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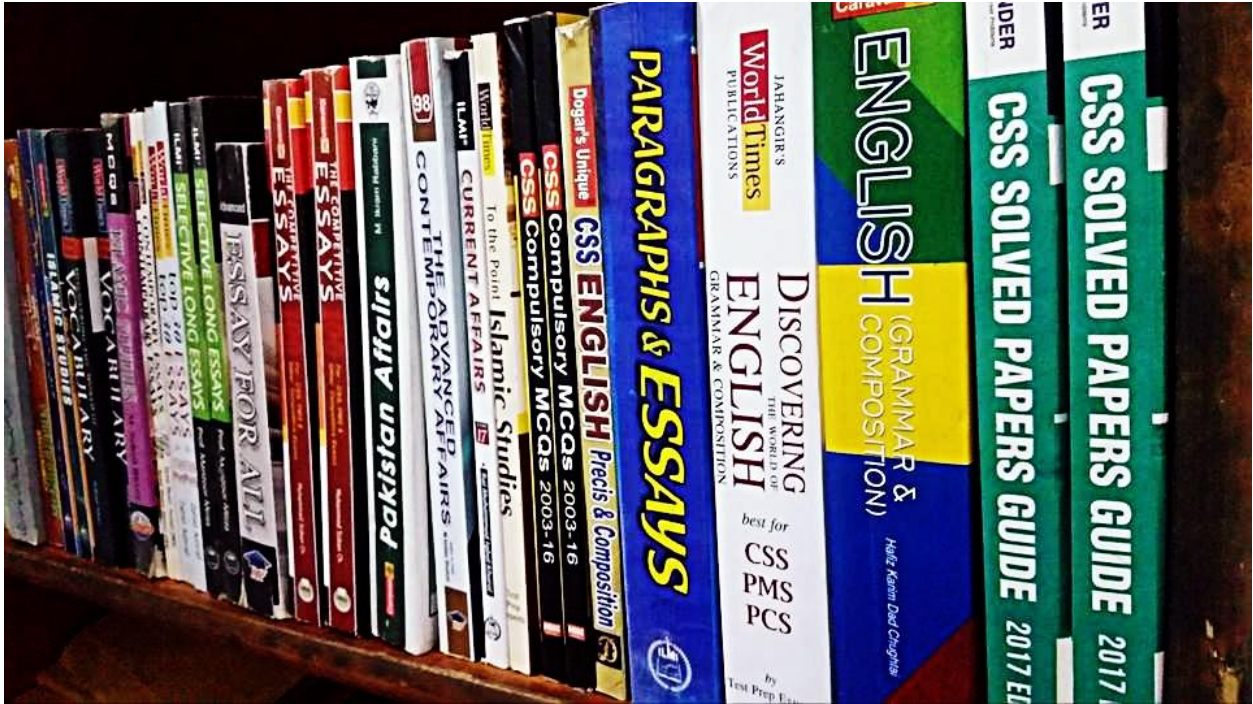
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PAKISTAN

India's Failed Test | Editorial

On Thursday night, DG ISPR Major General Babar Iftikhar held a press conference to reveal that India launched a supersonic flying object which violated the country's airspace and endangered civilian lives on March 9. Reports reveal that the object was launched from Sirsa in the Indian state of Haryana and fell in Mian Channu in Pakistan's Khanewal district. Thankfully, the incident did not result in any loss of life as there was no payload on the missile.

What we know so far is that the object had deviated towards Pakistan from its initial course before falling into its territory. Given how concerning an incident this is and how it could have triggered something a lot more serious, the DG ISPR should be commended for the professional manner in which the press conference was conducted. It took the Indian defence ministry two days to fess up to this incident, terming it a 'technical malfunction' and issuing an apology to Pakistan for the accidental incursion.

Experts are claiming that it was a supersonic missile, and that the Indians were most likely testing the next generation Brahmos missile. Regardless of these details, this incident illustrates India's disregard for aviation safety and reflects very poorly on their technological prowess and procedural efficiency.

This negligence could have endangered lives on both sides of the border, and could have also resulted in a major aviation disaster. The fact that this lapse comes from a nuclear power and ended up with a missile launched in its adversary's backyard, should entail a serious investigation into New Delhi's nuclear and general missile protocols.

Now that the military has shared the relevant details of the incident, this matter should be taken up at the Foreign Office and DGMO level. India must come clean like a responsible actor and give an explanation of what caused this violation of international borders. It is honestly alarming for a nuclear power to have such lax mechanisms and India must reflect on how its neglectful behaviour could have very well triggered a war in the region.

Source: Published in The Nation

Ukraine Crisis and Pakistan By Riaz

Mohammad Khan

THE Russian invasion of Ukraine is a point of inflection in world affairs, similar to the US outreach to China in the early 1970s and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. The situation is unfolding. There are many imponderables including how it will impact Russia itself. Its consequential character is obvious but the direction is not clear. Pakistan should be concerned about what the development portends for the future.

Russia has ostensibly acted to secure its periphery. It has done so like a great power which accords primacy to its perceived interests rather than show sensitivity to the principles of inter-state relations set out in the UN Charter. The invasion of Ukraine has been preceded by deep differences between Moscow and the West led by Washington with barely concealed ambition to bring into the fold of its political and security system not just the erstwhile Warsaw Pact countries but also Ukraine and Georgia which had once been Soviet territories. President Putin had repeatedly urged that Ukraine must not be part of Nato.

The quasi-ideological underpinning of this ambition was the belief in the emergence of a US-led unipolar world which did not countenance any sphere of influence, security or economic, by a rival power. For almost three decades, the US has enjoyed unprecedented economic and military preponderance globally. This propelled the expansion of Nato to the doorsteps of Russia, taking advantage of the desire of the East Europeans themselves even though in contravention of the reported verbal assurance given to Moscow at the time of the reunification of Germany. The US challenged Russia in the Middle East, and organised the Quad enlisting Japan and India as partners in a wider Indo-Pacific strategy. The economic rise of China and signs of a resurgent Russia are viewed as a threat. Nonetheless, uni-polarism was inherently destabilising in a world moving towards multipolarity. On the other hand, the Russian invasion displays utter disregard for UN Charter principles and international law. Russia faced no imminent threat to justify its action which is a fatal blow to aspirations for world peace based on principles and diplomacy and discourse among states. President Putin should have exercised a number of other less egregious options short of armed aggression against Ukraine.

How has Pakistan navigated this early phase of the crisis and what challenges lie ahead?

The United States and Europe have reacted with most stringent economic sanctions, including the scuttling of the mega Nord Stream Gas pipeline from Russia to Germany, and steps to buttress the security of the eastern flank of Nato and support to Ukraine. Even if the security dimension remains confined to Central Europe and Ukraine, the global economic map will change with new walls blocking the erstwhile free flow of dollar-based finances and trade. This portends a new world order in which so far the United States appears to have a strong position. Europe has pulled together behind the United States as never before.

Beyond the European theatre which will now demand greater attention on the part of the United States, the US capacity for proactive security initiatives elsewhere particularly in Asia-Pacific will diminish. This will increase comfort space for China.

There are some diplomatic initiatives to arrest the conflict although their prospects remain clouded or unclear. Israel is trying mediation. Turkey offered a venue for talks between the Russian and the Ukrainian foreign ministers which reportedly discussed the resulting humanitarian crisis. In substance, Russia demands nothing short of a total surrender, while Ukrainians who are putting up remarkable resistance ask for a ceasefire and Russian withdrawal. There is a faint hope that Moscow may be content with Ukrainian neutrality and firm assurances that Nato will not further expand. Perhaps China, given the congruence of its interests with Russia especially in Central Asia, together with some EU countries can play a role. For any solution, however, Moscow will have to abandon its desire to absorb the entire or parts of Ukraine and replace the elected Ukrainian government and Washington will have to suppress its impulse to retain unipolar primacy.

How has Pakistan navigated this early phase of the crisis and what challenges lie ahead? Are there any opportunities?

Pakistan's decision to maintain the prime minister's visit was sound, given the fact that for years Pakistan had been trying to inject trust and facility in our relations with Moscow. Similarly, our decision to abstain was a logical choice following the Chinese and the Indian vote in the Security Council. Pakistan has been fairly pragmatic in its decisions when a situation involved major powers. In

January 1980, as a lead country to negotiate a resolution in the Security Council on the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan, we successfully resisted naming the Soviet Union and asked for the withdrawal of “foreign troops”. Our official criticism of the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 or the American interventions in Syria and Libya was circumspect.

Principles are important, but nations weigh their core interests when taking decisions in fraught and critical situations. The démarche by EU ambassadors was understandable, but they overreached in making public their communication with the Foreign Office. There was no similar action in New Delhi. How could they entertain greater expectations from Islamabad given their opposition to Pakistan’s interests in FATF or the Nuclear Suppliers Group or their near indifference to the plight of Kashmiris and the Hindutva-discriminated Indian Muslims? Regardless of this indiscretion which only deserved a riposte by the Foreign Office, we should maintain a clear emphasis in our statements in support of Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity and avoidance of violence targeting civilians, while calling for recourse to diplomacy and to a peaceful resolution. But dragging this policy on to public platforms for domestic political advantage is inadvisable.

Are there any opportunities for Pakistan? Arguably, Pakistan’s geopolitical relevance to both Russia and China will be enhanced, especially for possible trade and communications corridors. Afghanistan remains an obstacle. Also, unlike the countries endowed by Providence with oil, we will need capacities to leverage our location to build national strength. Mere aspiration is not enough. So far our domestic politics has shown inexcusable apathy towards this imperative as reflected in the sad predicament of our economy and education. Lastly, Pakistan is safe today because nuclear deterrence is an integral part of its security: a lesson reinforced by the Ukrainian crisis.

The writer is a former foreign secretary and an author.

Published in Dawn, March 13th, 2022

Pakistan and the OIC By Zamir Akram

PAKISTAN will be hosting the 48th meeting of the OIC Conference of Foreign Ministers (CFM) from March 22 to 23 this year, which will coincide with the 75th anniversary celebrations of Pakistan Day.

This event will highlight Pakistan's consistent commitment to the principles and purposes of the OIC, in particular to foster greater unity and solidarity within the Muslim world so as to address the multiple challenges facing the ummah.

As a founding member of the OIC, which was established in September 1969 in response to the Israeli terrorist attacks on Al Aqsa Mosque in occupied Jerusalem, Pakistan has been at the forefront of the OIC's efforts to champion Muslim causes — from freedom of the Palestinian and Kashmiri peoples struggling under foreign occupation, to upholding the rights of Muslims in Myanmar and Bosnia, to ending conflicts in Muslim lands such as Afghanistan, Yemen, Syria and Libya. Pakistan has also played a key role in the OIC, the second largest international organisation after the UN with 57 member states, to combat transnational threats such as Islamophobia, the Covid pandemic and poverty.

A measure of Pakistan's commitment to the OIC has been its hosting of several events of the organisation, including the Second OIC Summit in 1974 and the Second Extraordinary OIC Summit in 1997, as well as meetings of the CFM in 1970, 1980, 1993 and 2007.

Pakistan is also the headquarters of the OIC Commission on Science and Technology (Comstech) and the Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Moreover, Pakistan played a pivotal role in the formation of the Islamic Development Bank, the Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission and the Observatory on Islamophobia.

The 48th CFM in Islamabad will be guided by the theme of 'partnering for unity, justice and development' and will consider over 100 resolutions on major contemporary issues facing the OIC. Pakistan's endeavour during the CFM would be to promote greater unity and a common sense of purpose to address multiple challenges before the Muslim world; promote the cause of justice for all Muslims, such as the ones in Palestine and Kashmir; encourage cooperation for

the promotion of development and prosperity in the Muslim world in keeping with the SDGs; and ensure complete recovery from the Covid pandemic. From Pakistan's perspective, the forthcoming CFM would be especially important to underscore two specific issues — the realisation of the right of self-determination of the Kashmiri people and the need to effectively combat the rising threat of Islamophobia.

Pakistan has consistently stressed the need for greater unity and solidarity among OIC members.

For many observers, the OIC has not lived up to its expectations, especially to help resolve the Palestine and Kashmir issues, despite adopting several resolutions and declarations. However, a realistic appraisal of the OIC's role is required.

The OIC, like other multilateral bodies, does not have any 'enforcement' machinery to implement its decisions. It can only rely on moral pressure and persuasion as tools for encouraging states to comply with its decisions. This does not always happen. More importantly, Muslim countries do not have the military, political or economic clout to compel other states to do the OIC's bidding. Even so, OIC should aspire for greater unity for the organisation to become a force to be reckoned with in the international community.

Accordingly, Pakistan has consistently stressed the need for greater unity and solidarity among OIC members. It has always given preference to OIC issues, at times by overriding its own national interests, such as consistent support for the Palestinian struggle and refusal to recognise Israel unless the two-state solution to the dispute is implemented.

Contrary to the view of some observers, the OIC has forcefully taken up the Kashmir dispute in its deliberations. Of course, due to the reasons mentioned, the OIC is not in a position to enforce its decisions on India, but these decisions do have the force of moral pressure.

Apart from several resolutions on Kashmir, the OIC has set up a Kashmir Contact Group, while also appointing a number of inquiry commissions and addressing direct communications with India. These have not only called for the implementation of UN Security Council resolutions for a plebiscite in Kashmir but also for an immediate end to the repression of the Kashmiri people.

Just the fact that India sought to address the CFM in 2019, maintains constant communication with the OIC and desperately seeks to join the organisation, signifies the importance of the moral pressure of the OIC on India.

Another area where Pakistan has taken a leadership role in the OIC is countering Islamophobia. As coordinator of the OIC Group in the Geneva-based UN Human Rights Council, Pakistan has ensured annual adoption of resolutions against defamation of religions ever since the publication of blasphemous cartoons against the Holy Prophet (PBUH).

In 2011, in order to promote universal acceptance of the issue and to bring opposing Western states on board, Pakistan ensured the emergence of consensus on a resolution adopting an action plan to combat Islamophobia, called the Istanbul Process.

After 10 years, this consensus still exists, including on the need to criminalise hate speech against Muslims. Prime Minister Imran Khan took this initiative further during his speech to the UN in 2018, leading to the recognition of Islamophobia as a form of religious and racial discrimination. Due to his efforts, the leaders of Russia, Canada and New Zealand, among others, have endorsed Pakistan's position.

In the future, Pakistan should also take the lead in the area of science and technology. It already hosts Comstech, which should become the vehicle to revive the past glory of Islam's contributions in this vital field. In particular, given Pakistan's achievements in nuclear technology and its track record of the flawless operation of civil nuclear facilities, Pakistan is uniquely placed to offer cooperation, training and education to OIC member states in the peaceful uses of nuclear technology in areas such as power generation, medicine and agriculture. This could be one of the areas that Pakistan should promote in the forthcoming 48th CFM.

The writer is a former ambassador of Pakistan.

Published in Dawn, March 18th, 2022

World Powers Overlooking Indian Acts in Kashmir By Dr Ghulam Nabi Fai

THE Vienna Declaration and Program of Action adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights, confirms the human rights of women as an 'inalienable, integral and indivisible part of human rights.

” The Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action, both are an outcome of more than two decades of collective efforts of the international community.

NGO's and civil society at large, and their whole and sole objective was the empowerment of women.

The changing millennium has established the importance of women in the economic, social, cultural and political conditions.

And it is a fact that true development of a society cannot be achieved and is not possible without the full participation and involvement of women in all activities of a human society.

Violence against woman remains a major issue in the development and advancement of women.

The violations of women's right during all conflicts has remained an issue in the twentieth century and if not corrected it will surely affect women not only in twenty-first century but also in the next millennium.

The United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights (UNHCHR) issued its “Report on the Situation of Human Rights in Kashmir,” on July 8, 2019.

The report contains graphic documentation of human rights violations being committed by the Indian military and paramilitary forces in Jammu & Kashmir.

This is a significant step towards greater international recognition of the serious abuses committed against Kashmiris at the hands of Indian army.

This report takes the veil of secrecy off of India's crimes against humanity. The 49-pages report cites specific incidents where the Indian Government violated the very principles of human decency and democratic freedom against the people of Kashmir.

It is well documented that the bloody occupation has resulted in massive human rights violations, particularly targeting women and children.

The sanctity of women has been violated, in a gruesome and unforgiving fashion. The United Nations report further illustrates that, "One significant case that illustrates the state's failure to investigate and prosecute allegations of sexual violence and addressing impunity for sexual crimes in Kashmir is the Kunan-Poshpora mass rape, which took place 27 years ago and for which attempts to seek justice have been denied and blocked over the years by the authorities at different levels.

According to survivors and a local administration official, on the night of 23 February 1991, soldiers from the 4 Rajputana Rifles regiment of the Indian Army gang-raped around 23 women of Kunan and Poshpora villages of Kupwara district.

The Indian Army and Government of India have denied the allegations" "Do You remember Kunan Poshpora" documentary evidence of five brave Kashmiri women scholars wrote these words on page 1, "This book is about one night in two villages in Kashmir.

It is about a night that has refused to end for 24 long years, a night that holds stories of violations, injustice, oppression and falsehood, as well as acts of courage, bravery and truth.

This book is about Kunan Poshpora." Dr.Nazir Gilani, President JKCHR in a written statement submitted to the UN Secretary General during 58th session of HRC said, "The issues of Kashmiri women have multiplied ever since.

The Kunan Poshpora rape case of 1991 and the issue of half-widows (women whose husbands are missing and cannot re-marry) have continued to remain unresolved."

The suggestion made by Dr. Nazir Gilani is very pertinent when he said, "It is high time that Human Rights Council addresses the question of sexual violence committed against Kashmiri women as detailed in Paras 125 to 133 of OHCHR Report of 14 June 2018.

The Kunan-Poshpora mass rape victims have not received any justice for the past 30 years.

Many of the victims have died while waiting for justice." How many Kashmiri women have to be dishonored before one concludes that a human rights violation has taken place?

This is one of the questions that is on the minds of millions of Kashmiri women. Please remember that these women live under the stranglehold of a 900,000 strong army of occupation.

These women are not oblivious to the world events. They know that in welcoming the appointment of a 'Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women,' the Vienna Declaration declared that "the human rights of women are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of the universal human rights.

" They wonder what action was taken by this Rapporteur, whose mandate included action on "state-sponsored violence against women.

" They waited with hope because the same document had asked the United Nations human rights body to "strengthen mechanisms or accountability to ensure that governments take steps to end discrimination and punish perpetrators of violence against them. " (Reference UN documents: E/CN/4/1995/NGO/28, and /5).

These violated Kashmiri women ask: what action has been taken to enforce the writ of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women?

Are these reports and revelations not enough to shake the conscience of the world powers and the Human Rights Council?

The perpetrator of this state policy, India, has the temerity to sit not only in the Human Rights Council but also in the Security Council.

Why does the international community not condemn India? During the years of suffering in Jammu & Kashmir, despite some intermittent and half-hearted efforts, the situation has worsened.

And why has that been so? Because the response of the international community to the predicament of Kashmiri people has been essentially weak and lacking in credibility.

