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NOVEMBER - 2016



COMPILED, ARTICLES, EDITORIALS FOR THE MONTH OF NOVEMBER 2016

12/1/2016

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PAKISTAN

TACKLING ABJECT POVERTY BY M ZIAUDDIN

Nobody talks of 'trickle down' any more. They now talk of 'inclusive growth'. In its post-1980 prescription all that Washington Consensus (WC) needed you to do was to get your economies to grow fast enough and the 'trickle down' effect, the WC doctors claimed, from such a growth would take care of the poor in your country ie, lift them out of the poverty line. But what really happened and is still happening following this kind of growth since the advent of Reaganomics, however, was something entirely opposite to what this prescription had claimed would happen. Instead of the poor being lifted out of the poverty line they went further deep down while the rich became filthy rich because the fruits of growth defying the laws of gravity went up rather than down.

Today in most of the countries which had used the WC prescription of growth a handful of rich have cornered almost 99% of the wealth while the rest of the population is holding the empty sack.

A recent report by Oxfam and the Lahore University of Management Sciences (Lums) has stated that the concentration of wealth in the richer 20% of Pakistanis is five times more than the bottom 20%.

Inequality and poverty have walked hand in hand in many countries for decades and even centuries - the result of non-inclusive growth models and regressive social policies.

Therefore, the buzz word today is 'inclusive growth'. But when it comes to spelling out what exactly do they mean by 'inclusive growth', most of the Breton Woods officials get tongue tied because any mention of equitable distribution of fruits of growth would immediately turn you into a socialist which is still a blasphemous term in the rich world and among their camp followers.

And if you try to further explain the term in some detail by stating that such a growth would ensure that affordable education, affordable health cover, affordable housing, affordable transport and affordable telecommunication facilities would come within the reach of each and every citizen of the country you would only end up annoying the very ruling elite that has cornered the 99% of the wealth of their countries and do not want the status quo to undergo any change that would threaten their wealth accumulation capacity.

However, even before a country can attempt to attain inclusive growth of a kind in which every citizen is afforded the enabling circumstances to better his/her lot, the poorest of the citizens need to be extended a helping hand to escape their abject destitution and be able to make the most of inclusive growth.

The Bangladeshis tried to do this with a fair degree of success through their world famous Grameen Bank launched by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus. In some Latin American countries they tried to do it by distributing land among the landless, getting their ownership registered in government documents and making these lands bankable.

In Pakistan the then official economic managers attempted in 2008 to attack abject poverty in the country through direct cash distribution amongst the most destitute through what is called the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP). The long-term objectives of the project was to support the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) launched world-wide to eradicate extreme and chronic poverty, to empower women and to achieve universal primary education through the provision of Rs 1000/month to eligible families. The monthly instalment was enhanced to Rs 1200 per month with effect from July 2013 and has now been fixed at Rs 1500 per month since July 2014.

BISP is now the largest single social safety net programme in Pakistan's history. The number of beneficiaries has increased to approximately nearly 5 million and BISP annual disbursements the government claims are likely to go beyond Rs 90 billion during the current fiscal.

A rigorous evaluation of the BISP is said to be underway. Despite some successes, however, the government finds high rates of malnutrition amongst young girls and boys. The BISP beneficiary households still face significant deprivations in access to adequate sanitation and drinking water. Some limited evidence of improvements to material welfare has been found with an increase in the proportion of BISP beneficiary households that own bicycles. The BISP appears to be supporting adult male members to shift away from casual labor towards self-employment. The BISP is also said to have increased the proportion of households that own livestock. The BISP Debit Card accounts could be used to deposit as well as withdraw cash. The potential for the BISP to have an impact on school enrolment has been found to be limited because the average cost of educating a child in a government school would account for 59% of the per adult equivalent value of the transfer.

Given the importance of education in reducing the inter-generational transmission of poverty, it is therefore encouraging that the BISP is also engaging in a Conditional Cash Transfer known as the Waseela-e-Taleem which seeks to provide an additional stipend to children aged 5-12 years, conditional on their attendance at a government school. However, the BISP should also be cognizant of the range of supply side weaknesses in

the education sector in Pakistan such as: shortage of school; shortage of teachers; lack of qualified teachers; missing facilities. The BISP should carefully take into account supply side considerations in relation to the Waseela-e-Taleem so as not to dilute the expected impact on education of this complementary program and focus on areas in which the education sector has the absorptive capacity to take on new students from BISP beneficiary households.

Research clearly indicates, officials claim, a change in the status of women in beneficiary households, with almost all women interviewed reporting that they are now being given more importance in the household as a direct result of the BISP. Furthermore, we find that the majority of women continue to retain control over the transfer, with 71% of women in 2014 deciding how the cash transfer is spent.

These official claims notwithstanding, one finds it very difficult not to question the program, its implementation and its monitoring system in a country where the population census itself is outdated by nearly 20 years. Besides, the level of governance, the high incidence of corruption, especially in high places plus the continued practice of the free market economy make it almost impossible to believe that the assistance is reaching the target recipients without at least half of it being siphoned off en-route.

Here it would not be out of place to mention the Brazilian experience of cash distribution among its poorest of the poor and try to learn from this experience.

In the second half of the 20th century, Brazil was one of the most unequal countries in the world, with economists coining expressions such as "Belindia - a society consisting of a tiny Belgium of prosperity in a sea of Indian poverty". For years, the poorest 60% of the population had only 4% of the wealth, while the richest 20% held 58% of the pie.

In 2003 President Lula launched the innovative Bolsa Família (BF) cash transfer programme, scaling up and co-ordinating scattered existing initiatives under a powerfully simple concept: trusting poor families with small cash transfers in return for keeping their children in school and attending preventive healthcare visits.

BF was met with considerable scepticism. After all, Brazil had traditionally been a big spender in the social sector, with 22% of GDP spent on education, health, social protection and social security. One of the images used by academics was that throwing money out of a helicopter would be just as efficient to reach the poor, given Brazil's frustration with the lack of results. How could BF, with about half a percent of GDP, change this bleak scenario?

But ten years of BF helped Brazil to reduce more than halve its extreme poverty - from 9.7 to 4.3% of the population. Most impressively, and in contrast to other countries, income inequality also fell markedly, to a Gini coefficient of 0.527 an impressive 15% decrease. By 2013 BF reached nearly 14 million households - 50 million people or around 1/4 of the population, and is widely seen as a global success story, a reference point for social policy around the world.

Equally important, qualitative studies have highlighted how the regular cash transfers from the program have helped promote the dignity and autonomy of the poor. This is particularly true for women, who account for over 90% of the beneficiaries.

Besides this immediate poverty impact, a second key goal of BF was to break the transmission of poverty from parents to children by increasing the opportunities for the new generation through better education and health outcomes. BF has increased school attendance and grade progression. Poverty invariably casts a long shadow on the next generation, but these results leave no doubt that BF has improved the prospects for generations of children. At the same time, fears about unintended consequences such as possible reduced work incentives have not materialised. Indeed, increased labor income has been another critical player in the reduction of poverty and inequality in Brazil during this period.

Brazil's experience is showing the way for the rest of the world. Despite its relatively short life, BF has helped stimulate an expansion of conditional cash transfer programs in Latin America and around the world - such programs are now in more than 40 countries.

Surveys conducted by the Federal Government among Bolsa Família's beneficiaries indicate that the money is spent, in order of priority, on food; school supplies; clothing; and shoes. A study conducted by The Federal University of Pernambuco, using sophisticated statistical methods, inferred that 87% of the money is used, by families living in rural areas, to buy food.

Source: <http://www.brecorder.com/articles-a-letters/187:articles/99023:tackling-bject-poverty/?date=2016-11-02>

PAKISTAN AND THE REVENGE OF GEOGRAPHY BY DR QAISAR RASHID

Geography is still the final determinant of a country's success is the central theme of the book, *The revenge of geography: What the map tells us about coming conflicts and the battle against fate*, written by Robert D Kaplan, and published in 2013 by Random House. Kaplan, who is a senior fellow at the Centre for a New American Security, and has twice been named Top 100 Global Thinkers by the *Foreign Policy* magazine, not only believes that geography dictates but also that the dictates of geography are monopolistic in nature. This op-ed intends to discuss his views on Pakistan.

On page 35, Kaplan writes: "Globalisation has itself spurred the rebirth of localism, built in many cases on ethnic and religious consciousness, which are anchored to specific landscapes, and thus explained best by reference to the relief map. This is because the forces of mass communications and economic integration have weakened the power of many states, including artificially conceived ones averse to the dictates of geography, leaving exposed in some critical areas a fractious, tottering world. Because of communications technology, pan-Islamic movements gain strengths across the entire Afro-Asian arc of Islam, even as individual Muslim state themselves are under siege from within.

Take Iraq and Pakistan, which are in terms of geography arguably the two most illogically conceived states between the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Subcontinent, even as the relief map decrees Afghanistan to be a weak state at best." In this paragraph, the meaning of conceive is not to imagine but to create or formulate. Here, Kaplan first refers to Pakistan as an artificially conceived state, and then mentions Pakistan as one of the most illogically conceived state. Unfortunately, nowhere in the book does Kaplan mention the reasons for calling Pakistan an artificially and illogically conceived state. Erudition demands that Kaplan should have qualified his statements in the book, leaving no space for the readers to conjecture. However, seen against the background of the central idea of his book, Kaplan might have tried to say that the creation of Pakistan was against the dictates of geography understood only by him. In such cases, esotericism is a curse; exposition is a boon.

On page 243, Kaplan writes: "Founded in 1947 by Mohammad Ali Jinnah...Pakistan was built on an ideological premise: that of a homeland for the Muslims of the Indian subcontinent. And it was true, the majority of the subcontinent's Muslims lived in West and East Pakistan (which became Bangladesh in 1971), yet many tens of millions of Muslims remained in India proper, so that Pakistan's geographical contradictions rendered its ideology supremely imperfect."

In this paragraph, Kaplan opines that geographical contradictions produced by leaving tens of millions of Muslims behind in India proper has rendered Pakistan's ideology — a homeland for Indian Muslims — absolutely imperfect. Kaplan seems to have not read the history of the Indian subcontinent that tells a reader that Indian Muslims had been divided into two halves. One half called Indian nationalist Muslims was against the division, while the other half called Muslim nationalists Muslims was demanding the division of the Indian subcontinent. The latter half got the country called Pakistan.

On the same page, Kaplan further writes: "The fact is that the subcontinent's history of invasions and migrations makes for a plenteous ethnic, religious, and sectarian mix. For example, India is the birthplace of several religions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism. Zoroastrians, Jews, and Christians have lived in India for hundreds and thousands of years. The philosophy of the Indian state accepts this reality and celebrates it; the philosophy of the Pakistani state is far less inclusive. That is partly why India is stable and Pakistan is not."

In this paragraph, Kaplan acknowledges that the religious repertoire of the Indian subcontinent was the most heterogeneous in the world, whether the religions were indigenous or foreign. Further, he recognises that the geographical dictates or realities of the Indian subcontinent cannot be seen in isolation from its religious heterogeneity. However, what Kaplan has failed to realise is that when political realities were introduced into the Indian subcontinent, the religious heterogeneity became more palpable and, in many instances, inflammable. If the philosophy of religious heterogeneity tinkered with political dissension had been realised by the Hindus, Jinnah would have found no reason to present his famous 14 points in 1929 as a constitutional formula for socio-political coexistence. India has still failed to submit to this reality, and this is the reason it has dispatched its 600,000 — the number is unconfirmed — troops to its part of Kashmir to quell the current uprising for securing the right of self-determination of Kashmiris, which is a major challenge to the stability of India.

On page 243, Kaplan also writes: "Pakistan is the home of four major ethnic groups [Punjabis, Sindhis, Baloch and Pashtuns], each harbouring hostility to others and each anchored to a specific region ...Islam was supposed to have provided the unifying glue for the state but it has signally failed in this regard." This idea is extended further on page 246, where Kaplan writes: "[T]he case can be made that with the slow-motion dissolution of the former Soviet Empire in Central Asia, and the gradual weakening of the Pakistani state, a historic realignment is now taking place that could see Afghanistan disappear on the political map."

Here, Kaplan expresses his belief that internal ethnic disharmony is undermining the unity of Pakistan and that the disintegration of the former Soviet Union in December 1991 is having a domino effect on Pakistan to get disintegrated. In this regard, Kaplan needs to read the 18th Constitutional Amendment passed by the Parliament of Pakistan in April 2010 reinforcing the resolve of all four provinces representing the four major ethnicities to co-exist and strengthen federalism and democracy in Pakistan, and thereby offering the desired unifying glue — both written and reassuring — for the state of Pakistan.

Kaplan seems to be morbidly infatuated with the idea that geography is still the final determinant of a country's success, but the world, especially in the post-Cold War phase, has stretched beyond the dictates of geography into political and economic realms, disproving the monopoly of geography as a singular enforceable factor. Pakistan has also been fast coming out of the geographical dictates and resorting to undertaking new politico-economic alignments in the region. In short, Kaplan needs to educate himself on Pakistan's history and update his knowledge on Pakistan's developmental trajectory, instead of incessantly and despicably misinforming the world about Pakistan.

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Source: <http://dailytimes.com.pk/opinion/02-Nov-16/pakistan-and-the-revenge-of-geography>

CLIMATE CHANGE AND PAKISTAN BY SIRAJ SHAWA

Pakistan is ranked eighth on the list of countries most vulnerable to climate change according to the Germanwatch Global Climate Risk Index. We are placed in a group of countries that encounter extreme weather events each year, not those that are in the bottom 10 because of exceptional catastrophes.

Pakistan was one of five nations most affected by events related to climate change in 2014. We are indeed in an awful situation. Our policymakers need to take appropriate measures to mitigate these effects. But they seem to slumber on while the sufferings of the people owing to climate change increase day by day.

Generally people here have no idea what climate change is. They think of natural disasters as divine punishment.

Pakistan has been one of the major victims of natural calamities in the world. According to the Pakistan Economic Survey, more than 3,000 people were killed and \$16 billion loss incurred due to the floods of 2010, 2011, and 2012. Bridges were swept away by the water, infrastructure was damaged and people were displaced from their homes and villages. Communication channels were lost with many areas. In 2014, floods in Punjab and AJK destroyed thousands of developmental projects costing the government billions of rupees.

The capricious rain patterns and freakish weather are also harming our agriculture. Farmers are mostly ambivalent about which crop to grow in order to avoid high losses. Earthquakes have become a norm in most parts of the country. More than 1,200 people lost their lives on account of the heatwave in Karachi last year. Flash floods in Chitral and drought in Thar cost us many more lives. With each passing year our glaciers are shrinking at a faster rate, making the flow of rivers more unpredictable downstream.

Pakistan's miseries due to climate change surpass its contribution towards global emission of greenhouse gases. But this doesn't mean we point a finger at others for our losses. Pakistan should draw advantage from the Green Climate Fund, created by the United Nations Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 2010 for reducing emission of greenhouse gases in developing countries and helping them set up climate-resilient projects.

We also need to evoke the spirit of self-help. If the indigenous production of greenhouse gases in Pakistan is reduced that can help reduce our afflictions to some extent. But instead of turning to renewable energy resources like sunlight, wind, geothermal heat etc the government has expedited work on coal power projects and nuclear power plants.

The Thar power plant, Arifwala power station, Jhang (RLNG based) power project, Balloki power plant, Chasnupp (I, II, III), Kanupp (I, II, III) are some examples from the list of power projects which are eco-unfriendly. Pakistan has the potential to generate 90,000MW of electricity from wind energy and sunlight and more than 60,000MW from hydro energy. Being exposed to climate change related calamities we should have turned our focus to such environment-friendly resources of energy to meet our growing demand. But, unfortunately, that isn't happening.

Taking eco-friendly initiatives is also very necessary. In this regard, projects like the billion tree tsunami in the entire country will help a lot. Campaigns like 'Save the forests' should be launched. Planting trees on both sides of the roads and thoroughfares will add thousands of more plants to the existing ones. As a result, more carbon dioxide will be consumed and higher production of oxygen will take place.

Facilities like the metro-bus service and mass transit trains in major cities of the country will promote use of public transport. That way the use of private vehicles will be reduced which is good for both financial and environmental reasons. Why not also promote cycling that is both a healthy exercise and a means of transport? Barring transport services in some cities, the government has done very little in the above areas – and very little is on the cards.

Indifference towards climate change adds to many other areas where we are failing our coming generations. The extent to which the adopted national climate change policy has been implemented is appalling. Very little has been done to address the climate change challenges as per the facts on the ground. Although climate change has been included in the 'budget in brief' now, according to the UNDP's Climate Public Expenditure and Institutional Review 2015, the climate change budget was underutilised in Pakistan.

It's heartening that our government took up a national climate change policy four years ago but now it needs to be implemented in full letter and spirit with an appropriate part of budget earmarked.

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Source: <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/161965-Climate-change-and-Pakistan>

WHAT IMPACT WILL US ELECTIONS HAVE ON PAKISTAN?

LAHORE: Though the Republican Party nominee for the Oval Office, Donald Trump, is considered a great threat to the world, in terms of Pakistan's concerns, no major policy shift is being expected as the United States has a strong institutional system, which cannot be influenced easily.

This was the outcome of a panel discussion at the festival of ideas, 'A World of Tomorrow', held on Sunday. The festival was organised by the Beaconhouse School System.

The Express Tribune Editor Fahd Husain, being moderator of a session on 'As the World Holds its Breath: The Oval Office and Global Security', set the tone of the session by highlighting the latest polls indicating the race for the Oval Office has further tightened up, though the Democratic Party nominee for President Hillary Clinton still has some lead.

What impact will US elections have on Pakistan

"Probably, it is happening for the first time in the US history that smooth transition of power is under threat as Trump had preemptively challenged the results of upcoming November 8 presidential elections, claiming the entire system was rigged." He highlighted the findings of a recent research poll, according to which, 85% Europeans believed that Donald Trump would have negative impact on the world. All these developments and controversies were strange and interesting as they were going to impact not only the Americans but the entire world.

Former foreign minister Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri said definitely Pakistan had uncertain times ahead, if not dangerous, but it should be kept in mind that only a person (president) could not impact much in the presence of a strong institutional system in the United States. He underlined that he did not see a major change in America's policy towards Pakistan as the US Congress was deeply divided with dozens of national security advisers who had a great say in decision making.

He, however, indicated concerns related to Pakistan-US bilateral relations and Pakistan-India-Afghanistan relations with the change of government in America. He underscored both Pakistan and India were nuclear states so war was not an option for either of the states.

Eminent writer and analyst Dr Hasan Askari Rizvi said the victory of Trump in the US elections would be a matter of great concern for the people of America rather than Pakistan because of his ambiguous position on the US national security. Another challenge for the US would be that to what extent the institutional checks and balances

could be effectively dealt with the strange ideas of Trump. On the other hand, if Hillary Clinton is elected, there would be continuity in policies and overall objective would remain the same, he maintained.

Speaking about the US policy in Asia, he said, the shift towards the Asia Pacific would follow and the US would build partnership with countries in the region, especially countries around China. However, this effort would be to contain China, not necessarily to exclude China, and the same would apply to Pakistan. The US obviously lost interest in Pakistan over a period of time but this was not going to abandon relations with Pakistan but to increase pressure to deal with issues related to terrorism. However, India would remain more important than Pakistan as it was partner with the US in the region as a big market and stabilising force, he added.

Noted journalists and writer Ahmed Rashid said right now Pakistan was in a real crisis-like situation as it did not know what Trump's foreign policy would be. "We did not know who would be the secretary of the state for him, although we knew a couple of candidates for Clinton," he said. But the real issue was the post-election question whether Trump would accept the election results if Hillary won. Even he lost, would he launch mass campaign against Hillary as he had already said.

Speaking about the institutional system, Rashid said, these institutes had been whittled down. Congress had lost power that paralysed Obama administration to do reforms that it planned. On the email fiasco a lot of people from FBI and CIA were with Trump so these institutions were for the first time in bad shape.

Published in The Express Tribune, November 7th, 2016.

Source: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1222671/world-tomorrow-impact-will-us-elections-pakistan/>

THE WAY OUT: SOLUTION TO CIVIL SERVICE CONUNDRUM LIES WITHIN BY RIAZUL HAQ

ISLAMABAD: An important document of the Federal Public Service Commission (FPSC) offers remedy to a plethora of serious issues plaguing it from an alarming drop in successful candidates to increase in vacant posts coupled with flawed policies of bureaucracy amid political intervention.

Establishment Division Secretary Tahir Shahbaz had told a Senate panel that the number of bright and able candidates was decreasing while competent officers have been joining multinational companies owing to attractive job offers.

He also shared that Balochistan has been facing a severe shortage of Pakistan Administrative Service group officers, as there are 61 seats vacant in top five grades (between BPS-18 and BPS-22) out of 103 vacancies among all provinces. The secretary shared the figures of vacant posts from other provinces and stressed the need for overhauling training, promotion and rotation policies of the civil services to make it attractive for the younger generation.

“An honest officer cannot work in current pay scale and facilities,” he lamented, besides stating that even the number of sanctioned posts every year is on the rise.

The FPSC has bluntly accepted that it has been plagued by several problems that have been increasing with each passing day in a report in April this year. The report pinpoints flaws in the civil service system and suggests solutions to it.

The FPSC has admitted that lack of professionalism, political interference; obsolete rules and systematic inconsistencies are one of the few factors besetting its performance.

OSD

On the one hand the bureaucracy laments shortage of officers while on the other hand there are around over 30 government officers in grades 20 to 22 who are currently officers-on-special-duty (OSD), meaning that they have not been posted anywhere.

Some of the officers have been OSD since 2013, meaning the government has been unable to find them any suitable posting, but still pays them full salaries, costing the public exchequer millions of rupees every month.

A source in the Establishment Division said some of the OSDs were considering voluntary retirement out of sheer frustration.

Political interference

Political interference and appointment of blue-eyed officers by politicians and the government have always been an issue of nuisance for officers as many are usually side-lined or ignored in promotion boards, forcing them to move courts.

Senate Standing Committee on Cabinet Secretariat Chairman Senator Talha Mehmood has often been putting the promotion of selected officers in his committee, but officers from the Establishment Division have been denying any such thing.

Another member of the committee Senator Kamil Ali Agha also thinks that it is useless to point out flaws in any system if they are not fixed.

“The apex courts should observe and take stern action as to why provincial quota is violated and selection is made on the basis of likes and dislikes,” he stated.

According to the Establishment Division, about 219 cases of civil servants were pending before various courts and tribunals nationwide. The statistics reveal that 94 cases, the highest number, are pending before the Federal Service Tribunal, followed by 85 at the Islamabad High Court (IHC).

Moreover, 21 cases are pending before the Lahore High Court, nine before the Sindh High Court, three before the Balochistan High Court, and seven before the Supreme Court.

Suggestions

Among many suggestions, the FPSC has urged the government to set up a national university of public policy and administration.

“There is a need for an apex institution to impart higher education in the fields of public policy, public administration and allied disciplines to prepare and groom current and future generations of officers in statecraft, good governance, strategic thinking.”

The report also suggests implementation of recommendations put forward by a committee headed by Abdul Wajid Rana, Member FPSC, to undertake an exercise to outline the objective criteria for promotion to make civil servants honest officers and free from political pressure.

The report also suggested redesigning evaluation form for officers of grade 19-20. Besides, suggesting objective criteria for promotion to BS-20 and BS-21 — including the minimum period spent on duty in each basic pay scale.

According to a secretary, who wished not to be quoted, until and unless the civil service is freed from the claws of politicians and their directions, every policy would fall flat.

Published in The Express Tribune, November 7th, 2016.

Source: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1222843/way-solution-civil-service-conundrum-lies-within/>

TRUMP VICTORY MAY NOT HARM PAK-US TIES: US EXPERTS BY WASEEM ABBASI

WASHINGTON: Victory of Donald Trump in US elections may not immediately harm Pakistan-America relations but the new President is expected to be tough on issues like terrorism and detained CIA spy Shakil Afridi which could strain already volatile bilateral ties, experts in US believe.

Although Pakistani Ambassador to United States Jalil Abbas Jilani has already briefed Trump's foreign policy team, no one still know what exactly the policy of President-elect on Pakistan is.

Talking to The News, one of Pakistan experts in US think tank said Trump's policy towards the country will be more transactional. "It's unclear how he'll craft his policy toward Pakistan. He said relatively little about it on the campaign trail. I imagine much of what we'll see won't be much different from how it's been in recent months—a focus on pursuing the core US interest of stability through limited yet focused counter-terrorism cooperation," Michael Kugelman, a senior associate for South and Southeast Asia at the Woodrow Wilson Center told The News.

Kugelman who is responsible for research, programming, and publications on Pakistan and South at the Centre said Trump's Pakistan policy will be "unabashedly transactional, all aspects of policy will be meant to serve and advance US interests."

"This could mean more conditions on aid and an increasing unwillingness to pursue broader avenues of cooperation outside of security," he added. When asked about the future of relations, Kugelman said US-Pakistan ties were headed toward a downgrade no matter who won the election.

"So the basic parameters of the relationship won't change. Still, some of Trump's specific positions, such as his demand for the release of Shakil Afridi, could introduce new tensions into an already volatile relationship," Kugelman added.

Another top US expert on Pakistan, Shuja Shah Nawaz does not see a hard shift in policy toward Pakistan under Trump. "But a lot depends on what Pakistan does on its own against internal and external violence and terrorism," said Nawaz who is Founding Director of Atlantic Council's South Asia Center and currently a distinguished fellow.

