like every season of [Coke Studio](#), exciting in its promise and heartbreaking in its execution (I am willing to admit that's a cheap shot, but then I never said I wasn't cheap).

Maybe the issue is the type of democracy. There are, after all, many ways of doing democracy, as long as the basic principles are adhered to.

So, in my goal of continuing to provide solutions to Pakistan's problems, instead of just whining about how things are broken, let me offer up new ways of doing democracy in Pakistan.

1. Roman Democracy:

Yes, I know, I bang on about Rome all the time. Shut up, I totally read a book about it once and I saw that HBO show and I love it. If you all let me wear a toga in public, then we wouldn't be having this problem.

Anyway, during the Republican-era of Rome, they had a quasi-democratically elected government. Why do I say, "quasi-democratically"? Because the only people allowed to vote were men, and even then, every election was a hideous show of bribery, corruption, and thuggish intimidation.

Sounds thoroughly modern, doesn't it?

Elections, then, were held annually, with the highest ranking elected official being the Consuls. Those were basically like the presidents of Rome. Why plural? Because Rome elected two of them every year. Often each one representing an opposing side. And they couldn't be elected more than once.

To further frustrate each Consul, they were both given veto power over one another. However, it could only be exercised on a bi-monthly basis, because each Consul was given absolute authority every alternate month.

Can you imagine that — if the last election had resulted in both Imran Khan and Nawaz Sharif as shared presidents, who then had to work together if they wanted anything achieved?

And then, before we could grow sick of them and regret voting for them, the next election starts up and we get Zardari and Maulana Fazlur Rehman. And so on.

I'm telling you, Roman history is good for more than just awesome movies and TV shows.

2. Level-up Democracy:

Video games were tough when I was young. I'm talking about shortly after the Mesozoic period, of course, when the earth had cooled and the continents separated, and the Atari was the greatest console in all the land.

Back then, you didn't have walkthroughs and hacks and pause buttons or very many buttons at all. You had one joystick and a large red button that you mashed with your thumb if you wanted anything to happen.

In those games, I'm talking about classics like Pacman and Space Invaders, you only moved onto the next level if you did everything right in the current level. And if you failed, you died and went back to zero.

It was traumatic and upsetting and taught you important lessons about life. Which is why I think we should look to those old games for lessons on how to fix our government.

We all know that election promises are false promises. It's taken for granted now, in fact.

Americans only recently learned this to be true, once they discovered that Candidate Obama was shockingly different from President Obama.

Pakistanis have considered this an ancient truth. We know that when Candidate N he will make education his top priority, he means that Prime Minister N will remember that education was a thing that people talked about once, but not really recall the specifics.

When Candidate Z says corruption will be stamped out, he means that President Z will giggle when you quote his older self and then pick your pocket lean, while you weep.

We have different standards for politicians, depending on where in the election cycle they exist. Those running for office should present themselves as the paragons of human virtue, whereas once they achieve office, we're happy if they don't debase themselves too embarrassingly.

Not if we implement my video-game approach to the government.

Every politician's promise is listed during the election season. Then, once the election is over, they are allowed to hold office for a month. Based on how many of those election promises are achieved, that month is extended.

Make education a priority? You get three months more.

Stamp out corruption? Add another month on.

Every politician is thus held accountable and their achievements incentivised. Which, if lab mice in a maze have taught us anything, is the only way in which we can be reliably expected to do anything.

In video games, if you mess up, you die and end up back at zero. Now I'm not advocating the killing of politicians if they fail to achieve the goals they themselves set, but that's only because it would be irresponsible of me to say so. I do, however, like the idea of a timer running out and if, after one month, the politician has done nothing towards the targets, they are kicked out of office and have to start again as a civilian running for the elections.

Holding politicians to the same standard as Pacman is literally the very least we should do.

3. Mandatory Democracy:

The problem with politics, I've found, are the politicians.

Being a career politician is a very particular thing, not everyone can do it. Indeed, some might argue not everyone should do it.

It's actually not that different from being an opinion columnist, also a rare skill that relies upon certain psychological quirks and unique talents.

The successful opinion columnist is someone who must be, above all, an utter narcissist — someone with such an esteemed estimation of themselves, that they feel the rest of the world is the lesser for not having it thrust upon them.

Coupled with this indulgent self-worth is the sociopathic ability to have a detailed opinion on whatever is current in the news, yet somehow managing to keep that opinion stapled to their particular ideological bent.

In the real world, people are a muddle of dogmas and creeds; conservative on some issues, liberal on others. A columnist, much like a pundit (and, indeed, a politician) is boringly, predictably, identical on all topics of consideration.

Finally, there is the desperate compulsion to be seen; writing columns pays very little, if anything at all; if the comments section of any online article can be used as a system of measurement, every opinion columnist is equally the subject of respect and ridicule; and, in the grand scheme of things, the columnist makes no difference to the practical world at all.

Politicians are the same. These are people who believe, fervently, that they are only fulfilled when being the representatives of millions of humans, and that the lives of their fellow human beings are insignificant in comparison to their own ascendancy. That's some seriously crazy stuff.

If your cousin acted that way, you'd stop inviting him over for dinner. If your coworker showed those characteristics, you'd report them to Human Resources. It's no surprise, then, that when someone in your personal life is discovered to be lying, cheating, and backstabbing, it's said they're "playing politics".

So the question arises, if politicians are so reprehensible and untrustworthy, why do we let them take part in politics? Shouldn't we just do it instead?

Who 'we', you ask? 'You, me, all of us,' I say.

Much like jury duty in American, let politics be a mandatory civilian requirement as well.

Every citizen, at some point in their life, will be called upon to serve in political office, the allocation of roles being arbitrarily made using a lottery system.

So, for example, you get a letter in the mail telling you that next Tuesday, you need to report to Islamabad to serve as Minister for Foreign Affairs for a six week period.

During those six weeks, you will be paid the salary of a Foreign Minister and enjoy all the perks, but also have to perform all the duties. And if you're worried about not knowing how to do it, don't worry. The last few foreign ministers have included Shah Mehmood Qureshi, Hina Rabbani Khar, and Khurshid Kasuri. How difficult can it be?

And while you're off serving as FM, Bashir Allahwalla, an auto mechanic from Toba Tek Singh, is appointed Prime Minister for the same period.

The benefit of all this, other than once and for all removing all career politicians from the public arena, is also adding some much needed diversity to the political sphere.

Currently, almost all politicians are feudal lords, powerful industrialists, or a combination of the two. There are no doctors, teachers, cooks, drivers, actors, writers, farmers, anyone really. There is no representation of real life. Yet, politicians have a say in every aspect of those lives.

Wouldn't it be great if the next educational budget was set by, say, educators?

4. Athenian Democracy:

They say there's no school like old school.

Therefore, if we are to continue with democracy, why not look at its origins.

The democratic government originated in ancient Greece, after which it was sold off as a franchise to neighboring nations to help Greece with its crippling debt to Germany and the rest of the EU. Or something like that.

History isn't my strong point. Either way, what's interesting is how democracy, particularly Athenian Democracy, was genuinely about empowering the people and involving them in the decision making process.

The way this would play out is that every time a decision was required on legislation or an executive bill, the entire population would vote on it together (by 'entire population', I mean 'rich men', of course, because if there is one thing history has been consistent about it's the disenfranchisement of women and the poor).

Now, logistically, this was possible in small city states because you could count the number of hands, but not on a larger scale. Until, that is, the advent of the internet and cell phones.

Now, we use a combination of the two for voting purposes on a national scale all the time, without realising just how empowering that is. Currently the citizen voting system is used mainly to determine the winner of Pakistani Idol, but there is no reason why it can't be used for governance as well.

Those are the top four approaches to democratic reform that I settled on, after rejecting many other possibilities. Those included, “Best Nihari Recipe Democracy, Arm Wrestling Democracy, Ali Azmat Democracy, Crunchy on the Outside and Soft on the Inside Democracy, Selfie Democracy, and Cthulhu Democracy”, to name a few contenders.

One feature that seemed fairly consistent across all of them, interestingly, was decreasing the amount of time a democratic government serves in Pakistan.

I think five years is just too darn long. And it seems like everyone else agrees, when you consider just how agitated we all get by the end of the first year.

I actually don't know many people who held the same job for five years. A child born at the start of a five-year government is doing basic math by the end of the term. That's just too long.