It is equally true that the United Nations mechanisms do not effectively address massive human rights violations.

In the situations of armed conflicts and civil strife, it is the innocent people who are killed and brutalized.

On behalf of the women and children of the world who continue to be the innocent victims, we hope that the Platform of Action suggest implementation of a special program to rehabilitate the women and children of all conflicts in all situations.

And, in particular, the women of Kashmir still have confidence in the mechanism of the United Nations and its sense of justice.

But there are limits even to hope. We are often assailed by despair because of the half-hearted response of the international community to our tragic situation.

Unfortunately, the indifference, the inaction, the passivity and the silence of the United Nations, of course unintentionally, have given the sense of impunity to the occupation authority in Kashmir.

—The writer is the Chairman, Washington-based, World Forum for Peace & Justice.

Source: Published in pakobserver

Pak-Russia Ties: Prospects and Challenges

By Ayaz Ahmed

ON the other side, Pakistan is concerned about the growing American strategic and military partnership with India, which increased under the Trump Administration.

In April 2016, the Obama Administration myopically declined to grant \$ 430 million to Pakistan for the purchase of eight F-16.

What is important to mention here is that Indian lobbies played the central role in inducing the American Congress to block the grant of the stipulated amount to Pakistan.

Since Pakistan has been engrossed in waging a long and expensive war against assorted terrorist and militant groups and is threatened by neighbouring India, the country direly needs advanced aircraft and timely modernization of its existing weaponry in order to make its security effective.

It is pertinent to note that Russia removed its arms embargo against Pakistan in 2014.

More importantly, the Kremlin also agreed to sell four MI-35 helicopters to Pakistan.

In the post arms embargo period, Pakistan can also purchase Sukhoi-35 fighter jets from Russia and seek Russian assistance to modernise its existing fighter aircraft. Both Pakistan and Russia are facing the threat of terrorism and militancy.

Terrorism is a major problem insidiously plaguing Pakistan with losses of nearly \$ 150 billion and over 80,000 lives.

The emergence of Daesh in Afghanistan currently poses a severe threat to Pakistan's tribal areas and the peripheries of Russia.

In this context, along with China, Pakistan and Russia have conducted a series of consultations on how to prevent the possible spillover effects of Daesh.

These states are also working with the Taliban regime in Kabul to inhibit the presence of terror outfits in Afghanistan.

Arguably, such an emerging cooperation is likely to prove effective in eliminating the militancy of Daesh from the region, especially from Afghanistan.

Pakistan shares SCO's concerns regarding the three evils of terrorism, extremism and separatism.

Under the umbrella of the SCO, it would acquire comprehensive counter-terrorism and counter-militancy assistance from the Tashkent-based Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) to stamp out rampaging terrorism, bubbling militancy and disruptive low-intensity insurgency in restive Balochistan.

Moreover, coordinated intelligence sharing and joint operation between Pakistan and Russia will greatly help them clamp down the deadly Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) based in Afghanistan.

Pakistan can adopt a two-pronged approach by joining hands with the SCO to ruin drug cultivation in Afghanistan and bust drug cartels operating in the region.

With China and Russia, Pakistan may conduct a vigorous joint naval anti-narcotics drive in the Arabian Sea against the burgeoning drug smuggling.

Russia has played a significant role in foiling all short-sighted Indian moves to label Pakistan as terrorism.

At the BRICS summit held India in October 2016, Indian supremacist Prime Minister Narendra Modi called Pakistan the 'mothership of terrorism' that should be isolated as such.

But, while delivering his speech, Russian President Putin adroitly avoided using the word terrorism which signalled his outright rejection of Modi's Pakistan-bashing.

Moreover, when Modi and former Afghan President Ashraf Ghani blamed Pakistan for sponsoring regional terrorism during the Heart of Asia conference in

December 2016, the Russian representative sternly rejected Afghan and Indian accusations of Pakistan and termed these allegations unjustified and unfounded.

After watching American repeated failures to bring about reconciliation, stability and tranquillity in Afghanistan, Russia demonstrated its willingness to play a role in Afghan peace and security.

Moscow hosted the Afghan talks and helped bridge the gap between the Taliban and the US before the take-over of the Taliban.

As now Pakistan is a complete member of the SCO, it can persuade China and Russia to come forward with their technological know-how and fiscal resources to help Afghanistan benefit from its natural resources and play a bigger role in Afghan reconstruction.

Pakistan and Russia could face some hurdles during the course of improving bilateral relations.

India may use pressure tactics or strive to strengthen its ties with Russia to the level so that Moscow does not feel the need of an extra market for its arms sale.

Since America is highly apprehensive of Russian naval presence in the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea, the Biden Administration will use backstairs influence and pressure to stop Islamabad from jumping into the Russian bandwagon in the region.

Washington will capitalise on the International Monetary Funds (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) to prevent Pakistan from fostering its security and economic relations with Russia.

The Indo-American bloc could expedite its support to Pakistani-based terrorist and insurgent groups so that they will create instability and uncertainty in Pakistan.

It is not uncommon that whenever two rivals decide to bury the hatchet for friendly relations, they are likely to face some hurdles in their budding relations.

Both Pakistan and Russia should not let their historical legacy, divergent objectives and the designs of India and America create obstacles to the reset of bilateral relations.

The following points may be helpful in this regard: Both countries should arrange and facilitate wide-ranging discussion between members of civil, military and economic institutions.

Such interactions will build trust, promote transparency and help increase meaningful cooperation on a wide range of issues between the two countries.

Both countries should take the Taliban into confidence and work with Kabul to inhibit the growth of Daesh in Afghanistan.

This will help Pakistan and Russia to play an effectual role in the rebuilding process in Afghanistan.

Pakistan should provide incentives to Russia so that Russian companies display readiness in working to improve Pakistan's energy sector, accelerate its industrialisation process, build infrastructure and improve agricultural productivity.

Pakistan should establish a long-term strategic partnership with Russia. Russian expertise in the field of nuclear technology will be of paramount importance for Pakistan to increase the capacity of its production of nuclear energy for civilian use.

Lastly, Pakistan should assure Russia that its partnership with Uncle Sam will not derail its relations with Russia in future.

—The writer is former senior researcher at the Pakistan Institute of International Affairs (PIIA) and now an editor and commentator based in Karachi.

Source: Published in Pak Observer

OIC Declaration | Editorial

THE Islamabad Declaration adopted at the conclusion of the OIC's Council of Foreign Ministers appears to be a comprehensive document, addressing around 70 points. These cover disputes affecting the Muslim world as well as conflicts in non-Muslim areas, such as the Ukraine-Russia war. Palestine, Kashmir and Afghanistan all feature prominently in the document, as does the plight of the Rohingya and the attempts to counter Islamophobia.

But as always, the key challenge before the multilateral Muslim bloc remains translating these noble aims into achievable goals, and more importantly, overcoming internal divisions.

The declaration reiterated the “centrality of the question of Palestine” while expressing “unwavering solidarity with the people of Jammu and Kashmir” as they seek “their inalienable right to self-determination”. The document also expressed “grave concern” over the incident earlier this month in which an Indian missile violated Pakistani airspace.

With regard to the dire humanitarian situation in Afghanistan, a trust fund has been launched by the OIC to help support the people of that country. Indeed, Afghanistan has been a victim of geopolitical intrigue and superpower politics for the last four decades, which has left its infrastructure in ruins. While it has primarily been non-Muslim powers that have played a central role in Afghanistan's destruction — though Afghan power players cannot be absolved of blame — the Muslim world has a responsibility to support the Afghan people in their hour of need. Pakistan has been hosting millions of Afghan refugees since the Soviet invasion, and many of the Muslim states with deep pockets can play a bigger role in ensuring that the people of Afghanistan get the financial and humanitarian help they need.

While such meetings have an important role to play where discussion of the Muslim world's problems is concerned, there has long been legitimate criticism of the OIC's lack of delivery and unity. True, OIC declarations are well-meaning and give the appearance of a united voice emerging from the Muslim bloc, but the reality is more sobering.

For example, at around the same time that officials waxed eloquent about the Palestine cause in Islamabad, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi was hosting the Israeli prime minister and the UAE's top royal in his country. Moreover, a number of Muslim states have taken the lead in establishing ties with Israel at the expense of the Palestinians. Also, while the Islamabad Declaration contains solemn pledges to support the oppressed people of Kashmir, in reality very little is done by the majority of Muslim states to help end the subjugation of Kashmir. For instance, the UAE has sought to make investments in the disputed region, to the benefit of New Delhi. These discrepancies between the OIC member states' words and actions need to be addressed if the multilateral body is to become an effective voice for the Muslim world and not merely a talk shop that issues verbose statements.

Published in Dawn, March 25th, 2022

Time to Revisit Foreign Policy Priorities? By Khalid Saleem

SEVERAL years back, one had taken the liberty to draw up a 'foreign policy wish list', in the fond hope that the government would be looking to make moves to turn the country's foreign policy priorities around to conform to national interest.

That, one now recognizes with the benefit of hindsight, was perhaps not only a wee bit premature as well as something of an over-reach.

It may perhaps not be inopportune to revisit some facets of this wish list. Time may be ripe for the government to initiate a frank, candid and above-board discussion with the United States Administration in order to separate the grain from the chaff.

The negotiations held earlier, in the murky behind-closed-doors atmosphere, did not count. For starters – to fall back on an Americanism — need might be felt to clarify to our 'friends' and, indeed, to the world at large that 'terrorism' is not strictly our baby, even though we may have been left holding it due to circumstances perhaps beyond our control.

Sympathy with the Americans in their 'war on terror' notwithstanding, how long could the people of Pakistan honestly be expected to continue to bear an open-ended commitment like a millstone around their collective neck?

A decade should have been enough to atone for whatever sins of omission and commission that they may have been guilty of.

We must be allowed to tackle the genie of extremism and terrorism that has been let out of the bottle on our own terms; in keeping with our ethos and with the minimum outside interference.

Keeping our long-term relationship in view, could we not trust our 'strategic ally' to show the necessary understanding and/or flexibility?

Now, on to our relations with India! The goal posts have now been discernibly moved. It may be time to insist on giving the process of bilateralism some purpose.

While holding on to our conscious decision to maintain peace on our eastern border, must it not be clearly understood that we could hardly be expected to continue marking time at the cost of our national interest.

Quest for normalizing of relations with our neighbour is unexceptionable. There is just no alternative option for the two countries but to live as good neighbours.

But, at the same time, there are no short cuts to normalization of relations. The exasperated populace of either country needs to see some tangible evidence of progress on settlement of contentious issues.

The two countries also need to start paying some result-oriented attention to arriving at mutual accommodation in respect of such issues as a) equitable sharing of water resources; b) adequate availability of energy supplies; c) demarcation of the maritime boundary and d) cooperating unreservedly, including intelligence sharing, on the matter of terrorism.

Dealings with the Muslim world have left a lot to be desired. In so far as Islamic causes go, do we honestly have to try to be the vanguard?

We should be one with the Muslim world as brothers but not as standard bearers. We must steer well clear of sectarian and denominational issues with the Muslim world.

We may consider proposing that decisions on action re. Muslim causes should preferably be taken jointly, e.g. through the OIC. Economic issues deserve top attention.

Above all, efforts to reduce our foreign debt are called for. An in-depth exercise on the meandering path this debt profile has adopted in the recent past may not be such a bad idea.

Remember the several pious declarations in the past to smash the wretched begging bowl? Has not the time come to break out of semantics and to do something concrete about this resolve?

There has been a lot of talk on how to make the country attractive for foreign investors. In the policies adopted so far, all we have succeeded in is to attract the wrong kind of investment.

There is need to convince our international partners that we mean business; that our economic and fiscal policies are long term and market-oriented.

It is also about time that the prosperous dual-nationals did something to help get the country out of its economic woes.

Merely buying real estate is neither here nor there! A Foreign Policy wish list needs must include the pious hope that hollow ostentation would be eschewed.

A low profile is what may be called for. Above all, there is imperative need to avoid getting involved in international ventures that shine but have little substance.

Emphasis should be on strengthening ties with friendly states like China, regional states and with the Third World in general.

Constructive regional politics should be an important objective. Developing newer and newer liaisons with far off lands and exotic destinations can wait.

The country has unnecessarily spent a bit too much effort, resources and energy on projects of multilateral diplomacy.

In the process, we have been badly neglecting what can be called state-to-state diplomacy. There is imperative need to cut down drastically on our bumbling efforts in multilateral diplomacy.

This is a luxury that the country can indulge in only at its own peril. All in all, what is needed in this hour of destiny is a thorough and dispassionate introspection in respect of our past experience in the field of foreign affairs.

And this should include a stringent re-appraisal of the yardstick that has been used hitherto in the process of selection of our diplomatic representatives abroad.

This is an exercise that needs to be carried out betimes in a thorough-going manner, without fear or favour.

Weaknesses evident in our system would need to be identified and rooted out; responsibility for failures pinned down.

No sacred cows should be spared and no quarter given. What is needed is a thorough purge and, if found necessary, drastic surgery.

This is the need of the hour. To delay would be to miss a God sent opportunity. There may not be another waiting down the road.

— The writer is a former Ambassador and former Assistant Secretary General of OIC.

Source: Published in Pak Observer

Pakistan's New Security Challenges By Dr Shoaib Baloch

Can Pakistan overcome new security challenges which are emanating from changing regional security landscape and internal discords?

Externally, Pakistan faces new security threats from impending perilous outcomes in Afghanistan, shifting global power dynamics with intensifying US-China power competition, growing Indo-US strategic partnership, changing nature and characteristics of the Indian state, advancing technology and cyber threats, navigating new geopolitics of the region, and emerging transboundary terrorism challenges.

If Afghanistan descends into chaos because of the looming humanitarian crisis, it will create security challenges for Pakistan. The fallout of Afghanistan's humanitarian crisis can be refugee influx in the KPK and Balochistan, which have already been volatile provinces of the country. The more Afghan exodus reaches these two provinces, the greater economic pain will be felt. Consequently, conflict escalates over meagre resources—especially water and food—between different segments of society, creating a new theatre of contest in both provinces of the country. Moreover, the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan seems to have emboldened other extremist groups such as the TTP and the IS-K, impelling them to increase their terrorist activities in Pakistan, thereby disrupting hardly achieved internal peace and stability.

With the shifting of winds of power from West to East, Pakistan, owing to its geostrategic location, will find itself in the eye of the geopolitical storm of US-China power competition. Pakistan's balancing approach toward the USA and China is no longer workable; it has to make a strategic choice between Washington and Beijing as both powers' growing competition is compressing time and space for Islamabad. Obviously, by aligning with either of the two great powers, Pakistan will confront new security challenges because great powers can cloud the strategic environment of the region. The growing Indo-US strategic romance can greatly affect the regional strategic stability.

Both external and internal security threats deserve attention. Pakistan can overcome external challenges by crafting proactive foreign policy measures in

order to protect its national interests. Pakistan's geo-economic shift is a significant policy initiative that will help the country steering itself out of new geopolitical crises. Besides, appreciating diversity, getting rid of extremism, making equal distribution of resources, promoting democratic culture, and educating the youth can be panacea to these security challenges.

To contain China, the USA has forged a strategic alliance with India; both countries have increased their military collaboration. Despite nuclear deterrence, strategic balance in the region will tilt in favour of India provided that Washington throws its strategic weight behind New Delhi to obstruct Beijing's regional outreach. As a result, Pakistan will be at disadvantaged position as the regional balance of power shifts against it, while India is radically transforming internally.

Notwithstanding India has claimed to be a secular and democratic country, power usurpation by the BJP-RSS cohort, with ultranationalist sentiments, has changed the nature and characteristics of the Indian state. The moderate and secular impulse of the country has stopped working; India is now becoming a dangerous radical country with increasing extremist tendencies in both the government and the media. This ideological change in India brought about the Pulwama/Balakot crisis, and has increased the risk of nuclear escalation between the two nuclear armed countries. Ideological shift in India, as has been taking place since the BJP has come to power, would have horrendous repercussions for regional peace. It increases the risk of strategic miscalculation by affecting crises as well as deterrence stability.

However, technological advancement is critical for modern development. But it has security implications, too. Artificial intelligence and cyber security advancement by adversaries put vulnerable countries at risk. India's primacy in the IT sector creates national security challenges for Pakistan because New Delhi attempts to use its technological superiority to carry out cyberattacks against Islamabad. Critical communication networks will be disrupted that certainly result in the breach of national security data by putting all security installations, banking systems and information sectors at risk. Besides, information warfare and cyberterrorism are also woven into the global technological landscape.

Moreover, shifting sands of regional geopolitics puts stress on the country's national security. Navigating these troubled waters will not be as smooth as it seems since geopolitical transformation is occurring in Pakistan's neighbourhood and beyond. Militant groups at the helm of affairs in Afghanistan, Indo-US

strategic alignment, Indo-Israel bonhomie, Saudi-Iran discontent, Arab normalization with Israel, great power competition at the Indo-Pacific region, Russia's return to South Asia and China's quest to be the next global superpower are critical developments which can be a litmus test for Pakistan's national security.

Although Pakistan has succeeded in eliminating terrorist networks by launching several military operations in conflict-ridden areas of the country, terrorist outfits have flown to Afghanistan and other neighbouring countries from where they operate and carry out sporadic terrorist activities in Pakistan. Religious and nationalist banned militant organizations tend to launch attacks on Pakistani soil by hiding in neighbouring countries. Recent mounting terrorist activities in the country signify that new security threats are emerging from transboundary terrorist operations.

Internally, identity crisis, ethno-nationalism, extremism, deteriorating state-society relations, political polarization, contest over interprovincial water resources and socio-economic insecurity are critical challenges for the country's national security. These challenges can stymie Pakistan's economic progress and political stability which are crucial for internal cohesion and national harmony.

Both external and internal security threats deserve attention. Pakistan can overcome external challenges by crafting proactive foreign policy measures in order to protect its national interests. Pakistan's geo-economic shift is a significant policy initiative that will help the country steering itself out of new geopolitical crises. Besides, appreciating diversity, getting rid of extremism, making equal distribution of resources, promoting democratic culture, and educating the youth can be panacea to these security challenges.

Source: Published in Pakistan Today

Rethinking Civil Services Reforms By

Muhammad Nauman Hafeez Khan

When the present government came in, bureaucratic reforms were announced as the top agenda of the government. Prime Minister Imran Khan frequently pointed out inefficiency in bureaucracy as a major cause of ills in the governance structure of Pakistan.

Special Advisor for Institutional Reforms and Austerity Measures Dr Ishrat Hussain was given the mammoth task of reforming the civil services. During his three-year tenure, Dr Ishrat worked on several contours of the bureaucracy to bring about a workable idea on leashing this problematic giant. However, before his resignation as special advisor to the PM, Dr Hussain failed to initiate any change in the civil administrative setup.

At this crucial juncture, the PM must look ahead, invite all those who subscribe to the vision of a “Naya Pakistan” to participate wholeheartedly in the process, lead the reform of our institutions so that any future digressions are dealt with appropriately and without bias or nepotism, and create the sort of collective momentum which is the prerequisite for any transformational change in a society on its path to becoming one nation, driven by a shared vision of the future.