"We have to wait to see if Trump continues the disengagement from Afghanistan and relations with Nato. Pakistan did not feature in the campaign. It was only mentioned once in the Democratic Party platform as an adjunct to the Afghan withdrawal," Nawaz said. He said the onus remains on Pakistan to right its own path on domestic polity and

economy and regional relations. “The US-India relation will affect its actions no doubt. But it must strike out on its own” said Nawaz who was born in Pakistan.

Talking to The News in a previous interview, Pakistan’s Ambassador to the United States Jalil Abbas Jilani had hoped the ties between the two countries will remain stable in the event of Donald Trump’s victory. “In America, foreign policies are made by team of experts with deep knowledge of region. I have briefed the Republican team about the issues of mutual interest and we hope our ties will be further improved in future,” he said.

Jilani said Pakistan is an important country of South Asia which had played vital part in improving US role in the region. He noted four Republican Senators have recently visited Pakistan.

Pakistan-born head of Muslims for Trump organisation Sajid Tarar hoped that the relations will be improved under the Republican President. “Pakistan is important country of the region and no US administration can ignore it,” he said. He said the Muslim countries are biggest victims of terrorism and action against terrorism by President-elect will ensure better future for these countries including Pakistan.

Source: <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/163787-Trump-victory-may-not-harm-Pak-US-ties-US-experts>

THE ENERGY CRISIS: NO END IN SIGHT | EDITORIAL

More energy woes are awaiting the nation as a report issued by the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) has contradicted Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's claims that load-shedding will end by 2018. Ironically, the premier has repeatedly claimed that there will be no load-shedding by the end of his government's term in 2018 while the NEPRA report is saying quite the opposite. When the PML-N campaigned for the general elections 2013, it made tall claims of ridding the nation of electricity shortages within days, then weeks, then months. Later, this was extended to six months, two years and lastly, till the end of its tenure. However, the latest NEPRA report says that the energy crisis will continue to haunt the country beyond 2018 due to serious problems in the power transmission system.

Reportedly, zero load-shedding across the country until 2018 is not possible due to inherent flaws in the system. The present power transmission and distribution system can bear the load of only 16,000 MW. Power experts believe that if more power is added to the existing distribution system, it will break down and result in blackout in the country. Faulty planning is cited as a major reason for government's failure to overcome the energy crisis. It is a pity that the government is struggling to ensure the availability of a basic utility of life that guarantees economic prosperity of a nation. No doubt, the duration of load-shedding has reduced but this blessing is limited to urban areas only, while the situation in small cities and villages not only remains the same but is likely to aggravate due to closure of canals in the last week of December for desilting. Overall, the performance of the PML-N government has not been satisfactory in the energy sector. Long term planning and its proper implementation are what the government has failed to do. Already, the electricity crisis has put many industries on the verge of collapse. In fact, the PML-N government has completely failed to understand the severity of the energy crisis, and has been attempting to befool the country with false claims. Instead of issuing contradictory statements, the government should present the real picture of the crisis. It should realistically describe the extent of the crisis and then present its strategy on how to deal with the problem. Electricity load shedding will not go away till the government comes up with a clear strategy to deal with the crisis. It is in the interests of the government that it should stop its false claims that have no worth and only result in a credibility crisis for itself. If the government continues to make fake promises, it will only further lose the people's trust. Instead, there should be planning in sequence. Along with working on new projects, the government needs to overhaul the existing outdated national grid, which cannot sustain the increasing load of electricity.

Source: <http://dailytimes.com.pk/editorial/15-Nov-16/the-energy-crisis-no-end-in-sight>

FROM 'COLD PEACE' TO 'HOT PEACE' | EDITORIAL

It is extremely difficult to know what India hopes to gain by the latest outbreak of firing across the Line of Control in the Bhimber sector that killed seven Pakistani soldiers. The incident occurred late on Sunday night, was unprovoked and brought what was described as a 'befitting response' from our military details of which have yet to be released. Indian officials have yet to make a response.

With diplomatic relations at an all-time low after a spate of tit-for-tat expulsions after spying allegations by both sides, whatever was left of a nascent peace deal is in tatters. Trade, always far smaller than its actual potential, has virtually dried up, the cinema industry in Pakistan is negatively affected and there are jitters about how the new Trump Presidency in America may tilt more towards India as a partner.

Recent weeks have seen an increase in incidents of this sort which have led to protest by Pakistan to the UN military observers and the death of at least 26 civilians and the injury of another 107. And all to what end other than terrorising the civilians unlucky enough to live within range of Indian long guns? There is no ground to be won, there is no invasion to support, no ground troops calling for support fire. The origins of this hot peace lie clearly within the Kashmir dispute, and the killing of a Kashmir activist. Tensions have escalated in Kashmir since then with Indian troops involved in any number of incidents that have led to deaths and appalling injuries, particularly to the eyes of many protesters.

Meanwhile the rest of the world looks in the other direction. Whatever intervention America could have made is negated by a Trump win. Clinton would have at the least provided continuity but now there is deep uncertainty. The UN continues to sit on its hands and India pushes ever closer to an explosive tipping-point. Domestic pressures are stoking the fires in India and Mr Modi is doing nothing to damp them down. Once again we appeal for calm, but view developments with considerable trepidation.

Published in The Express Tribune, November 15th, 2016.

Source: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1231051/cold-peace-hot-peace/>

PAK-TURK RELATIONS | EDITORIAL

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's visit to Pakistan is surrounded by a number of controversies while at the same time carrying great importance for the troubled government of Nawaz Sharif, which has been facing the wrath of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief Imran Khan over Prime Minister Sharif's alleged involvement in the Panama scandal. In a joint press conference with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in Islamabad, Erdogan expressed his government's concerns regarding the activities of certain groups in Pakistan that have alleged links with US-based self-exiled cleric Fethullah Gulen. He termed the organisation run by Gulen 'Fethullah Terror Organisation' (Feto), and called it a threat to Pakistan's security. Ahead of the Turkish president's visit to Pakistan, the interior ministry asked the Turkish staff of the Pak-Turk schools and colleges to leave the country by November 20. Reportedly, the number of teachers and other staff in the chain's 28 schools and colleges stand at 108 and the total number of their family members at about 400. Needless to say, it was shocking news for the parents of the children enrolled in these schools established in the three major cities of the country.

Critics say that Erdogan used the attempted coup as an excuse to curtail civil liberties; fire hundreds of thousands of people in civilian and military positions; clamp down on press freedom; jail journalists and essentially adopt the policies of a totalitarian government, run by a single individual. His government's move to pressure Pakistan to expel school staff has also come under severe criticism. The expulsion of teachers is being termed as a politically motivated decision, which is not in the interests of Pakistan, especially in light of the fact that the country has been struggling to improve its literacy rate for quite some time. The expulsion of teachers under a short notice has put a question mark on government's ability to resist pressure from close allies. Government should have provided an opportunity to the Turkish staff, who have been serving Pakistani schools for so many years, to conveniently shift to their own country instead of expelling them in such an embarrassing manner.

Besides, expressing his government's concerns, Erdogan has shown solidarity with Pakistan on the issue of Kashmir and criticised the mistreatment of Kashmiris at the hands of the Indian government. Turkey has also supported Pakistan on all international forums including the blocking of India's bid to join the Nuclear Suppliers Group. Despite internal rifts, Turkey has proved itself as one of Pakistan's most consistent allies and the nature of relations is emotional-cum-ideological. People-to-people contact and bilateral state relations remain as strong as ever, with the two countries now seriously exploring ways and means to further cement ties. The Nawaz Sharif government enjoys good relations with the Turkish leadership. The Turkish government's technical and financial

help enabled the Punjab government to launch various infrastructural development projects in the province besides the Metro Bus Service in Lahore. Now, the two countries are working to sign a free trade agreement to enhance bilateral trade.

The friendship between Pakistan and Turkey is time tested and indispensable. Pakistan needs to grab this opportunity and try to establish good relations with Turkey. At the same time, it should not blindly comply with all requests of its allies, particularly those that violate basic human rights.

Source: <http://dailytimes.com.pk/editorial/19-Nov-16/pak-turk-relations>

TERRORISM IN PAKISTAN: ROOT CAUSES BY AMANULLAH KHAN

EVERY terrorist incident in Pakistan strengthens my belief that root cause of terrorism in the country is external. The father of the nation, Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, truly said that no power on earth can undo Pakistan, however, he did not say that no power can hurt Pakistan. It is equally true that mere existence of Pakistan is not acceptable to many countries in the world. These 'rogue states' worked together in disintegration of Pakistan (East Pakistan) and the same forces are active since '9/11' to destroy Pakistan from within.

Internally, hostile forces have worked hard to deprive the nation from the spiritual power of dignity. These forces have applied multiple subversive methods to achieve this goal. The important among such strategies is the political and economic systems that are mainly responsible for all of the evils. When a nation loses the way to live with dignity, loses everything at last. This is a universal principle and in line with the teachings of Islam also. Allah in Quran says, "Allah will never change the condition of the people until they change it themselves." (Surah Ar Raad). Pakistani nation has lost its cause to live like a nation. Two times Roti (meal) is the prime goal of life for majority (poor class) in the country, and add two more to it, kapra and makan (cloth and a house), is the mindset and life style of the middle class. Making money is the practice of the rich, and ruling the country is the right of the 1% elites. In such a scenario, everyone is busy to grab an opportunity. State machinery is out of work, institutions are serving privileged class in the power corridors, and thus performance of the institutions is next to nil. National assets are being sold/privatised, money is borrowed in trillions of dollars, and a new wave of unregulated capitalism has emerged that is exploding the nation like a bomb.

Other than that, enemies have deployed their assets across the country at different stations, in different forms and at different levels. These include people in politics, media, academia, judiciary, religious circles and in the civil society organizations at large. These people are more dangerous than the bullets fired from an enemy's guns. We may call them mouthpieces who are on the mission relating to subversion—changing the national narrative and mindset that suits their masters. There is dire need for a fundamental change in the political system of the country. Structures of political, economic, judicial, education, and social systems have got corrupted that should be revised. The political system requires a major surgery at first place because leadership, whether honest or corrupt, emerge through a political system. Surgery of system will bring about change in the mindset of political leaders which will automatically lead to rigorous revision of Pakistan's internal and external policies.

Pakistan needs a competent, honest, courageous and visionary leadership who could restore national cause, and perform well to all challenges and threats, at home and from abroad. A kind of controlled revolution can bring about such fundamental changes. The core question yet remains; who will dare doing all this. I personally do not see any chances in the foreseeable future, although people have strong desire for a revolution—survey reports confirm. However, there could be some scenarios that may alter whole course of history and relieve Pakistan from the menace of terrorism forever: First, a controlled revolution with military support in order to establish a technocratic government; second, a miracle in the shape of a war between big powers in which India suffers (this happened during World War-II in which an arrogant Japan was defeated and Chinese were relieved from its atrocities), and finally, Almighty Allah can bring up an honest, competent, and a brave leader within the existing system of democracy who could introduce revolutionary policies and practices in the best interest of the country and the nation. — The writer is a Research Associate at Strategic Vision Institute, Islamabad.

Source: <http://www.eurasiareview.com/28102016-terrorism-in-pakistan-the-root-causes-oped/>

FOREIGN POLICY CHALLENGES | EDITORIAL

And what the government is doing to tackle them

The exchange of cross border firing between Pakistan and India became vicious on Wednesday after the reported mutilation of an Indian soldier's body a day earlier. Indian Northern Command vowed revenge, promising heavy retribution. After the statement several innocent civilians along with three soldiers have been killed on this side of the LoC. Reprisals by Pakistan army are likely to cause similar casualties on the other side. Incidents of the sorts can lead the two countries into war without either side desiring it. To stop the situation from further deterioration Pakistan and India need to resume a meaningful dialogue. Presently there is a lack of political will on both sides to stop the hostilities

The incidents on the country's eastern border are yet another indication of the overwhelming foreign policy challenges Pakistan faces. With both India and Afghanistan being hostile, the country is in a nutcracker. Meanwhile it has been denied F-16s while much of the funding from the US has stopped after Islamabad's relations with the US came under strain. Donald Trump's victory could further add to Pakistan's problems. The situation underlines the need for a thorough review of the foreign policy.

Days before the induction of the new COAS, the government has made a baby step towards bringing foreign affairs under the control of the civilian administration. Sartaj Aziz has announced a policy making mechanism which is supposed to receive feed backs from all relevant stake holders, civilian as well as military. The ministries of defence, interior and information will be represented in the committee side by side with the Military Operations Directorate, ISI and IB. The committee would be chaired by the Foreign Secretary to allow the Foreign Office to play a central role in the process. The committee has been tasked with hammering out a "doable and sustainable" India-Kashmir policy. One wishes the experiment success with hopes that the scope of the committee would be extended to the entire gamut of foreign policy issues over time.

Source: <http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2016/11/24/comment/foreign-policy-challenges/>

DISCUSSING THE 98 PER CENT FAILURE IN THE CSS EXAMS BY MOHAMMAD ALI BABAKHEL

It's fine to celebrate success but it is more important to heed the lessons of failure – Bill Gates

The recent 98 per cent failure of the candidates in the written part of the competitive examination (CE) is deplorable — but is it the failure of the candidates or could it be attributed to other factors?

Does it depict flaws in our education system? Does it depict poor professional counselling of students? What about the role of the parents? Does it also demonstrate the flaws in the talent hunting apparatus? Also why does success in the CSS examination primarily dependent upon proficiency in the English language? Why are specific talent hunting programmes not tailored for professional groups like the Police service of Pakistan and Foreign Service of Pakistan? Are our universities imparting knowledge or merely awarding degrees? Why are universities failing to promote creativity? Despite the mushroom growth in the number of universities, the question arises as to what is the reason for such a dismal scenario? If universities churn out such talent how FPSC alone be held responsible for high percentage of failure?

According to the recent results, only 202 candidates qualified for the written part of the exam. 20717 candidates applied for the examination and only 9643 appeared. In CE 2013, 15998 candidates applied, 11447 appeared and 238 were declared successful in the written test. For CE-2013 FPSC interviewed 238 candidates against 266 advertised vacancies and finally 194 candidates were allocated thus 72 vacancies remained vacant. For CE-2014, FPSC interviewed 377 candidates against 315 advertised vacancies but finally 233 candidates were allocated thus 82 vacancies remained unfilled. The remaining one-fourth of the vacancies unfilled in a country with one of the highest unemployment rate is a matter of grave concern. Such vacancies primarily remained unfilled owing to non-availability of suitable candidates from within the minority sector, smaller provinces and women.

During CE-2013, out of the total 72 unfilled slots, 25 were reserved for women, 25 for minorities and 22 open dependent on merit. Out of the total 25 unfilled women seats, 14 remained vacant in Sindh and out of total 25 seats for minorities, 12 remained vacant in Punjab. To make civil service more representative and service oriented, the FPSC needs to ensure inclusion of minorities and women as per available quota.

In CE-2013, 67 per cent of total allocated seats were captured by second and third time repeaters hence it transpires that after better preparation, change of subjects, guidance and improvement in presentation skills, they actually performed well. The performance of repeaters also suggests that the FPSC and universities should jointly design career counselling programmes.

In 2011, 13,071 candidates applied while 9,063 appeared; on the contrary, 24,640 candidates applied and 13,170 appeared in 2014. The final result in 2011 was 8.67 per cent while in 2014, the result was only 2.86 per cent. Though in three years time, the applicants were doubled but as compared with the results of 2011, 67 per cent downward result has been noticed in 2014.

For CE-2014, 24,640 aspirants applied but only 13,170 appeared thus it depicts that a majority of them were either not serious or they treated it as an examination of chance or luck. In the annual report of 2014, the FPSC identified the lack of analytical skills, critical approach, inability to comprehend issues, non-familiarity with subjects and poor presentation based on illogical arguments with wrong or irrelevant data as few reasons of failures.

Though universities are the best places to prepare young graduates for competitive examinations but in recent rankings, only three universities made place in the top 800 universities. Majority of the graduates are dependent upon the reproduction of information and get degrees. The aspirants shall realise, in time, that the CSS is not an academic examination but rather a competitive examination that requires quality, quantity and problem-solving approaches.

Still though, the CSS examination is the only talent assessment process that enjoys unimpeachable credibility, hence the FPSC should not act purely as a bureaucratic organisation but an adaptable modern talent hunting body. Ideally, the FPSC should establish an institutional network with leading universities, ministries and departments for whom it hunts the talent.

The recent introduction of subjects like Governance and Public Policy, Town Planning and Urban Development, Gender Studies, Environmental Science, Criminology and Anthropology is a positive measure that will improve the quality of intake. Research wing of FPSC should opt for a more diagnostic approach and also focus on studying the global practices.

We as Pakistani citizens need to encourage a debate as to why a candidate who opted for general subjects like language, history and sociology may land in the Pakistan Administrative Service or the Police but a candidate opting for international relations, US history, public administration, criminology and international law either fails or may be placed in information group.

Though in CE-2014, 53 per cent candidates opted for Journalism as an optional subject the results were disappointing. The Annual Report (AR) of FPSC 2014 observed that the “performance of the majority of the candidates was poor.” During 2014, 40 per cent candidates opted for Sociology. Though Sociology remained the second most popular optional subject but regarding the performance of candidates, the AR 2014 expressed “It seemed that candidates run after guides etc. or to shortcuts available in the markets.” In “Everyday Science about half of the candidates did not secure even 30 per cent marks. Regarding poor performance in Pakistan Affairs, the report observed that “Only five per cent candidates attempted seriously.”

Though after the 18th amendment, the quality of education in the smaller province was expected to soar, statistical data of results speaks otherwise. Domicile-wise performance shows that among the top 100 positions, candidates from Punjab got 77, K-P 7 and Sindh also got 7 positions. In such ranking, candidates from AJK obtained 2 seats, Fata obtained 2 and Balochistan obtained 5. Such poor performance should be a guiding principle for the bureaucracy of smaller provinces to devise improved strategies for educational development and prepare the youth for competitive examination and challenges being confronted.

Published in The Express Tribune, November 25th, 2016.

Source: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1243430/discussing-98-per-cent-failure-css-exams/>

CSS REFORM AND VISION 2025 BY AISHA GHUMMAN

UNDP's latest Development Advocate Pakistan report comes at the same time as the launch of its collaboration with the Ministry of Planning, Development and Reforms to design a comprehensive reform agenda on overhauling the Central Superior Services. A welcome effort, the report not only sets the right context for future action by tracing the origins of the service in the 19th century, but also provides an overview of the many reforms undertaken by various governments throughout the country's history.

The present government's ambitions as depicted in Vision 2025 — to join the top 25 economies of the world in the next decade — are heartening. Nevertheless, the envisaged institutional reforms vis-à-vis civil service reforms need to be approached with caution.

The evolving role under the modern governance framework has added to the responsibilities of civil servants towards both the state and its people. From revenue collectors and adjudicators, their main role today has moved beyond that of administrators of the state's affairs to facilitators, providing platforms to citizens for continuous engagement in the dynamic policymaking process of the day.

Bureaucracy has suffered from an imprudent and whimsical approach to reforms in the past.

The above is in contrast to the findings of a perceptions survey conducted in 2007, in which — while admitting failure to perform at global standards — civil servants remain unwilling to address issues facing the service. Their non-readiness, then, needs to be studied carefully in light of the surrounding complexities and nuances before charting the future course of reforms.

As with most of the country's institutions, bureaucracy has suffered from an imprudent and whimsical approach to reforms in the past. A structure, which played an instrumental role in facilitating the British Raj's control on the subcontinent's assets, is suffering from severe capacity and competency issues. This deterioration should have been expected given the ideological shift underscored in the 1949 Pay Commission's recommendations: "The correct place for our men of genius is in the private enterprise and not in humdrum of public service where character and a desire to serve honestly for a living is more essential than outstanding intellect."

Although successive reforms further debilitated the service, the most severe blow was yet to come. During his government, Bhutto abrogated the constitutional guarantees provided to civil servants in the Government of India Act, 1935 against wrongful dismissals and other arbitrary action during their terms of service. The ensuing loss

further diminished the efficacy of the service as an autonomous branch of the executive. Moreover, other reforms — abolition of service cadres, sanction of lateral entry, rigidity in pay scales — further stunted its performance as meritocracy was relegated to the back seat.

Similarly, the last reforms introduced during the Musharraf era — with the intent to empower local government under the devolution plan — resulted in the abolishment of the deputy commissioner's office. Without achieving much, the reforms further hampered effective administration, making adjudication and dispute resolution processes unnecessarily cumbersome.

Keeping this historical evolution of the service and the elaborate reforms proposed under the National Commission for Growth Reforms in view, it is important that any new reform scheme developed hereafter should lead to an ideological shift wherein autonomy, meritocracy and accountability become the cornerstones of the civil service.

A positive development in recent years that can help spur along reform efforts has been the changing profile of civil servants. According to statistics furnished by Federal Public Service Commission, the number of candidates appearing for the CSS examinations with professional degrees rose from 22 per cent in 2006 to 46pc in 2013. Similarly, the ratio of allocated candidates holding first division increased from 61pc in 2006 to 77pc in 2013. There has also been an increasing trend among civil servants to pursue graduate and postgraduate degrees from some of the world's top-ranked universities, equipping the workforce with the necessary skills and education to carry out their duties in an efficient manner.

Although changing demographics bode well for the civil service, these are mainly due to push factors prevailing in the economy. To restore its erstwhile prestige, it is important for government to pursue the pull factors in parallel, especially those related to long overdue pay reforms. Contrary to popular belief, without competitive financial incentives there is little hope of improving Pakistan's global ranking on the Corruption Perceptions Index (117th out of 175 countries in 2015) since intrinsic motivation cannot replace the economic needs of civil servants in the long run.

Another important reform to be pursued is to equally strengthen all groups and services. Currently, due to perceived differences in prestige associated with certain groups/services, many allocated candidates reappear for the exam to improve their cadre. The rising trend has resulted in important positions remaining vacant, with government having to bear financial and economic losses along with the groups/services suffering brain drain. Additionally, reforms need to focus on capacity building the careers of budding civil servants. It has been observed over time that, under its various programmes, underqualified government recruited internees/fellows at

higher pays yielded little result, not to mention straining scarce resources. For effective training, government may undertake policymaking in collaboration with academia, ensuring a holistic approach to the policymaking process without duplication of resources.

Much like today, civil service reforms in the past also placed great emphasis on governance, accountability, effectiveness and openness without considerable success on the ground. The leading cause of this failure has been that little to no attention was given to alleviate and improve conditions of the civil servants — the real implementers. If Pakistan is to become one of the top economies in the next decade, it is imperative that the steering wheel be in the hands of the most competent and motivated workforce — the key drivers of innovation in any field.

The writer is a civil servant and has worked on civil service reforms in the Establishment Division.

Published in Dawn, November 26th, 2016

Source: <http://www.dawn.com/news/1298678/css-reform-and-vision-2025>

RESTARTING THE PAK-AFGHAN RELATIONSHIP | EDITORIAL

Being the bigger man

After a prolonged period of less than cordial relations and a refusal to come to the talking table, it seems better sense has prevailed on both sides. The one on one meeting between Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and President Ashraf Ghani is a welcome thaw in relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan. A farewell call to the Afghan chief executive, Dr Abdullah Abdullah by General Raheel Sharif also inspires confidence in the future of Pak-Afghan relations.

There really should be not doubt about the necessity of healthy diplomatic relations with Afghanistan, after all, the flow of terrorism from Afghanistan and vice versa is a very real and serious problem that can only be solved if both countries work together rather than against each other.

Afghanistan still faces a much tougher and brutal war against terrorism than Pakistan. It is therefore imperative that the Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG) for Afghanistan is made active once again in order to bring the Taliban to the negotiating table. Any efforts under the QCG will also remain futile if Pakistan is not included in the process due to its geopolitical significance.

Talking on the sidelines of a UNGA session with just America and India while ignoring other regional players can be at best one part of the effort to find a resolution to the Afghan conflict but certainly not the only one. Pakistan also cannot be stubborn in terms of relations with Afghanistan; rather it should be the bigger man and take the lead in addressing any grievances. So closing the border with Afghanistan for extended periods of time without warning does not help matters – such moves exasperate solvable issues.

The upcoming moot hosted by Moscow for a China-Pak-Russia strategic dialogue on Afghanistan and most importantly the 'heart of Asia' conference in Amritsar that Sartaj Aziz is thus far confirmed to be attending are important events. Both display our intention to resolve problems with our neighbours via a diplomatic approach towards conflict resolution rather than a confrontational stance.

Source: <http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2016/11/28/comment/restarting-the-pak-afghan-relationship/>

THE NEW ARMY CHIEF | EDITORIAL

The wait was long and the candidates all deserving. Finally it is official: PM Nawaz Sharif has appointed Lt Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa as the new Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) while elevating Lt General Zubair Hayat as the Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee. Both the generals have sterling professional records.

Lt General Bajwa has served in key positions and brings with him a wealth of experience to the job that will see him commanding one of the largest armies in the world. He will assume responsibilities at a time when the relative decline in domestic terrorism is being replaced with increasing threats from across the border. The smooth transition from one commander to the other is yet another testament to the professionalism of the Pakistan Army and the institutional process that should be replicated by the political leadership.

In well-entrenched democracies, it is a routine matter -the retirement of an Army chief, not worthy of more than a single column, or a bland announcement in broadcast media at the fag- end of a news bulletin. But in Pakistan such a development becomes the talk of the town for days and the media, print, broadcast and social, go to town with it interpreting a number of meanings out of what had to happen or, but did not at the end of the tenure.