It's also why coups and protest marches happen, because you can't just suffer through a bad government, not when the suffering is so prolonged.

To this end, I propose a three-year term of office. Three years is long enough to really become unpopular, but not long enough to do too much lasting damage, which is a best-case scenario for most elected governments.

Saarc Summit: Hopes and fears

Aamar Gul November 25, 2014



The upcoming Saarc summit on November 26-27 in Nepal has already caught the spotlight in being one that will lead to “greater regional integration” in terms of connectivity. Although Saarc has been around for some three decades, it has until now failed to live up to expectations in being a driver for delivery on connectivity among its member countries. Perceptions have changed with the possibility of three major deals that may be signed during the summit. These include: (i) An Agreement for the Regulation of Passenger and Cargo Vehicular Traffic among member States; (ii) Saarc Regional Agreement on Railways, and (iii) Saarc Framework Agreement for Energy Cooperation. With the last two agreements signed off by the government, the Bangladesh side is hopeful to get some serious discussions ending in firm agreements in Nepal.

The first agreement would facilitate “allowing the vehicles of other Member States to ply in their territory for transportation of Cargo and Passengers to various terms and conditions in the Agreement and obtaining permits for such transport from Members States as per procedure and protocols prescribed in the Agreement. The agreement if signed will result in closer regional economic cooperation and integration through enhanced regional connectivity by allowing movement of goods and passengers in the region through road transport.” The details will have to be thrashed out among member countries on operators that will be allowed to carry passengers and

cargo. Other factors that will come up for consideration will be on the nature of permits and the traffic volume allowed by each country, and the entire regime of tariff will have to be worked out at the various entry points. The agreement will be reviewed every three years and can be amended or ratified then.

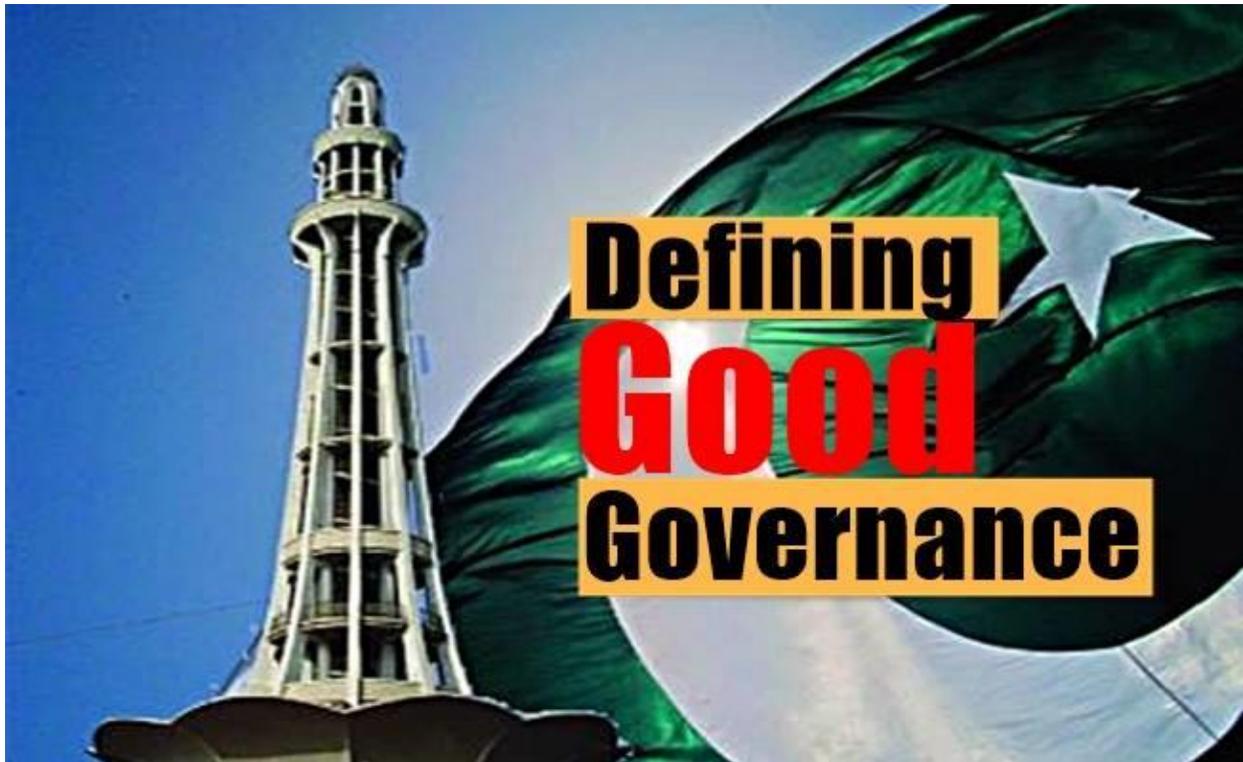
Like the road deal, the agreement on railways will allow for the ferrying of cargo and the movement of passengers along proposed routes. This agreement would allow for direct rail links on various routes connecting Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal. It opens up bright prospects for landlocked Nepal and Bhutan; both countries will gain access to two Bangladeshi ports of Chittagong and Mongla. Terms and conditions for using infrastructure in various countries will have to be worked out. As per a Daily Star report on November 23, “according to the draft, the countries will have to take measures for maintaining trains and servicing locomotives at interchange points, providing immigration and visa facilities, and ensuring security for passenger and cargo transportation”. This agreement will certainly be to our advantage, as it will provide Bangladesh Railway to earn meaningful profits by carrying cargo to various destinations.

But it is the last agreement that has the greatest potential and hope for the economy. Much has already been written on Saarc Framework Agreement for Energy Cooperation. The agreement would provide a platform for surplus-energy producing member countries to “export” electricity to energy-starved nations like Bangladesh and India. Were this agreement to see the light of day, it could open up the possibility for us to import hydroelectric power from other member countries. This is a deal that has generated much interest over the last four years since severe power crunch has left industrialisation plodding along an uncertain trajectory.

That said, all these deals have reportedly run into hot water ahead of the Summit. According to what has been published in the press on November 24, besides Bangladesh, Nepal and India, other members are far from ready with preparations to ratify these agreements. That is going to be a huge disappointment for policymakers who had hoped that the agreement signing would open up for a Saarc Market for Electricity (SAME). It would help expand the existing power trading that is already happening between India and Bangladesh. Were the agreement signed, Bangladesh could forgo (to a large extent) expensive electricity generation and turn to countries like Bhutan and Nepal and import electricity through interconnected power grids. It certainly is a major disappointment to see that the experts have probably not been able to work out the regulatory issues governing such a system. Similarly, Saarc remains one of the least networked regions in terms of physical connectivity leading high costs and low volumes of trade. The failure to agree on the railroad and road agreements will put back plans for transforming Saarc into a true trade bloc and hence missing out the opportunities associated with greater trade in the region. Disappointment at failure to ink three key pacts will be felt throughout Saarc.

Defining good governance |By Dr Zafar Iqbal Qureshi

Aamar Gul November 25, 2014



When rulers speak about good governance, generally they tend to confuse its definition. Efforts are always made to twist the interpretation of the term to suit their individual governance model. This oftentimes happens since there is no consensus on this definition. Context and culture are used to twist and turn the definition of governance around. A simple and brief definition of the word would suggest that “good governance means exercising authority in ways that respect the integrity, rights and needs of everyone within the state without exception”.

According to World Bank’s definition, good governance is epitomised by “predictable, open and enlightened policymaking (that is, transparent processes); a bureaucracy imbued with a professional ethos; and executive arm of government accountable for its actions; and a strong civil society participating in public affairs; and all behaving under the rule of law.”

To me rule of law, merit and the avoidance of conflict of interest in governance are the building blocks of good governance. As a starting point, therefore, it may be pertinent to shed some light on the concept of rule of law and the way it is practised in societies like ours. Briefly speaking, the rule of law implies a set of procedures and rules that govern a society and are consistently enforced

equally to citizens regardless of their economic or social status. Their universalism rather than particularism in application defines their boundaries or lack of it. This means that rather than having more rules and laws, the enforcement of existing laws without exception implies the 'rule of law'.