Even before that, bureaucratic reforms have been initiated from time to time by previous governments but ended with similar results. The reforms suggested by Dr Ishrat used a top-down approach to reform the top hierarchy of bureaucracy, ignoring the much-needed base of it. This effort is similar to the concept of reverse engineering in which a machine is broken down into pieces to find the fault, instead of making a more efficient machine.

The issues in the bureaucracy of Pakistan are not in its function but in its formation. Major reforms that have been proposed are making of a four-tier bureaucracy including All Pakistan Services, Federal Services, Provincial Services, and District Services, introducing a specialized recruitment process, security of tenure, increasing the ACR weightage for promotion, and increasing the compensation packages.

The above-mentioned reforms are not new for the readers. Dr Ishrat himself has been actively proposing these reforms in the previous governments as well. However, these reforms have failed to reach the implementation stage due to several bottlenecks attached to them.

The bureaucracy of Pakistan is the reflection of the Indian Civil Services introduced by the British government in united India. Since the inception of Pakistan, recurring political crises and hurdles in the way of democracy have helped the bureaucracy to emerge as a strong pillar in the state machinery, resistive to any reformational change made against it.

To rethink the civil services, one has to make strategic changes in the recruitment procedure and functions of the bureaucracy. Firstly, the FPSC needs to come up with a redesigned syllabus that discourages cramming in the written exam. Secondly, the interview weightage in the competitive exam should be increased. This will allow the Commission to pick those candidates who have strong personalities to deal with public issues.

After the revision of the CSS Syllabus in 2016, the rote system has corrupted the core of the recruitment process. Now, only those candidates can make it to the top groups who have bagged good marks in the written stage. Over-weightage to the written marks has made the personality of a candidate completely irrelevant. Later in the services, these candidates fail to deliver in the field. Thirdly, the psychometric assessment should also be given a portion of marks in deciding the final allocation of the candidate.

In the function of bureaucracy, a major hurdle in its performance is understaffing. The overburdened officers are unable to deliver efficient services to the public, which is visible in the quality of governance in the country. This understaffing has a technical reason. The FPSC conducts the competitive exam every year on the recommendation of the Establishment Division. For recruitment of each candidate through the competitive exam, the Establishment Division pays Rs 18,000 to the FPSC. However, after the final recommendation of the allocated candidates, half of the qualified candidates are not given any seat, sending them home unallocated. Despite the deficiency of officers, the state exchequer is ripped off its money.

The quota system needs to be revisited as well. In the 1973 Constitution, the provincial quota for recruitment in civil services was defined for the next 40 years.

This law lapsed in 2013. Currently, the quota system is being extended through an SRO from the PM's Office. Every year, half of the advertised seats go vacant despite the availability of persons qualified for the vacant seats. Technically, once the provincial seats get filled on merit, the empty quota seats could be converted to open merit seats.

Without bringing strategic changes in the recruitment process, the bureaucratic hierarchy cannot be reformed. At the present stage, changing the entire outlook of the bureaucracy will harvest undesired results that in turn can make its performance worse. Moreover, the current stronghold of bureaucracy will resist any step taken against it leading to more difficulties for the elected government to handle it. Gradually rethinking the civil services, bringing reforms at each stage starting from the recruitment process will make it more responsive to the public needs.

Source: Published in Pakistan Today

Drawing a Fine Balance in Foreign Policy By

Dr Muhammad Khan

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has initiated a new debate in the foreign policy of Pakistan. The controversy arose because of untimely visit of Prime Minister, Imran Khan to Moscow and thereafter appearance of a letter from United States, State Department, questioning the preferences in the foreign policy of Pakistan.

Rather, tackling the issue at the level of foreign office, the political forces in Pakistan involved themselves in an un-necessary open debate with ambiguous orientations of various political parties, institutions and prominent national personalities.

The imprudent debate and political squabbling denuded the state secrets and confidentiality of national policies and redlines of Pakistani national interests.

This mainly happened because of the no-confidence move against the incumbent Government of Prime Minister Imran Khan.

Taking cover of the US threatening letter, Prime Minister Imran Khan accused the opposition parties and their leadership as traitor and part of so-called US strategy of regime change.

At Islamabad Security Dialogue, Prime Minister Imran Khan further criticised the opposition and particularly a “powerful” country, indeed the United States and west for their prejudices and biases against Pakistan and Imran Khan.

These statements were more of political in nature to shed the impending pressure of no-confidence.

The same forum was later addressed by General Bajwa, the powerful Army Chief of Pakistan.

Unlike political statement of Prime Minister Imran Khan, General Bajwa took a different approach of the Russian invasion of Ukraine and called for its immediate stoppage.

Indeed, the General took a dimension which is strategic in nature and directly related to smaller states like Pakistan.

General Bajwa said in his statement that, “despite legitimate security concerns of Russia, its aggression against a smaller country cannot be condoned.

” This should have been the theme, rather providing Russia with the clean passage of invading an independent state.

Today, if Pakistan supports Russian invasion, what if another major power try to invade Pakistan tomorrow.

Therefore, there was a requirement of drawing a clear line and course of action for any major power while dealing with smaller states.

In the past, U.S has been involved in the regime change and invasions of many smaller states which has same connotation as for Russia.

On the basis of US invasions, Russian invasion cannot be justified. General further said that, “Pakistan has consistently called for an immediate ceasefire and cessation of hostilities.

We support immediate dialogue between all sides to find a lasting solution to the conflict.” The dichotomy in the statement of Prime Minister Imran Khan and General Bajwa during their speeches in the Islamabad Security Dialogue has necessitated clarity in the foreign policy position of Pakistan.

Indeed, Pakistan has its interests with all major powers and all regions; therefore there is a requirement to draw a fine balance in the relationship with all of them.

This can be ensured by formulating and pursuing a balance foreign policy. Such a foreign policy would enable Pakistan to independently formulate and pursue its foreign policy.

While defining an independent foreign policy, it is generally said that, a state has independent foreign policy once it has ‘friendship to all and enmity to none’.

This can be inferred as interests of the state are strictly pursued, preserved and well-being of the people is the real priority and preserved accordingly.

This explanation of the foreign policy is very idealistic and has nothing to do with the reality.

Indeed, the international system is running under the realism and realism is the product of competitive orientation of world driven by anarchy and power politics.

Therefore in a world which is governed by realism and power politics, idealism is unlikely to prevail.

Besides, the world is highly globalized and interdependent where each state has dependency over other(s).

A survey of the foreign policies of states including major powers indicates that, all have biases and prejudices in their foreign policies owing to complicated nature of the evolving world.

The foreign policy decisions of the states somehow have pre and post inferences on the foreign policy decision making process of the state.

This logical debate leads to another aspect of foreign policy; a balance foreign policy by a state.

The balance in the foreign policy would entail keeping a balance in the relationship between major powers, middle powers and smaller states purely on the basis of national interests.

For a state like Pakistan, there is need to formulate and pursue a balance foreign policy. Since it has key geopolitical location which always attracts the interests of major powers, therefore any biases and leaning towards single one or two major powers would jeopardize its national interests and pursuance of long-term objectives of the foreign policy.

A balance and interests driven foreign policy will keep Pakistan relevant for all major powers as well as for rest of the world, providing avenues for a wider and longer political, economic and strategic pursuance of its national interests freely.

Formulation and pursuance of such a balance foreign policy needs a critical re-evaluation of existing contents of the foreign policy objectives, the contemporary

methodology of its political and diplomatic interpretations and format of its pursuance vizviz international best practices.

Domestic party politics of Pakistan should not dictate and derail the foreign policy objectives of Pakistan.

Therefore, let's have a consensus on national issues with a professional approach towards formulation and pursuance of foreign policy of Pakistan.

— The writer is Professor of Politics and IR at International Islamic University, Islamabad.

Source: Published in Pak Obeserver

ECONOMY

A Global Crisis By Tom Hall

The reckless escalation of economic, political and military pressure by the United States and Nato against Russia is rapidly leading to a major global economic crisis with serious repercussions for the international working class.

The campaign against Russia, which includes a crippling sanctions regime aimed at starving out the Russian people and which has all but cut off Russia from the world economy, is aimed at the conversion of that country into a colony of western imperialism and the plundering of its natural resources. Putin's invasion of Ukraine, while it is reactionary and must be opposed, is the product of a years-long campaign of escalating provocations by Nato against Russia, using Ukraine as bait.

Millions around the world look at the unfolding events in eastern Europe with anxiety and fear that they could rapidly escalate into a nuclear war. But the crisis is also triggering immense economic dislocation that is driving towards a massive explosion of class conflict. The orientation of those who seek to oppose the drive to a third world war must be, as Leon Trotsky observed in 1934, not to the war map, but to the map of the class struggle.

In a statement last week on the economic impact of the war and western sanctions against Russia, the International Monetary Fund predicted: "Price shocks will have an impact worldwide, especially on poor households for whom food and fuel are a higher proportion of expenses. Should the conflict escalate, the economic damage would be all the more devastating. The sanctions on Russia will also have a substantial impact on the global economy and financial markets, with significant spillovers to other countries."

This is already beginning to take place. Oil prices have reached \$130 per barrel, and in the United States, gasoline prices at the pumps have surged past \$4 a gallon to their highest levels ever. In France, the price of gas has gone from €1.65 per liter at the end of last year to €2.20 per liter, or \$9.16 per gallon. Wheat futures have already risen by 70 percent this year – Russia and Ukraine together

account for one-quarter of all grain exports. In Europe, industrial production is beginning to shut down due to soaring energy prices.

In the month of February, US inflation reached 7.9 percent, and in the Eurozone it reached 5.8 percent, the highest level on record since the creation of the single currency in 1997. Inflation is expected to rise sharply in March as the consequences of sanctions reverberate throughout the world economy.

But among the worst hit will be developing countries in Africa and the Middle East. Starvation and famine in this region of the world is a real possibility. Eighty percent of grain in Egypt is purchased from Russia. Other major importers of Russian grain include Turkey, Bangladesh, Nigeria and Yemen.

The impact on the working class will be enormous. It is already reeling from more than two years of the pandemic, in which millions have died and living standards have been eroded to the breaking point by inflation caused by pandemic-induced chaos in global supply chains. This social trauma is the product of the deliberate rejection of necessary public health measures by the world's governments, above all the United States, on the basis of "herd immunity," or the sacrificing of life to profit.

Governments are using Ukraine to deflect attention from the war which should be waged against the pandemic, which is not over and is already beginning to surge again. They are also using it to recast inflation, which was already at its highest level in decades before the outbreak of war in Ukraine, as a 'Putin price hike' entirely the fault of Russia, in an attempt to deflect economic anxiety towards hatred of a foreign enemy. But while the wealthiest layers of society, including the most privileged layers of the middle class, have been gripped with war hysteria, there are no signs that this campaign is having any significant effect within the working class.

In a speech last week announcing a ban on Russian oil imports to the United States, President Biden presented the economic impact of these measures in the United States as a necessary sacrifice in the name of "defending freedom." But neither Biden nor anyone else ever bothered to ask workers in the United States, much less workers in Africa and the developing world, whether they wanted to make such sacrifices for a reckless campaign that raises the danger of World War III.

No such sacrifices are being demanded of the corporate oligarchy, which will make money hand over fist from the war just as it has during the pandemic. Indeed, the stock prices of major US defense contractors such as Northrup Grumman and Raytheon have risen sharply in recent weeks. Western oil companies and agribusinesses are also licking their chops at the prospect of superprofits from worldwide shortages caused by the removal of their Russian rivals.

The war in Ukraine is being used as cover to redirect billions in resources away from social programs benefiting the working class towards war. The latest spending bill making its way through Congress includes nearly \$800 billion for the military, including \$15 billion in spending for Ukraine, while omitting \$15 billion in pandemic-related funding. The corporate media in Britain is calling for the gutting of the postwar welfare state for the sake of increasing military spending. Most ominously, Germany has rammed through a tripling of the military budget for this year, the largest increase since Adolf Hitler.

The attitude of the ruling class was summed up most crudely and bluntly by an op-ed comment in the Wall Street Journal, whose headline declared, "NATO Needs More Guns and Less Butter." The phrase recalls the infamous statement by Hermann Goering that "iron has always made an empire strong, at most butter and lard have made the people fat."

The social consequences of this reckless campaign are preparations for a showdown between the working class and the capitalist class in each country, in which mass anger will intersect with the growing radicalization which is already underway as a consequence of the pandemic. The past two years have seen major strikes by industrial workers in the United States, the growth of wildcat strikes throughout Turkey, the defiance of anti-strike injunctions by health care workers in Sri Lanka and Australia, and other significant expressions of social opposition.

Excerpted: 'The NATO campaign against Russia will drive escalating class struggle across the world'.

Courtesy: wsws.org

Source: The News

Bracing For The Era Of Economic Shortage

– Analysis By Chan Kung

The term “shortage” has been banished from mainstream society in the world for at least a few decades. Oftentimes, in the Second World War themed movies, we see emotionless, starving people scavenging for food near the ruins of war, or that they pay high prices for commodities that are in shortage. The dark shadow of shortage has not really gone away. In fact, it is now looming over the world again. One example of shortage happens in Russia, where it is said that there is an instinctive tendency for Russian households to stock up on sugar and buckwheat every time when there is likely to be severe inflation or supply shortages. In 1998, 2008, 2014 and 2020, every economic disaster in Russia has been accompanied by a rush on sugar by the people. Sugar is once again the commodity most difficult to obtain in Russia, following its President Vladimir Putin’s “Special Military Operation” on February 24 this year that completely cut the country’s economy off from the Western countries.

If commodity shortage becomes generalized, it would be the shortage of economy, and usually it will be accompanied by the rise of various commodity prices. Few economists around the world seemed to be talking about this right now, so let me take my point a step further here. It is actually a simple and straightforward judgment that the world will return to the era of shortage of economy.

Perhaps a lot of people, I mean the Europeans, Americans, Asians, especially those people in the OECD countries are now thinking that the war in Ukraine will eventually end through certain sensible negotiations, and Europe will be saved from war once again. In this scenario, while there would be all sorts of complaints, the world would once again be “peaceful”. This may be what most people imagine now for the end of the war. This situation may or may not happen, yet there will be a serious problem all the same. The gunfire may be stopped; however, the adjustment of the world economic structure will not be easily reversed. We will no longer see the hyper-rational prosperity scene which was based on ideological illusions in the past. Global economy has already been re-divided by a pair of super-geopolitical hands, revealing a new structure that is familiar yet completely unknown.

We can look at the logic of these impacts and the trends that the evidence shows.

Even in the early days of the war, the United States and Europe have jointly announced sanctions on the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline. In fact, this major European energy pipeline was almost completed, but now lies in the ruins because it cannot be put into operation, and even the co-operating company has announced its dissolution. Germany, the United Kingdom, and other European countries that have relied heavily on Russian energy have announced that they will wean themselves off Russian energy and seek alternative sources of supply within a certain period of time. Among the European countries, the United Kingdom and Germany show the clearest stance, both declaring that they will basically end their “over-dependence” on the Russian energy by the end of 2020. For the Western countries, it is no doubt that this will be a huge reset of the energy structure, which will not only bring about obvious inflation, but also a significant risk that each country’s economy will fall into crisis.

Such reset is structural change, and it goes beyond merely about a gas pipeline. Many of the changes brought by it are permanent structural shifts. According to European Network of Transmission System Operators for Electricity (ENTSO-E)’s statement, Ukraine and Moldova have successfully connected to the European continent’s electricity system, paving the way for both countries to permanently cut their power links with Russia. In Belgium, the war in Ukraine has completely disrupted the country’s decision to shut down two nuclear power plants, and the Belgium’s ruling coalition has now decided to keep them operating for another 10 years. Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo said that, “the federal government has decided to take the necessary steps to extend the lifetime of two nuclear power plants by ten years. This should strengthen our country’s independence from fossil fuels in these turbulent geopolitical times”. Belgium’s original plan was to switch to natural gas after the closure of its two nuclear power plants and build a gas plant north of Brussels. All these will change. In fact, it is not just Belgium that has decided to take contingency measures. According to a new proposal by the European Commission, the European Union as a whole, aims to reduce its dependence on Russian gas by two-thirds within this year and end its dependence on Russian gas by 2030.

In terms of global manufacturing, Bosch, the world’s largest auto parts supplier, has announced to halt deliveries of truck parts to Russian customers. As Ukraine discovered that the components of Bosch, a German engineering and

electronics-focused business, were used in Russian infantry fighting vehicles. “Due to indications that Bosch products – contrary to local contractual agreements – may have been used in non-civilian applications, we have stopped the delivery of truck components in Russia and to Russian customers,” Bosch said in a statement. According to Der Spiegel, German authorities have asked local prosecutors to immediately investigate the Ukrainian government’s allegations. Under EU’s sanctions against Russia, EU companies are banned from supplying Russia with any “dual-use” products suitable for both civilian and military purposes.

As a matter of fact, there are now profound structural changes in the global manufacturing and high-tech markets. Daimler Benz, Ford Motor Company, Toyota Motor, Volvo, Jaguar Land Rover, Volkswagen, General Motors, Mitsubishi and Renault have all announced their withdrawal from the Russian market. Apple, Microsoft and Samsung Electronics etc. have also suspended operations in Russia. In the field of semiconductor chips, ADM and Intel have both announced the suspension of deliveries to Russia. These withdrawals are even affecting the green energy sector. Orsted AS, the world’s largest offshore wind power developer has announced that it will stop buying Russian coals and biomasses.

The service sector was actually the first area of sanctions against Russia. The SWIFT system, touted as the “financial nuclear weapon”, was previously an untouchable realm, or so many of the world’s leading financial experts thought. Now, SWIFT has been used in geopolitics. This important financial transaction system has excluded all Russian banks and financiers. In addition, the British bank HSBC has announced the end of its relationship with a number of banks including Russia’s second largest bank. Financial firms such as Citigroup, JPMorgan Chase and Goldman Sachs etc. have also taken similar actions. The EU has banned its settlement system from trading stocks, bonds or derivatives in rubles, the only currency in which Russia can pay. Interestingly, the same Western investment banks and consultancies that used to actively push the global financial community to do business in Russia are now doing just the opposite, i.e., helping them to withdraw from the country, as if they have equally solid experience in this.

Even in civil aviation, which is closely related to transportation safety, Western companies have opted to cut ties with Russia. U.S. aviation manufacturer Boeing announced on March 1 that it would suspend parts, maintenance and technical

support to Russian airlines following the invasion. Europe's Airbus and Brazil's Embraer have also announced the withdrawal of all services to Russia. As a result, nearly 1,000 Western-made aircrafts in Russia would face the supply interruption of spare parts and technical support. This move has left Russia contemplating a return to production of the notoriously unreliable domestically made large aircrafts that have long been ignored.