Indeed, if one studied the retirement of General Raheel Sharif at the end of his prescribed three-year tenure in the backdrop of how his predecessors since Field Marshal Ayub Khan, the first native Commander-in-Chief of the Pakistani Army appointed in 1951 had chosen to ride or not ride one would feel like bestowing the highest honour to the professional that the outgoing General was for strictly abiding by the Constitution. If all of his predecessors had stuck to their normal tenures we would have had at least 24 Army chiefs against only 13. Four of them had staged successful military coups. One tried but failed. Of the two who retired, General Aslam Beg and General Wahid Kakar, the relation of the first one by the time he retired was bitter with his PM (Nawaz Sharif), and the second one had the distinction of sending home both the elected president and the PM and appointing an imported American Pakistani as the interim PM assigned to hold a general election.

As opposed to this saga of Bonapartism, General Raheel's tenure was a period when constitutional democracy was seen to be getting entrenched imperceptibly, he acted strictly in defence of the country and its constitution throughout. He waged a relentless war against terrorism. His posturing towards Afghanistan was one of dignified patience. And his measured but no-nonsense response to the incitements from across the LoC was a classical demonstration of a chief of a nuclear armed country's defence forces –

calibrated but firm without showing an iota of weakness. Both President Mamnoon Hussain and PM Nawaz Sharif have paid glowing tributes to the retiring General. Indeed, on a number of occasions tailor-made situations had arisen for a military intervention, but General Raheel refused to be distracted from his constitutional responsibilities. There were invitations galore from a number of quarters for the Army Chief to oust the elected government but he resisted. There was also a poster campaign beseeching him to takeover which he spurned disdainfully.

On November 29, 2016 he will be calling it a day in a manner typical of a patriotic soldier hanging up his gloves. He has while restoring the prestige of his institution also promoted the cause of democracy. One hopes his successor would carry the baton to his finish line with equal dignity and patriotic valour. It is indeed a tough call to keep a balance in the transitional period, a period which is seemingly witnessing the institution handing over the powers it had enjoyed over the last so many years without tolerating any interference from the civilian governments to the latter which is still in the process of learning the rules of governance. General Raheel has rightly described the Pakistani Army as one of the best in the world. That is the Army that General Bajwa would be commanding and one hopes he would continue the traditions set by his predecessor.

Source: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1245263/editorial-new-army-chief/>

PAKISTAN & INDIA

EU SAYS WORKING TO DEFUSE INDO-PAK TENSIONS

ISLAMABAD: European Union Ambassador Jean Francois Cautain said on Tuesday that the 28-nation bloc is working to defuse ongoing tensions between India and Pakistan.

“The EU is raising the issue of Kashmir with different stakeholders,” Ambassador Francois said in an interview. He said EU’s diplomatic efforts were an ongoing process and were not always visible to the people.

In response to a question, he said the EU was taking the issue of human rights violation with both India and Pakistan. He stressed that both sides had to sit on the negotiating table to resolve the issue.

The EU, he said, was among the largest providers of development aid to Pakistan. The EU Investment Bank had also agreed to provide Pakistan 50 million euros, Francois said. He added that exports from Pakistan during 2014-15 went up by 30 per cent due to the success of the EU GSP plus concession.

Regarding the EU GSP-Plus obligations, Francois said the country’s report was positive but the grouping wanted to see concrete results.

“Pakistan should explore more avenues to benefit from the EU trade by diversifying it,” he said adding that EU-Pakistan relations were ‘good and getting better’, he said.

Published in The Express Tribune, November 2nd, 2016.

Source: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1218069/eu-says-working-defuse-indo-pak-tensions/>

ONGOING EFFECTS OF KASHMIR ISSUE | EDITORIAL

After the dead have been buried and bullet holes plastered over, those left behind in a region ravaged by war are left to start their lives anew. The after effects of wars are seen not just in razed buildings and graveyards but also in adults whose livelihoods were taken from them and the children who never went to school. For the Kashmiri people, where conflict rears its ugly head every few years, this is a never ending cycle in which successive generations have all seen turbulent times punctuated by mortar fire which leaves them scurrying for cover. The current iteration of this conflict has on November 2nd, resulted in the closure of hundreds of schools in Indian Occupied Kashmir due to shelling allegedly by Indian and Pakistani troops that has resulted in 14 deaths in two days. On the Pakistani side, 25 schools have had to be closed due to cross LoC firing.

The discussions about what caused this conflict are long but its human cost is only trotted out in the form of statistics to bolster arguments. When governments take the decision to launch armed attacks, they ostensibly do so to protect the people but for the Kashmiris, these promises have not amounted to much. In Indian Occupied Kashmir human rights abuses have been carried out by the military which has targeted protesting civilians by firing metallic pellets that have caused debilitating injuries. This, added to the curfew and now closure of schools should be enough of a prompt to lay aside the jingoistic rhetoric and approach the matter with an intent to promote peace in the region. In an already affected region where normalcy can quickly devolve, the withdrawal of educational facilities leaves the Kashmiri children not only with a difficult present but a bleak future as well. The Indian government's continued efforts to justify its actions against Kashmiri civilians while keeping them under threat of military attack is highly deplorable. This clash of egos gives the people of both countries something to talk about on social media but it is wrecking havoc on the lives of Kashmiri children.

Published in The Express Tribune, November 6th, 2016.

Source: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1221880/ongoing-effects-kashmir-issue/>

PAKISTAN WARNS INDIA AGAINST BREACH OF WATER TREATY BY ZAFAR BHUTTA

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad has warned New Delhi that Pakistan will respond with full force if India shows open aggression by breaching the World Bank-sponsored Indus Waters Treaty (IWT).

“India will be responded [to] if it shows aggression by unilaterally breaking the treaty,” Water and Power Secretary Younis Dagha told the Senate Standing Committee on Water and Power on Monday.

The committee had met to reconsider the report regarding an adjournment motion moved in the upper house of parliament by Senator Sherry Rehman on September 27. Rehman had moved the motion in the backdrop of Indian threats to unilaterally revoke the IWT.

The PPP senator had sought details about the possible repercussions of the move and Pakistan’s stance and preparedness to combat such a warlike situation.

Talking with reference to the Indian threats, Dagha told the panel that there are some more conventions in place in addition to the IWT to safeguard Pakistan’s water rights.

“If India shows aggression then there are some other options,” he added. “India cannot stop more water from Neelum River. It can stop water only temporarily for using it.”

Dagha said the government had started work on the National Water Policy 2016 and consultations would be completed in the next one to two months. Later, the parliamentary panel formed a subcommittee, comprising members National Assembly, Water and Power Ministry officials and experts on water to review the IWT.

Rehman expressed concerns over violation of the IWT and said Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi had threatened to end the treaty unilaterally.

“According to a report of the Water and Power Development Authority (Wapda), India has no authority to break the IWT unilaterally,” she said, adding that India has taken advantage due to past mistakes of different governments in Pakistan.

Rehman lamented that India built several dams on various rivers but Pakistan could do nothing to stop it. "India has built Kishanganga dam and Baglihar dam. Our Mangla dam will be adversely affected due to more dams being built by India," she said.

She said the IWT should be reviewed with mutual consultations, adding that India is blocking Pakistan's water and government should think over the solutions.

Wapda officials informed the committee that 584 appointments were made in the authority during the last one year. As many as 516 appointments were made on contract while 68 on daily wages.

Published in The Express Tribune, November 8th, 2016.

Source: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1223961/pakistan-warns-india-breach-water-treaty/>

NSG, INDIA, AND PAKISTAN BY MALIK MUHAMMAD ASHRAF

Notwithstanding the efforts of the US and its western allies to have India admitted to the prestigious international nuclear club, the NSG, the latter was not given the nod by the plenary session of the group held in Vienna, last week. For any nuclear nation to become a member of the NSG, signing of NPT is a basic condition. All decisions with regard to the admittance of a new member and changes in the guidelines of NSG are taken through consensus. The Indian bid failed because China stuck to its already stated position on the issue while seven other members including Switzerland, Mexico, Brazil, Turkey, South Africa, New Zealand and Austria insisted on the adoption of a criteria-based approach in view of the fact that besides India, Pakistan had also applied for the membership of the NSG. Pakistan has been pressing for a criteria-based strategy for admitting new members. Turkey also pushed for clubbing together the applications of both India and Pakistan. It is interesting to note that Brazil, which is a member of BRICS, did not support the Indian effort. The rejection of the Indian bid in a way is a vindication of Pakistan's stance on the issue.

Ever since signing an agreement with India on the transfer of civil nuclear technology in 2008, the US has been desperately trying to have India admitted in the NSG and had even managed a waiver for it. Emulating the US, France and the UK also signed civil nuclear deals with India. Recently, a similar arrangement was also concluded between Japan and India. At the time of giving the waiver to India, some members of the NSG did express concern about India expanding its nuclear arsenal by diverting the fissile materials for the production of nuclear weapons. These concerns still persist. Some international agencies have come up with reports on how India has indeed expanded its nuclear arsenal after the NSG waiver. The US Senator, Markey, said in a Senate hearing, "Since 2008, when we also gave them the exemption, India has continued to produce fissile materials for its nuclear programme virtually unchecked. At that time Pakistan warned us that the deal would increase the chances of the nuclear arms race in South Asia."

Pakistan rightly felt concerned about these developments. Ever since the signing of nuclear civil technology deal between the US and India as well as its NSG waiver, it has been striving hard to convince the US and the international community about its credentials to deserve the membership of the group and the adoption of a non-discriminatory approach in regards to admittance of non-NPT states to the NSG. While the US has all along stood for Indian membership of the NSG, it has not been favouring the same consideration for Pakistan.

The NSG seeks to further the objectives of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty through regulatory guidelines with regard to the export of nuclear materials, nuclear reactors, non-nuclear material for reactors, plant, and equipment for reprocessing, enrichment and technologies covering these items. The NSG guidelines also govern the export of nuclear-related dual-use items and technologies, which could make a substantial contribution to an un-safeguarded nuclear fuel cycle or nuclear explosive activity. The need for these regulatory guidelines stems from the recognition of the need for international trade and cooperation in the nuclear field for peaceful purposes as enshrined in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and NSG guidelines on the subject. The overall aim of these guidelines is to ensure that nuclear exports are carried out with appropriate safeguards, physical protection, and non-proliferation conditions, and other appropriate restraints.

Although Pakistan is not a signatory to NPT, it has always supported nuclear non-proliferation and abided by its parameters as well as those by different international treaties. Therefore, joining the NSG would tantamount to a global recognition of these efforts. But the question is, has Pakistan done enough to deserve membership of NSG? For this, one has to look at the measures taken by Pakistan to deserve the membership of the group and the criteria laid down by NSG in this regard.

At the third Nuclear Security Summit at Hague, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had made a forceful case for Pakistan's inclusion in the NSG. He staked his claim for the membership of group and other international control regimes by declaring that Pakistan had been running a safe and secure civil nuclear programme for the last 40 years and attached the highest importance to nuclear security. It had the expertise, manpower and infrastructure to produce civil nuclear energy and has pursued a policy of restraint as well as credible minimum deterrence. Pakistan's nuclear security regime is supported by five pillars—a strong command and control system, an integrated intelligence system, rigorous regulatory regime and active international cooperation. The security regime covers physical protection, material control and accounting, border controls and radiological emergencies. He said that Pakistan has also been submitting regular reports to the UN Security Council 1540 committee on the measures that the country put in place to exercise control over the transfer of sensitive materials and technologies. That is exactly in line with the criteria for admitting new members to the NSG, which stipulates that an aspiring country should have the ability to supply nuclear items covered in the NSG guidelines; should have a proven record of adherence to those guidelines taking necessary actions in that regard; must have enforced legally based domestic export control system; should have complied with obligations under NPT and other treaties; and supported international efforts towards non-proliferation of weapons

of mass destruction and their delivery vehicles. Pakistan, as is evident surely qualifies for membership of NSG.

Any discriminatory treatment towards Pakistan with regard to the membership of the NSG would push Pakistan for 'full nuclear deterrence' vis-a-vis India, which would be a big blow to the efforts of the international community to promote the cause of non-proliferation. As against this, simultaneous inclusion of Pakistan and India in the NSG will not only establish the principle of non-discrimination but would also add to the strength of the NSG in furthering the objectives of nuclear non-proliferation and well-controlled export of nuclear materials for promoting international nuclear trade cooperation. Pakistan being a member of the NSG would be in a better position to contribute to firming up and refining the regulatory guidelines and safeguarding its interests. It would also allow Pakistan to export nuclear materials to other countries under the gaze of the global community in a legitimate manner with all the accompanying economic benefits as well as reinforcing its credentials as a useful member of the global community.

Adoption of policies subservient to expediencies and vested interests with regard to the implementation of NPT and grant of NSG membership would scuttle the efforts to check proliferation of nuclear weapons and other related causes. It is hoped that the members of the NSG, particularly the US and its allies will consider all foregoing variables and give an adequate and well-deserved attention to the security concerns of Pakistan while deciding the fate of the request by the two countries.

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Source: <http://dailytimes.com.pk/opinion/25-Nov-16/nsg-india-and-pakistan>

WORLD

AMERICA'S RUSSIA POLICY HAS FAILED BY THOMAS GRAHAM & MATTHEW ROJANSKY

By any number of measures, Washington's Russia policy has failed. While ostensibly suffering from diplomatic and economic isolation under a U.S.-led international sanctions regime, Moscow has succeeded in challenging a wide range of American interests, most notably in Ukraine, Syria, and cyberspace. Coming up with a new approach on Russia should therefore be a top priority for either President Hillary Clinton or President Donald Trump soon after Jan. 20, 2017. So far, however, neither candidate has offered a vision that goes beyond the failed tropes of the past, with Clinton painting Russian President Vladimir Putin as a cartoonish villain and Trump viewing Moscow as an ally in-waiting. The most common U.S. policy responses to Russia — from both Republican and Democratic administrations across three decades — have depended either on the hope that Moscow can be fully defeated or that it can become a friend and fellow democracy. But Russia is not a democracy, nor is it democratizing, and although Russia may be in secular decline, it is a major power on the world stage. The next president needs to accept that Moscow cannot simply be defeated or contained in the emerging multipolar, globalized world order. It must be engaged through a comprehensive balance of cooperation and competition.

The next president will have to persuade Moscow to cooperate where cooperation is needed on things like preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) while limiting room for Russia to maneuver where its interests largely oppose American ones, such as in Syria. And this new U.S. policy must also recognize that tensions with Russia do not divide neatly along the lines of geography or individual issues, and that even shared interests will seldom overlap entirely. The goal should involve constructing a web of interactions, both cooperative and competitive, that yields the most beneficial balance for our national interests. But above all, rather than setting out to defeat or transform Russia, a new U.S. approach should deal with Russia as it really is.

1) Understand That It's Not Just About Putin

The next president must begin by abandoning the two axioms that have plagued Washington's Russia policymaking for the last 25 years: The first, that Moscow opposes the United States because of the Kremlin's undemocratic politics. And, secondly, that areas of agreement between the two countries can be walled off from areas of conflict.

It's also essential to recognize that America's problems with Russia aren't solely because of Putin: They're geopolitical. Neither Putin's departure nor broader regime change in Russia will resolve this challenge. Putin stands squarely within centuries of tradition in Russian strategic thinking, and his foreign policy enjoys overwhelming elite support while resonating with the public. Geopolitical competition of some dimension is inevitable among major powers with strategic interests stretching across the globe, regardless of what politics they practice at home. The next administration needs to break with its predecessors and realize that relations with Moscow can't simply be compartmentalized into areas of cooperation and disagreement. American actions on one issue will influence Russia's assessment of U.S. approaches on other issues. The George W. Bush administration, for example, unsuccessfully sought to insulate counterterrorism cooperation following 9/11 from competition with Moscow in the former Soviet space. Barack Obama's administration hoped to continue cooperation on nuclear security even as overall relations deteriorated sharply. But that, too, failed, evidenced by Russia's skipping the U.S.-sponsored nuclear security summit in April and suspending the Plutonium Disposition Agreement because of "hostile" American actions last week. After 1991, successive U.S. administrations attempted to integrate Russia into the West by encouraging its transformation from a totalitarian Communist state into a free-market democracy. At a time of Russian weakness following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Washington also reshaped the structure of Europe by enlarging NATO and supporting the expansion of the European Union. But as Moscow regained its geopolitical strength and expanded its ambitions under Putin, Russia pushed back against U.S. efforts, first in the former Soviet Union, then in Europe, and more recently in the broader Middle East. After 25 years of U.S. and European efforts, Russia has made it clear that it is not interested in integrating into the West and that it is prepared to challenge the United States along a broad front, even by interfering in domestic U.S. politics.

U.S. policy must adapt to new challenges, and Washington may need to give ground on other, lesser priorities. For example, if forced to choose between securing cooperation on nuclear nonproliferation and supporting pro-Western political change in Russia's neighborhood, a tactical withdrawal on the latter may be necessary to preserve a larger victory on arms control. In other cases, Moscow's actions that directly threaten vital U.S. interests will demand that Washington impose costs in proportion to the threat, such as supporting NATO allies when Russia deploys its forces or conducts provocative military exercises along their borders.

2) Stop Ukraine From Becoming a Frozen Conflict

Russia's aggression against Ukraine was the tipping point for the tensions and mistrust that define the U.S.-Russia relationship today. Washington used the pressure of international sanctions and diplomatic isolation to compel Moscow to withdraw from Ukraine. But the Russians responded with countermeasures of their own, and the

resulting reciprocal sanctions and warring narratives now combine to block even basic diplomatic engagement. Making any sort of diplomatic progress with the Kremlin will first hinge on how the next U.S. president interprets Moscow's motivations in Ukraine: Is Russia primarily holding Ukraine hostage because of its fear of Western encirclement and regime change? Or is Putin exploiting Ukraine's vulnerability for his government's political and territorial aggrandizement? The answer is most likely a combination of both, but from a policy perspective it makes sense to operate on the basis of the more positive interpretation, while hedging against the chance of being wrong.

In many respects, the hedge is already in place. NATO has decided to rotate new forces through the Baltic States and stepped up planning for various contingencies involving conflict with Russia. The West's support for political and economic reform in Ukraine — to help build a competent democratic state and raise standards of living — is another important part of the strategy. But a solution to the crisis in Ukraine will need more than preparing for the worst-case scenario. A voluntary Russian withdrawal from Ukraine depends for now on the highly flawed Minsk II peace deal signed in February 2015 by France, Germany, Russia, and Ukraine. Despite Minsk's obvious imperfection, it has two key features that cannot be abandoned: a legal and political commitment undertaken by major European powers and Russia and military de-escalation on the ground linked to a sustainable political process for ending the conflict. Abandoning either element would practically guarantee that eastern Ukraine will become yet another frozen conflict. Although Washington is not a signatory to the deal, the United States can help incentivize Minsk for Moscow by linking specific sanctions relief to concrete Russian steps it can implement to sustain a cease-fire, withdraw heavy military equipment from the zone of conflict, and return control of Ukraine's side of the border with Russia to Kiev.

3) Have an Honest Talk About Europe

For better or worse, Moscow retains sufficient power to shape the security environment in Europe. In this realm, the task for the next president in shaping U.S. policy will be to insulate European allies against Russian action in the short term while laying the groundwork for a more durable European security framework, with Russian participation, in the long term.

The next administration's most urgent and immediate goal should be to maintain the integrity of NATO as the guarantor of European security. In light of Russia's threatening behavior, many of its neighbors look to the transatlantic alliance, and the United States in particular, for the necessary commitment of manpower, hardware, and political will. Washington must also bolster NATO's collective defense capabilities, not simply by spending more, but by coordinating efforts and expenditures far better. U.S. leadership in this arena is essential, and American credibility in Europe will be judged not just by

what is said and done on the continent, but by Washington's performance in managing security commitments globally, such as in East Asia and the greater Middle East.

Enhancing the forums in which Russia and the West participate, like the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the NATO-Russia Council, even if they can't resolve or even manage disagreements, is a necessary step toward preventing conflict. The OSCE, still the only fully inclusive security organization for North America, Europe, and the entire former Soviet space, has an important role to play. Washington should seek to re-launch talks with Moscow and its place in the European security architecture through the body in an unofficial, second track format.

Where these discussions will end up is an open question. But the next administration will have better chances of reducing tensions and building a stable security order in Europe by allowing Russia's legitimate security interests in the region to be heard.

4) Push for More Arms Control

Even with reductions in nuclear forces under various arms-control agreements like the new START agreement of 2011, Russia is still the only country that can destroy the United States as a functioning society in 30 minutes. Absurd as it may seem more than 25 years after the Cold War, both sides maintain their nuclear forces on hair-trigger alert. That means the possibility of a crisis escalating to a nuclear exchange is still very real, even if the probability remains low. Stability in U.S.-Russia nuclear relations isn't just one of the most important issues for the two countries, it is also critical to the stability among the world's other major powers. In addition, Russia, like the United States, is one of a handful of countries with the scientific prowess and industrial capacity to weaponize new technologies that can change the global balance of power, including the advanced air-defense systems Russia is deploying in Syria and selling to Iran, or cyber-weapons that could cripple critical infrastructure in the United States and elsewhere. As the second-largest arms seller after the United States, Russia can either hinder or facilitate the spread of advanced conventional weapons. Given the speed, accuracy, and destructive power of Russian weaponry, they could affect regional and global stability by eroding a country's faith in its deterrent capability. Russian sales to Iran, for example, remain a top concern for Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey in the Middle East, while the sale of advanced weaponry to China alarms Japan and South Korea and complicates U.S. efforts to guarantee security in East Asia.

Finally, as the largest non-Western supplier of civilian nuclear technology, Russia can either greatly assist or totally derail international efforts to limit the nuclear ambitions of Iran and North Korea. Given the profound distrust between the United States and Russia, a key step, beyond safeguarding the agreements already in place, would be to promote maximum transparency about each side's strategic objectives and doctrines for

nuclear weapons, advanced conventional weapons, cyber-weapons, missile defenses, and other technologies with the potential to erode either side's confidence in its deterrent capability. The need for this step has grown even more urgent as Russia's public threats about its possible use of nuclear weapons have increased, it has suspended arms-control agreements, and has hacked into the Democratic National Committee to disrupt the U.S. presidential campaign. Russia and the United States will rarely join hands as the world's nuclear and WMD proliferation police force. That means U.S. policy must contemplate the need to counter Russian moves in sharing weapons and technologies with hostile or potentially hostile countries, like Iran. Washington will also need to compete with Russia when it deploys conventional, cyber, or other capabilities designed to neutralize current U.S. advantages in those areas. Success in maintaining strategic stability and preventing weapons proliferation is vital to U.S. national security, but will demand a careful balance among competing concerns in Europe and East Asia, where the Kremlin has been willing to challenge U.S. interests or hold agreements on strategic stability and nonproliferation hostage until its demands are met.

5) Work With Russia in Asia

Containing China is an impossible task in today's world. Instead, the next president should pursue flexible coalitions with other major powers to channel Chinese energies in ways that don't endanger America's core interests or, better, work to Washington's benefit. Russia could be one of those partners if the United States is able to avoid forcing the Kremlin into a position of de facto commercial and strategic dependence on Beijing.

Despite its attempts in the wake of Western sanctions to reduce its dependence on European energy markets by building up ties with China, Russia remains deeply concerned about Beijing's growing influence along its borders. Moreover, the economic promise of Moscow's own "pivot to Asia," particularly in penetrating the Chinese market, has so far failed to unfold as the Kremlin had hoped, with trade and investment slow to materialize. In East Asia, Moscow has sought to diversify its commercial relations, including with South Korea and Japan, two major U.S. allies, to reduce the risks that the development of Russia's far eastern provinces will become hostage to Chinese markets. South Korea and Japan also view Russia as a potential economic and security partner in managing their concerns about China. This leaves an opening where American and Russian interests can align in forging new coalitions that give each party more leverage in relations with China. Former Soviet Central Asia is another area where Washington's and Moscow's interests could actually align on China. Russia is unsettled by the rapidly growing Chinese presence within what the Kremlin considers its own backyard. Beijing's "One Belt, One Road" initiative, a massive network of roads, railways, and pipelines, has brought billions of dollars' worth of investment into the

region and dwarfed Russia's projects, like the Eurasian Union. The Kremlin has so far welcomed the emergence of other regional players, such as India and Japan, to counterbalance China. The United States could play a role here if it reversed its policy since the end of the Cold War of seeking to reduce Russian influence in Central Asia. Recognizing that China's expansion into the region poses more of a long-term challenge to U.S. interests than Russia's continued presence, Washington should not work against Russian initiatives in the region and promote other regional powers in Central Asia.

6) Recognize That Syria Is About More Than Syria

With the collapse of the U.S.-Russia negotiated cease-fire and the humanitarian catastrophe unfolding in Aleppo, the Syrian crisis demands urgent attention. Like it or not, the United States has no better option than to keep trying to work with Russia, which inserted itself into the region with a dramatic military intervention in September 2015. Moscow has the wherewithal to maintain its military deployment for a prolonged period, and regional powers like Iran, and perhaps even Turkey, support its continued presence. The more forceful options that some are now advocating — such as a no-fly zone or the destruction of the Syrian air force — carry too large a risk of outright military confrontation with Moscow in the region and elsewhere. Discussions with Moscow on Syria, however, will have no greater chances of success unless they include a new willingness to discuss the broader relationship with Russia, especially in Europe. In its statements and proposals, Moscow has effectively linked the situation in Syria to the Ukraine crisis and the larger issue of European security, but Washington has so far refused to recognize this linkage. Instead, the Obama administration has followed in the missteps of its predecessors and doubled down on trying to compartmentalize issues from one another. Only by acknowledging that the links among the various regional challenges posed by Russia are real can the next president extract a favorable balance for U.S. interests.