If practised in letter and spirit then the rule of law would mean that people are governed by clear and fair rules rather than by the arbitrary, personal exercise of power by the rulers. Rule of law would also suggest that institutional processes and practices protect individual rights by placing limits on arbitrary use of state power. Can we claim that our governance model historically, whether under civilian or army rule, had been underpinned by the rule of law? The answer, regrettably, will be in a firm no. Why?

First, it is widely believed that the VIP culture is the culprit in non-enforcement of rule of law. The VIP culture is directly in conflict with the rule of law. Surely, given the present security situation in the country important government functionaries ought to get enough security protection to ward off any direct threat to their lives. But, to create traffic logjam on the pretext of VIP movement in which ordinary citizens at times even miss their flights is no respect for the rule of law. This practice must change.

Second, more importantly, the '*dharna*' culture has created a popular perception that people like Tahirul Qadri, Imran Khan and Sheikh Rashid can go scot free when they are blatantly breaking the laws and questioning the very foundation of the state institutions. In contrast, if a commoner law abiding citizen were to even jump the traffic light, he/she would immediately be challaned. This elitist mindset is in direct conflict with the concept of rule of law and doesn't lead to creating a socially cohesive and well-integrated society. Doubtless, the degree of civility of a society is contingent upon the application of the rule of law regardless of the social/economic status of an individual in the society.

Another important pillar of good governance is the principle of meritocracy. The nature of social structures and the relationships embedded in such structures have direct bearing on the way the principle of merit will or will not be followed in societies like ours. The institutions in which social relationships influence institutional decisions encourage two kinds of broad culture: the culture of power and the culture of performance. The power culture and closely knit social relationships exert negative influence in the application of merit in decision making. Personal, social and political clout does come into play in power cultures and these influences kill the spirit of merit. In Pakistan of today while in some areas efforts are certainly being made to adhere to the principle of merit, in most other cases extra merit considerations still impact on recruitment and selection practices in our organisational world. Till such time that we are able to break out of power culture, the principle of merit will be flouted. As a result, efforts for good governance will be scuttled.

The development of performance culture in our state institutions requires fundamental changes in the way we practise human resource management in our institutions, especially in public sector. The institutionalisation of a performance culture presupposes the implementation of a management excellence model in which individual and institutional performance metrics are clearly defined to establish a robust mechanism of accountability. Once individuals are recruited against clearly defined performance accountability, it would be well-nigh difficult not to adhere to the principle of merit. It can be safely stated that our current management model in the public sector has to undergo radical changes to claim that we are a merit-centric country. This is one of the ways to establish robust mechanism in the functioning of our institutions.

If rule of laws and merits are absent then rulers fail to understand the deeper meanings of conflict of interest. How can our rulers avoid conflict of interest in decisions affecting the functioning of our national institutions?

Akin to the fuzziness of our appreciation of the concept of rule of law, the word conflict of interest is also misty in our minds. And this mistiness is the direct result of absence of merit from our institutional life. The problem is further confounded when our rulers fall prey to the multiple influences emanating from social and economic clout enjoyed by the elite in conjunction with an elitist mindset of the rulers that produces a power culture in which discretion and arbitrariness become the operating norms in the working of our state institutions.

In short, therefore, for Pakistan to become a socially stable and politically cohesive society, the practice of rule of law, merit and avoidance of conflict of interest would be of fundamental importance if we are to claim that we practise good governance in our statecraft.

Washington not a reliable friend: Asif

Saira Mustafa November 26, 2014



ISLAMABAD: The uneasy truth of Pakistan’s less-than-trusting relationship with the US was acknowledged by a key member of the federal cabinet on Tuesday when Defence Minister Khawaja Asif drew a large question mark on the reliability of Washington as a friend of Pakistan.

“The Americans have been our friends for a long time – since the 60s and the 70s – but their reliability is relative,” he told a packed audience at the Institute of Strategic Studies.

He did not stop there. “American foreign policy has been disastrous for this region,” he said, referring to South Asia and the Middle East, adding that, “for all times to come, the geography of this region has been changed”.

Also read: [Militants not dangerous to Pakistan should not be targeted: Sartaj](#)

Mr Asif warned that Pakistan had to be very careful. “We are still paying the price for our intervention in Afghanistan. The disintegration of this region on sectarian and ethnic lines is in process.”

He said that US ‘disappointment’ with Pakistan’s contribution to the ‘war on terror’ was unjustified. “We’ve had a historic relationship with the US since independence. It has had its highs and lows,” he said.

“Recently, the COAS had an extensive visit to the US. It was a good visit and we need to pursue this relationship and build the trust that is not there 100 per cent, at least,” he said, admitting that Islamabad did not necessarily see eye-to-eye with Washington in the context of the continuing war on terrorism.

He also called the recent US Defence Department statement about the objectives of the military operation in the tribal areas “very discomfoting”.

Defence minister blames US foreign policy for problems in Middle East and South Asia

“This shows that despite our sacrifices, the Americans still do not trust us completely. That is sad, but it should be clear that Pakistan’s national objectives are paramount for us,” he said.

“The Islamic State (IS) was propped up to fight against the regime in Syria and now the world looks on in horror. We may feel the repercussions [of the US foreign policy failure] in the region for many years,” Mr Asif said.

He said that US Defence Secretary Chuck Hagel — who stepped down just after two years in office — was the latest casualty of the failure of US foreign policy in the region.

During his remarks, Mr Asif took pains to note that he was airing his own opinion and that what he was saying did not necessarily reflect government policy. But the way he framed his points, it seemed as if he was building a case for an alliance with another global power, one that was nothing like the untrusting US.

Regional powers

After the world became unipolar, he said, global instability had only increased. Advocating multipolarity as ideal for a global balance of power, he said that Russia and China were the two largest powers in the region. “We should seek solutions to regional problems from our own shores, not from across the pond,” he said.

He called Russia “an emerging superpower”, one that was economically well-established despite sanctions against it. “Being in the same region, Pakistan must have a sound relationship with Russia,” he said.

He said that Pakistan had recently concluded a very important agreement with Russia; one which would allow it to purchase armaments from the Russian Federation. The arms that Pakistan was getting from Russia were going to be used primarily for anti-terrorism operations, Mr Asif said.

“Pakistan must pursue its own national security goals; we don’t want to antagonise our neighbours, countries of the region and greater powers,” he said.

The defence minister began his history lesson with Afghanistan, saying, “[Pakistan’s] intervention or interference in Afghanistan in the 80s was more of a proxy war and we were the proxy”. Pakistan as a nation, he said, still continued to pay the price for that.

He said, “Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, right at the outset, pledged that there will be no interference in Afghan affairs from our side. In the last two to three weeks, we’ve seen COAS go to Afghanistan and the Afghan president visiting Pakistan. The PM told Ashraf Ghani that we must start anew, turn a new page. The Afghan president responded: ‘No, we have to start a new book’.”

“Without peace in Afghanistan, there can be no peace; peace will be very elusive in Pakistan,” he said, adding that the situation in Afghanistan was also a matter of national security for Pakistan. “We cannot live in isolation or forget what is happening next door,” he said.

India

Talking about India, he said, “[Pakistan’s] peace overtures have been misconstrued as weakness by our eastern neighbour, but I believe that our problems can be solved through peace and negotiations.”

“When PM Nawaz Sharif came to power, he pledged to work with India. It was alright in the beginning... but since the last few months, things have deteriorated on the border,” he said.

Referring to the sharp Indian reaction to a recent meeting between Pakistani diplomats and Kashmiri leaders in New Delhi, Mr Asif said, “The reaction has been rather overstated and the way India reacted to this meeting was a setback to peace efforts.” Following the meetings, India cancelled secretary-level talks with Pakistan, which the minister said was “harmful for both countries”.

“We still wish and strive for peace with India and will resume the process of building a lasting friendship between the two countries,” he said, adding that he hoped that the Saarc summit would yield “something less bitter”.

The West Needs a New Strategy for Pakistan

Saira Mustafa November 26, 2014



A [new report](#) by the German Marshall Fund and the Swedish Defense Research Agency argues that the United States and Europe should adopt a fresh approach to Pakistan as the decade-plus conflict in Afghanistan winds down. We now need a policy that focuses squarely on Pakistan rather than one in which that pivotal country is treated as an adjunct of a policy towards Afghanistan. As Western forces depart the region, violent extremism engulfs the Middle East, China and India assert their growing regional influence, and Pakistan's internal instabilities mount, a new situation in the region requires a new approach.