How Western companies have responded to the sanctions on Russia has been extraordinary, and even more efficient than the pace at which Western governments have acted. Although the Russian government tried to take countermeasures to prevent the formation and spread of the divestment waves, such as emphasizing the seizure of assets, disguised refusal to pay debts, nationalization and cancellation of joint ventures etc., the Western business community is unmoved and seems willing to pay a heavy price. For example, British Petroleum's divestment could lose as much as USD 25 billion, but still insisted on giving up its 20% share in Rosneft. Shell announced to abandon all of its businesses in Russia, where it has 20% to 50% share in Russian gas, Siberian and other projects. Similarly, Exxon Mobil, which has as many as 1,000 employees in Russia, and Equinor ASA, Norway's largest energy company, which has been operating in Russia for three decades, are also leaving.

From manufacturing to services and financial industries, the chain of negative impacts of the war in Ukraine has been expanding and extending.

The Russian central bank's assets in Western countries are now being frozen. More than half of its total foreign exchange reserves of more than USD 630 billion were immediately rendered unusable overnight. The exchange rate of the Russian ruble plummeted by more than 40% on the same day, and has not recovered to its original level since then. In response to the situation, the Central Bank of Russia subsequently raised the key interest rate from 9.5% to 20%. Such a high cost of funds in Russia will obviously freeze all the country's domestic economic activities. In financial trading, major rating agencies such as Moody's, Standard & Poor's and Fitch have downgraded Russia's sovereign debt to junk status. The London Stock Exchange also suspended 27 Russian companies listed on Paternoster Square from trading.

Most importantly, food worldwide is affected as well.

In the case of China, according to some statistics, from February 24 to March 8, when the war has just started, the contract price of foreign wheat rose by 44.98% in these two weeks, and the yearly increase has reached 66.24%. During the same period of time, the Zhengzhou Commodity Exchange's strong wheat contract also rose 20.86% during the same time period. World Food Program (WFP) officials said on March 18 that the food supply chain in Ukraine, the world's largest grain producer, is collapsing. Some of the country's infrastructures are damaged, and many supermarkets stores and warehouses emptied. The WFP warned that with global food prices at all-time highs, UN agencies are concerned that the crisis in Ukraine will have an impact on global food security, especially in hunger hotspots. The UN revealed that due to inflation and the Ukraine crisis, WFP has to spend an extra USD 71 million a month on food this year, which could have fed 4 million people.

From the perspective of world geopolitics, this would be the first time ever after the Second World War that large-scale DIME (diplomacy, information, military and economics) state power tools were used to compete in and win a war. That said, consequences and impacts of the utilization of DIME tools in the sanctions against Russia, especially in terms of economic sanctions, remain unclear, as the action taken is not a geopolitical measure that has undergone meticulous research and planning. Such move could have a number of unknown, damaging possibilities. This involves in multiple fields, from manufacturing sector to the service industry, to major adjustments in finance and markets. Along with the turmoil and impacts of the world geopolitical situation, global economy may transit to the structural shift in re-division, redefinition, and reorganization of the global market from the shortage of certain commodities and market shock. This in turn may lead to a transition to a new economic era of product shortages and price shocks.

Perhaps aware of this unknown potential harm to the world economy, on March 18, a spokesman for the U.S. State Department emphasized that the sanctions imposed by the United States on Russia due to the situation in Ukraine were not intended to be permanent. Restrictions can be lifted after Ukraine regains its territorial integrity. The problem is that business relationships are not as simple as imagined by these officials. They are built on the basis of trust and credit, whether such businesses are financial services or commodity trading. Therefore, the subversion of commercial relations, the fait accompli of major losses, the unpredictable complex driving factors of geopolitics, and the powerful influence of social movements are bound to produce more profound impacts.

In just 72 hours, countries like Germany and France have changed their perception of peace and prosperity that has persisted for decades, a completely unimaginable feat in the past. For this reason, French President Emmanuel Macron said that the war in Ukraine was like a social “electric shock” for NATO.

Those who are used to peace will only remember peaceful environment in their memories, and would have a hard time to believe that the scenarios of starving people lining up for food handouts and the scenes of factories, towns and beautiful buildings in total ruins, common during the Second World War, are repeating themselves in the Europe they thought to be rational and refined. The dramatic fluctuations of commodity price, previously unimaginable, will go beyond traders’ psychological price levels, seriously challenging the living standards, income levels, and assets of people around the world. Unfortunately, all these changes and shocks may very well become a reality in the future world.

This will be a new era of product shortages and price shocks, caused by structural adjustments, supply chains, and various unpredictable factors. At the beginning, it may be a breakdown of the balance of supply and demand. We might see some products in excessive supply, while others in serious shortage. Yet, as time goes on, shortages and defects in the supply chain will spread, causing more and more products to be in shortage, and prices will soar irrationally. Eventually, the world economy as a whole will see serious structural imbalance, an aftermath of the Ukraine war. This war may further expand into a world war, or become a confrontational global arms race, or it may end temporarily with the return of short-term rationality, but all these possible results will not eliminate the reality of structural adjustment of the world economy. An era of economy shortage caused by the adjustment of product, asset and market structures has descended upon us.

This is a process of economic evolution. Every country, industry, and economy will face different situations, but they will all be bracing the structural adjustment of the market, assets, product supply and demand, as well as of the supply chain and major price fluctuations driven by geopolitics.

This in turn, causes more general economic difficulties and forms a shortage of economy. Such structural adjustment has broken the original supply system, and the markets of various countries will be facing reinvestment, redefinition and reorganization of production and market resetting. The efficiency of this process

will be diverse, depending on the situation of different countries. The supply, the scale, and return too will be different. In the end, the final price and efficiency will become far from optimal, causing countries' economies to gradually slide into disastrous situations.

In world today, the main factor that causes economic difficulties and potential major crises will not be capital as expected by Karl Marx. The most important driving factor of this would be geopolitics, and it is geopolitics that dominates the resetting process of global economy. The conflict in the world is no longer the clash of civilizations, but more of a conflict caused by differences in civilizations. It is not merely the conflict between religions and ethnic groups, rather it is more likely caused by ideologies, and the political ambition of expansion. Such conflict is more a crisis caused by irrational people's misunderstanding and disdain for rationality. While numerous Nobel Prizes in economics have been awarded, the deficiency in rationality has caused it hard to prevent conflicts and wars from breaking out.

In the era of economic shortage, which countries and regions may become safe havens thanks to geopolitics?

The answer is that the relative re-emergence of the Anglo-American axis, the maritime states, and the economies of the American continent, will become a possibility for this. Global spatial patterns indicate that conflicts and competitions are most intense in the continental regions of the world, i.e., the continental regions where Europe, Russia, the Middle East, Central Asia and China and India are located, and it would be difficult to establish a buffer zone between them. In this region, direct conflicts and competitions, which have been in existence since time immemorial, are unavoidable. In contrast, the geographical location of the Anglo-American axis is in the middle of the maritime regions. The Atlantic and Pacific routes connect the American continent and a large number of island countries and regions of different sizes, often divided by the oceans. Historically and relatively speaking, there are lesser enmities between them, and they are mutually dependent in their trade relations. Therefore, while the continental regions are experiencing violent upheaval, the Anglo-American axis, the maritime states, and the Americas have more prominent opportunities for development and enjoy prosperity than ever before.

Thus, we have now come to the point where geopolitics is resetting our world, rendering everything else insignificant.

*Chan Kung, Founder of ANBOUND Think Tank (established in 1993), Mr. Chan Kung is one of China's renowned experts in information analysis. Most of Chan Kung's outstanding academic research activities are in economic information analysis, particularly in the area of public policy.

Source: Published in Eur Asia Review

The Russia-Ukraine War And Pakistan's Economy By Dr Kamal Monnoo

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February was the largest conventional military attack seen since World War II and can cause a global economic catastrophe. Pakistan has taken a neutral stance, born of its fast-evolving strategic partnership with Russia. This new found alliance being spearheaded by Prime Minister Imran Khan, harks back to some historic disappointments (financial, political, strategic and defence related in nature) with the West in general and the US in particular, and spans over several fronts: diplomacy, defence, nuclear energy, and technology transfer per se—making Russia a pivotal part of Pakistan's nation-building process, mainly during a period where it faces many challenges from all facets involving key global linkages and a dwindling currency. Yet, this is unlikely to shield Pakistan from the ravages of a war of such scale. Especially since, in the global geopolitical context, both Pakistan and Russia today find themselves ever more closely linked to two other powers, China and the US (albeit, along with the European Union). The Russia-Ukraine crisis has stoked uncertainty in global trade and will impact oil and other commodities, according to Sunil Sinha, research director, and principal economist at Global Ratings. Pakistan may not have a significant merchandise trade with Russia, nevertheless, it stands to lose economically due to supply disruptions caused by Western sanctions. "Despite Pakistan's limited direct exposure, the combination of supply disruptions and the ongoing terms of trade shock will likely weigh on growth, result in a sharper rise in inflation, and (lead to) a wider current account deficit," said the chief economist at the World Bank when compiling its institutional report. Here are the ways Pakistan could suffer due to a Russia-Ukraine war even without being part of it:

A ban on Russia's crude exports: In reaction to the US' ban on all oil and gas imports from Russia, Brent crude prices surged to nearly \$130 per barrel last week, up 43 percent from the beginning of February. This is a major setback for global economic growth as Russia is one of the largest exporters of crude oil globally. Pakistan's trade, however, comprises only negligible or nil oil imports from Russia, but there could be a spill-over impact in the form of high inflation and sluggish growth. On March 13, Morgan Stanley lowered Pakistan's GDP forecast for the fiscal year 2023 by 50 basis points to as low as nearly 3 percent, citing risks to macro stability due to high crude oil prices. "Even as we expect the

cyclical recovery trend to continue, we expect it to be softer than we previously projected,” it said in a report. “We believe that the ongoing geopolitical tensions exacerbate external risks and impart a stagflationary impulse to the economy.” It was noted that more risks could arise if global growth conditions weaken further, which would hamper Pakistan’s export and capital expenditure cycle. Already logistics and shipping is posing to be a great hurdle! Inflationary concerns: Pakistan depends on imports to meet up to almost 85 percent of its crude oil needs or perhaps even more. The surge in international oil prices to a 14-year high will now result in broader price pressures. Analysts conclude that the impact on Pakistan’s economy will be felt mostly through higher cost-push inflation weighing in on all economic agents—households, businesses, and government. Every 10 percent rise in crude oil prices leads to a 0.4 percentage point-rise in consumer inflation, according to Nomura Research Firm. Morgan Stanley pegs retail inflation in Pakistan at almost 14 percent for the fiscal year 2023, much higher than the SBP figures. This has increased the risks of a higher import bill and, in turn, a widening of Pakistan’s current account deficit (CAD). The CAD is expected to widen by at least another 3 to 5 percent of the GDP in the financial year 2023, once these elements start kicking in fully, according to a report by Nomura Research. This is likely to further dent the Pak Rupee, which has already recently plunged to almost 182 against the US Dollars, in inter-bank exchange parity.

Pakistan’s defence supplies: It is believed that the multiple abstentions from a vote in the United Nations from Pakistan since the Ukraine invasion were driven by the country’s need to secure its supply of defence equipment, where Russia & China could play an integral part. Going forward, Pakistan is looking at Russia (after China) to play a pivotal role in meeting its defence needs and military equipment upgradation on easier financing terms. Technology transfer is yet another area where Russia could play an important role in making Pakistan self-reliant for its defence needs against an increasingly hostile India. By 2027, it is possible that Russia could account for as much as nearly 25 percent of Pakistan’s imported arms requirements, according to trends by a defence think tank Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. This explains that the importance of defence sustainability is something that is very dear to Pakistan. Key defence contracts could be in the areas of the Russia-developed S-400 air missile system, battle tank force composed predominantly of Russian T-72M1 and T-90S tanks (similar to the ones they recently sold to the Indians), and of course nuclear energy to induct sustainability in Pakistan’s struggling energy sector. Strictly from a military and national defence perspective, today’s reality

may be that Pakistan will continue to regard this growing relationship and defence and energy ties with Russia as very precious, despite the US' threat of sanctions or the possible withdrawal of the GSP+ Scheme by the European Union.

Source: Published in The Nation

EDUCATION

An Anatomy Of Educational Reforms By **Yaqoob Ali**

The learning crisis at schools in our country is an open secret. Studies done in the pre-covid period concluded that children learn either ‘too little or too slow’ at schools: half the children in grade 5 were below grade two level of learning. As children transition to higher grades without mastery of the previous content, learning becomes progressively difficult for them, leading to massive dropouts. It would not be far-fetched to conjecture that the prolonged school closures would have only exacerbated the already depressingly low learning levels. The chasm between mastery and actual grade levels of children at schools is such that it warrants tackling the learning crisis as a national emergency. The first step to bridging that chasm is to deconstruct the current abysmally low learning levels and understand why our schools are so stubbornly consistent in failing our children. According to the population census 2017, there are 58.9 million children between the age of 5 and 16. To put things in perspective, that is five times the total population of Belgium. Nearly a third of these are estimated to be out of school, leaving us with roughly 39.4 million who will currently be attending school. Using conservative estimates about 24 million (or 60 percent) of these will be attending public schools.

To think that 24 million people all of whom will be a part of the workforce by 2038 will have learned ‘too little’ at schools should worry us as a nation. Add to this the existing prevalence of intolerance, entrenched sectarian and ethnic divisions, and acute regional disparity which are reinforced by illiteracy and the heart begins to race. If you juxtapose this situation with where the world is headed—with the budding applications of AI and missions to go deeper into the universe around us—one’s heart begins to sink altogether. The picture is anything but gloomy, if not outright shocking. People in the corridors of power will do well to take a break every now and then from the circus they incessantly put on to demonstrate their resolve to ‘serving the nation and protecting its interests’ and sit down to do some long overdue pondering over the conspicuous and debilitating national crisis of ineffective schooling.

Learning at schools is a function of three broad actors: the teachers, the students, and the school ecosystem which includes all the administrators, parents, policies, and material resources that create an atmosphere conducive to teaching and learning. Learning happens when children who are in an amenable physical and mental state convene in a purpose-built space with a teacher who has adequate content knowledge, pedagogical skills, and the will to put in the effort to affect cognitive skills of the children. It follows that the readiness of students to learn and of the teachers to teach depends not only on their personal abilities but also on the broader ecosystem that they are a part of. For learning to happen, and happen consistently in time and space, the students, teachers, and their ecosystem need to be aligned in a certain optimal way. But how do we figure that out? That is the holy grail of teaching and learning. Figuring out the 'optimal way' requires resolve, resources, and patience. It requires taking unpopular decisions, taking risks, experimentation, and openness to the possibility that an experiment might fail. It requires the mettle to persevere, learn, and iterate, improving progressively and not being complacent. It requires impeccable vision, continuous re-evaluation, and adaptation to changing circumstances.

We have had a myriad of piecemeal efforts to fix the public education system. Whereas good teaching and learning requires a comprehensive and unshakable ecosystem, the reforms have been more of a cobbler's work: patching here and there, oblivious to the systemic nature of the educational crisis, and sans incremental improvements. The latest effort has finally spelled out a clear roadmap for reforms. It acknowledges that educational reform is not possible without concomitant, complementary reforms in the ecosystem in which schools operate. It has a cascaded approach to introducing curricular reforms, teacher development, and assessments improvement, affording the system the time to absorb the tremors of change without falling apart. The plan is well thought out, even though its first milestone of the SNC was criticised from left, right, and centre. It is almost impossible to have a consensus on where to start, which is where most of the SNC's criticism came from. The history of educational reform the world over stands testament to the fact that it is not the choice of start that matters; rather, it is the resolve to build on whatever you start with. Countries that have begun somewhere, learnt from the experiments, iterated, and built better structures have turned their schools and their fortunes around. While a judicious and well thought out plan, it will be no better than the previous ones if not implemented with religious commitment. Any plan is only as good as its ability to survive its contact with the metaphorical enemy. It is high time that as a nation

and civil society, we came together to ensure our children acquire 'knowledge even if they have to go to China'. Now with CPEC, even the metaphorical China is quite literally here, the irony will be lost on us if we continue to recklessly slumber and become a wedge between our children and their pursuit of knowledge.

Source: Published in The Nation

Education Matters the Most By Nazakat Hussain

EDUCATION not only plays role in personal development, it has a very significant role in a country's development.

No nation can rise to its glory without the jewel of education, which strengthens a country by playing role in poverty alleviation, capacity development, financial stability, employment opportunities, literacy rate etc.

Education sector is critical while making development plans for the country. Right to education is considered as the basic human right and there is a strong link between education and country's development, be it social, economic or human development.

In the wider scenario, after Millennium Development Goals, Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) also lays huge importance on education.

SDG-4 is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

This SDG reaffirms the importance of education in a country's development. As all countries, Pakistan has also given importance to education in its constitution.

On April 19th, 2010, the 18th Amendment to the constitution of Pakistan guaranteed Free and Compulsory Education to all 5 – 16 years old children as a fundamental right via Article 25-A but 12 years down the lane, we are still waiting for the notification of this in Punjab and at the Federal level.

Question is where do we stand now in terms of implementation. With 2.2 million out-of-school children (with girls being majority), how can the target achieved in absence of appropriate budgetary allocations and weak monitoring methods.

Concrete steps need to be taken to ensure provision of free education to all children, especially girls.

There is no doubt the future of our state can and must depend heavily on the kind of education we provide to our children and the manner in which we make them a future people from Pakistan – Muhammad Ali Jinnah , first conference on education in November 1947.

The biggest factor in this failure is not only provision of insufficient budget but also the effective use of budget.

National and provincial governments are required to allocate sufficient budget for implementation of Article 25-A. Budget is the most important pre requisite in achieving SDG-4.

The cumulative education expenditure by the federal and the provincial governments in fiscal year 2020 stood at 1.5 percent of the GDP which is even less than fiscal year 2019 (Economic Survey 2020–2021).

This number is self explanatory regarding situation of education in Pakistan.

The Gross Enrolment Rates (GER) at the primary level for the age group 6 – 10 years at the national level during 2019 – 20 declined to 84 percent as compared to 91 percent in 2014–15.

COVID-19 pandemic has also affected the education scenario very badly, thus more efforts need to be made and there is strong need for allocation of a bigger chunk to education in the upcoming budget.

After constitutional amendment no.

18, school education is delegated to the provinces as the first step for the implementation of Article 25-A.

Provinces are awarded with increased funds through NFC and they also generate their revenue through different taxes. Provinces plan and approve their own budgets.

Provincial governments and assemblies should now allocate bigger amount for the education sector and should also delegate powers and finances to district level with efficient monitoring systems.

Besides budget there is also the need of certain incentives for promoting enrolment and retention of students.

Monetary problems and resources is one of the biggest hurdles which is keeping children away from attending schools.

They are forced to earn money and contribute to family's income rather than attending school.

There is a need for some incentives at school level such as free food (mid-day meals, which are also promised in Free and Compulsory Education Acts), stipend etc.

There is also strong need to build more schools as distance is inversely proportional to attendance in schools.

Biggest hurdle in girls education is the conservative mindset of people, special attention needs to be paid to change the mindset of people and in this effort religious leaders, influential personalities and elders can play a fruitful role.