7) Show America's Promise

As in the Cold War, there is an ideological element to U.S.-Russia competition today. However, rather than advocating Communist class struggle, Moscow is focused on diminishing American credibility. Russia will be most effective where U.S.-led economic and political initiatives fail to serve the needs of the American people. This theme has been evident in the disconcerting overlap between damaging cyber-leaks from apparent Russian-related sources to favorable coverage in the Russian press of Trump's harsh attacks on the U.S. establishment.

How the next U.S. president tackles the well-known domestic and global challenges of wealth inequality, cultural pluralism, migration, resource insecurity, and climate change will determine the degree to which the United States is actually vulnerable to Russia's political and propaganda broadsides. As George F. Kennan, the U.S. diplomat who mapped out America's Cold War containment policy toward the Soviet Union, recognized in his famous Long Telegram, if Americans demonstrate vision and resolve to address the United States' most pressing challenges, the country can have far greater influence on developments in Russia than it ever could through direct confrontation.

The Cold War ended to a great degree because Russians saw the United States as a successful and prosperous society, whose model they hoped to emulate. By contrast, today's deterioration in relations has been deepened by American failures in Iraq and Afghanistan and the still lingering consequences of the global financial crisis of 2008-2009, which shattered Russians' faith in the American model for economic development. An aura of renewed success and growing power will go a long way toward restoring the United States as an attractive partner, and perhaps eventually as a leader by example.

For the moment, America's priorities must be on putting out the fires of regional conflicts in Ukraine and Syria and preventing the simmering threats of WMD proliferation and a new arms race from igniting. But success on any one of these issues cannot occur in a vacuum and depends on the credibility and effectiveness of the U.S. approach to other regions and issues where Russia holds important cards. By weighing the value of cooperation and competition with Moscow in terms of what matters most to the United States, the next presidential administration has its best chance to come out ahead in dealing with the Kremlin.

Source: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/10/13/americas-russia-policy-has-failed-clinton-trump-putin-ukraine-syria-how-to-fix/>

WILL AMERICA'S GOOD NAME SURVIVE THE 2016 ELECTION? BY STEPHEN M. WALT

Assuming, Hillary Clinton is elected president next week, the collective sigh of relief heard 'round the world could well be deafening.

Way back in June (i.e., before the revelations about Trump's fondness for groping women surfaced), a Pew Research Center survey found that more 80 percent of Swedes, Germans, French, British, Japanese and Australians, had "no confidence" in Trump's ability to handle foreign affairs. Their skepticism wasn't surprising, insofar as the Republic nominee had already revealed himself to be the living embodiment of the "Ugly American" stereotype: a bumptious blowhard who knows little about foreign policy and isn't troubled by his own ignorance. There are undoubtedly some U.S. rivals who will be disappointed by his defeat: the Islamic State will be deprived an ideal recruiting poster, Putin won't have an admirer in the White House, and Xi Jinping won't get to go up against rank amateur with a short attention span and long record of failure. For the rest of the world, however, it will be a moment to exhale and to be grateful for a bullet dodged.

That sense of relief may be short-lived, however, because Trump's candidacy and the broader condition of American politics have already done considerable damage to America's image overseas. If you talk to foreigners a lot (it's part of my job), you mostly hear repeated expressions of bewilderment: they find the Trump phenomenon as hard to understand as America's fondness for guns. The French newspaper Liberation called him the "American Nightmare," and a diverse array of foreign media outlets offer similar appraisals. Or as the New York Daily News headlined in March: "As [Trump] sinks lower, he does lasting harm to America's image in the world."

But it's not just Trump.

In fact, the entire 2016 election has been a pretty poor advertisement for American democracy, as well as a sobering referendum on the foreign policy the United States has pursued since the end of the Cold War.

In fact, the entire 2016 election has been a pretty poor advertisement for American democracy, as well as a sobering referendum on the foreign policy the United States has pursued since the end of the Cold War. Hillary Clinton and her foreign-policy team may be ardent defenders of U.S. liberal hegemony and eager to reassert American "leadership," but the 2016 campaign made clear that a sizeable percentage of the American population thinks differently. To be specific, most of the people who supported Trump, Bernie Sanders, Gary Johnson, Ted Cruz, or Jill Stein are unhappy with the

approach the United States has taken for the past quarter-century, and they aren't going to be eager to support a return to overactive U.S. interventionism. Just this week, a survey by the Charles Koch Institute found that only 14 percent of Americans thought U.S. foreign policy had made the country more secure since 2001, and only 25 percent supported an expanded military role for the United States.

To make matters worse, the Trump campaign has revealed that a fair number of Americans seem to like the Donald's disdainful and bigoted views of Muslims, Mexicans, and most U.S. allies. It can't be encouraging for the citizens of other countries to discover that a non-trivial chunk of the American body politic is xenophobic, racist, protectionist, and ill-informed. That may always have been true, but it took the Trump campaign to put it up in bright lights.

2016 also reveals that the two-party system (or at least the two parties that currently dominate that system) is badly broken. More than 150 million Americans are technically eligible to be president, yet somehow this long and costly process produced two major-party candidates with historically strong negatives and repeated episodes of bad judgment. And it's not like the alternatives were any better. The Republican primary was a clown show — I mean, seriously: Marco Rubio? Ted Cruz? Chris Christie? Ben Carson? — and the reason why a boorish cad like Trump could steamroll them all. On the Democratic side, all those earnest Sanders supporters never seemed to realize he was both a one-note candidate and one of the least popular or effective members of the Senate. If this collection of contenders was the best the American system could offer up, no wonder foreign observers are beginning to think something is broken.

Alas, the problem isn't just the campaign. The recurring dysfunctions at both federal and state levels reinforce the growing sense that something has gone badly awry with America's other political institutions. Congress can't pass budgets or ratify trade agreements, won't even bother to hold hearings on Supreme Court nominees, won't vote either to authorize the use of force or to withhold authorization, won't conduct genuine oversight of the intelligence community, and won't perform any of the other key functions the Founding Fathers designated for them. Instead, representatives and senators spend more time "dialing for (campaign) dollars" than they do legislating, while the rascals most responsible for all this obstructionism keep getting reelected. Several U.S. states are flirting with bankruptcy; gerrymandering is endemic; media outlets spew fact-free bile on a daily basis; and the country's existing institutions seem incapable of undertaking clear, obvious, and farsighted initiatives and then bringing them to fruition.

Seriously:

Is this a political system you'd like to try to persuade another country to adopt?

Is this a political system you'd like to try to persuade another country to adopt? Good luck with that.

In many ways, in fact, the 2016 election is looking like the antithesis of 2008. Back then, the United States elected its first black president. He was untested on the national stage, but millions of Americans responded enthusiastically to his eloquent and upbeat vision of hope. Think about it: a mere seven years after the 9/11 attacks, Americans somehow elected a man with a Muslim father and a Muslim name. Even more remarkably, they elected a man whose middle name was Hussein, only five years after we had invaded a country whose tyrannical leader had that name, too. The rest of the world saw in the 2008 election the energy, creativity, imagination, fearlessness, and hope that has long characterized America's providential history. If America could do that, they thought, it could still surprise the world and still do great things. And it is perhaps worth remembering that Barack Obama is today the most popular politician on the planet.

In 2016, by contrast, the Trump phenomenon and the GOP-induced paralysis in national institutions shows an image of America that is fearful, that has lost hope, that is guarding its prerogatives and privileges as meanly as Gollum guarded the Ring. Nov. 8 will expose Trump as the loser he always was (and not for the first time) but his candidacy itself has already done a lot of damage.

Perhaps the only consolation in all this is that politics in the U.K., the Philippines, Turkey, Italy, and many other places have been equally unsettling. And there is a silver lining, at least potentially. If global impressions of American democracy could decline so sharply from 2008 to 2016, then in theory they could swing back just as quickly now.

Engineering that shift will be Hillary Clinton's greatest challenge. The success of her presidency — including the success of her foreign policy — will depend not on whether she ends the Syrian civil war; resolves the disputes over the South China Sea; caps North Korea's nuclear and missile programs; conjures up a stable government in Yemen, Libya, or South Sudan; liberates Crimea; gets major carbon emitters to abide by the Paris climate accord; or successfully manages any of the other foreign-policy problems that her advisors will be eager to address. Rather, the success of her presidency will depend on whether she can figure out a way to get America's democratic system working again. Not perfectly or brilliantly, perhaps, but at least competently.

The surest way for her to fail at that task would be to take on a bunch of ambitious new burdens abroad. She may be tempted to do so, because then she wouldn't have to deal with a pesky or obstructionist Congress and she'll get some grudging support from interventionists, hawks, and the numerous special interest groups which are always

trying to get Washington to do something, somewhere, on behalf of someone. But heading down this road would mean spending a lot of time and energy on intractable problems of minor importance and such efforts aren't going to produce any big or significant victories. Instead, it will make her look as ineffectual as John Kerry now appears and give her domestic opponents lots more to carp about. Nor will more chest-thumping U.S. "leadership" make Americans safer or more prosperous. Getting the house in order here will do that, however, and showing that American political institutions still work reasonably well would also improve the country's standing around the world. After the Bizarro-World campaign of 2016, that's going to be challenge enough.

Source: <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/11/04/will-americas-image-survive-the-2016-election-trump-clinton/>

IRAQ AFTER ISIS BY VERA MIRONOVA AND MOHAMMED HUSSEIN

The campaign to liberate Mosul from the self-proclaimed Islamic State (ISIS) has raised questions about what Iraq will look like once ISIS is defeated. The expulsion of the militants from Iraq will probably neither decrease the number of armed groups in the country nor limit the potential for violence there. Far from portending the end of Iraq's current turbulence, ISIS' demise could have the opposite effect, creating opportunities for violent competition in the areas that the militant group abandons.

There are a number of reasons why this is the case. First among these is the fact that ISIS has exacerbated the old grievances among the various groups living under its control in an attempt to play them off of one another. Next is the sharp increase in weapons and outside support that Iraq's armed groups have received in recent years, in large part to equip them for the fight against ISIS. Even as Iran, Turkey, and other regional players compete for influence in post-ISIS Iraq, Baghdad will have to manage increased tensions at the local level, both between different ethnic and religious communities and within the particular groups that constitute them.

DIVIDED AND CONQUERED

Tensions between Iraq's ethnic and religious communities are on the rise. In the disputed territories in the northern parts of Diyala Governorate, the eastern portions of Nineveh Governorate, and in the city of Kirkuk, which was captured by Kurdish fighters after the retreat of the Iraqi army in the face of an ISIS offensive in the summer of 2014, the friction between Arabs and Kurds, in particular, is increasing.

In recent weeks, Kirkuk has again come under attack by ISIS fighters seeking to divert Iraqi forces from their assault on Mosul. According to Sheikh Burhan Assi, an Arab member of Kirkuk's provincial council, after one such attack in October, Kurdish militants used the amplifiers in mosques in several Kurdish neighborhoods to demand that internally displaced Arabs leave the city—a sign that the Kurdish militants considered the Arabs to have ties to ISIS.

The region's Arabs are not pleased with the extension of Kurdish influence that the past few years have brought. At the moment, they are represented mostly by tribes and have not yet organized into militias. But that could easily change once ISIS-held territories are liberated, encouraging more groups to jostle for power and thus generating more violence.

As tensions between Kurds and Arabs have intensified, so too have the old disagreements between Shiite and Sunni Arabs. Those squabbles existed well before ISIS' rise; in places where ISIS has been defeated, they are growing worse. Consider the case of Suleiman Bek, a medium-sized town near the border between Diyala and Salah ad Din Governorates that was recaptured from ISIS in the second half of 2014 by Iraqi Kurdish fighters and Shiite militiamen. Nearly two years after the area's liberation, armed Shiite groups are still preventing many of the Sunni civilians who fled the fighting from returning to their homes, leaving them to languish in camps for the internally displaced. "I followed all required procedures to return people to their homes, but at the end of the day I could not make the militias comply with the Iraqi government's regulations," Taleb Muhamed, a director of the sub-district, told us. The local government's impotence reflects a broader dynamic in Iraq: Baghdad's reliance on Shiite militias has allowed those groups to gain undue power.

The war against ISIS has not eliminated the internal rivalries of Kurdish groups.

The divisions between Shiites and Sunnis have spilled over into Turkmen communities, as well. The town of Tal Afar offers just one example. When ISIS captured Tal Afar in June 2014, many Shiite Turkmen escaped, and many Sunni Turkmen joined the militant group, looting the town and selling off the property of the some of the Shiites who had fled. Tal Afar is still under ISIS' control; when it is eventually liberated, the tensions between Shiite and Sunni Turkmen could come out into the open.

TROUBLE IN KURDISTAN

Although the war against ISIS has unified the Middle East's various Kurdish groups against a common enemy, it has not managed to eliminate the internal rivalries among them. That is especially apparent in Sinjar, where the competition between groups affiliated with the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) and the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), the dominant party in the Kurdistan Regional Government, have increased since ISIS was pushed out of the area in November 2015. The PKK was among the first groups to respond to ISIS' actions in Iraq and to the terrorist group's genocide of Yazidis in the area around Sinjar—a position that allowed it to significantly deepen its presence in the area.

Before the war with ISIS, the area around Sinjar was disputed: it was dominated by the KDP, but PKK-affiliated groups could not afford to abandon it either, since it provides a vital connection between Iraq and groups allied with the PKK in Syria's Kurdish territories. Now that the PKK has gained strength in the wake of the Sinjar operation, the competition between it and the KDP has become even more flammable. Both sides are accumulating weapons and, in recent months, have exchanged a number of harsh political statements.

The internal disputes among Iraqi Kurds have also polarized the Yazidi community, which had not been militarily organized before the war with ISIS. Today, Iraq's Yazidis are represented by a number of armed groups: the pro-PKK Protection Force of Sinjar (or HPS) and Sinjar Resistance Units (or YBS), and the pro-KDP Yazidi units in the Peshmerga and the Shingal Mobilization Force, whose main objective is political autonomy.

Finally, there is the competition between two of Iraqi Kurdistan's main political parties, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP). The tension between them is especially concerning because each party controls its own factions within the Peshmerga and because they may be tempted to compete for power in recently acquired territories. There are already signs that such competition is brewing. In September, for example, the KDP-dominated Kurdistan Regional Government reached an agreement with the Iraqi federal government over the sale of oil extracted around Kirkuk. But the PUK's leaders did not accept the deal: they sent a letter to Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi demanding that Baghdad discuss such issues with them instead of with members of the KDP.

INFIGHTING AND INSTABILITY

Sunni Arabs remain the least well-organized community in Iraq, but that could change once ISIS, which many Sunni Iraqis have joined, is defeated. As is the case with Iraq's Kurds today, that could lead to infighting in the near future.

Mosul is already home to several Sunni Arab armed groups. At the moment, those groups are working together against a common enemy. But in part because they receive support from different sources (Hashd al-Ashayari is backed by the Iraqi government, for example, whereas Kataib al-Mosul is sponsored by Turkey), they will likely compete for power once ISIS is defeated.

The desire for revenge against perceived ISIS collaborators and sympathizers also raises the chances of infighting among Iraq's Sunni Arabs. Some Sunni Arabs have joined ISIS and fought against the members of Sunni tribes to which they do not belong. In such cases, once ISIS is defeated, the aggrieved tribes could pursue full-scale conflicts with the tribes of the perceived offenders. The case of the al-Ubed and al-Bayat tribes, in a village near the town of Hawija, points to this possibility. In late 2014, a teenager from the al-Bayat tribe joined ISIS and was sent to kill a former Iraqi policeman who happened to belong to the al-Ubed tribe, according to a farmer with close ties to the al-Bayat tribe but declined to give his name, fearing ISIS reprisals. Worried that the al-Ubed tribe would seek to avenge the man's death after the village's liberation, the teenager's extended family fled the village when Iraqi forces started pushing the militants out of the area. And then there are the myriad other small disputes that will

arise among Sunni Arabs once ISIS is defeated, such as conflicts over the ownership of property based on ISIS-issued titles. These, too, could lead to violence if they are not settled properly.

As for Iraq's Shiite Arabs, like Mosul's Sunni Arabs, they are represented by a variety of armed groups that receive support from different sources, chiefly Iran and the Iraqi government. The struggle among them has already produced violence in territories liberated from ISIS. In June, for example, members of the Badr Organization and Asaib Ahl al-Haq, both Shiite militant groups, fought for about a day in the city of Tuz Khurmatu, leaving several people wounded. The violence was set off when Asaib Ahl al-Haq kidnapped a member of the Badr Organization, and it ended only after Asaib Ahl al-Haq withdrew from the area.

That Iraq will build a strong and united military to resolve these problems seems unlikely, thanks in part to Baghdad's dependence on Shiite militias. Yet so long as Iraq's central government lacks the power to enforce order on its own, the country will be prime territory for nonstate armed groups. That is troubling, since the more armed groups appear in Iraq, the harder it will be to bring the country's competing factions to the table to reach political solutions to their problems.

Source: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/iraq/2016-11-03/iraq-after-isis>

CHINA AND RUSSIA: GAMING THE WEST BY MATHIEU DUCHÂTEL & FRANÇOIS GODEMENT

In September 2016, Russia held joint naval manoeuvres in the South China Sea with China, bringing some of its best ships to the party. Two weeks later, China shied away from joining Russia in a veto of yet another Western resolution on Syria at the UN. The discrepancy sums up the extent and the limits of the strategic convergence between both countries.

The “axis of convenience” between China and Russia has, without question, grown larger. And the positive dynamics pushing cooperation forward are largely economic. But there is also a negative dynamic, coming from the West. Both countries have a perception of regime insecurity that emerges from the international promotion of democracy, and the attractiveness of corruption-free and comparably safe Western societies for individuals, be they Chinese or Russian.

But economic growth isn't the only thing drawing China and Russia together. The possible eastward extension of NATO, the high-tech superiority of the US and other Western armaments has not been undermined by the financial crises and political uncertainties of established democracies. This is why China and Russia describe their moves as reactive rather than assertive. For Russia, it means the possibility of mounting pre-emptive strikes and sudden regional escalation that leads to conflict dominance, as is the case today in the Syrian civil war. For China, it is the endless increase in military spending and deployment, and the game it is playing in the empty spaces of the South China Sea, East China Sea and border areas with India. Here again, the comparison reveals differences: Russia has conducted or directly condoned hot wars, from Georgia, Chechnya, and Serbia to Crimea, the Donbas and Syria. They target or concern large civilian populations. Instead, China fills open spaces, sometimes turning them into military assets. So far, it has lived up to its affirmation that it “will not fire the first shot”. Military adventurism is very far from the Chinese tradition, which is to take a much more comprehensive view of national power and influence.

Still, the China that has refused to enter into any alliances since the demise of the Sino-Soviet treaty in 1960 currently has its second track experts debating the opportunity of a new alliance with Russia. Indeed, there are few strong justifications for such an alliance, but many opportunities to team up on an issue-by-issue basis. Both China and Russia share a track record of flouting or rejecting international law on territorial issues, although in very different situations. Invoking and restraining the UN is becoming a key

topic of interest as China's budgetary influence over the organisation has grown considerably in recent years. Bridging the Eurasian landmass with strategically significant projects that might somewhat balance the US domination at sea is another cause – although the writers cited in this special issue of China Analysis make it clear that this is a project for the long haul and with elements of competition for markets and influence.

It is only the growing malaise inside Western democracies that makes this conjunction impressive. As our writers are well aware, Russia's well-being still depends on trade with Europe and on the price of oil and gas – things that China cannot dictate or help with. Russia is only a minor supplier of technology to China, even in the military and aerospace sectors. Historical distrust and even a lingering identity dispute lurk behind the surface of relations between the two countries. It is entertaining to see that leading diplomat Fu Ying, now a key speaker for China, presided over the latest PLA-inspired Xiangshan Forum in Beijing this October, where Russian participants were granted front row seats. Nonetheless, in a Chinese version of a piece published in English by Foreign Affairs, she cited, at length, the various Russian turnarounds since the nineteenth century that have ended alliances with China.

In a world where economics is increasingly separated from politics, and where international relations often mix engagement policies with containment policies, there is no reason why a strong Chinese-Russian partnership cannot endure, whatever the misgivings, distrust and diversity of interests. China and Russia are not perfect partners, but the weakness of Western alliances creates opportunities for risk-free strategic convergence on a growing list of issues. China and Russia might not be able to form a functioning alliance, but can we be sure that their issue-by-issue cooperation won't yield stronger results than existing Western alliances?

CHINA AND RUSSIA: TOWARDS AN ALLIANCE TREATY?

Mathieu Duchâtel

The possibility of an alliance treaty with Russia has been an undercurrent in Chinese foreign policy debate since the reciprocal visits of China's President Xi Jinping and Russia's President Vladimir Putin to the two military parades of 2015: Moscow's 9 May Victory Parade and Beijing's 3 September parade to commemorate the end of the "Chinese people's war of resistance against Japanese aggression". The key driver of the current rapprochement between the two countries is China and Russia's increasingly similar views on the state of international affairs – including a shared hostility towards the United States. After the two parades, during another state visit by Putin to Beijing in June 2016, China and Russia signed a "joint statement on strengthening global strategic stability". As argued by Yan Xuetong, a longstanding

supporter of a grand strategy based on alliances, the most significant part of the document is its effort to broaden the concept of “strategic stability” from its restrictive definition in the field of nuclear arms control to a much wider political context. But how far can China and Russia actually go? Chinese sources indicate that the prevailing thinking is sober and cautious, and that there is still widespread resistance to the idea of any alliance.

“Friendly neutrality”

The year 2016 marks the twentieth anniversary of the launch of the China-Russia strategic partnership. Liu Fenghua lists the many concrete achievements that have been made in the framework of the partnership: the final border delimitation of 2004; strategic alignment against colour revolutions; joint opposition against missile defence; the establishment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation; close cooperation in multilateral international organisations, including the United Nations; China’s acquisition of advanced defence systems; and energy cooperation. Economic cooperation has also reached a strategic level (一定的战略性, *yiding de zhanlüexing*). Bilateral trade totalled \$95 billion in 2014, and although it decreased to \$69 billion in 2015, China remains Russia’s most important bilateral trade partner, and Russia is in China’s top ten. China is also the fourth-largest provider of foreign investment to Russia. Liu says that one important characteristic of the partnership is its strategic ambition – it aims to shape the international order and create global strategic stability. This ambition was the starting point of the partnership, but it has since expanded to encompass many more areas.

Fu Ying’s piece on the subject in Foreign Affairs at the beginning of 2016 drew much attention. In a longer version published in Chinese in another leading international relations journal, she argues against describing the current strategic partnership between China and Russia as an alliance. An important point that was omitted in the English version is that China has taken on board the lessons of history. In the twentieth century, each successive Chinese regime signed an alliance treaty with Russia. None of them was successful in protecting or advancing vital Chinese national interests. In 1896, after the Qing Empire’s defeat in the First Sino-Japanese War, General Li Hongzhang signed a secret alliance treaty on the sidelines of the coronation of Tsar Nicholas II. The treaty granted Russia a railway concession in Manchuria in exchange for security guarantees if Japan should invade. Less than five years later, Russian and Japanese troops were fighting alongside each other against the Boxer Rebellion and Qing dynasty troops as part of the Eight-Nation Alliance. In August 1945, a day before Japan’s surrender in World War II, the Republic of China signed a Treaty of Friendship and Alliance with the Soviet Union. This treaty forced the Nationalists to recognise the independence of Mongolia, to accept a Soviet military base in Lushun, and to concede ownership of the Changchun railway to the Russians. The 1950 Treaty of Friendship,

Alliance, and Mutual Assistance between the two communist giants of the People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union lasted less than ten years and did not prevent a dramatic strategic break that opened the way for decades of military tension. Fu Ying makes it clear: the lessons of history are bitter.

Zhao Huasheng also has vivid memories of a past characterised by tension and strategic competition. The current friendly situation was hard won, but in his opinion, there is nothing to suggest that it will last over the long term. Zhao argues that the present state of China-Russia relations can best be described as “friendly neutrality” (友好中立, youhao zhongli). In 2015, trade and investment statistics showed a sharp decline, but mutual strategic trust continued to increase, and cooperation expanded on all fronts. Zhao believes that the key to all this was the decision to coordinate between the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union and China's One Belt, One Road project. Even though observers are still searching for a flagship cooperation project that can demonstrate substantial progress, Zhao says that the real value of the agreement is political – it means that Russian concerns about a dominant Chinese economic presence in Russia's traditional backyard in Central Asia have at least partially been addressed. In other positive news, he says that Russia's image is improving in China, including among the younger generation – Russia is perceived as a country that resists “international hegemony” (国际霸权, guoji baquan), and it is also increasingly appreciated for its culture, as more Chinese people travel as tourists to Russia. There has also been a considerable decrease in the number of complaints by Chinese tourists who felt discriminated against by Russian law-enforcement agents, which has been a major problem in the past.

But general friendliness does not make an alliance. Zhao believes that Russia and China's respective international identities on the world stage have already been firmly established – both are “independent strategic actors”. The partnership has some of the characteristics of an alliance relationship, and Zhao says there is some support for a real alliance in the strategic communities of both countries. However, the reality is that a “flexible partnership” (弹性的伙伴模式, tanxing de huoban moshi) serves both sides' interests much better than an alliance would: this kind of relationship has fewer commitments, which means that differences can be handled more easily. Fu Ying agrees: China does not have a “political culture” of alliances and does not follow a policy of “political blocs” (没有搞集团政治, meiyou gao jituan zhengzhi). That said, it sees Russia as a key strategic partner in advancing China's vision of a future international order.