Broadly, the report's co-authors — Dhruva Jaishankar, Andrew Small, John Rydqvist, and myself — argue that the Western allies need an economic strategy to invest in Pakistan's potential as an emerging market alongside a security strategy that pays more attention to the country's alarming nuclear weapons buildup. The transatlantic allies, which are Pakistan's major donors and important trading partners, need to more robustly engage with civil society and civilian institutions in Pakistan as part of a long-term strategy to tilt the civil-military balance in a healthier direction. We also need a more coordinated approach to counter-terrorism cooperation that leverages a growing realization

within Pakistan — including within the security services — that violent extremism is more of a threat to the Pakistani state itself than to its neighbors and the wider world.

The report makes a set of policy recommendations for the transatlantic community in four key areas: economic development, civil-military relations and governance, nuclear proliferation, and counter-terrorism.

Economic Development

The United States and Europe should:

- Support and actively shape the new wave of regional infrastructure initiatives — and new economic entities such as the Chinese-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank — to facilitate Pakistan’s regional economic integration.
- Utilize economic influence, bilaterally and multilaterally, to bolster the civilian government’s efforts to advance the more politically difficult aspects of the connectivity agenda, particularly vis-à-vis India, whose vibrant markets could substantially boost Pakistan’s development trajectory.
- Liberalize trade and investment to boost Pakistan’s productive sector rather than emphasizing assistance to the government.
- Use the military drawdown from Afghanistan as an opportunity to reposition the West’s relationship with Pakistan around realizing its potential as an emerging market

Civil-Military Relations and Governance

The transatlantic allies should:

- Invest narrowly, but systematically, in key areas like energy supply and education, rather than spread Western public investments thinly across a wide range of sectors and actors.
- Expand U.S. and European funding for Pakistan’s public education system, but tie this assistance directly to curriculum reform to stem radicalization in the classroom.
- Invest in strengthening the Pakistani parliament’s standing committees to enhance government oversight, and expand education and training of the Pakistani judiciary.
- Invest concertedly in media training, including through exchanges for members of the Pakistani print and broadcast media, and expand media outreach into Pakistan directly through U.S. and European public broadcasters to counter anti-Western and illiberal propaganda.

- Hold the government accountable for human rights abuses that are within its power to mitigate, including by imposing standards of conditionality on assistance programs, as well as building civilian capacity to mitigate abuses stemming from absence of the rule of law.

Nuclear Proliferation

- We argue that the West should:
- Highlight the dangers posed by Pakistan's nuclear development — specifically its development of tactical nuclear weapons — through official public statements, and help define clearer incentives for Pakistan to adopt a more stabilizing nuclear posture.
- Insert and elevate the discussion of Pakistan's nuclear program in bilateral and multilateral dialogues — both within the transatlantic community and with regional and global partners, particularly China.
- Further strengthen export controls for sensitive and dual-use technologies.

Counterterrorism

The transatlantic partners should:

- Establish a clearer division of labor between the United States, the European Union, and NATO, including by assigning a concrete role to the European Union.
- Engage in a deeper transatlantic dialogue about the strategic implications of Pakistan's support of militancy to develop common responses.
- Facilitate Afghanistan-Pakistan cooperation on counter-terrorism, with the objective of better tracking militancy in the region, and improving law enforcement and customs procedures.
- Make a more focused and cohesive effort to support wider police reform and capacity-building rather than channeling security assistance mainly to the armed forces.

These recommendations are modest rather than revolutionary; most will take years to bear fruit. They provide a basic roadmap for Western engagement with Pakistan, particularly in areas that have been largely neglected by the United States and Europe over the past decade. As great powers like [China](#) and [Russia](#) increase their focus on Pakistan, it is time for Europe and the United States to do the same — with an eye not so much on the future of Afghanistan, which has dominated our strategic thinking since 9/11, but on its far larger, more combustible, nuclear-armed neighbor.

Time to review the quality of education | By Salman Ali

Aamar Gul November 26, 2014



Constructive learning can only be achieved by ensuring the quality of education. A worldwide shift is vital in improving educational opportunities for the 250 million children who are unable to read, write or do basic mathematics, 130 million of whom are in schools

Investing in education should be the government's single, most effective strategy for reducing global poverty. Prioritising education is also helpful in accomplishing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). If all the children in low-income countries could read, it has been estimated in countless surveys that global poverty would drop by a whole 12 percent. Similarly, girls education is an equally effective investment for achieving long-term health benefits for a nation because it helps in saving the lives of mothers and babies that, in turn, benefits the whole of society.

As we all know, education is a fundamental human right like food or healthcare. Article 26 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights declares that everyone has an equal right to education. Education is not only a right but is also an indispensable basis for human development. It contributes to fostering peace, democracy and economic growth, as well as improving health and reducing poverty. The state plays an essential role as protector of this rule, setting standards and norms that guarantee quality and equality of opportunity. Since the UN's Education for All framework was established in 2000, both developed and developing countries have made considerable progress towards achieving these goals. However, many more will still be far from the desired targets in 2015. It is unfortunate that most marginalised groups have continued to be denied opportunities in

education over the decades. An estimated 25 million children who attend primary schools in developing countries are struggling to read even basic words. Over the last two decades, national education policies and international aid for education have mainly focused on improving access to primary schools and completion rates.

Progress has been steady on these two indicators but the focus now has to be shifted towards ensuring that every child should get quality education and the children who attend schools should actually learn. Children who fail to read in the early grades will fall further behind each school year, when reading ability is progressively used as a tool for acquiring other types of knowledge. Poorly performing students struggle to catch up and some of them simply drop out of school. Once the child is in school, improving the quality of learning is the most challenging target for all the collective education partners involved and to help minimise the dropout rate.

Constructive learning can only be achieved by ensuring the quality of education. A worldwide shift is vital in improving educational opportunities for the 250 million children who are unable to read, write or do basic mathematics, 130 million of whom are in schools. But different factors contribute to limiting the quality of education that children receive and this impedes learning outcomes. I believe these factors include lack of textbooks, overcrowded classes, absent children and teachers, poor use of classroom time, parents unable to monitor homework, lack of use of the mother tongue, developmental delays resulting due to lack of early childhood interventions, inappropriate or insufficient learner assessment and limited teaching skills.

There should be one core set of goals aligned with the global development agenda, equipped with a more detailed set of targets that make up a post-2015 education framework. Each goal must be clear and measurable, with the aim of ensuring that no one is left behind.

To achieve this, progress should be tracked by the achievements of the lowest performing groups, making sure the gap between them and the better off students is narrowing. The number of years young people spend in school is one measure of overall progress in access to education. A report prepared in collaboration between the government of Pakistan, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Institute for Statistics, provides a detailed analysis of out-of-school children and is important for complementing the ongoing work in all provinces and areas to scale up evidence-based educational activities to ensure that all children have equal access to quality education. The study confirms that more girls than boys are out of school: 38.9 percent of primary age girls are not attending school and the rate is 30.2 percent for boys. Children from poorer households are proportionally more out of school: 49.2 percent compared to 17.5 percent in the richest quintile.

Sadly, dropout is highest in grade five (42.8 percent), indicating that many children do not enter lower secondary education and, therefore, do not complete basic education. If the challenge of out-of-school children and causes behind high dropouts are not addressed, the existing out-of-school

children's data will be added to current youth statistics and, ultimately, an addition to adult illiteracy growth. However, in delivering quality education, the state should not be alone; it must cooperate with families, communities, civil society organisations, the private sector and others. We need to do efficient collaborative planning to avoid future aggravation of poverty. We must bind all the stakeholders together to improve the delivery and financing of education and meet the MDGs. Moreover, the present government has also announced that it will soon be implementing a national plan of action for education to accelerate progress and double education spending. Let us hope that this is not just a paper promise and empty rhetoric for political consumption. To be frank, the record of past performance in this regard is not very inspiring.

The Obama doctrine and Pakistan |By Dr Qaisar Rashid

Aamar Gul November 26, 2014



Though Obama entered the White House in January 2009 with the slogan of change, in some ways the Obama doctrine was a development on the Bush doctrin.