Besides this, there are many other factors which serve as big barriers such as absence of toilets, lack of infrastructure, untrained teachers, no boundaries, lack of awareness, lack of science labs, canteens, school grounds etc.

Policy makers should highlight all these aspects for implementers. If we look at the statistics, according to the National Education Statistics 2017-18, only 27% Middle, 39% High and 33% higher Secondary Government schools exists in Punjab and on the other hand, there are more middle, high and higher secondary private schools and colleges in Punjab that shows the less interest of government investment in education.

According to Pakistan Bureau of statistics (PSLM 2019-20), 16% urban while 28% rural children of Punjab are still out-of-school whereas percentage of out-of-school children is the highest in Rajanpur with 48 percent.

According to Pakistan Standard and Living Measurement Survey 2019-2020, the total population of 5-16 years old children in Punjab is 31,991,082, whereas, 24 percent of this population is reported out of school.

This amounts to a total of 7,690,526 (7.69 million) children unable to go to school in Punjab.

According to the PSLM 2019-2020, in Punjab, girls constitute the majority of out-of-school children (OOSC) population in 22 of the 36 districts.

District Rajanpur has the highest rate of OOSC in Punjab at 48 per cent, followed by district Muzaffargarh at 43 per cent.

Thus, it is urged that, the Federal Capital and Punjab government should play active role to immediately notify Free and Compulsory Education Acts to ensure utilization of allocated budget and improve the state of education in the country.

Among various stakeholders Ministry of Human Rights and media should serve as an efficient watchdog on the activities of government and civil society organizations in the field of education since education is the basic human right and no one should be denied of this right.

—The writer is contributing columnist, based in Islamabad.

Source: Published in Pak Observer

Education Crisis | Editorial

PAKISTAN'S educational crisis is rooted in inequality. Nowhere are national socioeconomic and gender fault lines more apparent than in the education sector. In this regard, a recent report by the Idara-i-Taleem-o-Agahi, titled *Measuring the Impact of Covid-19 on Education in Pakistan*, confirms what education experts have been saying all along: "girls experienced greater learning losses than boys during the Covid-19 school closure across nearly all competencies and classes". Even before the pandemic, Pakistan was among the 10 countries identified by Unesco where girls from poverty-stricken homes spent less than two years of their life in school. Several surveys in the past two years have highlighted the drastic increase in student drop-out rates and learning losses. However, this new report provides significant insights into how almost all vulnerabilities in the education sector — poverty, unequal access to school, socioeconomic barriers — hamper girls' education. According to the report, school enrolment for boys in the age groups of 3-5 and 6-16 years was 58pc and 61pc. In contrast, girls' enrolment for the same age groups was 42pc and 39pc. Similarly, the report states that more girls dropped out of school during the pandemic than boys.

Secondly, girls who remained in school faced larger learning losses as compared to their male classmates, even if they were outperforming them before the pandemic. "This is the case across most competencies — mathematics, Urdu literacy and English," asserts the report. For example, in 2019, 28pc girls as compared to 25pc boys could read Urdu words in Class 1. However, in 2021, only 16pc of girls were able read Urdu words as compared to 19pc of boys. Though learning losses are significant for both, girls appear to be more affected. These and other figures in the report reflect the gender imbalance in society. Many sections of society place a premium on boys' education, while girls are expected to take up domestic responsibilities. In families where affordability is an issue, a girl's education is deemed less important than that of her brothers. In the same vein, more boys have access to digital means of study than girls, naturally affecting the continuity of their studies. The task of reforming education in Pakistan, then, is a difficult but not impossible one. As the report recommends, the government can start investing in girls' education by ensuring that at least 50pc of the recipients of education support schemes are girls. Leaving girls behind is no longer an option.

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Post-Pandemic Education Crisis in Pakistan

By Tayyaba Aurangzeb

22.8 million children in Pakistan between the ages of 5 – 16 years are currently out of school.

Another 1 million children are at risk of dropping out-of-school by the end of the pandemic across the country.

Among those children from underprivileged backgrounds particularly girls in provinces where education indicators presented a dismal picture even before the pandemic are at a higher risk of being deprived of their constitutional right to education.

More than ever, Pakistan's education system requires a nationwide, multi-pronged strategy that would ensure access to education for each child and work towards overcoming learning losses incurred during the pandemic.

To achieve such an undertaking, there is an urgent need for pan-national coordination between the federating units.

In line with the aforementioned, a much-needed measure was taken with the revival of the Inter-provincial Education Ministers' Conference (IPEMC) during the pandemic and the federal and provincial governments' renewed resolve to leverage the platform beyond emergencies.

The platform could prove critical in creating national ownership of education reforms and making education possible for the most marginalized learners, especially adolescent girls across the country while preserving the integrity of the 18th Constitutional Amendment that made education a provincial subject.

Moreover, the platform could become a valuable source of inter-provincial learning through knowledge-sharing among the federating units so that best practices of one province could be adopted by the others and potentially benefit children across Pakistan.

The suggested initiative can prove especially beneficial for Balochistan province which has the largest proportion of out-of-school children in Pakistan: 47 percent of children of school-going age in the province are out of school and 78 percent of the girls between the ages of 5 – 16 years cannot access education.

Revisiting education policies at the provincial level to identify context-specific solutions to address key barriers to access quality education will be of paramount importance.

The role of provincial education departments to lead such gap-analysis exercises in collaboration with the civil society is likely to catalyze the process.

One such initiative was taken by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) recently that included the publication of a five-part series of white papers that identified key issues impacting adolescent girls' access to education in Balochistan.

Based on the review of secondary data and interviews with parents, teachers and school administrators, each white paper offers potential solutions to combat long-standing issues that hamper the provision of quality education in the province.

Some of the critical challenges identified in the white papers include unavailability of sufficient schools, the distance of schools from homes, shortage of qualified female teachers, lack of school infrastructure, and gender-insensitive school budgeting.

The white papers and policy papers developed by the civil society organizations are a fruitful resource for the education department of Balochistan to plan the required education reforms and ensure that quality education becomes possible for every child in Balochistan irrespective of their gender and socio-economic background.

Pakistan must no longer rely on piecemeal solutions to address the country's education emergency.

The federal and provincial governments must put into action all possible collaborative and independent efforts to ensure that past gains made within the education are not lost to the pandemic and that quality education becomes

possible for all children across the country irrespective of their gender, and socio-economic background.

—The writer is Acting Country Director at International Rescue Committee

Source: Published in Pak Observer

WORLD

The Return of Containment (How the West Can Prevail Against the Kremlin) By Ivo H. Daalder

Russia's unprovoked assault on Ukraine did not come as a surprise. The United States and its European allies learned last fall what Russia planned to do, and even publicized the Kremlin's plans to the world. Even so, they failed to prevent Russia's onslaught on its much weaker neighbor. Once they ruled out direct military assistance to Ukraine, deterring a Russia bent on controlling its neighbors and upending the post-1990 European security order was always going to be a tall order.

The same threats that failed to dissuade Russia from invading before—severe sanctions, military assistance to Ukraine, and beefing up NATO—are unlikely to compel Russia from changing course now. Instead, Washington and its democratic allies need to embark on a strategy of containment that increases the cost to Russia and eventually forces internal political change that brings the brutal regime of Vladimir Putin to an end.

The outlines of this playbook are familiar, first set out in the late 1940s by George F. Kennan, a senior diplomat in the Moscow embassy, and elaborated on in the pages of this magazine. Kennan argued that the Stalin regime's paranoia and insecurities represented a clear danger to the West and called for steady, forceful counterpressure. But Kennan also believed the Soviet Union was weak and suffered from internal contradictions that would ultimately undo the regime. Containment took 40 years to succeed and involved plenty of needless mistakes by the United States—including launching the Vietnam War and backing the violent overthrow of a number of governments. But the policy ultimately unleashed forces inside the Soviet Union that led to the end of the regime.

A return to a robust policy of containment is now the West's best option. The fundamental goal will remain the same as the old policy: to counter Russian expansionism, inflict real costs on the Russian regime, and encourage internal

change that leads to the ultimate collapse of Putin and Putinism. Of course, it needs to be adapted to the realities as they exist today rather than those that prevailed at the end of World War II. In particular, Russia's close ties to a strong and newly assertive China will have to be addressed proactively.

Still, Russia isn't the Soviet Union, a military and ideological colossus nearly equal to the United States. Although it remains a nuclear power, its military is a shadow of its former Soviet self, and its economy is smaller than Canada's, which has a quarter of Russia's population. Meanwhile, the West has grown stronger. The United States retains unrivaled military power and has an economy 13 times larger than that of Russia. Europe, a defeated continent scarred by war and poverty after World War II, has emerged as a cohesive economic giant with a military that, although underfunded, enjoys significant modern capabilities to defend against a stretched Russian military. As a result, although a policy of containment will not deliver swift success or victory, its steady application in the months and years ahead should drive the necessary change in Russia within the next five to ten years.

THREE PILLARS

An effective twenty-first century update of containment would consist of three main pillars: maintaining U.S. military strength, decoupling Western economies from Russia, and isolating Moscow. Together, these three elements will steadily increase the cost to Russia of continuing its expansionist policies, foment internal dissent and debate, and ultimately could force a change in governance. To be clear, such change must be driven internally—although the United States seeks an end to Putinism, this will occur only when the Russian people decide the time has come. Also, a return to containment will not lead to an immediate end to the war in Ukraine. That will require additional measures, including providing Ukraine with the military means it needs to defend itself and resist occupation if Russia succeeds in taking over part or all of the country. And it will require massive economic and humanitarian assistance to help the besieged population in Ukraine and those who have been forced to flee the country.

Although the United States and other NATO countries maintain significant militaries, two decades of European under-investment and U.S. military engagement in the Middle East and Afghanistan have left NATO profoundly unprepared for a return to a strong deterrent posture. The subordination of the Belarussian military to Russian command and the invasion of Ukraine mean that a new front line is being drawn from the Baltic to the Black Sea—with the eastern

borders of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, and Romania effectively marking NATO's new eastern flank. As a result, NATO needs to move swiftly to defend the new front.

The alliance has taken steps to bolster deterrence in the East, but these moves fall short of what the situation demands. The United States has doubled its ground presence in Poland, to 9,000 troops, and sent air and naval reinforcements to other countries. France, Germany, and the United Kingdom have increased their military presence in Romania, Slovakia, and the Baltic states. NATO has activated its 40,000-strong Response Force for the first time, though current plans do not include full mobilization of the entire force. While these initial steps have strengthened the forces that were deployed East in the wake of Russia's initial invasion of Ukraine in 2014, they amount to little more than a tripwire that will be unable to offer a robust defense if Russia attacks NATO territory.

NATO's moves have fallen short of what the situation demands.

That is why a fundamental rethinking of NATO's forward force posture is now necessary. NATO needs to deploy tens of thousands of troops, rather than the few thousand that have so far been committed. The most immediate requirement is to deploy two to three combat brigades to eastern Poland and southern Lithuania to defend the Suwalki gap, the 60 miles that separate Russian Kaliningrad and Belarus. If Russian or Belarussian forces were to connect these territories, the Baltic states would effectively be cut off from the rest of NATO.

Preparing for a long-term presence in the East will also require making significant investments in ports, rail lines, airfields, roads, fuel supply, and other critical infrastructure to improve NATO's capacity to rapidly reinforce its troops. Moreover, given Putin's threats to use nuclear weapons, combined with the deployment of nuclear-capable and likely armed missiles in Kaliningrad and other parts of western Russia and possibly in Belarus, NATO will need to consider the adequacy of its nuclear posture.

None of this is to suggest that NATO needs to prepare for war. The point is that deterrence now requires greater visibility and forward presence than was the case before Russia attacked Ukraine. Whatever Putin may be thinking about forcefully revising the post-1990 security order in Europe, NATO needs to make clear that he cannot succeed. That requires a strong deterrent presence East

and a major commitment to increase spending for the long run. Germany's decision to spend 100 billion euros now and at least two percent of GDP on defense going forward is a big step in the right direction.

BEYOND MILITARY MIGHT

Although military strength is a core requirement of deterrence, it is not enough. Indeed, the forward deployment of military forces will initially reinforce the divisions in Europe—and would leave the peoples of Ukraine, the Caucasus, and indeed of Belarus and Russia, under Putin's dominion. The West cannot allow a return of an Iron Curtain dividing Europe. That is why the new containment also needs a policy of economic decoupling and political isolation—measures that are designed to inflict ever increasing costs on Russia and force change from within.

The sanctions announced by the United States and its allies are an important first step. Russia has been effectively cut off from credit and financial support, and technology export controls will severely curtail imports into Russia. Meanwhile, sanctions on Putin, his cronies, and their families will leave them isolated in their dachas in Russia, unable to gallivant on their yachts in St Tropez or their London duplexes. Though many have criticized these sanctions as too little, too late, these critiques assume that their purpose is to stop Russia's military advance. That was never going to happen. Instead, sanctions are designed to inflict costs over months and years to force a change of behavior.

The effectiveness of sanctions on Russia will depend on two factors. First, their sting requires that they be applied by as many countries as possible. The Biden administration has been right to walk in lockstep with Europe, even as it has engaged diplomatically for months to push for the maximum possible sanctions. It may make people in Washington feel good for the United States to announce a rash of sanctions, but unless others agree to follow, their impact will be limited. As the case of Iran has shown, coordinated sanctions from 2010 onwards produced a real nuclear agreement; the unilateral maximum pressure from the United States since 2018 has only led Iran to accelerate its nuclear program.

Europe gets 40 percent of its natural gas from Russia.

Second, energy is key. Former Senator John McCain once memorably described Russia as “a gas station masquerading as a country.” But it is a big gas station, especially for Europe, which still gets 40 percent of its natural gas from Russia. Some countries, including the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Latvia are almost completely dependent for their gas heat and electricity on imports from Russia.

Although restricting Russian oil and gas imports would hit the Russian economy, which is highly dependent on fossil fuel exports, the damage such restrictions would do to European economies would be grave as well. True decoupling will thus take years, not weeks or months, as Europe finds alternative sources of gas and reduces its reliance on fossil fuels as part of its climate change commitments.

Aside from military strength and economic decoupling, Russia will also need to be isolated politically. Its unprovoked attack represented a blatant violation of the UN Charter and international law and runs counter to Russia's commitment not to change borders by force—a commitment Moscow repeated numerous times in European security declarations, including the Helsinki Final Act in 1975, the Charter of Paris in 1990, and the Astana OSCE Declaration in 2010. And Russia clearly violated its explicit guarantee in 1994 to respect Ukraine's borders and territorial integrity in return for Kyiv's commitment to give up its nuclear weapons. There can be no return to business as usual with an outlaw regime.

To be sure, diplomatic channels need to remain open, as they were during the Cold War. But Russia's normal engagement with the rest of the international community must come to an end. The International Olympic Committee's recommendation that sporting competitions ban athletes from Russia and Belarus was the right call, as was the decision by FIFA and UEFA to ban Russian soccer teams from the World Cup and European championships. The isolation must extend well beyond sports, however. There is no place for Russia in the G20 and the diplomatic dance of European leaders heading off to Moscow that preceded Russia's attack on Ukraine needs to cease. Aside from Russia's complete and unconditional withdrawal from all of Ukraine—including the territory it has occupied and annexed since 2014—there is nothing to talk about. That includes suspending the strategic stability talks that were aimed at creating a predictable and stable relationship with Russia. No such relationship is possible so long as Putin is in power. "We will make sure that Putin will be a pariah on the international stage," President Biden declared.

At the same time, just as during the Cold War, there needs to be a concerted effort to engage Russian civil society. Inside Russia, opposition to the war is already surprisingly widespread, as evidenced by the demonstrations that erupted in recent days in more than 50 cities. As Russian soldiers return in body bags and sanctions begin to bite, that opposition is bound to grow. Russians will need access to accurate information, which Western governments can provide

through social media, the internet, and broadcasting. People-to-people exchanges should continue. The United States has opened doors to refuseniks before. It can do so again.

UPDATING THE PLAYBOOK

To succeed, the new containment policy must be embraced by all Western allies—in Europe, in North America, and even in Asia. Russia, like the Soviet Union before it, is keen to exploit divisions within and between democracies. It has interfered in elections for years and supported far right politics in Europe and beyond. It has used bribes and Western energy dependence to divide Europe. Putin saw the divisions within NATO sown by U.S. President Donald Trump during his four years in office, and the disagreements over Afghanistan and submarine sales to Australia that occurred since, as evidence that the West was weak and divided. Now, he likely thought, was the time to strike.

Putin was wrong. The West has been remarkably unified in its response. Even before Russia's attack, Western unity within NATO and beyond had solidified. The Biden administration, perhaps learning from its Afghanistan stumbles, did a superb job of bringing its allies together by sharing information, consulting frequently, and demonstrating tough, determined leadership. The result has been significant: strong sanctions, bolstered deterrence, and total political solidarity with Ukraine.

To preserve this unity, the United States, which has once again emerged as a leader of the West, will need to carefully listen to allies and be willing to change course to keep everyone on board. There will be times when internal divisions will raise questions about the solidity of the coalition. During the Cold War, NATO seemed to be in perpetual crisis—except when it mattered most.

There is no place for Russia in the G20.

An important difference between the Cold War era and today is the status of China. No longer a bit player on the global scene, Beijing has emerged as the Washington's biggest competitor and largest geopolitical challenger in the Indo-Pacific and beyond. The Ukraine crisis emerged at a moment when the relationship between Russia and China has become particularly close. Their leaders have met 38 times since Xi Jinping became president of China in 2012, including most recently at the opening of the Winter Olympics. There, they issued a joint statement noting that their partnership had "no limits." Far from

condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Beijing has blamed the United States and NATO for taking insufficient account of Russia's security interests.

Beijing's pronouncements, however, contained an undercurrent of unease with Putin's moves. The joint statement was notably silent on Ukraine, and official statements have consistently stressed China's principled commitment to sovereignty, territorial integrity, and noninterference in the internal affairs of other nations. China abstained on a UN Security Council Resolution condemning Russia, rather than joining Moscow in voting against. And Beijing has never recognized Russia's annexation of Crimea, suggesting it may keep an open mind on the future of Ukraine. There is scope, therefore, for quiet diplomacy to gauge whether Beijing might be persuaded to help put pressure on Russia.

Even if Beijing has its doubts, however, it is hardly in its interest to help the United States against Russia. Indeed, Chinese leaders no doubt welcome the U.S.'s renewed preoccupation with security in Europe because it gives Beijing more freedom of maneuver in its own region. China is also likely to help alleviate some of the economic consequences of sanctions for Russia, though there are limits to how much it can do, especially on the financial side, where transactions largely remain the domain of western currencies from which Russia has now been banned.

Containing Russia will therefore require paying attention to China. One way to increase the West's leverage over Beijing would be to strengthen the political, economic, and military ties between the advanced democracies in Asia, Europe, and North America. An expanded G-7, for example, could include Australia and South Korea as well as the involvement of the heads of the EU and NATO. These nations and organizations will need to devise common strategies and policies not only to contain Russia but also to compete effectively with China.