Managing differences and expectations

Zhao thinks the main thing that will continue to prevent Russia and China from becoming allies is the way that they deal with each other's conflicts with third states. Clearly, the situations in Ukraine and the South China Sea do not provide evidence for a pattern of unconditional mutual support. In the future, the two sides "will not completely come down on the other's side, and will not provide full support to each other" in times of crisis. Zhao says that the real challenge is not bringing the partnership to the level of full strategic support; rather, it is managing the differences that could easily generate strategic distrust. For this reason, he suggests "friendly neutrality" – even if it is, in his opinion, an "imperfect concept". In the absence of anything more concrete, the concept at least describes what is needed to prevent future distrust.

Chen Yu is similarly sceptical in his piece assessing the strategic value for Russia of its ties with China in the context of Western sanctions. The phrase "pivot to Asia" is sometimes used to describe the increased attention that Russia has given to China since the Ukraine conflict. Chen's conclusion is clear-cut and straightforward: China will never replace Europe as the centre of gravity of Russian foreign policy. His two major arguments are economic and cultural. On the economic front, in 2015, in spite of a decrease of 40 percent since the previous year, trade with Europe still represented 44.8 percent of Russian foreign trade, more than four times its total trade with China. Europe also remained the Russian economy's main source of capital and advanced technologies. The "strategic replacement" has just not happened. Chen sees this as also being a result of China's policies, which have persistently focused on Russia as an export market rather than as a destination for outward investment. The second argument is simply that Russians are Europeans, and Putin himself is a "Europeanist" (欧洲主义者, ouzhou zhuyi zhe). In spite of Putin's ideological contempt for Europe's liberalism, Chen argues that Russia's values are closest to Europe's. His conclusion: beware disappointments, because "while Russia values its relationship with us, we should not be overly excited, and we should certainly not expect too much from our bilateral partnership".

Liu Fenghua draws the most optimistic conclusion of the Chinese authors. He argues that the timing is not right for forming an alliance, because general trends in the evolution of the international system serve the interests both of Russia and of China: "At the present stage, our interest is in completing modernisation, not in transforming the existing international order."

RUSSIA'S MILITARY STRATEGY: CHINA'S PARTNER, MODEL, OR COMPETITOR?

Alexandre Sheldon-Duplaix At the time of the Crimean crisis in 2014, an editorial in the *Global Times* concluded that Russia's military power is Moscow's trump card. So, the article suggested that "China should speed up its military modernisation", because "once the confrontation between the West and Russia goes out of control, it is China that will suffer". But Chinese authors have various assessments of the real state of Russia's military strength, and of the degree to which Moscow is prepared to partner or compete with Beijing to achieve its goals. Is Russia a weak power?

In 2013, China's Academy of Military Science's Department of Military Strategy published a third edition of the *Science of Military Strategy* (战略学, zhanlüe xue). This exhaustive 276-page manual dedicates four pages to a short description and analysis of Russia's military strategy. In these four pages, the Chinese authors describe the overall transformation of the Russian military strategy since the end of the Cold War. They note a shift from a global military strategy to a regional military strategy focused on the homeland, with new strategic frontlines centred on the restricted corridors of the Baltic and Black Seas.

The Academy of Military Science authors characterise Russia as a "warlike nation ... founded and strengthened by war" that has never hesitated to use military force to defend its interests. The authors say that Russian military culture favours defensive and offensive operations in order to seize the initiative. A year before the seizure of Crimea, the authors quote Putin as advocating "pre-emptive strikes" to counter the United States and NATO and to preserve "strategic parity" and "asymmetrical balance" in the peripheral regions.

The authors say that after Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in 1985, Soviet military doctrine was based on five "Nos": no to being the initiator of military operations; no to being the first to employ nuclear weapons; no to surprise attacks and pre-emptive strikes; and no to large-scale offensive operations. But after the fall of the Soviet Union, needing to compensate for the collapse of its conventional forces, Russia abandoned Gorbachev's "no first-use" nuclear policy in favour of an "offence and defence strategy"

Vladimir Putin, who became president in 2000, is depicted as having "actively revived national power and military strength". His policy was that the armed forces should be able to effectively contain any nuclear or conventional threats against the Russian Federation and its allies. The Academy of Military Sciences cites the two Chechen wars and Serbia as examples of Russia's resilience and initiative: in the Chechen wars, Moscow ultimately prevailed after initial defeat, and in Serbia, Russia mounted the surprise occupation of an airfield in Kosovo in the aftermath of the 1999 NATO campaign that it had opposed. In 2002, Putin said that Russia might "use nuclear

weapons to fight back against a large-scale conventional attack”. This statement obviously referred to a scenario in which Siberia was invaded, but the Chinese authors do not make this point explicit.

During Dmitry Medvedev’s presidency (2008-2012), Russia issued its National Security Strategy to 2020 (in 2009) and the Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation (in 2010). The Chinese authors say those documents made it clear that Russia considered external threats to be greater than domestic threats, with the US and NATO remaining the primary strategic opponents. To resist aerospace attacks, sea and air blockades, and anti-missile operations, Russia considered that it was essential to be able to deploy joint operations by the navy, the air force, air defence units, and strategic missile forces. In order to facilitate these operations, Russia established four major military area commands – the west, south, central, and east – each with their own joint strategic headquarters. The authors do not endorse Russia’s justifications for the 2008 Georgian War (Russia said the war came as a result of Georgia’s killing of Russian military observers): instead, the Chinese writers describe the war as a Blitzkrieg attack carried out during the Beijing Olympic games aimed at countering US and NATO moves to reduce Russia’s strategic space. Meanwhile, in response to increased aerospace threats – from the US’s Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) defence plan and Prompt Global Strike initiative – a new Russian “national aerospace defence concept” established a unified national aerospace defence system, integrating air and space defence.

In 2016, three years after the publication of the Academy of Military Science’s manual, Ma Jiang and Sun Jie also analysed “Russia’s geopolitical and military relations with major powers”. Unlike the Academy authors, Ma and Sun present Russia as a weak power that is challenged by NATO. They say that the West’s attitude to Russia has continued to be characterised by a Cold War mentality, which is why the European Union and NATO sought to expand eastward without trying to integrate Russia into their security architecture. This policy squeezed Russia’s strategic space at a moment when its armed forces were decreasing dramatically, which explains Moscow’s reactions in Georgia and Ukraine. The authors note that “earnings from oil, gas, and mineral exports constitute more than half of [Russian] federal government revenues”, making the country’s economy very sensitive to the world commodities market. Exacerbated by Western economic sanctions, the fall in resource prices has caused economic hardship that is now endangering Russian national security.

With regard to Russia’s military strength, Ma and Sun say that “Russia’s conventional armed forces’ combat capability does not meet the Russian Federation’s national security requirements and can only handle low-intensity conflicts, while Russia’s huge nuclear arsenal is lagging behind because of a lack of sufficient funding”. They agree that Putin has increased investment in and reform of the military – but even so, the US and Japan have gradually increased the asymmetry. Washington is building a sea- and

land-based ABM system, from Spain to Romania, Poland, and Japan. And in spite of Russia's efforts to modernise the Black Sea Fleet, the authors believe that its naval and air forces would be unable to prevail in a large-scale confrontation with Turkey.

On Syria, Bi Hongye disagrees somewhat with Ma and Sun's analysis. All three agree that Russia's willingness to send troops to Syria reflects an urge to defend the country's only strategic asset in a Mediterranean region that is dominated by NATO, along with Russia's only foreign naval base, which is conveniently located on the route to the Indian Ocean. But Bi downplays the US and NATO threat to Russia, in spite of the Alliance's decision to reinforce its troops in Poland and the Baltic States. Instead, Bi sees the Islamic State (ISIS) as Russia's real cause for concern: Bi believes the group could eventually provoke war and havoc in the Northern Caucasus and Volga regions, with a risk of much higher casualties for Russian forces than the risk from intervening in Syria. Furthermore, Damascus is one of Russia's major trading partners, particularly in weapons and energy. Therefore, Moscow ought to support Damascus, just as Washington would support its partner, Israel. Unlike Ma and Sun, who emphasise Russia's military weakness, Bi Hongye is impressed by the efficiency of Russia's air and missile strikes in Syria.

China: Russia's "natural ally" or a "strategic competitor"?

Liu Fei analyses Russia's policy in the South China Sea and its influence on China's maritime disputes. According to Liu, Russia's policy is a pragmatic effort to strengthen cooperation with China so as to resist pressure from the US and NATO and oppose the US's strategy of "re-balancing in the Pacific". Liu notes that Russia's core principles are "pragmatism with fewer resources to contribute in exchange for larger visibility, in order to secure sound and practical benefits". Quoting Russian experts from the Far East Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Liu believes that China is a "natural ally" for Russia. He points to the joint statement of 2016 signed by the two countries which state that they should support each other "on issues concerning each other's sovereignty, territorial integrity, security, and other core issues". Liu notes that Russia's Foreign Policy Concept has "also made it clear that a comprehensive strategy will continue to enhance cooperation with China on an equal footing and with mutual trust ... for the maintenance of global peace and regional stability in general". As a result, Russia has publicly expressed support for China in its maritime disputes, denouncing the US "as a major destabilising factor in the South China Sea". China and Russia have since 2012 engaged in joint naval exercises, which Russia characterises as a joint maritime defensive action, carried out in order to "safeguard world peace and stability". Liu believes that Russia's top priority is the development of relations with China. It wants to build bilateral military cooperation "to resist the threat from the ocean" – that is to say, from the US.

Nevertheless, Liu sees some limits to Russia's Chinese policy: he admits that "for Russia, China is to a certain extent a strategic competitor". In the South China Sea, Russia does not go as far as endorsing China's claims, even as it aligns itself with China's approach: "Russia hopes the parties concerned will exercise restraint and resolve their differences through negotiations". In the East China Sea, Russia de facto recognises China's "Air Defence Identification Zone", but it abstains from any further involvement in the Diaoyu/Senkaku dispute.

Liu also notes that Russia is preparing to export more weapons to other countries in the region, including Vietnam and perhaps the Philippines, both of which are participants in the South China Sea disputes. The volume of Russia's bilateral trade with Vietnam is over \$3.5 billion, five times higher than it was ten years ago. Liu says that by arming Vietnam to counter China's expanding power, Russia has created a stumbling block for China. The relationship between Vietnam and Russia has been upgraded to a "comprehensive strategic partnership", to a certain extent renewing the old Soviet alliance that enabled Moscow to check and balance China's rise. Given Russia's strategic necessity of getting closer to China, Liu wonders whether the country will have to suspend its cooperation with Vietnam. But he points out that such a move would be very costly, both in terms of image and in terms of contracts worth several billion dollars. The Asia Pacific region accounts for 60 percent of Russian arms exports, and Liu says that Vietnam is one of the two largest importers of Russian arms, along with Venezuela. Ma and Sun say that in the longer term, Russia will have to contend with the external threat represented by the US's Prompt Global Strike and the external and internal threat of a Western-sponsored "colour revolution", which could undermine its domestic political stability. And while Chinese commentators seem wary and even slightly envious of Russia's ability to use its military forces to support its interests, they also point out that Russia may not have the economic means to support its assertive strategy.

THE SILK ROAD GOES NORTH: SINO-RUSSIAN ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND COMPETITION

Michal Makocki President Vladimir Putin's visit to China in May 2014 was an important milestone in China-Russia relations. Isolated by the post-Ukraine sanctions regime, Russia turned to China not only for political support but also as an alternative to Western markets and investment. The leaders of the two countries touted trade and economic cooperation as one of the key pillars of their comprehensive strategic partnership. Lofty goals were established, including to reach a bilateral trade volume of \$100 billion by 2015; to enable China to tap the East Siberian gas fields through the Power of Siberia pipeline; and to allow China to invest in infrastructure in Russia, in particular in the underdeveloped Russian Far East.

Two years since the visit, progress on many of the goals is mixed at best. Despite the rhetoric, the China-Russia relationship continues to suffer from strategic mistrust, preventing the two sides from fully embracing mutual commercial opportunities. This is particularly the case for projects that would lock the two countries into long-term dependency, such as the Power of Siberia pipeline. Bilateral trade has not been going as well as could be hoped, either: with a 28 percent decrease from the previous year, bilateral trade between China and Russia totalled \$64 billion in 2015 – well short of the stated target, as Liu Changmin observes. In spite of setbacks like this, the majority of the Chinese research community continues to emphasise the enormous potential of economic cooperation between the two countries. However, some authors disagree, suggesting the possibility of a less cooperative relationship, or even a direct clash, between the two countries, especially in Central Asia.

Russia's missed opportunity

Chinese analysts recognise that Russia's rapprochement with China is driven by Western sanctions. Zhao Mingwen says that Russia simply has no alternative to embracing China: "Russia's hopes for cooperative ties with the West have been dashed after the imposition of sanctions. As a result, China has become the only global player with which Russia can cooperate." Liu Changmin agrees: "As China's relationship with the United States increasingly experiences turbulence and uncertainty, Sino-Russian ties will continue to rise in their overall importance in China's foreign diplomacy outlook."

With this in mind, the fall in trade can be explained by factors exogenous to Sino-Russian relations and, Zhao says, should not be made the yardstick for assessing the relationship. He explains that the 2015 drop in bilateral trade was "mainly due to the landslide fall of crude oil prices". Russia actually exported a record 37.63 million tonnes of crude to China last year, a 28 percent increase from the previous year – but the total dollar value of these exports still declined, because of the drop in crude oil prices. This underlines the importance of fossil fuels in the trade relations between the two neighbours, as well as evidencing their clearly delineated roles: Russia is the provider of raw materials, and China is their consumer.

Zhao says that although China benefits from cheaper fuel imports from Russia, limiting the two countries' economic cooperation exclusively to energy deals is a weakness that needs to be overcome. This pattern of oil-for-cash trading is not sustainable, particularly for Russia: according to Zhao, "Russia's focus on Europe in the past two decades meant that the country lost the opportunity to capitalise on the rise of China, and Russia would be better off not replicating the pattern of dependence on oil sales that characterises its trade with Europe, but instead fully embracing cooperation with China in fields other than energy and primary materials exports."

Russian politicians and industry leaders apparently share this view: Zhao says that this is one reason for Russia's willingness to expand high-tech collaboration. Some examples of this cooperation are the new China-Russia Silk Road Innovation Park on the outskirts of Xi'an City, as well as the two countries' joint efforts to manufacture civilian jet engines using Russian technology, and joint R&D in the development of a satellite navigation system. Likewise, Wang Gang points out the convergence of China and Russia's competitive advantages in fields such as agriculture, forestry, high-speed railway, civil aviation, outer space exploration, infrastructure building, finance, investment, education, technology, medical care, and tourism.

Cooperation trumps competition

Energy cooperation with Russia has significant benefits for China. One major opportunity is the Power of Siberia gas pipeline, which is to supply gas to China's north-eastern provinces from Russia's East Siberian gas fields. Even though Russia's gas fields are geographically close to China's industrial north-eastern regions, the pipeline took ten years to be agreed, mainly because of disagreements over gas prices. When it becomes operational, the pipeline will help China to diversify its energy supply. Li Xi notes that Turkmenistan currently supplies the largest share of China's natural gas imports, while sea-borne oil and gas supplies provide the coastal regions with most of their energy needs. But the pipeline linking Russia to northeast China raises fewer geopolitical concerns than these routes, because it will allow energy to be supplied directly to Chinese consumers without transiting through the territory of intermediary countries. Wang adds that Russia's gas supplies could create the conditions for a new petrochemical industry in the region, thus providing "impetus for the revival of the Chinese Rust Belt", which is currently characterised by its outdated industrial capacity.

The Chinese authors also say that Chinese companies should seize the opportunity to contribute to Russia's national and regional development strategies. Jiang Zhenjun says that Russia's national strategy of "going east" and China's Silk Road Economic Belt initiative both create opportunities for infrastructure construction, in particular in high-speed railway. Jiang suggests that, to highlight their rapprochement, China and Russia should cooperate on some flagship projects, such as the high-speed railway between Moscow and Beijing (roughly 7,000km apart), which could cut travelling time between the two cities from almost a full week to 17-24 hours. At this stage, however, the project remains only aspirational: so far, only a small part of the route between Moscow and Kazan, a city 800km east of Moscow, is being developed (potentially with Chinese companies' participation in the construction, although partnering with Western companies has not yet been ruled out). China and Russia could jointly implement other railway projects in Central Asia, a region that Jiang says offers great potential for China-Russia cooperation rather than competition.

These suggestions mirror the tone of the official announcement on pairing the Eurasian Economic Union and the Silk Road Economic Belt, which was signed at the sidelines of President Xi Jinping's visit to Moscow in May 2015. Jiang thinks Central Asia could be the "meeting place" where the two strategies intersect. He sees potential for "a second Eurasian Intercontinental railway as a crucial part of the Silk Road Economic Belt initiative". However, Xiang Yijun and Zhang Jinping do not share this optimistic view: they see potential for "conflicting and overlapping interests in third countries, particularly in Central Asian states, which both regional projects of China and Russia claim as their main operational space". They add: "political stability and economic nationalism in third countries could also be a risk factor". Xiang and Zhang seem to be in agreement with many Western commentators, who tend to see potential for a clash in China's commercial expansion into the region that Russia perceives as its own backyard.

Jiang sees Northeast China as a key element of the Silk Road initiative. He envisions a dynamic regional economy "centred on Harbin and connected with Russia's Siberian railway system, river ports, and airports in the region to form a mega-transportation network." However, his expectations overestimate the economic opportunities available in Russia's Siberia, which is a depopulated and underdeveloped region with little economic activity. Similarly, Russia's unfavourable business environment, including cumbersome customs controls at the border, will also work against Jiang's vision – as will Russian perceptions. As Xiang and Zhang note, "The perception of China as an economic threat, particularly related to Chinese investment and immigration into Russia's under-populated Far East, will continue to adversely affect Russians' willingness to cooperate with China."

Jiang's ideas also include a very imaginative link through the Arctic, which he calls the northern part of the Silk Road. He suggests that "Russia and China can jointly build a logistics port along the projected Arctic navigation route. The two countries can also join hands in developing the mineral resources along the route, particularly energy resources." If developed, the Arctic route would provide China with an alternative maritime connection to the congested Malacca strait and the Suez Canal and increase its energy security by diversifying trade routes.

Trade and infrastructure cooperation between China and Russia has the theoretical potential to greatly reward both sides – but in spite of official statements, it is increasingly clear that the strategic mistrust between the two countries will prevent them from capitalising on the available opportunities.

BACK TO THE BASICS: COUNTER-TERRORISM COOPERATION AND THE SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANISATION

Marc Julienne

Counter-terrorism cooperation has been a *raison d'être* for the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) since its establishment. Today, the SCO is facing a new threat, as the possible expansion of the Islamic State (ISIS) into South and Central Asia makes counter-terrorism cooperation even more important. Moreover, the organisation is set to expand from six to eight member states, and the accession of new members India and Pakistan will have profound effects on regional counter-terrorism cooperation.

The institutional basis of SCO's counter-terrorism cooperation

The SCO was established in 2001, but its predecessor, the Shanghai Five, began to meet annually to promote regional cooperation as early as 1996. Even then, cooperation on non-traditional security issues was among the meetings' top priorities.

On 15 June 2001, the SCO was formally established, including the Shanghai Five countries plus Uzbekistan. One of the organisation's two main founding documents is the Shanghai Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism, and Extremism. In this document, the member states committed to exchanging information and experience on the implementation of measures and legislation to combat terrorist activities and their sources of finance, weapons, ammunition, and any other assistance. In 2002, the Agreement Between the Member States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation on the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure was signed during the group's Saint Petersburg summit. Following this, the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) was launched in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, in 2004. It represented the first institutionalised feature of the SCO's counter-terrorism cooperation mechanism.

A further advance in counter-terrorism cooperation came with the signature of the SCO Convention on Counter-Terrorism at the SCO's Yekaterinburg summit in June 2009. In contrast with the 2001 Shanghai Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism, and Extremism, which was short on specifics in many areas, the 2009 text is more detailed and complete. For instance, the 2001 Convention only briefly described the broad notions of terrorism, separatism, and extremism, whereas the 2009 document legally defines the concepts of "terrorism", "act of terrorism" (恐怖主义行为, kongbu zhuyi xingwei), and "terrorist organisation" (恐怖主义组织, kongbu zhuyi zuzhi).

China-Russia bilateral cooperation and the SCO

As the SCO's two leading powers, China and Russia play a key part in the development of security cooperation, and the bilateral relationship between the two is crucial to the efficiency of the entire organisation. Li Hui, the Chinese ambassador to Russia, noted in 2015 that both sides had shown great willingness to cooperate. Beijing and Moscow have lately been discussing the integration of their respective regional economic projects, the Chinese-led Silk Road Economic Belt and the Russian-led Eurasian

Economic Union. In May 2015, China's President Xi Jinping and Russia's President Vladimir Putin signed a "Joint Statement on Cooperation of Connection Between the Silk Road Economic Belt and Eurasian Economic Union" and the "China-Russia Joint Statement on Deepening Comprehensive Strategic Partnership of Coordination and Advocating Win-win Cooperation". And in June 2016, they signed another "China-Russia Joint Statement on Strengthening Global Strategic Stability".

Regional stability is a prerequisite to implement these projects. To ensure this stability, Li Hui stressed that China and Russia are committed to strengthening cooperation on fighting terrorism, transnational criminal organisations, cybercrime, and drug trafficking, adopting a "zero tolerance" (零容忍, ling rongren) policy.

One area in which this cooperation is realised is in the joint counter-terrorist exercises known as "Cooperation". "Cooperation" is a bilateral joint training programme between the two countries' counter-terrorist special forces: the Chinese People's Armed Police (PAP) and its Russian equivalent, the Russian National Guard, which was established in June 2016. Zhang Lue and Luo Hu say that exercises under the programme have been held three times: in 2007, 2013, and 2016. The exercises in Russia in July 2016 involved 80 troops, including the PAP's renowned Snow Leopard (雪豹突击队, xuebao tujidui) and Falcon (猎鹰突击队, lieying tujidui) Commandos.

The authors also emphasize that counter-terrorism joint training exercises present an opportunity to promote mutual understanding, pragmatic cooperation, and military exchange between the two countries. They also facilitate wider military cooperation: one example of this is the China-Russia joint naval drill, "Joint Sea", which has been held since 2012, with the last one held in the South China Sea in September 2016.

Other bilateral and multilateral military exercises take place within the framework of the SCO. China and Kyrgyzstan held a bilateral joint military exercise in 2002, within the framework of both the SCO and their bilateral exchange, but the first truly multilateral exercise was held in August 2003, two months after the signature of the "Memorandum on holding joint antiterrorism exercises by SCO member states' armed forces" during the SCO's 2003 Moscow summit. Since then, SCO member states have participated in and organised joint military exercises almost every year. The most recent SCO joint military exercise was held in September 2016 in Kyrgyzstan ("Peace Mission" 2016). All of these exercises' stated purpose is the fight against terrorism.

The growing terrorist threat in Central Asia

After 15 years of increasing counter-terrorism cooperation, the SCO faces several new challenges. One of the most serious is ISIS. From its beginnings in Syria and Iraq, ISIS

is searching for new territories to spread into – especially in Central Asia. SCO governments take this threat very seriously.

According to Jin Kai, the “rapid expansion” of ISIS in Afghanistan and Central Asia has made the Fergana valley, shared between Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan, an attractive and vulnerable target for the terrorist group. The valley is an important economic and strategic hub – but it has a small land area and a large population, so land and water resources are insufficient. Moreover, religious influence is quite strong, and economic development has stagnated. All these conditions make it an easier target for ISIS, so the area could become a security threat for the “Eurasia heartland”, and a serious danger to China and Russia.

The north of Afghanistan, bordering Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan, offers another “paradise” into which ISIS could expand in Central Asia. Turkmenistan has been fighting terrorist attacks on its border with Afghanistan since 2014. To combat the threat, the Turkmen government has tried to strengthen its security forces by recruiting veterans from the Soviet era and enrolling high school students in the army. In 2015, Turkmenistan asked for direct assistance from the United States, but no moves to provide it have been made so far.

Jin says that Central Asian ISIS combatants are not recruited in Central Asian countries directly – instead, they are mostly recruited in Russia. This is because most Central Asian young people who immigrate to Russia have trouble integrating, which makes them vulnerable to extremist ideology.

The Uzbek Ministry of State Security estimates that more than 5,000 Uzbek nationals have already joined ISIS. The Tajik government says that interest in ISIS is spreading fast among the young people of Tajikistan. In 2015, 400 young Tajiks joined ISIS, and 120 of them died in the Middle East.

Kyrgyzstan is also a privileged target for ISIS in Central Asia. On 16 July 2015, domestic security departments arrested six alleged members of ISIS in Bishkek. According to the Kyrgyz government, the suspects were planning an attack during Eid al-Fitr the next day, with a car bomb supposed to rush into the crowd gathered in a public square; they were also planning an attack on a Russian air base in Kyrgyzstan. On 30 August 2016, a suicide car bomb injured three people at the Chinese Embassy in Bishkek. The Kyrgyzstan State Security Commission indicated that the driver was an ethnic Uyghur with a Tajik passport; he arrived in Kyrgyzstan from Istanbul on 20 August and had links to the Turkestan Islamic Party (TIP). He might have spent time in Syria fighting for Jabhat al-Nusra, now renamed Jabhat Fatah al-Sham. On 29 August,

Kyrgyz counter-terrorist Special Forces shot an alleged “international terrorist organisation member” in an operation in a Bishkek suburb.