Strategically, not much distance is present between the news item that on his recent visit, the Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Raheel Sharif had been given a red carpet welcome in the US and the news item that US President Barack Obama had silently permitted a residual combat force (numbering about 10,000) in Afghanistan to fight against the Taliban for another year in case, after December 31, they threatened the nascent Afghan government and in case theremnants of al Qaeda resurfaced. These developments are not surprising if one understands the latest doctrines governing US foreign policy. A doctrine can be understood in terms of a principle that engenders policies and consequently means for their execution. In the context of Pak-US relations, the doctrine of US President Barack Obama

can be understood in his two addresses in the beginning of his first term. First, on March 27, 2009, Obama declared his resolve to fight against al Qaeda in both Afghanistan and Pakistan, especially in Pakistan's lawless tribal belt where al Qaeda had shifted its bases and had silently been waiting to repeat 9/11. The announcement of this stance prompted the famous Af-Pak strategy, which is a hallmark of the US foreign policy overseeing US relations with Pakistan and Afghanistan. Second, on December 1, 2009 (while speaking to a gathering of US army cadets at the West Point Military Academy, New York), Obama said that Pakistan was key in solving the Afghanistan crisis. In this address, Obama outlined three fundamental elements of his policy towards the Af-Pak region: "A military effort to create the conditions for a transition, a civilian surge that reinforces positive action and an effective partnership with Pakistan." In effect, the US is now operating in the third element of this policy. Nevertheless, the overarching goal of the policy was to "disrupt, dismantle and defeat al Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and to prevent its capacity to threaten the US and [its] allies in the future." Certainly, General Sharif should have been venerated for launching Operation Zarb-e-Azb.

Though Obama entered the White House in January 2009 with the slogan of change, in some ways the Obama doctrine was a development on the Bush doctrine. The prospective part of the Bush doctrine uttered on June 1, 2002 (on the occasion of the graduation exercise of the US Military Academy, West Point, New York) was this: "[W]e will not hesitate to act alone, if necessary, to exercise our right of self-defence by acting pre-emptively against...terrorists [whether a state or its clients], to prevent them from doing harm against our people and our country...even if uncertainty remain as to the time and place of the enemy's attack." This aspect of the Bush doctrine transformed the US view of the world and vice versa. The doctrine generated two main principles: first, to act pre-emptively and second, to act unilaterally, whether the (perceived) enemy is a state or non-state actor.

The doctrine was also the recognition of three points. First, the world had entered a new era of warfare in which not only rogue states but also non-state actors could launch attacks (or wage wars). Secondly, in the (consequent) asymmetrical style of warfare, the initiative could rest with non-state actors. Thirdly, deterrence, which was a functional term during the Cold war, ceased to be functional. Apparently, it was the execution of these principles that has compelled Obama to allow the US residual force in Afghanistan to stay proactive for another year even after December 31, 2014.

Recently, Obama told Nawaz Sharif telephonically that he would not be visiting Pakistan. Instead, he will be visiting India. In the past, US foreign policy paired Pakistan with India in the region. However, since 2000, the US has started viewing India as a partner in economic terms. Then, General Pervez Musharraf was ruling Pakistan. After winning the presidential elections in 2000, Bush also aspired to develop a US-India strategic partnership. With that, the process of de-hyphenation of Pakistan from India started. The appalling incident of 9/11 just hastened the process. Subsequently, there took place cooperation between the US and India in the fields of spaceflight, satellite technology and missile defence.

On the other hand, having sensed the policy change, Pakistan raised a hue and cry but in the context of its vulnerability in the domain of security. No doubt, in 2004, Bush mollified Pakistan by awarding it the status of a Major Non-NATO (MNNA) ally but, in 2005, formal negotiations for a US-India nuclear energy deal started and the famous 123 Agreement was signed in 2008. In this way, Pakistan's pleading for security backfired. Obama picked up the threads where Bush left off. On March 27, 2009, the Obama doctrine hyphenated Pakistan with Afghanistan and, on December 1, 2009, Obama detached Pakistan further from the US by saying: "In the past, we too often defined our relationship with Pakistan narrowly. Those days are over. Moving forward, we are committed to a partnership with Pakistan that is built on a foundation of mutual interest, mutual respect and mutual trust." This statement alone changed the contours of the Pak-US relationship, as it happened. For instance, Pakistan was kept in the dark about the Abbottabad Operation in May 2011.

The prescriptive part of the Bush Doctrine, announced on June 1, 2002, was to reform the political societies of the world by introducing democracy and by recognising the importance of human rights where these were suppressed. The Obama doctrine toed the same line. In fact, both doctrines viewed a relationship existing between the emergence of democracy and the decline of extremism. In the Kerry-Lugar-Berman Act, 2009, Pakistan received the prescriptive part of the Obama doctrine. Now, it is up to Pakistan to make policy changes both domestically and regionally that are more acceptable to the US in the future.

Modi, Nawaz meet briefly at Saarc Summit

Saadat Agha November 27, 2014



KATHMANDU: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and premier Nawaz Sharif shook hands and met briefly on Thursday during the retreat at the Saarc Summit, according to Indian media reports. Sources say there was no separate conversation between the two leaders.

According to a report on [NDTV](#), Modi and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif shook hands and spoke briefly at an informal retreat for Saarc leaders at a resort outside Kathmandu, on the sidelines of a summit that appears to have been derailed by Pakistan's refusal to endorse agreements backed by India.

The report also says that Nawaz Sharif will fly out of Nepal this evening, a little earlier than scheduled. He will miss a banquet and a meeting with the president of Nepal.

An Indian government source had earlier said that Prime Minister Modi may hold informal talks with his Pakistani counterpart at the Dhulikel resort in the Himalayan foothills on Thursday morning, although that had remained uncertain.

Modi held one-on-one talks with every Saarc leader except Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on Wednesday, with both sides saying it was up to the other to request a meeting.

Read more: [*Leaders retreat to Himalayan hideout amid Indo-Pakistan chill*](#)

The 18th South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (Saarc) summit kicked off Wednesday as leaders of the eight members states got together here at the capital of Nepal to find ways to make the regional grouping more viable and effective.

All the eight leaders were invited to the conference table and the ceremony began with the playing of the national anthem of Nepal.

Analysts have blamed Saarc's failure on the mutual mistrust between Pakistan and regional powerhouse India, which has taken a more assertive stance toward its northern neighbour since the election of a new Hindu nationalist government in May.

The Indian Express said there were "visible cold vibes" between the two leaders, who did not even exchange nods on Wednesday, let alone shake hands, despite being only two seats apart for around four hours.

The leaders are hoping to salvage agreements on road, rail and power connectivity which some officials said were being held up by Pakistan.

The Status Of Islamic Politics In Pakistan

Aamar Gul November 27, 2014



Inability to achieve electoral success is often cited as the biggest failure of Pakistani Islamist political parties. But I think they have much bigger failure to their credit — the failure to propose viable political institutions for a conflict-ridden society. The ideology they claim to represent has an answer, according to them, to every problem. Yet the solutions they proposed for myriad and complex problems of Pakistani society were nothing more than abstractions and rhetoric. Over the years they played no small part in aggravating and sharpening the political and religious conflicts that existed in a very mild form at the time of creation of Pakistan. And now when the political and religious conflicts have assumed the form of uncontrolled specters, all they have to say about resolving these problems is nothing more than religious rhetoric.

For instance, they will say, “All Muslims are brothers”; “We have to follow the Amir (Religious leader) and take decisions according to mutual consultations”; “The best political system is Islamic political system (without pausing for a minute to explain what that system is) and it will resolve all

our problems”. When you take a look on the ground realities it becomes clear that their “Golden principles” don’t even succeed in resolving their mutual conflicts. Every other day we see reports about killings on the basis of religious conflicts.

By viable political institutions, I mean institutions which can facilitate the peaceful resolution of conflicts in our society, whatever may be the cause or basis of these conflicts. Whether these conflicts are political, religious, sectarian or ethnic, the political institutions should have flexibility and adaptability to accommodate the interests and concerns of all the myriad groups that exists in our society and without any of the group facing any compulsion to resort to violence to achieve its objectives and in the process becoming a centrifugal force.