February 24 was a turning point in history. Democratic powers of the West are once again called upon to defend a rules-based order that has been violently uprooted. Fortunately, the Western powers possess the innate strength necessary to contain Russia and outcompete China for influence across the globe. The only real question is whether they have the will and determination to do so in unison.

Source: Published in Foreign Affairs

Ukraine Crisis: Scramble For Power By Dr Syed Akhtar Ali Shah

The Ukraine crisis has taken the world by surprise and set alarm bells ringing everywhere. Around the world, countries are beginning to feel the pinch of increased prices of petroleum and other commodities. However, most people are still unaware of the dynamics of the crisis because the news cycle is devoid of the historical perspective. The current events, particularly conflicts, are always rooted in history and must be analysed from that perspective.

It appears that Ukraine has remained under Russian protection in different forms for a long time. During the 9th century, Kyiv was a part of the East Slavic state Kyivan Rus — it was here that the states of Ukraine and Russia emerged. In the 13th century, Russia acted as a shield against Mongols' invasions and later Tartars' incursions. By the 17th century, antagonised with persecutions of the Catholic Church, and Poland, the areas accepted the Orthodox Russian Tsar in the 1654 Treaty of Pereiaslav. Consequently, the Russian policies affected the absorption of Cossak lands.

With each passing day, merchants, professionals, academics, landed gentry, and other professionals flocked to Ukraine, particularly, the eastern side. Over the years urban areas of Ukraine especially the eastern side swelled with the Russian population. The process continued consistently even after the Communist Revolution of 1917.

During the second world war, at the Yalta conference, the 'Big Three' agreed that after Germany's unconditional surrender, the country would be divided into four post-war occupation zones, which would be controlled by American, British, French and Soviet military forces. To ease Soviet fears of an invasion through Poland, Eastern Europe was designated as a Soviet sphere of influence. However, soon after the conclusion of the second world war, the foundation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was laid down in 1949. It was aimed towards collective defence and to curtail the expansion of Soviet influence in Europe.

In response to this, the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance — also known as the Warsaw Pact, which was a strategic alliance between

Eastern European countries — was carved out in 1955. However, under Mikhail Gorbachev's policy of Glasnost, Warsaw Pact was scrapped.

In this context, Russia was told that NATO would also be wound up. However, the countries of Eastern Europe that were former members of the Warsaw Pact were made members of NATO. At present, the US has tried to make Ukraine a part of NATO and arm it with nuclear weapons. Given that this move would threaten Russia's national security, Russia is opposed to it.

Moreover, a sizeable population of Ukraine is of Russian origin and wants to be independent. This population is concentrated in specific areas and is one of the causes of the conflict. If Ukraine or NATO announces that Ukraine will not join NATO and not go nuclear, the conflict is likely to end. It is just like the US does not want an inimical government under her soft belly in the US. In this connection, questions can be asked as to what was the main objective of the Monroe Doctrine. Under that Monroe Doctrine, the US announced that European powers should no longer colonise the Americas or interfere in the affairs of sovereign nations located in the Americas, such as the US, Mexico, Colombia and others. In return, the US planned to stay neutral in wars between European powers, and wars between a European power and its colonies. However, if the latter types of wars were to occur in the Americas, the US would view it as a hostile act towards itself.

Back when the Soviet Union installed missiles in Cuba, the US viewed it as a threat to its national security and reacted. Both the countries were on the brink of war, with nuclear catastrophe as the outcome. However, better sense prevailed, and diplomacy was given a chance, which averted the war between the two "Bigs".

The composition of the population in Ukraine can also help understand Russian interest. A high proportion (42.3%) of the Russians in Ukraine lived in cities, particularly in comparison with the proportion (5.4%) of Ukrainians who lived in cities. The urban population of Ukraine made up 12.6% of the total population of the country (within the 1938 borders of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic). Of the urban population, Russians constituted 33.7% (Ukrainians, 32.5%). In cities of over 100,000 inhabitants, they represented 53.4% (Ukrainians, 12.6%). Only 6.7% of the rural population in Ukraine was Russian (83%, Ukrainian). The largest urban concentrations of Russians in Ukraine (1897) were in Odesa, 198,200 (48.2% of the city's total population); Kyiv, 134,300 (54.4%); Kharkiv,

109,000 (63%); Mykolaiv, 61,000 (66.3%); Katerynoslav, 47,100 (41.8%); and Kherson, 27,900 (47.9%).

It must also be understood that peace in Europe is based on the equilibrium, built around the concept of balance of power and national security of all states. The scramble for power between the US and Russia has disturbed the equilibrium. In such a situation, it must be understood that during a fight between elephants, it is the grass under their feet that is crushed. Therefore, the best policy option available is non-alignment and peaceful coexistence. Countries such as Ukraine should refrain from aligning with a superpower. The realities of international politics must be understood by accommodating each other's interests. Unilateral imposition of world order will always lead to conflict.

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On the Brink of a World War-III ? | By Syed Qamar Afzal Rizvi

AWFULLY, things are going to be worsened day by day. The sixth day of fierce war between Russian and Ukraine forces evidenced heavy casualties and devastation on both sides— Russia and Ukraine.

The Russian President Putin has ordered Russian Deterrent Nuclear Forces to be on high alert, a scowling indication that Putin is likely to use the nuclear weapons to ensure his victory over Ukraine.

All the while the US, NATO and the European forces seem ready to rebound the Russian aggression.

These all developments indicate that the world is heading on the brink of a third world war—an impending global havoc.

So far, the diplomacy has waned its role since the UNSC resolution has been technically vetoed by Russia.

Undeniably, the only way to resolve the current crisis is to diplomatically mend the fences between East-West relations.

During the early hours of last Thursday, Vladimir Putin announced on television that he had decided “to carry out a special military operation” in Ukraine.

Shortly afterwards, explosions were reported across the country, but in start, it was unlikely to devolve into World War-III as some cautiously feared it.

But as the war enters the sixth day, grave apprehensions are mounting in eastern and western quarters that the war could turn into a global catastrophic upheaval.

Moscow has warned the Ukrainian public to evacuate the urban cities. Russia’s growing temptations and its force posture around Ukraine suggests that its military planners have the objective of seizing the Ukraine capital for establishing its territorial dominance.

Briefings by senior Western officials suggest it is likely President Vladimir Putin's troops will now attempt to take a number of key Ukrainian cities and ports including Odessa, Mariupol and the eastern city of Kharkiv.

"Russian forces have increased their use of artillery north of Kyiv and in vicinities of Kharkiv and Chernihiv.

The use of heavy artillery, including rocket launchers and missiles in densely populated urban areas greatly increases the risk of civilian casualties.

Given the complex dynamics of this asymmetric warfare," It is too early to tell at this stage what direction Russia's campaign against Ukraine is going to take but there are multiple options," said the Chatham House Russia expert. "This also needs to be put in the broader context of Russia's strategic aims", he added.

Putin now claims that Ukraine is an integral part of Russia. Although Putin thinks that his actions in Ukraine are justified in so far as the West did not take a serious note regarding his security concerns over NATO's eastward expansion trajectory, yet the magnitude of his aggression in Ukraine cannot be defended.

Many Europeans think that Putin feels no concern regarding what Ukrainians think; conversely, Russia's growing might and its global leverage are all that matter him.

"That's a world war when Americans and Russians start shooting at each other," said US President Joe Biden earlier this month, vowing he would not deploy American troops to Ukraine under any circumstances.

Apparently, as long as there is no direct conflict between Russia and NATO then there is no reason for this crisis, bad as it is, to descend into a full-scale world war.

But nothing can be predictable in a situation of war. Currently, the most probable indications warrant that the Ukrainian war could go beyond the Ukrainian borders, particularly to the borders of three Baltic States—members of NATO—Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

What if any NATO member state is attacked by Russia. Veritably, under NATO's Article 5 the entire western military alliance is obliged to come to the defence of any member state that comes under attack.

It is why the Russian policy experts are against NATO's Article-V. Moreover, a growing western apprehension is that after strident western sanctions against Russia, Moscow will certainly retaliate in some form.

Western businesses in Russia are likely to suffer, but it could go further, much further, if Putin decides.

"Revenge" could take the form of cyber-attacks – as already warned by the US National Cyber Security Centre.

Often hard to attribute, these could target banks, businesses, individuals and even critical national infrastructure.

"Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.says Kenneth Weinstein, a Hudson Institute distinguished fellow.

"But if NATO is forced to invoke Article-V by a Russian attack on the Baltics, Poland or other alliance members, and the Chinese move simultaneously and massively on Taiwan..., we'd be there.

" Needless to say, the current war will not only influence the European region, but its impact in the ME, particularly in the South Asian region cannot be ignored where China, India and Pakistan are arch-rivals. Suzanne Nossel argues in the Foreign Policy Magazine, "Diplomacy has limits.

Russian President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine occurred despite every effort of Western diplomats to avert it.

Keeping the Russian temptations aside, the most irrefutable fact is that the West has also played an irresponsible role in making the present situation worse because the West paid no heed and attention to the Russian reminder of security concerns regarding expanding NATO near to the Russian border—the promise that the Western powers committed to Russia.

Should not the Biden Administration recall the Cuban missile crisis in 1962 when Russia finally withdrew in order to prevent a nuclear war between the two Cold War era rivals?

The onus of burden now goes to the western political leadership to find the way to address the current peace challenge.

The West accuses Putin that he is challenging the rules-based order. The fact is that Modi's unlawful annexation of IOK in 2019 — a revisionist attempt is intrinsically motivating President Putin to expand his present Russian borders.

Sadly, the global power tussle between the western policymakers and the Russian strategists resurrected the Cold War order — an order rampant with antagonism, arms and nuclear race around the globe — a faded dream to render the future of 21st century's humanity as much safer than yesterday.

The Big challenge posed to the UN's diplomacy is that in order to prevent our posterity from the threats of the present and future nuclear and conventional wars, we must make a peaceful settlement of the most sizzling conflicts like Ukraine, Kashmir, Taiwan and Palestine.

—The writer, an independent 'IR' researcher-cum-international law analyst based in Pakistan, is member of European Consortium for Political Research Standing Group on IR, Critical Peace & Conflict Studies, also a member of Washington Foreign Law Society and European Society of International Law.

Source: Published in Pak Observer

Introduction of International Relations in Modern Era By Prof Dr Qayum Mangi

FOLLOWING the end of World War-I and II the nature and concept of International Relations have transformed with new realities and pillars of Power politics.

The emergence of new ideologies around the world and collapse of European Colonial Empires, the conduct of IR have changed.

As man is social animal of the society so are the states in the International comity or international System.

As man cannot live, alone consequently states cannot sustain individually. Therefore, like man state have to maintain all forms of relations including diplomatic, commercial and strategic relations for numerous reasons and compulsions.

The main factor of fear and benefit to maintain relations among states is to acquire benefit in vital fields of life and preserve existence of state against internal and external dangers.

The benefit is accruing from cooperation in various vital fields. The fear of loss of existence politically, economically, subjugated by other strong states compels states to maintain relations to preserve its Ideological, territorial integrity and political independence.

The factors of fear and benefit started the historical process of international relations among states throughout the annals of history.

It is a multifaceted field where every state has to take steps and devise strategy considering not only its interests but also the interest, intentions and aspirations of other states.

As Rousseau said, man is born free but everywhere he is in chains. Similarly, every state is free to pursue independent internal and external policy, yet it have

to take into account the sentiments and anticipated repercussions of foe and friend.

International Relations are that branch of Social Science, which relates to the external interaction of State with each other.

George Bernard Shaw the famous dramatist and the thinker of the 20th century calls political science as the sciences by alone civilization can be saved but following the end of World Wars 1 and 11 in 1945 International Relations have superseded the role of Political science, confined it to the boundaries of a state.

International Relations through its fresh course of interaction proved that it could save the inhabitants of world from annihilation.

The International Relations have entirely altered the concept of interaction among states to coexist with one another in conflict and cooperation for global peace and human security.

International Relations have proved that its intercourse have transformed the world into inhabitable global village.

The shattering of chains of colonial powers from world, the reemergence of Russia and China on the stage of world politics hitherto occupied by the United States and its allies further widened and superseded the old pattern of International Relations.

The successful working of United Nations system and its gradual eminence in world affairs have given International Relations a new contour in which every state feels secure and finds a viable forum where they can raise their voice against even a powerful state for their protection.

These developments in the world have entirely transformed and widened the definition, nature and significance of International Relations in the modern world.

Today's International Relations is absolutely different from the International Relations of pre World Wars, end of Cold War, fall of Berlin Wall and merger of Europe, fall of the Soviet Union, Iran Iraq war, Gulf War, Incident of 9/11 and withdrawal of the US from Afghanistan.

The international system has become somewhat less polarized and more flexible. The power of International Relations has forced states to pursue simultaneously the approach of conflict and cooperation to avoid confrontation, destruction and war.

Worst enemies of the past are cooperating with each other despite divergent policies and approaches on global issues.

The International Relations have compelled states to coexist and live in conflict and cooperation.

The International Relations have compelled states to relinquish ideological considerations to economic and survival interests of the entire humanity.

The International Relations have given power to UN system and to greater extent; states willingly have relinquished sovereignty for collective wellbeing of Global peace and Human security.

In the new era of International Relations, every state is searching for procuring its vital interest without coming into conflict with other states.

—The writer is Principal at College of Superior Service, Sukkur.

Source: Published in Pak observer

Strategic Ambiguities in India's Nuclear Doctrinal Posturing By Dr Zafar Khan

Primarily, strategic analysts, including those of Indian security leadership, presume that India practises three essential pillars when it comes to its nuclear doctrine and force posturing: Credible Minimum Deterrence, No First Use, and Massive Retaliation. We closely read, understand, conceptualise, and critically analyse strategic ambiguities and lacunas that exist in all essential pillars of India's nuclear strategy. Interestingly, both in practice and theory, all pillars do not remain consistent with what the Indian security leadership earlier conceptualised, and more broadly they do not remain consistent with the so-called minimum deterrence India earlier conceived. For example, it is often analysed that what is 'credible' against China cannot be 'minimum' against Pakistan when it comes to India's deterrent force posturing. Also, the strategy of massive retaliation did not make logical sense during the Cold War between the Soviet Union and the US. It remains equally senseless in the South Asian strategic context. Therefore, the strategy of massive retaliation becomes war-prone and offensive, risking military conflicts.

The question is: where is India heading towards and why and how important is that for Pakistan to reassess such strategic imperatives when it comes to nuclear doctrinal posturing?

First, we need to understand that India's nuclear doctrinal posture remains a "draft" that India can modify accordingly whenever it decides to do so. Ambiguity lingers on, lacunas persist, and complexity and confusion in India's nuclear doctrinal posture become the order of the day. Arguably, this becomes problematic. For example, since the 1999 and 2003 draft nuclear doctrines, India continues to shift away from the earlier draft doctrines despite officially claiming that it follows credible minimum deterrence and no first use policy.

The two drafts do not remain consistent with each other. They leave many questions unanswered. The 2003 draft doctrine remains more offensive when India persists to add certain modifiers — that is credible with minimum deterrence, massive with retaliation, which becomes 'massive retaliation' in the event of attacks on India, and the urgency to use nuclear weapons if and when

Indian forces are attacked anywhere, thus undermining the doctrinal pillar of no first use. Tellingly, India aspires to use its nuclear forces first.

Second, since Pakistan faces an acute security threat from India and since both India and Pakistan continue to have an acute state rivalry, Pakistan needs to reassess India's evolving doctrinal force posturing, particularly when India is increasing and modernising its conventional and nuclear forces. Many of them are targeting Pakistan. The two rivals have already fought several wars and continue to confront several unresolved crises including the core issue of Kashmir.

India aspires to acquire emerging technologies to further strengthen its deterrent force capabilities. From supersonic, India has recently developed and tested a hypersonic missile. India has acquired the S-400 sophisticated missile defence system. It has been working on its ballistic missile defence system. India has developed an assured second-strike capability in the form of nuclear-powered submarines with increasing ranges of submarine-launched ballistic missiles. The construction of more nuclear-powered submarines is in the pipeline. It has considerably increased its nuclear warheads and certainly the delivery systems these increased warheads may require. It has a huge stockpile of fissile materials. Therefore, it is unwilling to become part of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the proposed Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT). It has developed tactical nuclear weapons and plans to develop a modernised aircraft carrier. India has developed Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) and acquired Multiple-Independently Targetable Re-entry Vehicles (MIRVs).

Third, the fast-changing strategic environment, the growing US-India, Russia-India, India-Israel and India-France strategic partnership on several serious strategic projects create a security dilemma in South Asia while enhancing the power potentials of India. In addition, the formation of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue — involving the leading states (the US, India, Japan, and Australia) famously known as the QUAD — makes India one of the essential pillars of the US grand strategy for offshore balancing while emphasising the Indo-Pacific region. India as part of the Indo-Pacific strategy is strategically assisted by these countries to contain the spread of China because India and China also have an acute security rivalry. In 1962, India and China fought a war with the latter emerging victorious. More recently they had a severe border standoff at Doklam.

All such ambitious projects provide an incentive to India to wage the so-called limited war against Pakistan. The forward-deployed forces as a broader part of Cold Start Doctrine (CSD) are one of such indicators to this ambition. Mistakenly, India recently aspired to wage an unsuccessful surgical strike against Pakistan but soon realised that it could escalate and spiral out of control. Pakistan deterred India from further escalating the crisis. Perhaps, the existence and the value of nuclear deterrence speak louder than words.

Finally, it becomes significant for Pakistan to keep reassessing India's evolving doctrinal posturing to produce effective countermeasures, retain balance rather than parity, keep deterring the adversary within the ambit of credible minimum deterrence, promote strategic stability, prevent the risk of a major arms race, and work for establishing a much-needed arms control regime in South Asia.

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Why West Cries: Rebalancing East-West Relations By Syed Qamar Afzal Rizvi

SADLY, last week, a US-led western campaign was launched against Pakistan—pressurizing Islamabad to denounce the Russian invasion of Ukraine, failing which Islamabad could face some unpalatable consequences.

Foreign Office on Friday expressed concern over a press release issued by foreign envoys urging Pakistan to condemn the Russian invasion and said that use of such language by missions of the European countries was unacceptable, the statement said.

“We have conveyed our reservations to the European embassies,” the Foreign Office Spokesman said during the weekly briefing and added, “Secretary Foreign Affairs raised the matter with the envoys.

” Pakistan rightly condemns a western policy to intimidate and dictate a sovereign country. Keeping in view the changing dynamics of world order, Pakistan is obliged to charter an independent foreign policy discourse, fulfilling our national interests.

The West should not direct us what to do.If India is free to choose its foreign policy discourse, the same principle should be applied to Pakistan.

By no means, the West should accuse Pakistan if it chooses to rebalance its East-West relations.

While meeting with President Putin in Moscow on 24 February, “The Prime Minister regretted the latest situation between Russia and Ukraine and said that Pakistan had hoped diplomacy could avert a military conflict”, read the Foreign Office handout.

The Moscow visit was already scheduled, while delaying the visit could have caused a diplomatic lull between Moscow and Islamabad, the PM Imran Khan decided to follow the diplomatic norms.