In Kazakhstan, official statistics indicate that about 1,000 nationals have left for Syria and Iraq. ISIS even released a video with a Kazakh national perpetrating a beheading. As for China, Jin reports that some Turkish organisations have been helping young militant Uyghurs to illegally immigrate to Thailand, Malaysia, or Indonesia, where they are given visas to Turkey, and then might go on to Syria. However, not much information is available about this issue.

SCO enlargement: towards the end of a “dual-core” organisation?

For more than ten years, the SCO has been gradually opening up to observer states and dialogue partners. Now, with India and Pakistan approved as full members at the Tashkent summit in June 2016, it is entering a new phase of enlargement. Chen Yurong believes that the enlargement reflects the organisation’s attractiveness; it will enhance the SCO’s international status and influence, and expand its economic and security cooperation. As Li Jinfeng points out, it will also transform the SCO from a “dual-core” (双核, shuanghe) organisation to a “China-Russia-India-led” (中俄印三国, Zhong e yin san guo) body.

Li Jinfeng says that the main motive of the SCO expansion is to counter US influence in Central Asia. He thinks that ever since the first US military base was established in Central Asia after the Cold War (officially to fight terrorism in Afghanistan), the US’s real purpose in the region has been to prevent Russia from regaining its traditional sphere of influence. Jin Kai says the Fergana Valley, for example, is not only a potential terrorist threat, but also the great powers’ “natural arena” (天然竞技场, tianran jingjichang). In the future, it is “highly possible” that it could become a “Ukraine II” (乌克兰第二, Wukelan di er), caught up in the fight for influence between the US and Russia.

However, China-Russia relations should not be much affected by the enlargement. Li Jinfeng thinks that competition between China and Russia centres only on economic and soft power issues. On security, their interests largely coincide.

Counter-terrorism has always been a core component of the SCO and has strongly contributed to the institutionalisation process of the organisation. So, the current threats as well as the accession of new member states should broaden the SCO’s scope for multilateral and bilateral cooperation. As Li Jinfeng says, the SCO’s counter-terrorism mission will continue to be to “prevent the ‘three forces’ [of terrorism, separatism, and

extremism] from spreading from South and West Asia” to Central Asia, China, and Russia.

Source: <http://worldaffairsjournal.org/content/china-and-russia-gaming-west>

WHY BREXIT HAS NEVER LOVED DONALD TRUMP BACK BY ALICIA P.Q. WITTMAYER

Given all the strange sights the 2016 presidential race has produced, a British politician taking the stage in Jackson, Mississippi to whoops and cheers may not rank among the weirdest. Still, it's worth taking a few minutes to look back on oddness of the moment: Donald Trump, delivering a remedial lecture on European politics (“I said that Britain would leave the EU — sometimes referred to as ‘European Union’”); Nigel Farage, wearing a suit in the late August Mississippi heat, bounding up on stage to bash Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama.

For a few months, Farage and Trump gleefully played populist brothers in arms. Farage worked the spin room on Trump's behalf following the second presidential debate, producing memorable animal comparisons; Trump called himself “Mr. Brexit” nearly every chance he got. Farage could have rightfully taken offense at that self-conferred title. If anyone was Mr. Brexit, shouldn't it be him, the man who devoted his entire political career to achieving U.K.'s exit from the European Union? But no matter — it was worth swallowing his pride for what seemed a mutually beneficial relationship, one which allowed Trump to claim Brexit's momentum for his own campaign and allowed Farage to be the international face of a victory that was, in fact, only partially his.

And then, two weeks ago, it seemed that even Trump's favorite Brexiteer had finally had enough. In an interview with the BBC's Jeremy Paxman following the wave of sexual assault allegations that had just slammed into Trump's campaign, Farage showed the first signs of slowly backing away from the Republican nominee. Farage said he disagreed with Trump on “lots of things” — among them, he said, his treatment of women and his plan to ban Muslims from the United States. “There are lots of things in this campaign that I couldn't support in any way at all, nor do I,” he said. When you've lost Mr. Breaking Point, can you really keep calling yourself Mr. Brexit?

The incentive for Trump to tie his populist campaign to the Brexit vote is clear enough: Brexit's anti-establishment vibe fits his own populist brand. Plus, Brexit won! When ‘decent people,’ as Farage put during his Mississippi stump speech, band together and rise up, they can shake off the unelected Eurocrats! (Or, Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama.)

But, Farage's early enthusiasm aside, Trump's love for Brexit has never been requited. Many of the most prominent Brexit champions are not Trump supporters at all. (For Farage's part, as of the surprise Clinton email bombshell from the FBI a week ago, he appears to be back on Team Trump.) And that lack of support says something about where the analogies between the Trump campaign and the Brexit vote do and don't stack up.

Trump, for instance, does not have the backing of Boris Johnson, the former mayor of London, whose support, many post hoc accounts suggest, was instrumental in giving the Brexit campaign the mainstream respectability it needed to secure a victory. Johnson, now foreign secretary, has called Trump "unfit to hold the office of the president of the United States," and following the Brexit vote, made a point of drawing a "very, very strong contrast" between what it meant to vote to leave the EU and what it means to vote for Trump.

Whatever support Trump has from Rupert Murdoch — whose newspapers led the way in Brexit cheerleading — has come only grudgingly, and in the wake of a high-profile feud during the Republican primary. Murdoch, who particularly dislikes Trump's stance on immigration, apparently blamed former Fox News head Roger Ailes for enabling Trump's rise, and even went so far as to order the moderators of the first GOP primary debate on Fox to hit Trump hard on a variety of issues, according to *New York* magazine, declaring that "this has gone on long enough." The Murdoch-owned *New York Post* endorsed Trump in the GOP primary, but the *Wall Street Journal*, which does not endorse candidates as a matter of tradition, has published editorials that have been strongly critical of the Republican nominee, including one that edged close to asking Trump to drop out of the race.

These are the big names, the ones with international cache. But there are others: Daniel Hannan, a member of European Parliament whom the *Guardian* newspaper dubbed "The Man Who Brought You Brexit" thinks Donald Trump is "a narcissistic, thin-skinned bully, a serial liar, a man who shows not the slightest respect for the office to which he aspires."

Douglas Carswell, UKIP's only member of Parliament, called Trump "shrill and obnoxious" and said the idea of banning Muslims from the United States was "plainly absurd."

Douglas Carswell, UKIP's only member of Parliament, called Trump "shrill and obnoxious" and said the idea of banning Muslims from the United States was "plainly absurd."

Many of the theories for a possible Trump victory have depended on analogies with Brexit. If Brexit could achieve a convincing populist victory despite ambiguous polling, who's to say Trump can't do the same? But the fact that many, if not most, prominent Brexit supporters express a visceral dislike for the Republican presidential nominee, despite his obvious enthusiasm for them, at the very least suggests that not all populist causes are created equal.

It's sometimes hard to remember these days, in the wake of the Conservative Party Conference last month in which Theresa May made clear that she saw the Brexit victory as a mandate to take a hard line against immigration, that the vote to leave the EU actually came out of a coalition composed of two camps. One of these camps looked very much like Trump voters do: white, working class, anti-immigrant, and anti-globalization — people who saw pulling the lever for Brexit as a big middle finger to “the system.” But the other camp looked very, very different. A Brexit vote, for them, was a vote to liberate Britain from the EU's reams of regulations, so that it might be freed to become the ultimate freemarket state. This camp was, if anything, pro-immigrant and pro-globalization — people who wanted to see London turned into a sort of “Singapore on the Thames.”

More than a few American publications have referred to Boris Johnson as the Donald Trump of Britain. But funny hair aside, this isn't an accurate comparison at all. There's a reason why Nigel Farage is Trump's favorite Brexit buddy: Farage, despite briefly losing faith a few weeks ago in the face of Trump's alleged sexual predations, hails from the first camp of Brexit voters. But many of the figures that gave Brexit its political and intellectual muscle — the professionals, in other words, the ones who knew how to run campaigns, who knew how to strategize, and prepare for, say, debates — hailed from the second.

There is no real Trump equivalent of this second camp. Not politically (with, perhaps, the exception of Kellyanne Conway, a late addition, Trump's leading strategic advisors have been his children). And certainly not intellectually: Conservative thinkers remain among the staunchest #NeverTrumps out there. Daniel Hannan spent decades of his life writing books and speeches that honed the intellectual case against the European Union. There is no Trumpian equivalent of a Daniel Hannan.

When people like Johnson, or say, Michael Gove, another leading Brexit campaigner, railed against the “elites,” they always seemed to be doing it with a bit of a wink. The idea was absurd on its face — these were among the most elite people in the country, even if they were happy to exploit the anger of the working classes to achieve their own ends. But with Donald Trump, despite his own personal wealth, the anti-elite attacks are less patently ridiculous. For better or worse, his campaign is a genuinely anti-elite revolt. With a handful of exceptions — the Peter Thiels, the Newt Gingriches — there are truly

very few of the people commonly considered “elites” who are rooting with gusto for Donald Trump.

This missing second camp complicates the analogy between Brexit and Trump, so it's not actually clear what it tells us about the prospects of a Trump victory. The fight over the EU referendum has since been replaced by a battle over who will “win” Brexit — the Little Englanders or the Singapore-on-Thamesers — that is still unfolding. But for those who saw, in Brexit, people like Rupert Murdoch riding a wave of working-class anger toward a dream of a regulation-free Britain, the course of the fight, so far, has been surprising. May has sent signals that some see as portending a “hard Brexit”; that is, she's indicated she might be willing to prioritize stopping immigration over maintaining access to Europe's single market. For the most part, this isn't the sort of Brexit that this second camp had in mind. Will it turn out that Britain's angry white working-class voters were actually exploiting the pro-Brexit elites, and their politicking expertise, to achieve the sort of victory they wanted, rather than the other way around?

The ultimate meaning of Brexit will be determined retroactively, by whomever wins the ongoing fight between Britain's pro-Brexit camps. And that, in turn, will determine whether Trump, who only represents one side of that fight, can rightly refer to himself as Mr. Brexit, or rather just a poor man's Nigel Farage, fated to rule a fringe party and nothing more.

Source: <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/11/07/why-brexit-has-never-loved-donald-trump-back/>

IRAN ONCE AGAIN EXCEEDS A NUCLEAR DEAL LIMIT

Iran has exceeded a soft limit on sensitive material set under its nuclear deal with major powers, the UN atomic watchdog said on Wednesday, hours after Donald Trump – who has strongly criticised the agreement – won the US presidential election.

It is the second time Tehran has surpassed the 130 metric tonne threshold for heavy water, a material used as a moderator in reactors like Iran's unfinished one at Arak, since the deal was put in place in January. It had 130.1 tonnes of the material on Tuesday, the watchdog said.

The last time Iran overstepped that mark was brief, passing without major criticism from the other countries that signed the nuclear deal last year. But there are questions about whether the incoming Trump administration will react to such incidents the same way.

“On 2 November 2016, the director general expressed concerns related to Iran's stock of heavy water to the vice president of Iran and president of the Atomic Energy Organisation of Iran, ... Ali Akbar Salehi,” the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said in a confidential report seen by Reuters.

The IAEA is policing the restrictions placed on Iran's nuclear activities under the deal it signed with the United States, Russia, China, Britain, France and Germany. The agreement also lifted international sanctions against Tehran.

Iran told the agency it would prepare to transfer 5 tonnes of heavy water out of the country, as provided for in the deal, and a senior diplomat said Iran planned to carry out the shipment in the coming days.

A US State Department spokesperson, speaking at a regular news briefing in Washington, confirmed Iran's intention to export the excess heavy water.

“It's important to note that Iran made no effort to hide this, hide what it was doing from the IAEA,” spokesperson Mark Toner said.

Rather than setting a strict limit on heavy water as it does for enriched uranium, the deal estimates Iran's needs to be 130 tonnes and says any amount beyond the country's needs "will be made available for export to the international market".

Trump has called the agreement, one of President Barack Obama's top achievements, "the worst deal ever negotiated" and said he would "police that contract so tough they (the Iranians) don't have a chance".

Source: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1226490/iran-exceeds-nuclear-deal-limit/>

TRUMP'S SYRIA STRATEGY WOULD BE A DISASTER BY CHARLES LISTER

late last week, President-elect Donald Trump explained for the first time since his election victory his position on the crisis in Syria. In his remarks, he laid out his determination to ramp up the fight against the Islamic State and to cease support to those fighting President Bashar al-Assad's regime: I've had an opposite view of many people regarding Syria.... My attitude was you're fighting Syria; Syria is fighting ISIS; and you have to get rid of ISIS. Russia is now totally aligned with Syria, and now you have Iran, which is becoming powerful, because of us, is aligned with Syria.... Now we're backing rebels against Syria, and we have no idea who these people are.

Though this is an extraordinary simplification of a highly complex crisis, the president-elect's views on Syria do evince some consistency — just not the consistency he apparently intends. Trump says he wants to focus on destroying the Islamic State. But the main effect of the policies he describes would be to eliminate the moderate opposition to the Assad regime and to empower extremism.

Before considering all the disastrous effects of Trump's policy, we should examine why even his stated justification for it doesn't hold water. A brief history lesson should suffice to demonstrate the Assad regime's lack of counterterrorism qualifications. This is the government whose intelligence apparatus methodically built al Qaeda in Iraq, and then the Islamic State in Iraq, into a formidable terrorist force to fight U.S. troops in that country from 2003 to 2010. Hundreds of American soldiers would probably still be alive today if it had not been for Assad's state-backed support to the Islamic State's direct predecessors.

Meanwhile,

Trump's suggestion to partner with Russia in "smashing" the Islamic State is little more than a non sequitur

Trump's suggestion to partner with Russia in "smashing" the Islamic State is little more than a non sequitur, given Russia's near-consistent focus on everything but the jihadi group. According to recent data monitoring airstrikes across Syria, only 8 percent of areas targeted by Russian airstrikes between Oct. 12 and Nov. 8 belonged to the Islamic State. With only one brief exception — the capture of Palmyra from the jihadi group during an internationally imposed cessation of hostilities — the Kremlin's focus has unequivocally and consistently been on fighting Syria's mainstream opposition, not the Islamic State. Much of its targeting has been against U.S.-linked members of Syria's opposition.

And contrary to Trump's statement, the United States knows precisely who "these people" receiving U.S. support are. The CIA has been running an intricate web of relationships with dozens of moderate Free Syrian Army (FSA) groups since late 2012. Today, this program, code-named Timber Sycamore, continues to provide support to 80 such "vetted" groups across Syria in coordination with international and regional allies. The U.S. role in this multilateral effort has ensured a modicum of control over the breadth of international support for the Syrian opposition, and over the risk that extremists will gain control over opposition weapons or fighters.

In fact, contrary to an increasingly popular narrative, fighters in these vetted groups are not, with very few exceptions, handing over U.S. weapons to jihadis, nor are they wandering off to join the extremists themselves. The cornerstone of the CIA effort has been to supply rebel groups with U.S.-manufactured BGM-71 TOW anti-tank guided missiles, which have ensured that the moderate opposition has remained a relevant actor in the conflict. Thus far, according to publicly available information, at least 1,073 TOW missiles have been sent to Syria and used in combat, only 12 of which have changed hands and been used by nonvetted groups — amounting to an impressively low proliferation rate of 1.1 percent. Of all the groups that have enjoyed "vetted" status, only two have been defeated by groups linked to al Qaeda and one was withdrawn from the program for questionable activities. Trump appears to be indicating a preference for combating the symptoms of a crisis — that is, terrorism — while strengthening their principal cause: Assad's dictatorship and his refusal to negotiate. Although Syria's moderate opposition is far from perfect, withdrawing U.S. support and thus the basis of its international legitimacy will only undermine U.S. interests in Syria.

But the dangers of Trump's policy are far greater than that. If Trump follows through on it, he risks exacerbating six major threats to U.S. domestic and international security.

Empowering al Qaeda and its narrative

Al Qaeda's de facto affiliate in Syria has positioned itself perfectly to reap the benefits of a decrease in U.S. support to the moderate opposition. Jabhat Fateh al-Sham, the group formerly known as the Nusra Front, has spent more than four years embedding itself in the Syrian revolution and presenting itself to opposition groups and civilians as a partner and protector of their national movement. These efforts have guaranteed that its power will increase markedly should more moderate groups suffer a reduction in support. In other words, erroneously labeling the mainstream opposition as universally "extremist" today will produce a self-fulfilling prophecy and create a threat of far greater magnitude than what was posed by the Islamic State in 2014.

Since its public emergence in Syria in January 2012, Jabhat Fateh al-Sham has insisted to Syrians and to Muslims elsewhere in the world that the United States would never decisively turn against Assad and that Syria's Sunni Muslims were to be the victims of an international conspiracy to subjugate them to oppressive minority rule. Sadly, many developments in Syria have strengthened that narrative in many Syrians' eyes. The lack of a punitive response for a sarin gas attack in August 2013 served as one conspiratorial justification, as did the perceived ease with which Russia intervened to save Assad from possible defeat in late 2015. Every flagrant war crime committed by Assad and his backers before and since these events has pushed Syrians closer and closer toward believing al Qaeda's narrative.

The widespread perception that Washington is indifferent to the suffering of Syrian civilians has led ever more members of the Syrian opposition to consider al Qaeda a more willing and more effective protector of their lives and interests than the United States, the supposed "leader of the free world." Trump's proposed abandonment of the Syrian opposition would permanently cement that perception and make Syria a pre-9/11 Afghanistan on steroids. This should be deeply troubling to anyone concerned about international security, given Syria's proximity to Europe.

Encouraging regional allies to go it alone

A U.S. decision to disown the Syrian opposition would undermine its < European allies and enrage its regional partners.

A U.S. decision to disown the Syrian opposition would undermine its European allies and enrage its regional partners. Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Qatar in particular have been determined supporters of Syria's armed opposition since its earliest days, often with a cooperative U.S. ally in hand. Which is not to suggest that these states have always been effective: It is no secret that the chaotic and disorganized support provided by these states to armed groups in Syria in 2011 and 2012 played a role in the FSA's failure to coalesce into a single unified organization.

It was U.S. support that managed to help organize the armed opposition. From late 2012 onward, the U.S. role in the multinational “operations rooms” in Turkey (the MOM) and Jordan (the MOC) imposed some control over the influx of military equipment and finance. Removing that U.S. role risks re-creating the chaos and infighting that ruled the early days of the Syrian crisis, but this time in a context where extremists are poised to swiftly take advantage.

Al Qaeda’s well-publicized “rebranding” of Jabhat Fateh al-Sham also makes it an increasingly likely recipient of support from exasperated regional states. Given that Jabhat Fateh al-Sham now outwardly claims to have done away with its “external” ties to al Qaeda, it would not be altogether surprising to see Qatar or Turkey — for example — switching the bulk of their support to Jabhat Fateh al-Sham and similar groups were the United States to cease supporting the opposition. Although regional states have yet to explicitly propose throwing their full weight behind Jabhat Fateh al-Sham, the group’s growing military capabilities and levels of lethal and nonlethal equipment, especially since its rebrand, already suggest some level of direct or indirect state support.

Regional states may also feel justified in breaking a long U.S. taboo in sending anti-aircraft weapons like MANPADS to their closest proxies on the ground in Syria. To a certain extent, this illicit flow of anti-aircraft weaponry has already begun in response to perceptions of insufficient U.S. “muscle” in preventing the brutal assault on the besieged eastern districts of Aleppo. According to well-placed opposition sources, at least three small shipments of MANPADS have entered northern Syria since late 2015.

Giving the Islamic State another chance

Although a U.S.-Russian alliance would likely increase the threat to the Islamic State’s territorial holdings in Syria, at least in the short term, such a partnership would be an invaluable long-term boon to the group’s propaganda. Were Russia to employ the same carpet-bombing tactics it has used in its attempt to crush the Syrian opposition, the consequences of such “victories” would ensure that the Islamic State has a ready-made narrative to attempt a determined resurgence with some level of popular acceptance or even support.

While the Islamic State’s recovery in Iraq between 2010 and 2014 was driven by Sunni resentment at a perceived sectarian leadership in Baghdad and a raging civil war next door in Syria, its future recovery could feasibly be empowered by widespread Sunni fury at the brutal and indiscriminate U.S.-Russian assault launched on Islamic State-held populations in 2017.

Trump has spoken frequently about the dangers posed by domestic terrorism. But a potential U.S.-Russian partnership in Syria could also further energize the Islamic State’s calls for attacks against targets in the West, particularly in the United States.

The Islamic State has maintained a potent capacity to “inspire” foreign attacks during its times of success, but one should not underestimate the possibility that it could spark an even greater homeland terrorism threat while in retreat. Paired with the possibility that Trump may introduce newly oppressive domestic policies on immigration and other issues relating to race and religion, this scenario portends greater threats, not a safer America.

Strengthening Iran and Hezbollah

As a staunch opponent of the Iran nuclear deal, it is surprising that Trump appears to be proposing Syria policies that would save Iran from a geopolitically crippling defeat and strengthen its regional influence. For years prior to the Arab Spring, Syria represented the existentially important “glue” holding together Iran’s spheres of influence — from Tehran to Baghdad to Damascus to Beirut. Assad was Iran’s most important Arab ally, and his proximity to Lebanon ensured that Hezbollah remained a truly formidable terrorist organization. Since the Syrian crisis erupted, Iran’s role in protecting the Assad regime has been of paramount importance, consistently outweighing the role played by Russia on the ground. This is for one simple reason:

An Assad defeat in Syria would dismantle Iran’s regional empire

An Assad defeat in Syria would dismantle Iran’s regional empire, leaving a gaping hole at its heart. It would also pose a serious threat to Hezbollah, the world’s only terrorist organization whose armed forces are a recognized paramilitary actor in a nation-state.

Despite having lost some of its popular appeal in the Arab world, Hezbollah in particular appears to have emerged stronger from the Syrian crisis. It has received highly significant arms shipments from Iran and Assad: Only this past Sunday, Hezbollah held an impressive military parade in western Syria, including dozens of armored vehicles and modern tanks. An amateur could have been easily forgiven for thinking images from the parade were of a national army. Were President-elect Trump to drop America’s insistence that Assad has lost his legitimacy and must be removed through transition, not only would Iran gain immeasurably, but the greatest immediate terrorist threat to Israel would be free to point its formidable weapons array toward America’s most valued regional ally.

Emboldening Russian revisionism

Trump has indicated that he thinks Vladimir Putin is a “great” man and has described how he is “doing a great job in rebuilding the image of Russia.” This ignores the fact that Putin seeks to secure a Russian rise at the expense of American power and influence, not in equal partnership with them. Putin is a deft strategist and tactician who has consistently outplayed an Obama administration known to favor drawn-out deliberations

when faced with troubling issues abroad. When faced with Trump who says he wants to “bomb the hell out of” terrorists and withdraw from costly situations overseas, Putin is well-placed to offer a relationship of cooperation that he knows will benefit Moscow a great deal more than Washington.

An inevitable consequence of a U.S.-Russia partnership in Syria would be their eventual attempt to negotiate an enforced settlement for the civil war. Paired with Trump’s erroneous suggestion that confronting Assad would damage counterterrorism efforts against the Islamic State, Syria’s opposition would conclude that their presumptive negotiating partners would be expecting them to surrender and accept an Assad “victory.”

The pursuit of such an objective would fail before it started. It would also give Assad, Russia, Iran, Hezbollah, and their militia allies the excuse — with quiet U.S. complicity — to treat the entire Syrian opposition as if it were no different to the Islamic State. Doing so would encourage further war crimes; make any negotiations in Syria practically impossible; and further embolden an aggressive Russia, giving it the confidence to act with impunity elsewhere, in direct opposition to U.S. interests.

Exacerbating the refugee crisis

A combination of all or some of the above-mentioned scenarios would produce dynamics that would undoubtedly further exacerbate Syria’s refugee crisis, leaving as many as 5 million Syrians permanently outside their country’s borders. With Assad remaining in power and his various backers secure in his defense, a quarter of Syria’s entire prewar population would be highly unlikely to ever return to their homes, meaning that neighboring states would be left to shoulder the unsustainable costs of housing them while many refugees would embrace desperate attempts to get to Europe.

The resulting mass exodus of people toward Europe could dwarf the debilitating refugee movements seen in 2015 and 2016. This would likely give a further boost to far-right populist movements across Europe — creating yet more instability, as well as opportunities for terrorists and hostile governments alike. Both the EU and NATO would suffer.

Trump may hope to reduce U.S. military and financial commitments overseas, but this development risks drastically increasing the burden placed on the United States. As a would-be partner in sealing such conditions, the U.S. government would be expected to play a lead role in financing and supporting necessary stabilization measures — in Syria, its neighboring states, and in Europe. Pressure would also rise for the United States to increase its share of the refugee burden.

Although it remains possible that President-elect Trump will do away with his perilously simplistic reading of the Syrian crisis, the dangers of pursuing a policy based on his limited understanding should be well-understood. As five years of failed policy under President Barack Obama has shown, treating the symptoms of the crisis rather than its root cause — Assad's dictatorship — will only lead to further displacement and ruin. As president-elect, Trump's words about the Syrian crisis already matter — our allies in the opposition, and adversaries elsewhere in the region, are paying close attention. Trump must urgently acknowledge the inherent threat posed by Assad's continued grip on power. If he chooses instead to abandon Syria's moderate opposition and ease up on the regime, the United States will be directly contributing to the growth of violent extremism — and not just in Syria.