The existing political institutions and the nature of the state are another problem that needs to be considered with reference to Islamists’ revivalist thought. At the start of 20th century, when the Ottoman Empire breathed its last, Islamic revivalists around the world embraced nation-state as the ideal form of political organisation. With it they came to terms with the parliamentary form of government in most of the newly created states. Pakistani Islamists responded no differently to the emerging situation. Before the enactment of 1956 constitution, some of the groups of Islamists such as Jamaat-e-Islamic were not ready to swear allegiance to the state, calling it a force that has not come from divine sources. But everything changed after the religiously inclined prime minister Chaudhry Muhammad Ali convinced his personal friend and JI ideologue, Maulana Maudoodi to campaign in support of the 1956 constitution among the religious lobby of that time. Other groups didn’t take long for coming under the umbrella of Pakistani state. This alliance and this sense of belonging to each other has continued every since in different forms. This mutuality was reinforced when Islam was adopted as a state religion.

The way Islamists related themselves to Pakistani state cannot simply be attributed to naivety or altruism. Their belief (which they displayed through their politics and rhetoric in 1950 and 60s) that the institution of the state could be Islamised in the same way as an individual can embrace Islam, was not only frivolous but could be termed out rightly obtuse. This frivolity stemmed from the fact that the Islamists not even once made an attempt to understand the institution of State. They picked up political and ideological fights with the forces, which could have helped them understand the problems and dynamics of the institution of the state. The intellectual left made some rudimentary attempts to understand the institution of the state from a Marxist perspective in the formative years of Pakistani state but the Islamists just ignored this literature as well as post-colonial nature of the state in favour of some individuals who were at the helms of affairs at different points of time during the last sixty years and who displayed one or the other strand of religiosity in public life. For instance, Bhutto was a good man as far as he declared “Ahmadis” non-Muslims. Zia-ul-Haq was a perfect Muslim because he said his prayers five times a day and because he started the project to Islamise law in the country. All of these favorite personalities of the religious right, with a tinge of religiosity, made the Islamists oblivious of the fact that all of them either presided over or were part of the state

structure that was inherently exploitative, internally, and was geared towards serving the interests of the western powers, externally.

The tradition of militarisation and rule through bureaucracy continued in the post-independence period, when the nascent tradition of parliamentary democracy was disrupted as part of a plan which the military-bureaucratic elite hatched with the help of their international connections to consolidate their grip on power structure. International forces, especially Americans were supporting this ascendancy of military-bureaucratic elite for achieving their geo-political interests against an expansionist Soviet Union, and Pakistani Islamists were a small tool in this grand alliance. To give an idea of how it all worked, let me give a small but pertinent example. In 1970s and 1980s, American CIA translated (into local Central Asian languages) and supplied the books of Jamaat-e-Islami founder, Maulana Maudoodi into Soviet Central Asia as part of propaganda campaign against communists and royalty was paid back to the publisher. Some of the Americans journalists have mentioned this fact in their writings on the basis of recently declassified documents.

So the Islamists primarily served as an appendage of the post-colonial state, rather than fulfilling any intellectual purpose of proposing viable political institutions, which can help resolve the existing conflicts in the society. I would even go a step further and say that the Pakistani Islamists don't have any real political thought to their credit. Their literature is simply devoid of any serious political thought. It's full of rhetoric, abstractions and is focused more on some kind of moral and social reformism. In contrast are the Islamists in Iran. The clergy in Iran at the time of 1979 revolution was as much devoid of any serious political thought as the Islamists in Pakistan. But the Islamists in Iran had among their ranks people such as Ali Shariati, who made an attempt to understand the existing political and social realities from a sociological perspective.

This created a paradoxical situation in Pakistan. On the one hand, Islamists groups like Jamaat-e-Islami were on the forefront of politicising religion (or giving primacy to politics over salvation of individual as the ultimate aim of religious observance) while on the other hand intellectually they were completely bereft of any serious political thought. It didn't take long for more radical groups (especially the militant groups), who were advocating complete de-politicization and taking up of arms, from filling the void and pushing Islamists groups off the center-stage.

Policy response to challenges By Sakib Sherani

Saira Mustafa November 28, 2014



WHAT are Pakistan's most pressing economic challenges and what is the government's policy response? How well is the policy response aligned to addressing the challenges on a sustainable basis?

The list of challenges is long and growing, including everything from population growth to preparedness for climate change, from the low domestic savings rate to urbanisation challenges and water issues. However, looking at the immediate to medium term, the three challenges that stand out — and present themselves as political opportunities for this government if it can resolve them even partially — relate to the energy crisis, tax reform and restoring the confidence of investors. While the last of these is related to the first two, in that a resolution of the energy crisis and a more transparent and equitable tax system will help lead to the restoration of investor confidence in large part, it is important on its own as well, as there are other dimensions that need to be addressed by the government beyond energy and taxes.

Power

The unresolved power sector issues are single-handedly responsible for slowing the economy's growth, stopping new investment, straining public finances and burdening the banking system. And yet, 18 months after assuming office, the government has precious little to show for its efforts. It is true that the losses of the sector have come down moderately, and the pace of accumulation that had touched nearly Rs2 billion a day at its peak has been brought down to more manageable levels; however, this is largely due to the steep decline in international oil prices. Were it not for this single extraneous factor, the sector would continue to bleed at the previous pace.

As pointed out by many commentators, the issues in the sector relate to governance. While relatively easier things have been done for immediate relief, the real milestones of progress such as uprooting the corrupt power sector bureaucracy through corporatisation and privatisation, modernising systems, introducing technology such as smart grid solutions, have mostly eluded the government so far.

The glacial pace of reform is understandable from one perspective. Given that electricity theft of nearly Rs100bn occurs each year, while the gas sector's unaccounted-for gas losses are another approximately Rs200bn, the scale of theft and the magnitude of the vested interest is staggeringly obvious.

Three challenges stand out — the energy crisis, tax reform and restoring investor confidence.

In fact, a telling development that points to which side is winning in the power sector — the corrupt status quo or the reform-minded elements — is the “elevation” of the only competent technocrat in the government's team in the power sector to the position of the prime minister's spokesperson. He is now safely out of the way of the politicians and bureaucracy.

Tax

The government's failure to fix the tax system is even more glaring. By making ‘tax collection’ its benchmark for success, rather than a whole-scale qualitative improvement in the system, it has given the Federal Board of Revenue a free hand to resort to ‘predatory taxation’. This is hurting honest taxpayers and damaging the investment environment in the country.

For reasons of space and importance, I will treat this subject separately in a subsequent article.

Investment

Pakistan's private sector continues to shy away from investment. While the government is chasing new investment by foreigners, fixed investment by the country's private sector has fallen to multi-decade lows.

The bottlenecks to new investment are not just the energy shortage or the rising tax burden. The policy environment of the PML-N government is more conducive to trading than domestic manufacturing, reinforcing suspicions about the Sharif predisposition in this regard.

In a recent meeting to evaluate the performance of the government, it is unclear if the prime minister asked any probing questions of his ministers, or not. If a 'tick the box' exercise was all that was intended, then it is very likely the prime minister was appreciative of the 'Vision 2025' document the Planning Commission had produced — which even a cursory reading makes clear why the collection of wish lists cannot be a guide for planning our immediate destiny, and that the document needs to be written professionally and competently all over again. Or, he might have been impressed with the holding of an 'investment conference' in the capital which attracted, against little odds, sitting ambassadors of some countries to the venue.

Being in an appreciative and charitable mood, the prime minister may not have wondered why we wanted to have foreign investors experience load-shedding first-hand, while his ministers waxed eloquent about the investment-friendly policies of the government.

Or, perhaps the intention was for potential investors unfamiliar with our handling of existing investors to meet first-hand with the sponsors of the Al Tuwairqi Steel Mills, a joint venture between a Saudi business group and Posco, the South Korean steel giant. This project, a \$1.24bn investment, is meant to set up a world class steel mill outside Karachi, and was promised feedstock gas at a certain industrial tariff — a promise the government has reneged upon. This is the same treatment the government meted out a few years ago to the \$1bn new fertiliser plant by Engro.

Incidentally, just last week, representatives from Al Tuwairqi and Posco stood for nearly three hours outside the Prime Minister's Secretariat, on a particularly cold day, waiting for entry to the ECC, to which they had been invited. The agenda had been changed, without informing these poor souls who had flown from all over the place to present their case. Is this what the 'investment conference' was meant to showcase?