As for Pakistan-Russia relations, over the past few decades, with shifts in the international system — Russia's resurgence under Vladimir Putin accompanied by an atmosphere of Pakistan's freezing ties with the US— created an opportunity to re-evaluate their mutual relations.

Russia is finding new opportunities in South Asia as the US has completely withdrawn from Afghanistan.

Both Moscow and Islamabad have good relations with Beijing. This growing symmetry of regional trio is actually disturbing the West.

And yet, Islamabad and Moscow have faced some policy vicissitudes while redefining the scope of their relationship, and in the past decade or so, the trust deficit has been significantly declined.

As both sides have positively moved, there are sufficient grounds for alignments in terms of geopolitical, geo-economics and security thinking.

Here are six major areas where broad convergence of Russia-Pakistan's bilateral policy interests could be identified: the future of Afghanistan; strategic balance in South Asia; nuclear doctrinal similarities; integration of conventional and nuclear deterrence; changing character of war—hybrid war and its counter; and Pakistan's quest for NSG membership along with its energy needs.

For the last 72 years, Pakistan has been a western ally. Notwithstanding our decades old relationship with the West, we have had some ill memories, particularly regarding the US role in the region.

Sadly, despite India-Israel's evil initiatives of destabilising Pakistan, and our continuing concerns in this regard, Washington never sustained our pleas; rather, it unjustifiably supported the anti-Pakistan Israeli and Indian policies in the region.

Moreover, though India violated international law in Kashmir by revoking the Kashmir special status in 2019, the West remained indifferent to the Indian transgressions of international law and HR atrocities in India-occupied Kashmir.

Notwithstanding the fact that during both Cold War and the Post-Cold war periods, Pakistan has remained a major western ally, the successive US

Governments –Republican and Democratic demonstrated their diplomatic and strategic tilt towards India.

India remained US's trustworthy partner while Pakistan did not receive a reciprocal response from the US policy quarters despite its heroic and exemplary role in the US-waged war on terror in Afghanistan.

There is no doubt in the western estimate that the US and most Western countries have traditionally dealt with Pakistan according to short-term interests.

The truth reveals that Pakistan has invested a lot in its partnership with the West, particularly the United States; yet unfortunately, it has harvested no triumphant results except blaming and a do more mantra.

And yet, there is growing consensus in Pakistan's foreign policy quarters that given the evolving dynamics of a geopolitically and geo-economically-driven multipolar world order, Islamabad finds no pragmatic choice other than to move beyond our traditionally — set policy lines to the west.

Despite this backdrop, vive la difference, still, Pakistan's policymakers seek to viably maintain our valuable, workable and sustainable partnership with the US and the EU.

Our relations with Germany, Belgium and Netherlands are noteworthy. Pakistan has sound bilateral relations with the United Kingdom.

Needless to say, Pakistan can hardly ignore its bilateral relations with Ukraine which were diplomatically started in 1992, while since 2018, Pakistan-Ukraine relations have moved from "conventional diplomacy to public diplomacy".

Pakistan ardently believes that war is no alternative to diplomacy, thus it advocates for peaceful resolution of the Ukraine conflict.

"We have since repeatedly stressed the need for de-escalation, renewed negotiations, sustained dialogue and continuous diplomacy," the Foreign Office said and added, "All efforts must be made to avoid further escalation of violence and loss of life as well as military, political and economic tensions which can pose an unprecedented threat to international peace and security and global economic stability".

Promoting international peace, stability and security remain the hallmark of Pakistan's foreign policy.

Pakistan has always sustained the role of multilateral peace diplomacy on simmering global conflicts, and same remains the credo of our foreign policy on the Ukraine issue.

Objectively, Islamabad is highly justified in rebalancing its East-West relations while maintaining its neutrality.

Instead of bullying Pakistan, the West would have had a better choice — that in order to activate a synergy of preventive diplomacy— it could have reasonably solicited Islamabad to use its good offices to mend the fences between the West and Russia— as both China and Pakistan may jointly work in this regard.

Thanks to the EU's diplomatic vision, Brussels has now realized the worth of this prescience — in a latest move, while adopting fidelity to diplomatic norms, it has asked Islamabad to act as a mediator vis-à-vis the Ukraine conflict.

In the same vein, without showing a double standard on the humanitarian issues, should the West not play its active peace role in Kashmir — a humanity bleeding spot in South Asia?

—The writer, an independent 'IR' researcher-cum-international law analyst based in Pakistan, is member of European Consortium for Political Research Standing Group on IR, Critical Peace & Conflict Studies, also a member of Washington Foreign Law Society and European Society of International Law.

Source: Published in Pak Obsever

Advent Of Global Energy Resetting –

Analysis By He Jun

The escalation of the Russia-Ukraine crisis, in addition to causing turmoil in the global energy market, is causing deep changes in it as well. According to ANBOUND analysts, the global energy market is undergoing a substantial reset as a result of such developments in the energy sector in some nations.

The very word “reset” here implies there will be major adjustments in different areas including global energy production, trading, transportation, consumption, investment, and financial markets, as a direct result of the Russia-Ukraine geopolitical crisis. This system adjustment has not only altered the past development pattern of the global energy field but has also resulted in the reconstruction of the global energy industry and energy market.

Historically, it is quite common for energy markets to be hit by geopolitical events. The two energy crises in the 1970s – the NATO attack on Yugoslavia in 1999 and the 9/11 terrorist attack in 2001, and the advent of the Russia-Ukraine conflict in February 2022, to varying degrees, all had a detrimental influence on the international energy market.

However, not every shock leads to a major transformation in the global energy markets. What makes the crisis remarkable this time is that Russia is one of the world’s largest energy producers and exporters. As a result of the crisis, which has triggered conflicts between Russia and the West, the massive geopolitical risk is driving a worldwide shift in the energy business.

Russia is currently one of the world’s main energy suppliers. The country’s oil and natural gas production ranks second in the world. Russia is also the second-largest oil exporter and the largest natural gas exporter in the world. Its oil and natural gas exports account for about 25% of global export trade. Russia’s oil exports are second only to Saudi Arabia, exporting about four million to five million barrels of crude oil a day, and two million to three million barrels of refined products per day. In 2021, Russia’s crude oil production was about 520 million tons, ranking third in the world, after the United States and Saudi Arabia. The natural gas production was 761 billion cubic meters, ranking second in the world, which accounted for about 18% of the world’s total natural gas production. In

2021, Russia exported about 230 million tons of oil, second only to Saudi Arabia. The natural gas export was about 200 billion cubic meters, ranking first in the world. Europe is the main destination of Russia's energy exports. Russia's oil and natural gas exports to Europe account for 50% and 78% of the country's total exports, respectively.

The Russia-Ukraine crisis has severely ruined the rapport between Russia and Europe. The West's multifaceted sanctions against Russia, combined with Russia's counter-sanctions, result in a long-term regress between Russia and the West. At present, the sanctions imposed by the United States and Europe against Russia, has yet to involve oil and natural gas which are major interests by the United States and Europe, at least for now. If Europe adds to the oil sanctions, they would be critical to Russia's economy. This is bound to cause a major transformation in the world energy market. Using European natural gas as an example, BP data shows that in 2020, European natural gas consumption was 541.1 billion cubic meters (an average of 547.8 billion cubic meters over the previous five years), and imports from Russia were 184.9 billion cubic meters (accounting for 34.2% of European consumption), with 167.7 billion cubic meters of pipeline natural gas. If Russia cuts off completely the supply of natural gas to Europe, it implies that Europe would need to locate 184.9 billion cubic meters of alternative natural gas.

Europe and other nations have been wary about Russia's energy exports, as they are well aware that any changes would have an impact on the demand and supply of global energy. On March 3, The International Energy Agency (IEA) said, "Nobody is under any illusions anymore. Russia's use of its natural gas resources as an economic and political weapon show Europe needs to act quickly to be ready to face considerable uncertainty over Russian gas supplies next winter". The IEA estimates that by turning to other gas suppliers and alternative energy sources, the European Union could reduce its dependency on Russian gas by more than a third within a year. There is still space for improvement in the supply of pipeline gas in Azerbaijan and North Africa. The United States is the world's number one supplier of liquefied natural gas (LNG). Europe competes with Asian countries for LNG contracts by Qatar and Australia. Europe must pay a higher cost than pipeline gas to increase LNG imports. Countries with insufficient receiving terminals, such as Germany, have gas supply and storage capacity difficulties.

While a global ban on Russian crude exports has yet to be enacted, refiners from European and American industries have begun to shun Russian oil, and banks have refused to finance the shipment of Russian commodities. This has set off a chain reaction in the global crude oil trading system: On March 1, Russian Urals oil was at a discount of more than \$18 to Brent crude. The market estimates that as of March 2, the affected Russian crude oil exports have reached three million barrels per day. The non-Russian crude oil has also been drawn into the turmoil. International buyers are shunning crude oil transported by the Caspian Pipeline (CPC) because the crude oil transported by the pipeline could have mixed with Russian crude oil and the terminal of the Caspian Sea pipeline is a Russian port on the Black Sea, according to Reuters. The Caspian pipeline transports more than one million barrels of crude oil per day from Kazakhstan, equivalent to more than one percent of the world's supply. Against the background, the market expects that Russia might be forced to partially cut down production.

The energy resetting would also affect the traditional energy and nuclear energy policies in some countries. With the escalation of the Russia-Ukraine crisis, international oil and gas and coal prices have soared, and nuclear power is gaining attention from some countries. On February 11 this year, French President Emmanuel Macron announced a large-scale revival of the nuclear power program. France will build at least six new nuclear reactors and study the possibility of building eight more reactors. On February 16, the construction of nuclear power plants in Kazakhstan is likely the most promising solution in the event of an expected power shortage, Kazakhstan's Ministry of Energy said. The Philippines has also determined to embrace nuclear power. Philippine President Duterte mentioned in a recent executive order to include nuclear power in the country's energy mix as local authorities get ready for the phasing out of coal-fired power plants after earlier efforts were unsuccessful due to safety concerns. Next, on March 3, the Finnish utility FORTUM applied to the government to extend the life of the LOVIISA nuclear power plant, which has been in use for more than 40 years, to 2050. Previously, the plant was supposed to close in 2030. On March 2, German Economy Minister Robert Habeck revealed that Germany is weighing whether to extend the life of remaining nuclear power plants to safeguard the country's energy supply amid uncertainty over Russian gas supplies. Germany had plans to close its nuclear power plants by the end of 2022. India, South Africa, and other countries also plan to significantly expand nuclear power.

Coal also becomes a part of this transformation. Germany has loosened its coal policy under pressure. The German Institute for Economic Research recently recommended in a report that coal power plants that had been mothballed for reasons of climate protection should be brought back into service. According to Germany's plan, all coal-fired power plants will be closed by 2038, and the use of natural gas will be abandoned by 2050. Under energy crises brought by geopolitical challenges, these green and environmentally friendly plans would be greatly affected. Other European countries might also reuse or increase the use of coal.

These changes brought by the energy crisis, which has been exacerbated by the geopolitical crisis, are driving many countries to reconsider the application of nuclear power and coal power, along with other green energy and energy-saving applications. A massive energy transformation process has taken place all across the planet. Due to the energy resetting, the changes might not only occur in the energy market, but also in the laws, industrial plans, fund investments, government energy policies, and financial insurance.

Final analysis conclusion:

The escalation of the Russia-Ukraine crisis not only exerts pressures on global geopolitics, but also greatly impacts the global energy industry and energy market system. This leads to a great energy resetting in the areas of global energy production, trading, investment, finance, law, and consumption. As one of the world's largest energy consumers and energy importers, China is bound to be significantly affected by this. Given the comprehensive assessment of the impacts of the global energy resetting and the timely manner formulation and adjustment of energy security strategies in the world, China must act.

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Source: Published in Eur Asia Review

The End of Globalization? By Adam S. Posen

Over the last three weeks, the Russian economy has been overwhelmed by sanctions. Soon after the Kremlin invaded Ukraine, the West began seizing the assets of the wealthiest individuals close to Russian President Vladimir Putin, prohibited Russian flights in its airspace, and restricted the Russian economy's access to imported technology. Most dramatically, the United States and its allies froze the reserve assets of Russia's central bank and cut Russia out of not just the SWIFT financial payments system, but of the basic institutions of international finance, including all foreign banks and the International Monetary Fund. As a result of the West's actions, the value of the ruble has crashed, shortages have cropped up throughout the Russian economy, and the government appears to be close to defaulting on its foreign currency debt. Public opinion—and the fear of being hit by sanctions—has compelled Western businesses to flee the country en masse. Soon, Russia will be unable to produce necessities either for defense or for consumers because it will lack critical components.

The democratic world's response to Moscow's aggression and war crimes is right, both ethically and on national security grounds. This is more important than economic efficiency. But these actions do have negative economic consequences that will go far beyond Russia's financial collapse, that will persist, and that are not pretty. Over the last 20 years, two trends have already been corroding globalization in the face of its supposedly relentless onward march. First, populists and nationalists have erected barriers to free trade, investment, immigration, and the spread of ideas—especially in the United States. Second, Beijing's challenge to the rules-based international economic system and to longstanding security arrangements in Asia has encouraged the West to erect barriers to Chinese economic integration. The Russian invasion and resulting sanctions will now make this corrosion even worse.

There are several reasons why. First, China is attempting to navigate a nonconfrontational response to the Russian invasion. Both its financial system and its real economy are observing the sanctions because of the potential economic retaliation if they finance or supply Russia, let alone bail Moscow out. But anything short of fully joining the blockade will feed anti-Chinese policies in the West, reducing the country's economic integration. Second, countries fear being subject to the whims of Washington's economic might, now that it is re-enamored with its apparent power. Right now, the United States' economic

actions may be just, and there may be little risk of countries not invading Ukraine ending up on the wrong side of U.S. policies. But the next time, the United States may be more selfish or capricious.

Finally, the damage sanctions are doing to the Russian economy and the substantial costs to central Europe if Russia cuts off its access to natural gas and oil in response may make governments pursue self-reliance and disentangle themselves from economic connections. Ironically, this will be self-defeating. Russia's current sharp economic contraction shows just how difficult it is for states to thrive without economic interdependence, even when they try to minimize their perceived vulnerability. In addition, Russia's attempts to make itself economically independent actually made it more likely to be subject to sanctions, because the West did not have to risk as much to impose them. But that will not stop many governments from trying to retreat into separate corners, looking to protect themselves by withdrawing from the global economy.

Pundits, of course, have cried wolf about such divisions for years, and the smaller countries that attempt to self-isolate will be unable to succeed. But it now seems likely that the world economy really will split into blocs—one oriented around China and one around the United States, with the European Union mostly but not wholly in the latter camp—each attempting to insulate itself from and then diminish the influence of the other. The economic consequences for the world will be immense, and policymakers need to recognize and then offset them as much as possible.

THE DOLLAR ENDURES

For all the talk about the “weaponization of finance,” the sanctions employed against Russia have been effective only because the international alliance imposing them has been broad and committed. Freezing the Russian Central Bank's reserves, for instance, works only if the majority of the world's financial system is on board with doing so. It is the alliance, not the finance, that has mattered. Since the anti-Russian alliance contains all the major financial institutions except the Chinese banks—and since Chinese banks do not want to be shut out of that system—the financial sanctions will not lead to any fundamental changes in the world's monetary or financial order.

Economies that feel threatened by Washington do now have an incentive to shift their reserves out of holdings in the United States. In theory, this has always been a check on Washington's overuse of financial power; if the country

sanctions too frequently, it might induce other states to come up with better alternatives to the dollar and to the payments system around it. And over the very long term, a divided world economy under the threat of sanction will bend in that direction. But in the meantime, what Russia demonstrates is that diversifying into euros, yuan, and even gold will not help states if other market participants are themselves afraid of being shut out of the dollar system, because there will be no other party for them to sell their reserves to. Cryptocurrencies are going to have to decide whether they will observe sanctions and thus lose some of their users (who treat the currencies as a refuge) or whether they will facilitate attempts to elude sanctions, in which case governments are likely to shut down or marginalize them.

The Chinese yuan will struggle to become a major alternative to the dollar, even for economies in Beijing's bloc. As long as China prevents people from freely taking assets out of its domestic financial system, investors and even central banks that adopt it would just be trading Washington's sanction threats for Beijing's. Beijing could work around this problem by making the yuan freely convertible, rather than tightly controlled. But if that happened, the value of the yuan would likely decline sharply for an extended period, as it did from 2015 to 2016, when China temporarily opened its capital account, because billions of people who hold their savings in China are desperate to diversify their portfolios by moving their assets elsewhere in pursuit of higher returns. China could, of course, become the reserve currency for the small economies it dominates and for pariah states—countries with no real alternative. But this would do little to diversify or create preferential returns for Chinese savings, and it could backfire by entangling China's financial system in other states' financial instability.

That does not mean nothing will change financially. The more that economic divisions are amplified by hard-power divisions, the more that governments will align their financial systems with their primary military protector. Exchange-rate pegs tend to follow military alliances (as I established in 2008). The world saw this throughout Africa, Latin America, and South Asia during the Cold War, as governments switched the focus of their exchange-rate targets or currency pegs when realigning between the Soviet Union and the United States. But although that may mean some countries move in and out of the de facto dollar zone, it will not create an alternative currency that is attractive on its own terms.

COME UNDONE

The invasion and sanctions, then, will not result in enormous financial changes to the global economy. But they will speed up the corrosion of globalization already underway, a process that will have broad impacts. With less economic interconnectedness, the world will see lower trend growth and less innovation. Domestic incumbent companies and industries will have more power to demand special protections. Altogether, the real returns on investments made by households and corporations will go down.

To see why this is, consider what may happen to supply chains. Currently, most industrial companies and retailers source each key input or step in their production processes from a single or handful of separate places. There was a powerful economic logic to setting up global supply chains this way, with relatively few redundancies: not only did they save on costs by encouraging firms and factories to specialize, they also increased the scale of production and provided local marketing and information advantages. But given the current geopolitical and pandemic realities, these global value chains may no longer be worth the risk of relying on specific choke points, particularly if those points are in politically unstable or undependable countries. Multinational companies, with government encouragement, will rationally insure against problems by building redundant supply chains in safer locations. Like any form of insurance, this will protect against some downside risk, but it will be a direct cost that yields no immediate economic returns.

Meanwhile, if Chinese and U.S. companies no longer face competition from each other (or from companies outside their economic bloc), they are more likely to be inefficient, and consumers are less likely to get as much variety and reliability as they currently do. When that consumer is the government, protected domestic firms are even more likely to engage in waste and fraud, because there will be less competition for government procurement contracts. Throw in nationalism and fears of national security threats, and it will be easy for such companies to cloak themselves in patriotism and take it all the way to the bank, knowing that they are politically too big to fail. There is a reason why closed economies are more likely to experience corruption.

The world will see lower growth and less innovation.