IS US TRYING TO DEFEAT IS TOO QUICKLY? BY TAYLOR LUCK

THE US may prove to have been too rushed in its efforts to strike at the heart of the so-called Islamic State (IS), analysts and experts say. An American-led coalition and its allies opened a second front against the apocalyptic jihadi group last week, even as fighting was still under way in the Iraqi city of Mosul. The target of the new offensive is Raqqa, Syria, a city of half a million which since 2014 has served as the administrative capital of IS's so-called caliphate and its centre of governance. The city is IS's last real stronghold in Syria, where it hopes to usher in an end-of-days war with Western armies further northwest in the town of Dabiq. Military officials and analysts acknowledge that the push on Raqqa is driven by Obama's desire to stamp out IS's second stronghold before he leaves office on Jan. 20, 2017. But trying to forge a fragile coalition of Kurdish and Arab fighters and liberate a city amid a civil war — all on a tighter timeline than the Mosul operation — would be a herculean task, and may set up the Raqqa offensive for failure, analysts warn. "It looks like Obama wants to wrap up the military campaign against IS before he leaves office, but unfortunately he hasn't done nearly enough to address the political aspects of it," says Kenneth Pollack, former Central Intelligence Agency military analyst and senior fellow at the Brookings Institution in Washington. "In Syria they have simply tied a bow around these rough agreements between the Arabs and the Kurds and the hope is that these guys will refrain from shooting each other until we take Raqqa, get rid of IS, and leave," he says. The timing for the offensive, according to military officials, is twofold: to disrupt the planning of imminent attacks on the US and its allies, and to prevent IS leaders and fighters fleeing Mosul from making a mass migration back over the border into Syria. According to Brett McGurk, presidential envoy for the coalition against IS, the Raqqa offensive will be carried out in "deliberate" phases relying on the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) backed by US-led air support and with US special forces in an advisory role.

The SDF is a coalition of 30,000 Kurdish and Arab fighters formed in October 2015. Kurdish fighters make up an estimated 70 to 90 percent of the coalition. This poses a challenge for controlling Raqqa city, whose Sunni Arab inhabitants have centuries of bad blood with their Kurdish neighbours and eye them with suspicion. “The composition of forces that retake Raqqa city is very critical,” says Genevieve Casagrande, Syria analyst at the Institute for the Study of War in Washington. “If you have Kurdish forces clear out Raqqa city, you are going to exacerbate tensions between Arab and Kurdish communities that have been simmering in northern Syria for a long time.”

Coalition officials are mulling proposals that include using Kurdish forces to isolate Raqqa city, while relying solely on Sunni Arab fighters to liberate the city house by house. Yet if conservative estimates are right, and the number of Arab Sunni fighters in the SDF is indeed as low as 3,000 to 5,000, experts say it will be nearly “impossible” for Arab fighters to clear, let alone hold, Raqqa. In addition, Turkey views the coalition’s dominant Kurdish faction – the YPG – as a terrorist organisation, and remains concerned about Syrian Kurds’ territorial ambitions driving them across the border into Turkey. Although Washington has sought to assuage such concerns, Ankara remains wary of the US’s ability to keep Kurdish fighters in check.

Military officials and analysts acknowledge that to carry out both offensives successfully, Washington would have to increase its military support ranging from aircraft and Apache helicopters to special forces on the ground – something the Obama administration has been hesitant to do. Actors in Raqqa ranging from Kurdish fighters to IS will likely be watching Mosul closely, and be influenced by the way it plays out. “Mosul will be a very important bellwether for people in Raqqa as the very same problems exist in both,” says Mr. Pollack.

— Courtesy: The CS Monitor

Source: <http://pakobserver.net/is-us-trying-to-defeat-is-too-quickly/>

GET READY FOR THE MOST VIOLENT DÉTENTE EVER BY IVAN KRASTEV, STEPHEN HOLMES

Trump and Putin want to reset U.S.-Russian relations on the basis of a shared worldview. But that might just increase the chances of a conflict.

Some American presidents have foreign-policy doctrines. Others are inclined to trust their gut. For a very few, their gut is their foreign-policy doctrine. Donald Trump seems to belong to this latter and most rare type. He poses an extraordinary challenge to anyone attempting to imagine how visceral instincts and dispositions can be translated into actionable policies, for good or ill.

The most compelling, and perhaps the most urgent, such challenge concerns Russia. There is a facile assumption that détente and peaceful coexistence between the United States and Russia will now be in the offing. It is an assumption that urgently needs to be reassessed.

Distilling a coherent policy on Russian relations from president-elect Trump's jumble of campaign catchphrases and provocative one-liners is no easy task—which is why a more reasonable starting place may be to consider Trump's likely motives for lavishing praise on Vladimir Putin during the campaign, against the pleas of his advisors and running mate. Some America-watchers inside the Kremlin apparently considered Trump's eccentric pro-Russian pronouncements more as a business gambit than as a rudimentary foreign policy. Many Democrats, on the other hand, seem to assume that Trump's deferential attitude toward the Russian president reflects undisclosed financial entanglements and perhaps even the Kremlin's possession of reputation-blackening kompromat.

But Trump's "cozying up to Putin," to use Sen. John McCain's derogatory phrase, is better understood as his way of soliciting support among disenchanting American voters. It helped him position himself as a rebel leader and frame the quadrennial election as a revolution-in-the-making. Above all, it dramatically illustrated his willingness to break radically with the entire Washington establishment, Republican as well as Democratic. To excite the loyalty of his politically alienated voters, he needed to communicate unequivocally that he would have nothing to do with the Washington insiders who had allegedly betrayed them. He did this by signaling his dissent from most of the central foreign-policy tenets of his own nominal party, including the premise that Russia is one of the country's foremost national-security threats. It was Mitt Romney, after all, who, as the Republican presidential nominee in 2012, labeled Russia as America's geopolitical enemy No. 1.

Trump may have been attempting, in addition, to puff his own legendary savvy as a dealmaker. By transforming Putin from an adversary into a partner, Trump implied, he could reassert America's global power while staying at home and refusing to send American troops abroad. And at a subliminal level, candidate Trump may also have been playing on his electorate's dim fantasy that Putin is "a white Christian at war with brown Muslims."

Of course, making sense of candidate Trump's electorally expedient stance toward Putin is only a first step toward divining his administration's potential Russia policy. Some moves, of course, are predictable. Sanctions will possibly be eased. The annexation of Crimea will presumably be accepted informally, though not formally. Cooperation in fighting the Islamic State will no doubt be ratcheted up, although denigrating remarks about Islam will come easier to Trump than to Putin, given the Russian Federation's large Muslim population. But what can we see if we look past such particular issues and peer through the fog of an amateurish and fractious transition? Is there an overarching strategy that will be informing the Trump administration's Russia policy?

Trump's "America First" refrain is obviously more of a slogan than a doctrine. What makes it fascinating as a portent of the new administration's foreign policy is the way it combines a turn toward disengagement and isolationism with an insistence that America will start "winning" the zero-sum global competition again. To put this in personal terms, president-elect Trump seems bent on wedding Rand Paul's utopia of American disengagement with Dick Cheney's utopia of a unilateral America über alles. But can such a marriage of irreconcilables be consummated?

To gain some purchase on the opportunities and dangers of this Janus-faced approach, it helps to recognize how closely Trump's stance tracks Putin's posture in international affairs. Trump presumably recognizes the convergence, having contrasted Putin's bold leadership not only to Obama's passivity and caution but also to Hillary Clinton's hawkish fondness for foreign intervention. Without poring over State Department briefing books, Trump has an intuitive sense — justified, in our estimation — that Putin, rather than being a neo-Soviet imperialist, is a besieged leader whose bloody forays beyond Russia's borders, however risky, have been basically defensive. He understands that Putin's geopolitical adventures have been driven largely by an abiding anxiety about his country's domestic weaknesses and Washington's eagerness to embrace regime change abroad. The same cultural sensitivity that has allowed Trump to tune into the resentments of downwardly mobile white Americans helps explain his empathy for Putin, whose once-powerful country is now bereft of soft power — its economy is uncompetitive, its petrodollar-subsidized living standards are plummeting, and its population is aging and dwindling.

Putin's foreign policy is marked by a kind of aggressive isolationism. His two guiding principles are disentanglement from the international system, symbolized by Moscow's recent withdrawal from the Rome Statute of 2000, which set up the International Criminal Court, and a reassertion of Russia's relevance as a global player, symbolized by the flotilla of Russian warships now participating in the siege of Aleppo.

These also happen to be the two principles that inform the paradoxical approach to American power that Trump, too, guided not by experts but by his gut, has made his own.

Given this elective affinity, Trump's initial discussions with Moscow will be very different from Obama's ill-fated "reset."

Given this elective affinity, Trump's initial discussions with Moscow will be very different from Obama's ill-fated "reset." What Trump offers Putin is not simply cooperation on a range of issues where the two countries' interests overlap. What he offers, instead, is a shared narrative about what went wrong in the post-Cold War world. Verbally, at least, he will hold out the possibility of a reactionary alliance against cosmopolitan liberalism and the rootless globalists who are undermining national sovereignty everywhere we look. Unfortunately, a shared repugnance for liberal internationalism, celebrated and sealed by the clinking of champagne flutes in the Kremlin, is no guarantee of mutual cooperation or even peaceful coexistence. On the surface, Trump's repeated assertion that America's allies are swindling the United States, which reflects a piddling fee-for-service conception of alliances in general and especially of the arguably obsolete NATO alliance, might seem like music to Putin's ears. But if we more closely examine the political earthquake of Nov. 8, we will see why a shared illiberalism will do little or nothing to reduce tensions between Russia and the United States.

First of all, the populist insurgency that just overthrew the American political establishment represents the very sort of resentment-fueled instability that frightens Moscow most. An ardent opponent of regime change, Putin has been subsidizing populist insurgencies in various European countries not to replace the governing parties but simply to sap the EU's unity and coherence. Similarly, any hypothetical clandestine Russian involvement in the American presidential campaign was presumably aimed at weakening Clinton before she acceded to the presidency as well as discrediting the American political model in general, not at electing Trump. Nothing would unnerve the Kremlin more than a new rash of Orange Revolutions. The fact that they will now be anti-liberal rather than liberal revolutions is no real consolation. Let's assume that Trump is being sincere when promising Putin non-interference in the domestic politics of other countries. By inspiring emulators, his seditious example will nevertheless be inherently threatening to ruling elites around the world. And while Putin has every reason to rejoice at Trump's snide dismissals of NATO, he will be less enthusiastic

about Trump's insistence that all of America's allies must increase their defense budgets to the promised 2 percent. Spooked by a seasoned dealmaker's calculated bluff that he will otherwise cut them loose, the truant members of NATO are very likely to do just that.

Second, the U.S. election delivered a fatal blow to the dominant narrative designed to legitimate the Putin regime in the face of Russia's poor and worsening economic conditions. According to this narrative, all Russia's problems result from a global liberal conspiracy, led by the United States, to humiliate Russia and prevent it from assuming its rightful place in the world. But in an election covered 24/7 by Russian state media, the candidate who was repeatedly branded as "Putin's puppet" was elected president by the American people. The way this democratic outcome has sabotaged Putin's legitimacy formula can be illustrated by the comments of some of Russia's leading nationalists. In a series of tweets after the election, Alexander Dugin declared that "Anti-Americanism is over".

And this is not because it was wrong but exactly the opposite. It is because the American people themselves have started the revolution against precisely that aspect of the USA that we all hated. Now the European ruling elite as well as the part of the Russian elite that is still liberal cannot be blamed as before for being too pro-American. From now on, it should be blamed for being what it is: a corrupt, perverted greedy gang of bankers and destroyers of cultures, traditions, and identities.

But the end of anti-Americanism, prematurely fêted by Russian nationalists, promises to be the beginning of a destabilizing crisis inside Russia. A principal source of Putin's legitimacy since he returned to the presidency in 2012 has been the obsessively repeated accusation that the United States is a hypocritical superpower, publicly espousing universal values but acting secretly in pursuit of narrow national advantage. Trump's embrace of "America First," whatever it means in practice, makes nonsense out of Putin's endlessly recycled excoriations of America's inveterate hypocrisy.

On a more practical level, Trump's election obliges Putin to own the chaos he has sowed in both Syria and eastern Ukraine.

On a more practical level, Trump's election obliges Putin to own the chaos he has sowed in both Syria and eastern Ukraine. Standing up to the United States was arguably a principal motivation for Putin's interventions in both countries, justified to the Russian public largely as ways of sticking a finger into America's eye, revealing its weakness and hypocrisy, and teaching it that Russia cannot be ignored. But the president-elect's expressed willingness to offer Putin a wide berth in both arenas greatly diminishes the domestic political value of the two incursions as sources of national

pride. Here again, Trump's embrace of Putin may soon come to resemble a kiss of death.

Third, Putin's reassertion of Russia's heft on the international stage has depended on his leading the revolt against American-orchestrated globalization. This picture has no doubt been scrambled by Trump's eccentric argument that globalization is a conspiracy not by, but against, the United States. But the more important development is that the uncontested leader of the deglobalizing world, the most visible counter-revolutionary in the worldwide fight against liberal internationalism, will soon be the president of the United States, a figure immensely more powerful and imitation-worthy than the president of Russia. The unbridled enthusiasm with which Europe's anti-establishment populists have greeted Trump's victory reflects the fact that he is perfectly credible as a populist insurgent in a way that Putin, who has dominated the election-proof Russian state for almost two decades, is not. The rise of anti-EU populism in Europe could even have the paradoxical consequence of drawing Trump into a new trans-Atlantic alliance of populist democracies based on a new set of illiberal "shared values." Russia's economic difficulties mean that Putin, to achieve relief from Western sanctions, may enter into a momentary Berlusconi-style bromance with the new U.S. president. But the honeymoon is unlikely to last because Russia's economic difficulties oblige its government to hunt for enemies, foreign and domestic. It's likely that Trump will also soon be looking to magnify the role of domestic and foreign enemies to fend off domestic criticism and explain his inevitable failures.

The likelihood of such a parallel search for enemies by two aggressive isolationists should clarify why Trump's cozying up to Putin during the campaign doesn't promise to make the world a safer or less hostile place. Parallels may never cross in geometry, but in geopolitics they can violently intersect, to catastrophic effect. What makes matters worse is that the foundation of mutual understanding that allowed Moscow and Washington to manage nail-biting crises during the Cold War has by now completely eroded. Although Trump might be able to reduce the overt animosity between the White House and the Kremlin, he will find it much more difficult to rebuild the two countries' shared assumptions about how the world works. Senior members of Putin's entourage have repeatedly resorted to reckless talk of nuclear blackmail, which will make it immensely difficult for Western leaders to keep a cool head in any high-stakes emergency. The paucity of steadying foreign-policy hands in Trump's inner circle is equally worrying, as is the possibility that Trump's habit of making friendly offhand comments, whether in tweets or at public rallies, may lead Russia to underestimate the possibility of a violent American response to incursions, say, into the Baltic states.

President-elect Trump arguably won the election by burning his bridges with the Republican Party's foreign-policy and national-security establishments, but governing will require some of these bridges to be rebuilt. How this will work out in practice is still not known. One thing is certain, however: A gut-level aversion to foreign adventurism will not suffice to keep the country safe. Two proud and thin-skinned leaders with similar worldviews and wielding more unilateral power than it makes sense to confide in any single individual could, after an amiable interlude, all too easily trigger a tit-for-tat spiral of escalating insult and injury that may drag the helplessly watching world toward a catastrophe that no one could possibly intend.

Source: <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/11/21/get-ready-for-the-most-violent-detente-ever/>

ECONOMY

E-COMMERCE — A NEGLECTED OPPORTUNITY BY MUBARAK ZEB KHAN

THE prime minister's secretariat has expressed concern over the inability of the commerce and information technology ministries to formulate a sound national e-commerce policy.

The policy will mainly focus on the development of the e-commerce market along with related financial and legal issues.

The current size of Pakistan's e-commerce industry seems to have no ballpark number; the commerce ministry estimates it will reach \$1bn by 2020.

The ministry has proposed the exemption of sales tax on ICT services.

The Electronic Transaction Ordinance 2002 and prevention of Electronic Crime Bill 2016 provides the basis for legislative infrastructure for of e-commerce operations. Additionally, an Electronic Certification and Accreditation Council has been established to deal with e-signatures and e-contracts for e-transactions. However, there is a weak regulatory mechanism for consumer protection, data and information privacy, insurance liability and dispute resolution for e-commerce transactions.

A separate law has been proposed which may include a provision for seller protection, specifying rights, obligations, liabilities and penalties for both sellers and consumers.

The question will be whether the Competition Commission of Pakistan is ready to deal with online negative business practices? Moreover, the government will have to adopt a law for data protection. Industry players doubt the capacity of the FIA to stop data transfers which may be used for spying. The EU has imposed a ban on such transfers.

Currently, the country's judicial system may not be ready to respond swiftly to online disputes. The government needs to make fully functional the trade dispute resolution organisation, which is currently understaffed.

The potential for e-commerce is immense. Building blocks now exist and it is up to policy makers to connect the dots efficiently

Foreign exchange regulations are to be amended to facilitate cross border electronic transactions. The question is whether the State Bank is ready to trek all online transactions traffic across frontiers.

Currently, e-commerce stakeholders are individuals/companies selling services. Interestingly, the existing legal framework only accommodates traditional retail transactions.

The potential for e-commerce is immense. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development's e-commerce readiness index for the developed world is 77, and for developing Asia it is 41. Pakistan's index stands at 36; while that is marginally higher than the Saarc average, the country's position in the index shows that there is still a huge task ahead.

Over the years, several committees were constituted to develop policy. On the basis of these committees' reports, a summary was submitted to the prime minister's secretariat on Sept 9 by the commerce ministry for approval.

The summary listed steps to be taken out in a period of three to six months for promoting e-commerce in the country. On the surface it seemed doable, but not in the given short timeframe.

E-commerce draws on technologies such as mobile commerce, electronic funds transfer, supply chain management, internet marketing, online transaction processing, electronic data interchange (EDI), inventory management systems, and automated data collection systems.

For development of the e-commerce market, there is an adequate ICT infrastructure. The launch of 3G and 4G bandwidth for mobile network operators has increased the number of mobile users to nearly 26m. The number of smart phones will reach 60m by 2017 from existing 40m. Building blocks now exist and it is up to policy makers to connect the dots efficiently.

According to an official report, 60pc of all recorded visits to e-commerce sites were made via mobile phones. The Global Findex report branded Pakistan as a leader in mobile banking transactions in South Asia with 11pc of Pakistani citizens using mobile phones to carry financial transactions.

To make access to hardware easy, the government will have to speed up work on the accession to information technology agreement of the WTO. The government will also have to establish a separate wing in the ministry of commerce for content management and ensuring net neutrality.

As there are no rules for the payment system, local vendors offer cash on delivery options. The State Bank of Pakistan just approved the concept of establishment of the national payment gateway in 2015.

Industry players say the government will have to invite global online payment giants — US-based PayPal and Chinese giant Alibaba to offer their services in Pakistan. The tax structure — customs and sales tax on the e-commerce also needs a thorough revisiting.

They ask: is the FBR ready and does it have the capacity to tax online transactions? This is not easy because currently developed countries like US find it challenging.

Published in Dawn, Business & Finance weekly, October 31st, 2016

Source: <http://www.dawn.com/news/1293203/e-commerce-a-neglected-opportunity>

EU MISSION HINTS AT FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP WITH PAKISTAN BY PEER MUHAMMAD

ISLAMABAD: The European Union (EU) on Friday hinted at entering into a five-year strategic partnership with Pakistan after stating that the current relationship between the two countries had matured and remained stable.

This was expressed by EU's Ambassador to Pakistan, Jean François Cautain, during a debriefing meeting with the EU's Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP) Plus review mission currently visiting Pakistan.

The delegation is visiting the country to assess the implementation of 27 UN Conventions covered under the GSP Plus agreement.

The other day, the EU assessment mission in its meeting with commerce minister urged Pakistani authorities to strictly implement laws that protect human rights, including fundamental rights of child and bonded labour.

On a separate note, Cautain said Pakistan and EU's relationship has entered a mature and stable state. He said he would like to extend the engagement under a five-year strategic plan. The debriefing meeting was hosted under the umbrella of the Treaty Implementation Cell (TIC), Cabinet Division and was chaired by Attorney General of Pakistan, Ashtar Ausaf Ali.

The debriefing meeting was also attended by representatives from the Ministry of Commerce, Foreign Affairs, Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development, Climate Change, Human Rights, National Accountability Bureau (NAB) and Anti-Narcotics Division.

An official privy to the meeting told The Express Tribune that the EU mission hinted at a five-year strategic partnership to further broaden cooperation in areas other than trade and economic relationship.

The official mentioned that under the proposed partnership, grants and other assistance from the EU to Pakistan would also be expanded. "Both sides would work on the plan and would soon be framed into action," said the officials.

Speaking on the occasion, the Attorney General of Pakistan was of the view that the country takes the GSP Plus programme as an incentive and not as conditionality towards its commitment to protecting life.

The delegation's representatives debriefed the participants and shared the feedback during a six-day visit to Pakistan. The mission's representatives were of the view that they had observed an advance level of understanding regarding GSP Plus programme with Pakistan.

"Government officials at both federal and provincial level are well aware of the human rights and labour issues. There is a consensus across the board that the government should strive for improving quality of life," said a press release quoting the delegation representatives.

Published in The Express Tribune, November 5th, 2016.

Source: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1221032/strengthening-alliance-eu-mission-hints-five-year-strategic-partnership/>

WB AND PAK ECONOMIC ACHIEVEMENTS | EDITORIAL

THE World Bank has acknowledged that Pakistan's growth caught up with its neighbours in the fiscal year 2016, with a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at 4.7% – the highest rate in eight years — and is expected to reach 5% in 2017 and 5.4% in 2018. A report of the Bank, however, says the country needs to start investing in human capital and improving health, education and nutrition for sustainable growth and development in the long run. It also emphasises the need for sustaining progress on energy reforms, CPEC and widening the tax net.

This is yet another acknowledgement of prudent economic policies of the present Government and its achievements during the last three and a half years. The country has surely moved away from economic instability, which was a source of concern in 2013 when the PML-N assumed power. The party took difficult and tough decisions despite the fact that these meant erosion of its popularity and that too in a scenario where some of the opposition parties were on the look out to cause maximum dent to the Government. Over sixty percent increase in revenue collection during three years is not a mean achievement but experts say there is still much room to widen the tax base without burdening the already hard-pressed people. The policy of increasing tax rates, imposing tax on food and medicines and increasing prices of utilities every now and then should be abandoned and instead those who have the capacity to pay should be made to pay. The Government seems to be fearful of taxing the feudal because of their perpetual influence in politics but this is creating resentment among masses that are made to pay instead and that too in the shape of disproportionate increase in the support price of wheat and other items. Similarly, sugar mafia is not allowing the prices of sugar to come down and the Government is protecting this mafia by imposing taxes on import of sugar as well as wheat, which amounts denial of benefit to the common man. The Government has also not been able to focus on export sector and is allowing free for all imports as a consequence of which trade deficit is increasing and even record remittances by overseas Pakistanis are not sufficient to neutralise this widening gap. Circular debt in power sector is another issue that needs out of the box solution instead of inflating electricity bills of honest consumers.

Source: <http://pakobserver.net/wb-and-pak-economic-achievements/>

GAWADAR BECOMES FUNCTIONAL | EDITORIAL

...and brings new developments to light

Convoys of trucks laden with hundreds of containers carrying Chinese cargo reached Gawadar covering a distance of over 2,500 KM from Pak-China border post at Sost. For the first time Gwadar turned into a port exporting cargo containers to overseas destinations. That the convoys reached their destination safe and sound indicates that security arrangements on the CPEC route are in good shape. This will send a positive signal to the world. The Sost-Gawadar route would provide Pakistani exporters a cheaper and more secure access to China and an alternate passage for their goods meant for the Middle East and Africa.

It was highly appropriate to hold a ceremony in Gawadar to celebrate the historic event. The function was addressed by the Prime Minister and was attended by COAS, some of the federal ministers, the Governor and Chief Minister Balochistan and a number of foreign envoys. The Prime Minister reiterated in his address that the CPEC would benefit the entire country. At several occasions in the past also Nawaz Sharif has tried to dispel the notion that the project would benefit mostly Punjab. There was a need at this historic moment to ensure the presence of the CMs of all the provinces at the celebrations as was done by Yousuf Raza Gilani at the signing ceremony of the 17th NFC award in Gawadar in 2009.

Full information about mega projects which impact the entire federation needs to be shared with the federal units. In case this is avoided the projects can give birth to alienation. The secrecy and vagueness maintained about the CPEC has caused suspicions among smaller provinces. A perception has been formed that it is being used to strengthen the PML-N's constituency in Punjab to help the party win the next elections. While the CPEC has roused hopes that it would help bridge the power shortfall and transform the country's economy, it has also triggered concerns that the local people in smaller provinces might be left out of the gains.

Source: <http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2016/11/14/comment/gawadar-becomes-functional/>

ECONOMIC PROGRESS | EDITORIAL

Metrics show that Pakistan is making steady progress towards improving its economic conditions. Economic growth increased by a whole percentage point between fiscal year 2013 and 2016, currently at 4.7 per cent. Inflation and the budget deficit have both decreased. While indicative of growth, the quality of life has had little impact. Human development lies dormant even in the face of vast economic growth, which is bringing in higher revenue for the country. The objective of these efforts seems lost as the purpose of any investment or project is to improve the well-being of citizens. Two key areas of target in this regard are health and education. Conversely, Pakistan has seen no social progress, be it school enrolment, neonatal mortality rates, women and girls' empowerment or employment.