As demonstrated, the government's response to key challenges is out of sync with what is required. If it is so desires, it can still correct its policy drift and redeem the situation. On current performance, however, that seems a tall order.

India, Pakistan and a changing world By Aijaz Zaka Syed

Saira Mustafa November 28, 2014



The reality finally seems to have dawned on Pakistan. Although Pakistani officials and intellectuals have from time to time complained of the fickle and far from trusting nature of America, their long-time ally and fair weather friend, few have had the pluck to put it as bluntly as Defence Minister Khawaja Asif has.

“The Americans have been our friends for a long time – since the 60s and the 70s – but their reliability is relative”, he told a select audience at Islamabad’s Institute of Strategic Studies.

The minister singled out Washington for much of the geopolitical mess in the region and beyond. “American foreign policy has been disastrous for this region,” he said, referring to South Asia and the Middle East. “For all times to come, the geography of this region has been changed. The disintegration of this region on sectarian and ethnic lines is in process.”

Evidently articulating the view of Pakistan's powerful military establishment, Asif rejected the continuing US 'disappointment' with Pakistan's role in the war on terror saying: "This shows that despite our sacrifices, the Americans still do not trust us completely. That is sad. We are still paying the price for our intervention in Afghanistan. (Pakistan's) intervention or interference in Afghanistan in the 80s was more of a proxy war and we were the proxy!"

This is as interesting as it gets. It is hard to disagree with the thrust of the minister's argument though. While everyone went home happy after the Afghan mujahideen with their primitive weapons, sheer resolve and faith – and of course moral support from the Americans and Arabs – drove out the mighty Soviet Union, it was Pakistan that was left holding the baby.

And it is still clearing the mess left behind by more than a decade of occupation, civil war and militarisation of the region.

Afghanistan was seen as a good war by the US and west, a brilliant opportunity to bleed its arch rival to death. For much of the Muslim world, the valiant Afghan struggle against the Soviet occupation was jihad. It inspired and attracted sympathetic Arab and Muslims from far and wide in their droves. One of those fighters had been a certain Arab called Osama bin Laden.

Coming back to the issue on hand, Pakistan's defence minister did not stop with venting the long pent up frustration and ire against the reigning superpower. He went on to drop more than broad hints that Pakistan is out looking to make new friends and win allies.

Advocating multi-polarity as ideal for a global balance of power and hailing Russia and China as 'the two largest powers in the region', Khawaja Asif said: "We should seek solutions to regional problems from our own shores, not from across the pond. Pakistan must pursue its own national security goals."

Interesting views and choice of words and interesting timing! But are they mere words or do they really suggest a strategic, meaningful shift in the mindset and priorities of Pakistan's military and political establishment?

The change may not come about overnight but it appears Pakistan has at last woken up to the need to reduce its critical dependence on America, one of the three 'As' that supposedly run the Islamic republic.

But it's better late than never. Indeed, this should be the way forward for all developing countries, especially Arab and Muslim nations, although it is easier said than done given the total global dominance of Pax Americana in all spheres.

In recent years, the Arab world, Africa and South America have increasingly looked eastwards, building economic partnerships with China, Japan, India and South Korea etc. But obviously they have a long way to go before they can come anywhere close to reducing their excessive dependence on the west.

But the first tentative steps for a thousand mile journey, as the Chinese would put it, are being taken by countries around the world. Turkey, Saudi Arabia, UAE – all US allies – and many other Muslim countries have increasingly been doing business with countries outside the influence of the western hemisphere.

Pakistan recently clinched a strategic defence deal with Russia which would allow it to purchase armaments from the Russian Federation. Although China has long been a close ally and friend with long years of economic and defence partnership between Islamabad and Beijing, this equation is set to acquire a whole new meaning and nature.

The two sides are ostensibly closing ranks against a growing US-India partnership on the one hand and an assertive, confident India looking to play a bigger role in the region and the world on the other.

The ascent of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his ambitious approach, strutting from Japan to America to Australia, clinching strategic and economic cooperation deals while assiduously avoiding Pakistan, hasn't clearly helped.

The tension at the 18th Saarc summit in Kathmandu has been so thick that you could slice it with a knife. The cold vibes between the neighbours who not long ago were part of the same country indeed froze the whole Saarc jamboree, whose sole stated purpose has been the promotion of 'regional cooperation'.

After a warm start in Delhi at Modi's inauguration in May, things have unravelled at an alarming rate. Seems the more things change between the South Asian twins, the more they remain the same. Twelve years ago, at a similar summit in Kathmandu, General Pervez Musharraf instantly broke ice and scored a diplomatic coup of sorts when he walked up to a bemused Prime Minister Vajpayee to shake hands.

The Indian leader, who once argued that since you cannot choose neighbours you might as well live with them in harmony, had been gracious enough to respond with warmth and a big smile.

Incidentally, Vajpayee founded the party that Modi now represents and leads. Yet there's a world of difference in how each views the world.

That said, it is good that both India and Pakistan are keen to make new friends and win allies far beyond their shores. In an increasingly globalised and interconnected world, no country can afford to forever remain an island limiting its sphere of acquaintance to any particular country, especially when it has repeatedly demonstrated to be exceptionally self-serving and fickle in its relationship.

However, before setting out in search of distant friends in distant lands shouldn't India and Pakistan first reach out to each other and break the Himalayan wall of distrust and suspicion that separates them?

The repeat farce of the Kathmandu Saarc summit, where the diplomatic games and moves and countermoves of the Big Two drove everyone nuts, is just another example of how the never-ending rivalry and antagonism of the nuclear powers is not just affecting their own people but the wellbeing and progress of the whole region.

In response to Modi's snub, Islamabad ensured that India's proposal for greater regional trade, connectivity and energy cooperation came up a dud. On the other hand, Modi went out of his way to court everyone, signing a series of bilateral agreements with even small players like Bhutan and Nepal, while looking straight through Nawaz Sharif.

Many in the Indian media noted how the continuing India-Pakistan duel had once again hijacked the regional cooperation summit, rendering it merely an expensive photo op.

Will this ever change? Notwithstanding his ideological baggage, Vajpayee had the audacity and vision to see that India and Pakistan had to make peace with each other and move on if they wanted their people to move ahead with times.

No one expects the neighbours to bury their troubled past, which includes four wars and constant hostilities in the past six decades, and suddenly become great friends. But they could, for God's sake, at least try for a mature, sensible relationship that exists and should exist between responsible, civilised neighbours and adults. Isn't it absurd that, while they make nice with the whole world, they should forever remain at each other's throats?

Will China Join the Global Currency War?

Aamar Gul November 28, 2014



Since the credit crisis, the rise in debt-fuelled investment in China has been taking place against a background of slowing additions to the workforce and also structurally weaker export growth, hence lacking the productivity dynamic. Reflecting the excess capacity issues in the industrial sector, producer prices have been in deflation for the past 32 months while consumer price trends have also been subdued. These disinflationary pressures have resulted in slower nominal GDP growth and higher real rates, posing challenges for policymakers to manage debt dynamics. Against this backdrop, a crucial debate has been raised as to whether policy-makers in China should engineer a sustained depreciation in RMB in order to aid deleveraging efforts.

In our view, the experience of the U.S. deleveraging cycle during which USD held relatively stable (as opposed to a sustained depreciation trend) as the U.S. economy successfully achieved a stabilisation in its debt dynamics suggests otherwise. To be sure, a weaker currency can play a supportive role in the management of debt dynamics, particularly if most of the external debt of the economy is denominated in local currency; however, we argue that the management of real rates versus real GDP growth is more critical.

In addition, we see challenges for policy-makers in engineering a sustained depreciation. Real rate differentials are supportive of renminbi (RMB) and, as per our forecasts, real rate differentials are unlikely to narrow significantly in the coming 12-18 months.

With the onset of disinflation pushing up real rates and policymakers' ongoing attempts to reduce misallocation of financial resources, fixed asset investment growth has been weak. If disinflationary pressures were to persist, high real rates would weigh on domestic demand growth and, in this scenario, current account surpluses, as represented by the savings investment gap, would likely increase. This would make it even more difficult to engineer a meaningful, sustained depreciation in the trade-weighted exchange rate.