Another statistic that has risen with Pakistan's GDP is government ineffectiveness, casting doubt over whether the right leadership is in place. This is evidenced by social indicators published by The World Bank World Development Indicators 2015. In tandem, law and order and terrorism have become worse over the years, highlighting a government that is not in control of all that it should be in control of. It is time that Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and his team take a step back from the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects and reflect on whether their intended purposes are being achieved. They must question why their projects are not benefitting the 30 per cent of Pakistanis living below the poverty line. The leadership needs to assess what is lacking and how the people who were intended to benefit from CPEC and other projects can do so in the near future. We have a long, running record of governments that have come into power and acted haphazardly on their own interests, without adequate thought given to the plights of the citizens they command. Pakistan has to stop this trend and retain in power only those who will work for the people's benefit.

Published in The Express Tribune, November 16th, 2016.

Source: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1232322/economic-progress/>

INDIA OFFERS SOME RELIEF TO CHAOS IT CREATED WITH CURRENCY BAN BY NIDA NAJAR

NEW DELHI — As the chaos surrounding Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ban on high-currency bills entered its ninth day, the government moved Thursday to address some of the problems amid signs of growing impatience with the slapdash way the policy seems to have been carried out.

Since the move was announced, retail commerce has slowed, farmers who deal almost exclusively in cash have had no buyers and people have waited in long lines at banks and ATMs in hopes of getting a paltry amount of the new notes the government is in the process of printing.

To deal with the continuing liquidity crunch, the government on Thursday cut the exchange limit to 2,000 rupees, or about \$30, from 4,500 rupees, or about \$66, effective Friday, so that the cash would be more widely distributed. This week, banks began using indelible ink to mark fingers of people who had exchanged old notes to weed out repeated exchanges.

In a nod to the wedding season here, the government said Thursday that families celebrating a marriage could withdraw 250,000 rupees, or about \$3,700, from their bank accounts for the event.

Farmers gained some relief, with permission to withdraw 25,000 rupees a week against their crop loans, the government said. Traders were allowed withdrawals of 50,000 rupees a week, allowing them to pay for labor and produce at wholesale markets.

The government was also racing to calibrate ATMs with the newly issued 2,000 rupee notes and smaller currency.

Mr. Modi has begun to come in for criticism, after being afforded a remarkable grace period. Politicians clashed over the move, and Parliament was adjourned amid raucous debates over the plan, which was intended to drain unaccounted cash, so-called black money, from the economy to cut down on rampant corruption and tax avoidance.

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal of Delhi and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee of West Bengal joined forces in opposition to the policy on Thursday, attending a rally against the decision in New Delhi and demanding that it be rolled back in three days.

In a televised interview, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley expressed regret over the inconvenience but said it was unavoidable because “we have to withdraw currency which is used for generating black money.”

Mr. Modi announced on Nov. 8 that India’s highest-value bills, the 1,000 and 500 rupee notes, worth about \$15 and \$7.50, would cease being legal tender the next morning. The bills represent more than 80 percent of the currency in the country. The old currency could be exchanged for new bills, but those were in short supply and no replacement bills had been printed to avoid tipping off anyone about the plan.

Officials warned that while they were doing what they could, the currency shortage was not going to disappear overnight.

“Please remember this dislocation is not going to get over in the 50 days the prime minister has mentioned,” Arun Shourie, a former cabinet minister, said Thursday evening on NDTV, an Indian news channel, adding that experts had estimated the full adjustment could take months.

“The scale of this event is so unprecedented that we are all struggling to see where the chips will fall,” Pratap Bhanu Mehta, the president of the Centre for Policy Research, wrote in *The Indian Express*. “Just as a matter of political analysis, the sheer audacity of this move is breathtaking.”

Source: http://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/18/world/asia/india-offers-some-relief-to-chaos-it-created-with-currency-ban.html?ref=asia&_r=0

PAKISTAN'S INTERNAL CHALLENGES AND CPEC BY RAJA OMER SHABBIR

Pakistan's economy is all set to take off with the successful trial run of the CPEC, but for this flight to blossom in full, we need to unhinge it from the myriad challenges that plague our internal affairs.

On the political front, we are becoming increasingly polarised. Our capacity to reach a consensus on different issues is restricted by our party affiliation, regardless of the merits of the case. Because of this strict interpretation we have a government which has been tethering along since 2013. The present setup has seen little respite on one pretext or the other. Earlier it was on account of electoral rigging; now it is the Panama leaks. Consequently, this government has been in survival mode ever since its formation. It is not that the questions asked of the PML-N led government have been unmerited; it is just that the veneer of rigging and accountability seem to camouflage more elaborate hopes. The ongoing case of the Panama leaks has become a game of one-upmanship, which is sometimes played out on the roads, sometimes behind closed doors and now on the media and the court premises. This has kept the government distracted and also given it an alibi to present before those who scrutinise their performance. The present lull is perhaps only till the Supreme Court reaches its final verdict.

Political bickering has also dented our efforts on the diplomatic front. The decision by the PTI to boycott the Turkish President's address to a joint session of the parliament is inexplicable. Turkey is one of the few countries with whom we have a cordial relationship right now. A narrative read out by a Prime Minister whose political opponents are hell bent upon making him controversial even in front of an international audience will have no takers, no matter who he meets, what he presents or how eloquent he sounds behind the dice.

The CPEC is also being unnecessarily politicised and a permanent picture of discontentment is being painted. It seems that everyone wants an equal share of the project regardless of whether it is merited or otherwise. The perception of Pakistan as a 'rentier state' is pretty strong in some influential diplomatic circles. This trade corridor is one project which promises to shift the balance in our favour by materialising the promise of Pakistan's strategic location, which has been a pipedream ever since the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Even if there are some outstanding issues with the implementation of the project, other avenues for compensating the aggrieved parties must be sought instead of jeopardising the entire project, as well as our 'sense of togetherness' or national integration.

The CPEC is a network of roads, rail links, dams, ports, airports and economic zones, passing through the Western, Central and Eastern parts of Pakistan. This means that this entire infrastructure will be spread throughout Pakistan rendering it susceptible to terror attacks. The recent rise in terror attacks in Balochistan confirms the concerted effort of local and foreign elements to destabilise the province. Even though these efforts will not stop the CPEC from moving forward, it is a cause for serious concern for the long-term viability of the project. Operation Zarb-e-Azab has considerably constricted the physical space enjoyed by terror groups in our tribal areas, however, much needs to be done in other parts of Pakistan. The time for the need-based exigency in differentiating between militants is nearing its end.

The perception of civil-military differences on matters of national security also becomes a challenge when magnified needlessly on the media. It encourages those elements who are willing spoilers in the political realm. Veiled references to the third umpire, lockdowns, and sit-ins are petty attempts to capitalise upon and magnify such assertions. These strategies when adopted by spoilers also have a regional context because external players like India aptly exploit the resulting instability by furthering their subversive activities inside Pakistan. The ceasefire violations across the Line of Control, the claim of surgical strikes inside Pakistan, and now even sea violations are more overt efforts to up the ante. Just a few months ago, Narendra Modi was emboldened enough to claim interference in Balochistan openly.

Pakistan is a victim of terrorism despite our own historical culpabilities regarding this matter. We have been the centre stage of proxy wars be it between the United States and the USSR or Iran and Saudi Arabia. Even during the ongoing war on terror, we have lost over the US \$118 billion and more than 50,000 lives, yet the world refuses to listen to us. Have we not suffered enough or do we have pretty little to offer the world right now? There will be many takers for peace, stability, political and national consensus, and economic prosperity but none for what we are offering today.

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Source: <http://dailytimes.com.pk/opinion/22-Nov-16/pakistans-internal-challenges-and-cpec>

EDUCATION

HIGHER EDUCATION VISION 2025 BY DR PERVEZ TAHIR

Reports in a section of the press inform that a Higher Education Vision 2025 is about to be announced. The main Vision 2025 document launched earlier contained a set of targets and the purpose of the latest exercise seems to be to flesh out the barebones. Setting physical and financial targets is the easy part. To avoid routine incrementalism, serious attention has to be paid to the analytic bone-structure.

Take the case of the mushroom growth of universities. These now number 180. Those announced or under construction are in addition. Very few, if any, were established as part of a strategic plan or in pursuit of a directional change. None can boast of a decent feasibility study. In the public sector, what happens is that an announcement is made on 'great public demand', a PC-I is prepared hastily and token money allocated in the development budget. In the absence of a PC-II relating to feasibility, the construction moves in fits and starts, depending on the political weight of the players. Anything goes here — single subject universities that eventually try to expand into unintended directions, upgrading of colleges and mindless conversion of hospitals and workshops into universities. Some, set up with the laudable objective of accommodating un-served regions, have turned to establishing sub-campus in the well-served cities. Barring some well-known names, the growth of private sector universities is linked to the declining profitability of the alternative investments. In the garb of creating more choices in higher education, many in fact are tax havens of an unreachable variety. Full page ads of universities in major newspapers outnumber other businesses by a wide margin.

A university is nothing but its faculty. However, brick and mortar precedes the building of faculty. Salary structure and incentives for teachers have improved more than the quality of teaching and research. Quality enhancement cells are, literally, a matter of forms than substance. Academic-industrial linkages have not taken off. The few universities with good faculty do not offer postgraduate programmes as the faculty finds it more lucrative to engage in donor funded research directly or in partnership with government. Obviously, the donors set the research agenda. Others with rag-tag faculty offer all kinds of postgraduate programmes. This generates profits for the universities concerned and fake journals and, more ominously, a spurious knowledge force that in time don faculty and other positions in society. To maximise profits, private universities avoid recruiting high-paid quality faculty. Three locally produced junior faculty for the price of one quality teacher, is their guiding principle. In public sector, positions are

advertised with applicants required to submit kilos of hard copies of documents along with a significant amount of fee. However, a random look at any of these universities will reveal a long list of unfilled senior positions. The outcome of such practices was there for all to see in the damning report of the Federal Public Service Commission on the quality of candidates appearing for the CSS examination. A new class of semi-public universities, controlled by the retirees of the services, treats the faculty as second class citizens, unless it is one of their own. The last-mentioned is produced by registering for higher degrees in the same universities, secured by exploiting the marginalised faculty.

The main Vision 2025 document rightly talked of increasing “investment significantly in human resources (software) at the higher education level.” In the past three years, this is reflected neither in allocations, nor in outcomes. For example, the current agricultural crisis bears testimony to the failure to develop the software in agricultural universities. The proposed strategic plan should prioritise software over the target of establishing a university in each district. The objective is quality teaching and research, not higher education for all. Universalisation is better left to primary education and health.

Published in The Express Tribune, November 4th, 2016.

Source: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1220013/higher-education-vision-2025/>

RESISTANCE THROUGH EDUCATION BY SHAHID SIDDIQUI

The history of imperialism is ridden with treachery, guile and coercion. To control the colonised, all possible methods are used, ranging from persuasion to coercion. India, under the British rule, was no exception. The colonisers suppressed the voices of dissent by using oppressive methods and imposing biased education and language policies.

Education, in a conservative paradigm, was considered passive, neutral, fixed and apolitical. This myth was debunked by Antonio Gramsci who in his seminal book, 'Prison Notebooks', elaborates on the powerful role of the civil society, including educational institutions, suggesting that education is a vibrant, highly political and ever-changing phenomenon.

The politics of education and language can be seen at its best in the Minute by Lord Macaulay. It is important to analyse the vision of education proposed by a British representative for the colonised. Macaulay proposes: "We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indians in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and intellect."

With this vision, a new education system came into being, which is still in vogue in mainstream schools of Pakistan. The essential purpose of this system was to produce a class of obedient servants who would conform to authority and never think of challenging it.

In 'Culture and Imperialism', Edward Said says that imperialism always found resistance in different parts of the world. The nature of resistance could be varied from place to place. Nationalism in British India flourished in the mid 19th century when the people of India came together as a nation. The British Raj and its despotic policies made Indians conscious of the worth of their country.

The economic policies of the East India Company (EIA) levied huge taxes on peasants. Similarly, local artisans were made jobless as finished products were made in the factories and India was used as a rich source of raw material. A number of peasants were forced to give up their professions and look for other ways of earning of their sustenance. Besides the repressive economic policies of the EIC, the Indians were also cornered because of the cruel political structure of the British rulers.

The British also introduced a new system of education which was quite different from the indigenous education system. Persian, the language of the courts, was targeted by the British rulers and the English language was introduced with lots of perks in terms of government jobs and social status. The British used the familiar imperialist technique of glorifying their own culture, language, literature, education system and way of life, and stigmatising the culture, language, literature, and way of life of the colonised. The ultimate objective of this approach is that the colonised internalise the 'fact' that the colonisers are superiors and the colonised are inferior.

As I discussed in my previous articles on these pages, different modes of resistance were adopted by the Indians to combat British imperialism. These modes were guided by two major paradigms of resistance – coercive paradigm and discursive paradigm. The coercive paradigm would allow use of force to resist whereas the discursive paradigm would use discourse as resistance.

One important mode of resistance paradigm is education. In India, education was used as a powerful tool of resistance against the British Raj. How education can be used to resist hegemonic forces can be better understood through the Gramscian concept of hegemony which talks about two major approaches to hegemony –through the political society and through civil society. The political society uses coercion by using army, police and bureaucracy, whereas the civil society relies on discourse, and uses social institution.

It is through the civil society that the process of hegemony takes place in a subtle way and minds are controlled in such a way that the colonised group give 'spontaneous consent' to be colonised. Education, thus, becomes a potent tool to control minds and is frequently used by the colonisers. Interestingly education has also been used by marginalised groups to put up resistance.

In British India a number of nationalist leaders used education to resist British imperialism. A number of educational initiatives converged on the idea of national education. Sir Syed's Aligarh initiative was essentially driven by the passion of nationalism. This was a mild version of nationalism as a number of faculty members were British. Then we see a chain of educational institutions run by national leaders who believed in liberating India from foreign rule through education.

Darul aloom Deoband was established in 1867 by Qasim Nanotvi and his comrades. In Delhi, Jamia Millia Islamia was established by the Johar brothers. Gandhi established a number of schools and popularised the concept of Nai Taleem. In Bengal, Tagore established the Shantiniketan School. In Lahore, Lala Lajpat Rai set up the National

College. In the (then) Frontier province, Haji Tonag Zai and Khan Abul Ghaffar Khan established a number of schools.

There were certain traits which were common among these institutions. The distinguishing features were their curricula, faculty, pedagogy and aim of education. All of these schools at aimed at inculcating love for the country, indigenous civilisation, local languages and the desire and confidence to liberate India from foreign rule. In the forthcoming articles I shall be writing in detail about each of these initiatives, which produced students who were proud of their own culture and country and who contributed to the freedom of India.

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Source: <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/162922-Resistance-through-education>

VALUE OF EDUCATION IN PAKISTAN BY SAMRA KHAN

Provincial governments have been trying to get every child enrolled in school. Public education systems, across all provinces, have gone through a plethora of reforms in the last couple of decades to achieve higher enrollments. Teacher salaries have been increased, more infrastructure facilities have been provided, there is more monitoring of teachers, teacher recruitment has been made more transparent, and a lot more has been spent on teacher training. Enrollment drives are conducted almost every year. But we have not been able to achieve universal enrollment as yet. This has been a puzzle for governments: why are the last 10-15 percent of out-of-school children so hard to bring into the system?

A variety of reasons have been cited: there are not enough schools (especially for girls); schools are too far away and transport costs are high; some children are needed at home for housework; and some households need the income children bring in through their work, etc. There is some literature that even cites the low value some parents put on education and/or cultural/religious factors that might limit enrollment.

There is another way of looking at the problem as well. We should ask: why is such a high proportion of children in Pakistan in school at all? To me this is more of a puzzle than the fact that 10-15 percent of early age children do not attend school. If we ask the question this way, we can make more sense of the phenomenon of dropouts as well.

We know that the quality of education we give to the majority of children in schools, other than in the small percentage enrolled in high-fee, private schools, is very poor. The Punjab Examination Commission (PEC) results for grades five and eight illustrate the poor levels of learning in most children. ASER surveys also show that grade five children have difficulty doing grade two-level work. Why should children then come to school? Why should they waste time in school, and not drop out early to try to find other things to do? We know that some 50-60 percent of children who appear for matriculation examinations fail them. A large proportion of children who are enrolled in grade one do not make it to grade 10. But even after this sorting, if a child is going to fail the matriculation examination after remaining in school for 10 years, and there is a high probability that that is going to happen, why should a child and his parents put in 10 years of effort?

We also know that even after matriculation, it is not easy to get a job now. So, even if a child is successful in getting through the matriculation examination, his/her chances of landing a good job are not high or even reasonable.

Unemployment rates amongst graduates are also very high in Pakistan. The economy has slowed down, government jobs have all but evaporated, and manufacturing has been languishing for a long time now. The Middle East used to provide relatively lucrative options, but new job opportunities, even at semi-skilled level, have become limited. Most of the jobs created in our economy over the last couple of decades have been in the service sector. But, by and large, service-sector jobs are low-skilled jobs, and they do not offer decent career progression for sales agents, runners for delivery companies, sales staff in shops and hosts in restaurants. The youth bulge, much talked about, with millions of young people entering the working age, is going to make it even more difficult for young people to get jobs in a slow-growing economy.

The situation for girls is even more problematic. Only 20 percent or so of our female population joins the active workforce. For those who are looking for work, teaching seems to be one of the few professions that are acceptable to families. But with the youth bulge, and in an economy that is not growing fast enough, restrictions on choice of profession further depress prospects and returns on education. Most teachers working in the private sector do not even make minimum wage levels through salaries. If economic returns are a significant factor in people determining if they want to get educated and how much, low perceived or real returns should depress the demand for education.

The demand for education is only not for jobs. Many consider education to be a basic right, and many feel that having an educated citizenry is a prerequisite for good governance and effective working of a democracy and society in general. This might be true. But such a case has never been made at a popular level in Pakistan. If we felt that having every child educated is necessary for the future of this country, wouldn't the state and society have made a stronger case for it?

The demand for private education is strong in Pakistan. If the returns on education are low, as I have argued here, what explains the demand for private education? My conjecture, and this requires more research, is that parents are buying lotteries (low-probability, high-impact events) by sending their children to private schools: most of them will not get high returns, but some will. When you send a child to a private school, you have a chance of being among the select few, but it will lead to disappointment for most.

Education, despite all the rhetoric, continues to be a neglected sector. Bringing children to schools is not education. The main issue has always been that of giving quality education that would lead to better outcomes for individual recipients as well as society. We have so far failed in that. No wonder many children do not remain in school. In fact,

many more would probably not even come if they had realistic expectations about the returns they can hope for from the education they are receiving.

The writer is a student at the University of Karachi

Source: <http://dailytimes.com.pk/opinion/09-Nov-16/value-of-education-in-pakistan>

'PAKISTAN'S EDUCATION SECTOR | EDITORIAL

Our nation's education sector has always been the state's stepchild. Its failures and weaknesses cannot be overestimated and while this plaguing issue does not make it to authorities' concerns, it does appear in public discussions. At the Sindh Literature Festival held in Karachi last week, Sindh Madressatul Islam University vice-chancellor Dr Muhammad Ali Shaikh raised the issue of Pakistan's university rankings. For the second year in a row, none of Pakistan's universities have made it to the world's top 500 institutes. Pakistan's universities feature somewhere in the top 800 and that too, includes only three universities. Compared to this, India has seven universities and China 24 in the world's top 500. While students in neighbouring countries can rely on public institutions for quality education, in Pakistan, whoever can afford to study abroad would choose to do so.

Pakistan's spending on higher education: a mere two per cent, is less than the spending in India, Iran and Bangladesh, which is a reflection of our priorities and is in turn reflected in the scholarship, or lack of, produced here. As things stand, the level of academic scholarship is so poor that COMSATS, among the best known universities of the country, held a conference titled 'Jinns and Black magic', where the guest speaker was introduced as a 'spiritual cardiologist'.

In a report released two months ago, the UN said that Pakistan's education is more than 60 years behind the rest of the world in primary and secondary education targets, respectively. Pakistan has one of the largest and fastest growing youth populations in the world with an estimated 59 million people from 4-10 years of age. We must ask what are we giving this population? At this rate and with our foundations so rickety, we will never be able to catch up with the rest of the world.

Published in The Express Tribune, November 11th, 2016.

Source: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1227072/pakistans-education-sector/>

THE LANGUAGE OF EDUCATION BY ZUBAIR TORWALI

In his recent book, 'Education Policies in Pakistan', Shahid Siddiqui states that the major challenge before policymakers in Pakistan has been the choice of language and its central role in the process of learning.

Since 1947, Pakistan has tried nine different policy guidelines in education. Interestingly, out five of these were crafted during the reigns of various military dictators. The first policy document on education is the recommendations adopted in Pakistan's first education conference held in Nov-Dec 1947 in Karachi.

Since then, till 1959 – soon after General Ayub took over the government – we see no comprehensive document on education. Before Ayub's regime there were strikes in East Pakistan on the question of the national language. On Feb 21, 1952, at least seven students were killed in Dhaka when they were protesting against Urdu being made the sole national language of then Pakistan. They demanded the same status for Bengali. In 1954, the government approved Bangla as a national language along with Urdu; this was also incorporated in the 1956 constitution but because of political instability concrete measures could not be taken and the people of East Pakistan could not be satisfied.

The second document on education is the report of the Commission on Education or the Sharif Report in 1959. The third policy on education came in 1970 when Pakistan was ruled by General Yahya Khan. The fourth education policy was designed in 1970 during the regime of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and after the separation of East Pakistan.

When General Ziaul Haq snatched power from Bhutto in 1977 he tried to change everything, including education. He announced the National Education Policy and Implementation Plan in 1979. His plan was to Islamise and Urdu-ise society.

The next education policy came when Muhammad Nawaz Sharif was the prime minister of Pakistan in 1992. The eighth document in education policy was crafted when Muhammad Nawaz Sharif was the prime minister for the second time. The last one, the New Education Policy, was the work of the Musharraf regime but was presented by the PPP's government in 2009.

The report of the first education conference in 1947 maintained Urdu as the lingua franca of Pakistan because of its historical links with Arabic, Persian, Sanskrit and English. The conference regarded English 'injurious' as a medium of instruction but recognised it as a tool of access to Western knowledge and culture. Some role of the

so-called provincial languages was recognised, maintaining that the choice of medium of instruction at schools be given to the provinces along with having Urdu as a compulsory language in each province.

In the backdrop of the protests and killing of students in 1952 in Dhaka, the Education Commission of 1959 recognised Bengali and Urdu as the national languages of Pakistan. It suggested that the national language(s) should gradually and progressively replace English as the medium of instruction at all levels.

The education policy of 1969 suggested Urdu as the official language of West Pakistan and Bengali for East Pakistan. The 1970 education policy had nothing new to offer except a number of characteristics for a medium of instruction.

In 1973 Pakistan got the first nationally approved constitution. Two specific articles – Article 28 and Article 251 – were devoted to the language issue in it. Article 28, subject to Article 251, allows citizens to practise and promote their languages.

In 1979, during the Zia regime, an education policy was designed in order to meet the personal whims and ideologies of the dictator. Urdu was made the medium of instruction. Even private schools were directed to use Urdu as the medium of instruction. This was, however, unsuccessful as the English medium elite school lobby was too strong. Urdu was, however, made a symbol of Muslim identity during this period and greater resources were provided for the production of books in Urdu which mainly focused on Muslim history and religious studies.

With the restoration of democracy in 1989 till its end in 1999 we see no remarkable policies in education. The two policies made by the first and second Nawaz governments had no impact except giving importance to the Arabic language and the teaching of Islamic studies.

In 2009, a year before the 18th Amendment to the constitution, Pakistan had a comprehensive document, crafted during the Musharraf regime. The policy placed much importance on English, at the same time also calling English one of the factors responsible for educational inequality in Pakistan. English was made a compulsory subject from kindergarten.

The policy suggested inclusion of English as a subject, and Urdu, one regional language, mathematics and an integrated subject in the curriculum from class 1 onwards. However, the choice of medium of instruction was given to the Provincial and Area Education Department up to class V. English was also made the medium of

instruction for science and mathematics from class VI onwards with the option of teaching mathematics and science in English or Urdu or the official regional language for five years; after five years the subjects would be taught in English.

In 2010, the 18th Amendment devolved a number of subjects to the provinces including education. However, the provinces did not avail the opportunity. In 2012, the ANP-led Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government passed the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Promotion of Regional Languages Authority Act for the promotion of regional languages, by “recommending to the government a curriculum and syllabus for the gradual teaching of the regional languages spoken in the province”.

For the 2013-14 school year, it also introduced four other regional languages to be taught in the pre-primary classes in areas where these languages were the mother tongue of a majority of children, aiming to make such language classes gradually compulsory throughout primary school.

A critical review of these policies leads us to conclude that the language issue has not been given much priority. Instead, more emphasis was placed on the political aspect of language.

Urdu could not be made official language despite multiple promises. The social status of English could not be changed in Pakistan and it consistently remains a ‘language of power’, being the language of the major power wielders – military, judiciary and bureaucracy. The policies oscillated between English, Urdu and the so-called provincial/regional languages. The education policy altogether ignored the other 65 native/mother languages of Pakistan.

English is an important language. To remove English from the teaching process is to refuse access to various means of information and knowledge in the world. It must be there – but not at the cost of the local languages. Urdu has virtually become a lingua franca in Pakistan. But the importance of English and Urdu must not be at the cost of the more than 65 other languages that are the native languages of the people of Pakistan. All these languages need special attention as many of them are fast dying along with the rich folklore, history, culture and indigenous wisdom.

Pakistan needs a trilingual model wherein the native/mother tongue must be the medium of instruction at the primary level along with Urdu and English as subjects. At the level of higher education the mother tongue must be included as a subject.

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Source: <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/167252-The-language-of-education>