FX Strategy: Putting RMB Under the Microscope

Given the strong USD backdrop, China's monetary conditions have been tightening due to tight credit lending, high real interest rates and a strong real effective exchange rate. China will focus on reforms and continue to promote the critical transition of its growth model away from exports and investments towards domestic consumption. Furthermore, a weaker RMB could lead to significant outflow risks and consequent hedging demand in FX additionally resulting in an adverse monetary impact on the domestic economy. This would also not align with China's ambitious plans for RMB internationalisation.

Therefore, we do not expect China to use RMB as a policy tool to support growth. The currency is likely to remain stable in the years ahead with a mild appreciation bias, we believe. Potential costs of weakening RMB could outweigh the potential benefits, in our view. Having said this, if China's macro outlook and flow dynamics remain stable alongside external macro volatility staying relatively low, we see a likelihood of China perhaps increasing RMB's two-way volatility in 1H (especially in 1Q when the trade balance and current account balance are seasonably weak).

Global FX Implications of RMB Policy

The impact on the global economy from the path the People's Bank of China (PBoC) takes cannot be emphasised enough. With global disinflation very much at the fore of macroeconomic concerns, a policy adopting the weakening of RMB, allowing China to export deflation abroad, will only add to existing issues. While China's policymakers look to provide some support to domestic growth to eschew a disorderly rebalancing, using FX weakness as the policy tool could have substantial negative implications for disinflationary currencies, especially within Asia, we argue. SGD, KRW and THB would be most vulnerable, given large trade linkages with China and already low inflation.

In addition, China joining the global trade of deflation would increase pressure on other central banks to take further dovish action in order to support dangerously low inflation expectations. In the case

that the ECB takes further action to counter the PBOC's RMB weakening policy and weakens EUR, we also see an indirect negative impact on other 'lowflation' currencies against USD. As such, this outcome could be potentially negative for EUR, CHF, SEK and JPY within G10, and ILS, PLN and HUF within EM.

We also evaluate the broad global FX implications of three separate scenarios: I) Our base case in which the PBOC stays neutral on RMB and no active changes are made to FX reserves; II) The PBOC fixes USD/CNY higher to weaken the currency while keeping FX reserves stable; and III) The PBOC buys USD reserves to weaken RMB in order to support domestic growth and inflation, similar to 1Q this year.

In summary, our base case remains that the PBOC will not use FX as a policy tool to buttress domestic growth. In the event that it does, we see potentially negative implications for disinflationary currencies, as well as commodity currencies, depending on the policy adopted on FX reserves.

Reforms in the education sector By Hussain Nadim

Saira Mustafa November 29, 2014



Like almost everything in Pakistan, education, too, has become a controversial subject. One cannot have a decent roundtable or a talk show on education that [does not end up being political](#).

Beyond revolutionary ideals, fixing education, I believe, needs a bit more realistic approach. Given the space constraint, I will focus on the following five areas that can set the education sector on the right track.

The first is to prioritise education in our country. And by prioritising, I don't mean listing it as a priority for only those who are in power but also for the general public and the media at large. Every time I have written about education, the social media penetration is not even one-tenth of what it is when I write about *dharnas* or conspiracy theories.

Also, how many times have the top anchors of talk shows even remotely discussed education in their programmes? Or for that matter how many [protests or sit-ins have we witnessed in Pakistan related to education](#)? The pressure has to come from the public, and it is my firm belief that a *dharna* of 10,000 students for changes in the education system can get parliament to prioritise it as a key budget allocation sector, opening doors for an improved education system.

Secondly, and more importantly, as long as teaching and grading methods are not revamped, no matter how much money is spent, the students will never attain quality education. Being a lecturer at NUST and the Quaid-e-Azam University, I have for long been a strong advocate of changing the teaching and evaluation methods in the country across all levels of education.

A teacher has to be trained in innovative methods, interactive techniques and approaches to fascinate the students, to develop their interest in the subject and to arouse curiosity, which is the first step towards learning and acquiring good education.

Grading has to be very careful and holistic so that it truly gauges the intellect and aptitude of the students instead of pushing them towards a number oriented rat race of scoring an 'A'. Pakistan needs truly learned people than mere degree holders.

The third and most important aspect for me is providing counselling across all levels of education. Education has to have a purpose: defining that purpose is something that the teachers, parents and each student must sit down and discuss.

Counselling is perhaps the key aspect of education reforms that must be taken into consideration at the high school and university levels. Unfortunately, in current schools and universities such a set-up doesn't exist. Well over 90 per cent of my students studying political science, economics or pursuing business degrees were studying the course because that was what 'everybody' else in the market was doing.

Integrating the component of counselling, I stress, is the key to education sector reforms that will go a long way towards self actualisation of students and putting them in the right direction based on the their interests and job market trends.

Fourth, there is a need to integrate information and communication technology (ICT) in education. Technology is rapidly changing the education structure and infrastructure all over the world and the education system must adapt. Also, [teachers' attendance and monitoring](#) could be established by integrating the ICT network in school systems tackling the culture of ghost schools.

From the students' perspective, education is no more just about getting a degree. In today's job market, education is synonymous with computer literacy. Programmes like the [laptop scheme](#) in that sense has really had a tremendous impact on making technology available to everyone by allowing kids from humble backgrounds to be on an equal footing in the job market.

Lastly, getting a degree is not all what education is about. It should be known that the world is now moving towards specialised certification and skill set trainings. Vocational trainings, hence, is a great alternative that can put our massive youth to high quality work and enable the government to extract value. Training in sectors that link the local economy with global economy (textile, sports goods, etc.) is what can create an excellent workforce that can be exported and also used internally.

Fixing education is no quantum physics — an integrated policy will bear fruit earlier than expected in a shape of accelerated GDP growth, better labour efficiency and eventual political stability for the government.

History of Terrorism

Aamar Gul November 29, 2014



Terrorist acts or the threat of such action have been in existence for millennia. Despite having a [history](#) longer than the modern nation-state, the use of terror by governments and those that contest their power remains poorly understood. While the meaning of the word terror itself is clear, when it is applied to acts and actors in the real world it becomes confused. Part of this is due to the use of terror tactics by actors at all levels in the social and political environment. Is the Unabomber, with his solo campaign of terror, a criminal, terrorist, or revolutionary?

Can he be compared to the French revolutionary governments who coined the word terrorism by instituting systematic state terror against the population of France in the 1790s, killing thousands? Are either the same as revolutionary terrorist groups such as the Baader-Mienhof Gang of West Germany or the [Weather Underground](#) in the United States?

So we see that distinctions of size and political legitimacy of the actors using terror raise questions as to what is and is not terrorism. The concept of moral equivalency is frequently used as an argument to broaden and blur the definition of terrorism as well. This concept argues that the outcome of an action is what matters, not the intent. Collateral or unintended damage to civilians from an attack by uniformed [military](#) forces on a legitimate military target is the same as a terrorist bomb directed deliberately at the civilian target with the intent of creating that damage.

Simply put, a car bomb on a city street and a jet fighter dropping a bomb on a tank are both acts of violence that produce death and terror. Therefore (at the extreme end of this argument) any military action is simply terrorism by a different name. This is the reasoning behind the famous phrase “One man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter”. It is also a legacy of legitimizing the use of terror by successful revolutionary movements after the fact.

The very flexibility and adaptability of terror throughout the years has contributed to the confusion. Those seeking to disrupt, reorder or destroy the status quo have continuously sought new and creative ways to achieve their goals. Changes in the tactics and techniques of terrorists have been significant, but even more significant are the growth in the number of causes and social contexts where terrorism is used.

Over the past 20 years, terrorists have committed extremely violent acts for alleged political or religious reasons. Political ideology ranges from the far left to the far right. For example, the far left can consist of groups such as Marxists and Leninists who propose a revolution of workers led by a revolutionary elite. On the far right, we find dictatorships that typically believe in a merging of state and business leadership.

Nationalism is the devotion to the interests or culture of a group of people or a nation. Typically, nationalists share a common ethnic background and wish to establish or regain a homeland.

Religious extremists often reject the authority of secular governments and view legal systems that are not based on their religious beliefs as illegitimate. They often view modernization efforts as corrupting influences on traditional culture.

Special interest groups include people on the radical fringe of many legitimate causes; e.g., people who use terrorism and extremism to uphold antiabortion views, animal rights, radical environmentalism. These groups believe that violence is morally justifiable to achieve their goals.