Analysts can already see this at work in seemingly patriotic commitments by President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump about “onshoring” manufacturing—relocating the supply chains that make U.S. goods so they take

place in the United States. They are using national security and pride to justify policies that shortchange both national defense and the 85-plus percent of U.S. workers not employed in heavy industry. The fetishizing of domestic manufacturing over advancing cross-border trade in services and networks is especially ironic, given that the latter sectors are what has truly advantaged the West over Russia in implementing effective sanctions, and what has deterred Chinese businesses from bailing Russia out.

Similarly, the corrosion of globalization will have negative consequences for technology. Innovation is faster and more common when the global pool of scientific talent is engaged and can exchange ideas and share proof, or disproof, of concepts. But there is a politically compelling reason for states to try to make sure that only allies have access to their technology, even if restrictions are of dubious military relevance (in a world of cyberespionage, it is easy to acquire technological designs). The likely result will be a decline in innovation, as U.S. and other Western research institutions deprive themselves of many talented Chinese and Russian students and scientists.

The intensified corrosion of globalization will further diminish the return on capital in the world economy, and it will do so on every side of the economic divide. There will be new limits on where people can invest their savings, driving down the range of diversification and average returns. Fear and nationalism will likely increase people's desire for safe investments at home, in government or publicly backed securities. Governments will also combine national security arguments with fiscal and financial stability measures designed to strongly encourage investment in their own public debt, as they do during wars.

THE CONTINENTAL CONNECTION

There is one beneficial economic side effect to the increasing global divisions: the European Union is being galvanized to unify more of its economic policies. The bloc is putting up joint resources to share the financial burden of the massive Ukrainian refugee inflow coming into Poland and other eastern members. European bonds are being issued to pay for these measures, rather than individual member state debts.

The European Union or eurozone may issue more European public debt in the future, which would further help the global economy. The Russian invasion reinforces the fact that this is a world of low returns, and many investors have a

high desire for safety. By creating more safe assets for them, the EU and eurozone can absorb some risk-averse savings, improving financial stability.

Stronger EU unity will also create new opportunities for growth. Led by Germany's Chancellor Olaf Scholz, almost every EU member has made a multiyear commitment to increased defense spending and a greater public investment in rapidly reducing the continent's dependence on Russian fossil fuels. Both of these investments will go a long way toward ending Europe's free-riding on the United States and China for growth; giving the global economy another engine will help balance out the ups and downs of the business cycle, stabilizing the world against recessions. It will also prevent the faster-growing economies from running up foreign debt as they have when Germany and other European surplus economies exported products but failed to consume.

These initiatives will, in particular, help the eurozone itself. One of the primary causes of the euro crisis a decade ago were the imbalances among euro economies caused by German austerity. By increasing German domestic demand, southern members of the eurozone will be able to work off some of their debt through increased exports rather than having to cut back wages and imports to make their payments. This should strengthen the long-term viability of the euro, as well as increase its attractiveness to potential new members in eastern Europe and reserve managers around the world. A euro that is less subject to internal tensions and worries will also be of higher, more stable value, which in turn will reduce trade tensions with the United States.

AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH

Unfortunately, the Russian invasion will prove to be far less kind to the developing world. Food and energy price hikes are already hurting the citizens of poorer states, and the economic impact of corroding globalization will be even worse. If lower-income countries are forced to choose sides when deciding where they get their aid and foreign direct investment, the opportunities for their private sectors will narrow. Companies within these countries will grow more dependent on government gatekeepers at home and abroad. And as the United States and other countries increase their use of sanctions, firms will be less likely to invest in these economies. Anxious multinational companies want to avoid U.S. opprobrium, and so they will forego investing in places that they see as having undependable transparency.

The saddest part of this is that it comes on top of the world's unequal response to COVID-19, in which high-income countries did not provide enough vaccines and medical supplies to the developing world. This political disregard for the well-being of low-income populations globally materially changes the economic conditions on the ground. That in turn provides a commercial justification for the private sector not to invest in those economies. The only way out of this cycle is through public investment and enforced, fair treatment. Division among the major economies, however, is likely to make such investment in the developing world insufficient, unreliable, and arbitrarily disbursed.

Helping poor economies is not the only long-term, development goal that Russia's invasion puts at risk. To survive, societies around the world will need to mitigate and adapt to climate change, but the pivotal role of Russia and Ukraine in global energy supplies sends out contradictory forces that will make the energy transition more challenging. Simultaneously, Western politicians are calling for moving away from greenhouse gasses and advocating increased fossil fuel exploration outside Russia. States want to prevent price gouging, cut energy taxes, and compensate households for higher gas prices, but they also want to increase incentives to expand greener energy production and decrease consumption, which require higher prices. The tradeoffs extend beyond climate change. Democracies want to build alliances around liberal values and freer markets, but to cut energy costs, they are going to autocratic governments such as Saudi Arabia and Venezuela, offering to legitimize their regimes in exchange for increased oil supply.

Underlying all this is an inconvenient reality: to slow rising temperatures, the world needs international collective action, including from China. The alliance of democracies cannot do it alone. The Chinese and the U.S. governments have, at times, been able to make joint progress on climate initiatives even while being in conflict on other issues, and both Chinese President Xi Jinping and Biden have said they want to do so again. But it will get harder as each country retreats into a separate bloc. Meanwhile, as the corrosion of globalization reduces the pace of innovation by restricting research collaboration, it will also become more challenging for scientists to come up with a deus ex machina that can save the planet.

PICKING UP THE PIECES

Stopping the corrosion of globalization was already difficult, and the Russian invasion of Ukraine makes it harder. As politicians in the United States and

elsewhere spin false narratives about how economic openness is bad for workers, the Russian invasion and the resulting sanctions push China and the United States further apart.

But policymakers are not helpless. The financial sanctions on Russia were so powerful because they were imposed by a strong alliance of higher income democracies. If Australia, Japan, South Korea, the United Kingdom, the United States, the European Union, and other important market economies can channel the same might they used to punish Russia toward helping the economy, they can repair the erosion—perhaps encouraging China to stay connected as well.

To do so, officials must pursue a wide range of policies. They can start by making a common market among democracies that is as broad and deep as possible—including for goods, services, and even labor opportunities. They must create common standards for screening cross-border private investment for national security and human rights reasons. They should create a relatively even playing field among allies that can foster healthy competition, which would diminish the worst side effects of economic nationalism: corruption, the entrenchment of incumbents, and waste. Policymakers must also set up a sustained, multiyear public investment front across the Western alliance, which would reduce imbalances between economies and raise overall returns on investment.

The world's democracies cannot reverse every corrosive division in the global economy caused by Russian aggression and China's tacit approval. They should not want to; some forms of violence must be met with economic isolation. But they can make up for many of the losses, steadying the planet in the process.

Source: Published in Foreign Affairs

UN: A Failure? By Dr Shoaib Baloch

The purpose is not to write the death certificate of the UN but to attempt to delineate the failures of the world's largest multilateral organization. The catastrophic global wars of the 20th century took a great toll of lives with profound social, economic and political implications. To prevent the future generation from the 'scourge of war', the gang of five midwived the birth of the UN, but congenital anomalies have atrophied all its organs. Thus, it has failed to grow and function properly.

The structural defects of the UN have provided room to big powers to advance their interest at the expense of the organization's primary objective. It has failed to prevent conflicts; peace and security have become a far cry. The flames of conflict have never extinguished while only the means and patterns of war have been changed.

Given that the UN has made the lawless jungle a sort of zoo to cage the big beasts and neutralize their aggressive behaviour in an anarchic international system, this objective has remained a pipedream. However, during the creation of the UN, the five permanent members of the Security Council were victorious powers with convergent interests, creating an institutional world order aimed at protecting their future interests and preventing war.

When the interests of veto powers started to diverge over the future course of world economic and political structure, the UN landed in troubled waters. Great powers have never compromised their interests— while breaching flagrantly the UN's principles to preserve their strategic interests. The permanent members of the UNSC always tend to use their veto power to curb any resolution which may undermine their interests or that of their allies. In this way, power politics continues to strangulate the UN.

An evolving multipolar world order will be a litmus test for the UN. Multiple major powers in the international system will increase unilateralism, so multilateralism will be at stake. Nevertheless, war, climate change and pandemics are the major global problems for the UN. But great power relations will decide the future of the UN.

Of all optimisms, the UN is always admired as having prevented World War III. It may be true to admit that the UN has contributed in several peacekeeping

missions and has also extended help in conflict resolution, but it must not be given the credit for preventing World War III. It has been the nuclear deterrence which has repelled big powers from direct collision thus far. Nuclear weapons have created the fear of mutual destruction; therefore, nuclear countries rationally avoid war. In other words, the concept of mutually assured destruction (MAD) has discouraged them from engaging in war, for it will bring about complete annihilation with no victorious power. But the major global powers have remained in entanglement through proxy warfare in other countries.

However, on the pretext of humanitarian intervention or self-defence in the face of a perceived threat, great powers are often inclined to military intervention in other countries with the view to 'preventing' or 'pre-empting' the imminent threat to their national security. Pre-emptive self-defence has resulted in the violation of sovereignty and human rights abuse. The US invasion of Iraq in 2003 is a textbook example of sovereignty violation. Similarly, the ongoing Russia's military invasion in Ukraine signifies the tragedy of great power politics.

Evidently, the UN is impotent, for it has failed to prevent great power aggression. Any resolution against their actions will be vetoed without any impediment. Hence, the UN serves no purpose during great power conflict, and the vulnerable countries are subjugated without any substantial help or collective security.

Today, the world is in disarray. Virulent nationalism, retreat of globalism, great power tension, unilateralism in action, little respect for global norms, global security landscape, and the twilight of American exceptionalism are some aspects of the world in transition. The UN is unable to stem the rising tides of these evolving dynamics of the world.

Even though the UN has cheated death despite global crises in the past, changing priorities and interests of permanent members of the UNSC will lead to its painful death. These permanent members— particularly China, Russia and the USA— are on a collision course, having divergent interests over a myriad of global issues. Drifting great power interests would be a death agony for the UN.

Although the USA has been a ruthless master, its rise as global hegemonic power has provided the UN a lease of life. The USA has covered the world with the blanket of its security to work as global policeman; its economic supremacy has allowed it to influence world economy and attract alliances; its technological superiority has added another dimension to its power; and, its ideological

principles— multilateralism, the neoliberal economic system, and democratic political norms— have provided it with the paraphernalia to craft the rules of the game. Briefly, the UN has been under the protection of a hegemonic power; its principles have been upheld by the virtue of the US exceptionalism.

An evolving multipolar world order will be a litmus test for the UN. Multiple major powers in the international system will increase unilateralism, so multilateralism will be at stake. Nevertheless, war, climate change and pandemics are the major global problems for the UN. But great power relations will decide the future of the UN.

Source: Published in Pakistan today

Washington Can't Treat Russia as It Does North Korea By Ted Galen Carpenter

US. policy with respect to the war in Ukraine is characterized by excessive emotionalism and stridency. Indeed, the hostility toward Russia has reached toxic levels. The Biden administration has embarked on a crusade to enlist its allies in Europe and East Asia to form a solid bloc dedicated to imposing severe sanctions on Russia and assisting Ukraine's defense with shipments of sophisticated weaponry. U.S. officials also are pressuring governments throughout the international community to cooperate in waging economic warfare against Moscow.

Washington and its NATO partners seem almost indifferent to the adverse impact of their punitive measures on the Russian people or on the global economy. Worse, their strategy does not appear to have an identifiable endpoint. Neither Biden nor any other administration official has tried to define what would constitute "success." U.S. and NATO leaders have not clarified whether sanctions will be lifted (or even eased) if Russia withdraws its invasion force from Ukraine. There is no indication that the West's economic war against Russia would cease even if Kyiv and Moscow concluded a peace agreement. The Biden administration actually appears to be pressuring Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskyy not to make concessions. State Department spokesman Ned Price emphasized that the war is "bigger" than Russia and Ukraine. "The key point is that there are principles that are at stake here that have universal applicability everywhere."

The implication in U.S. and NATO policy statements is that the punitive approach will continue indefinitely unless Russia capitulates. Indeed, given Biden's recent accusation that Vladimir Putin is a war criminal, it seems likely that nothing short of Putin's ouster would slake the Western thirst for retribution.

Such an attitude is profoundly unwise. Insistence on Russia's capitulation and humiliation virtually guarantee that the war in Ukraine will continue to rage on, causing a rising toll of casualties on both sides. The Kremlin will have little incentive to reach a compromise peace if there are no significant benefits to be gained. Conversely, a promise that Russia's international and political status will be restored as soon as the fighting ends would create an inducement for Moscow

to compromise and seek an early truce. That is especially true since the invasion has proven to be a much slower and more costly slog than Russian leaders anticipated.

Beyond considerations about ending the tragic Ukraine conflict sooner rather than later, there is another compelling reason for the United States and its allies to adopt a more flexible and conciliatory approach. Pursuing a strategy of isolating Russia diplomatically and economically over the long term amounts to trying to replicate the U.S.-led policy toward North Korea that has produced decidedly unsatisfactory results.

Frankly, it has been myopic and counterproductive even to treat North Korea like North Korea. Isolating a country that is gradually, but successfully, developing a small nuclear arsenal and an effective delivery system is extremely dangerous. North Korea's new test launch of a missile that apparently has sufficient range to reach the U.S. mainland is the latest evidence that the isolation strategy is not working. Applying the same rigid, misguided approach to a country that is one of the world's major powers and already possesses several thousand nuclear weapons would be much worse. However angry they might be, the United States and its allies must not seek to treat Russia as an international pariah.

The good news is that even making such an attempt is almost certain to fail. U.S. and other Western leaders already are reacting with disappointment and annoyance because other important countries, such as China, India, and South Africa, declined to join the anti-Russia crusade. Some of them have even refrained from explicitly condemning Russia's invasion. When it comes to implementing tangible sanctions, the resistance is far stronger and more pervasive. Hudson Institute scholar Walter Russell Mead provides an apt summary of the sharply differing responses:

As the consequences of the Russian-Ukrainian war ricochet through global politics, the West has never been more closely aligned. It has also rarely been more alone. Allies in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization plus Australia and Japan are united in revulsion against Vladimir Putin's war and are cooperating with the most sweeping sanctions since World War II. The rest of the world, not so much.

U.S. and NATO leaders need to take a deep breath and develop a strategy to restore the West's relations with Russia to normal as soon as possible. That

modification may need to include easing some sanctions even before the fighting in Ukraine comes to an end. Above all, NATO governments must convey a message to the Kremlin that the West's long-term strategy does not amount to Cold War 2.0. Such a myopic, confrontational approach would not only do lasting damage to the global economy, it would significantly increase the chances of a catastrophic military collision. Like it or not, Russia is—and will continue to be—a major player in the international system. It is not feasible to treat it like the West does North Korea.

Ted Galen Carpenter, a senior fellow in defense and foreign policy studies at the Cato Institute and a contributing editor at the National Interest, is the author of twelve books and more than 950 articles on international affairs.

Source: Published in The National Interest

American Arrogance Amid Ukraine Crisis

By Azhar Azam

After the fall of the Soviet Union, the United States in the 1990s reconsolidated strength and expanded hegemony across the world. Since then, America has been manipulating its economic and military prowess to assert influence and monopolise the planet earth through the so-called 'new world order'.

The US hoped the doctrine would allow the country to sustain world dominance, not realising that strategy could mask a decline too. Same was true when Washington, between 1997 and 2009, enrolled more than a dozen countries into its orbit under the NATO banner. But the Treaty's open-door policy lost appeal as just Montenegro and North Macedonia joined the military alliance through the next decade.

Before the first Gulf war, Washington assured that Baghdad had no interest in Arab-Arab conflicts including Iraq's border dispute with Kuwait, emboldening Iraqi President Saddam Hussein to invade the neighbouring emirate. To make NATO relevant internationally, the Bush Sr administration backtracked once Iraq seized Kuwait and distorted facts to justify NATO's military campaign.

It leaked reports about Iraqi military buildup on the borders of Saudi Arabia and drew analogy of Hussein's invasion of Kuwait to Nazi Germany's occupation of the Rhineland. Throughout the war, President George HW Bush rebranded him as "Hitler revisited" and used phrases such as "blitzkrieg fashion" and "Death's Head regiments" for the Iraqi forces. The Pentagon scrutinised media reports under the aegis of national security before release.

A couple of Soviet satellite images subsequently exposed the "pretty serious fib" that Iraqi troops were amassing near the Saudi borders to attack on world's major oil fields and make global industrial economies hostage. The Middle East watchers largely agreed Hussein's invasion had roots in historical grievances and urged the Iraqi president to refuse accepting the Britishdrawn lines after World War I to virtually cut Iraq off from the Gulf.

In the second Gulf war, the US "murdered" the truth again, claiming Hussein was developing weapons of mass destruction. Before and after incursion in Iraq,

nothing was found either in more than 70 UN inspections or US military searches. Certainly, the US and NATO had the choice to avoid a war; they decided to launch a military offensive on Baghdad in violation of the UN Charter and international law.

The approach “changed Russia”. In 1993, the Kremlin said NATO’s eastward expansion breached the spirit of the 1990 treaty and labeled it a “betrayal”. A vast majority of the Russians on both occasions — when NATO bombarded Moscow’s ally Yugoslavia in 1999 and the Kremlin deployed troops to Crimea in 2014 — backed their government’s claims that America was sparking the conflicts through behind-the-scenes meddling.

Six years onward, in 1997, Moscow questioned Washington’s “double dealing” and initiated a bareknuckle diplomatic battle with its cold war rival a decade later. At the 2007 Munich Security Conference, Russian President Vladimir Putin strongly derided the US for fanning conflicts the world over and threatening his country through new missile shield programmes in Poland and the Czech Republic. “One state, the United States, has overstepped its national borders in every way.”

Russian media isn’t the odd one out that blames the US for prying Ukrainians to deflect attention from intensifying internal issues including skyrocketing inflation, shrill racism, soaring crime rates, organised shoplifting sprees, vaccine protests, cultural battles on transgender rights, political intolerance, broken family system, increasing suicides, drug dependency and presidential sarcasm.

Western observers too consider the US and NATO arrogant expansionist policy and interference in Ukrainian domestic politics during 2013 and 2014 is behind Moscow’s invasion of Kyiv. The belief — American great empire has waned due to political turbulence at home, entered a period of decline and faces existential challenge in East Asia — is gaining traction in the West. Americans after the Capitol riots fret their country is “falling apart”.

America’s global hegemony or liberal international order — resting on three pillars: economic strength, military might and the soft power of cultural dominance — appears to be shaking over the administration’s myopic foreign policy to spike tensions in other parts of the world. The flippant approach has contracted America’s share of global income with China making a “worldaltering shift”, sharply reduced ability to deter or defeat opponents and decayed culture.

McKinney & Company's analysis, noting Beijing accounted for 50% of the growth in net worth or wealth between 2000 and 2020, describes the US is losing ground globally.

From leading to opposing aggressions, US history is marked by double standards. As the White House has sought global nations to row behind Washington over nebulous security threats, it lacks the moral ethos to call out Russia's military action in Ukraine and champion peace. Before the invasion, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi likened Putin with Hitler; many countries don't agree as they watch to protect their interests with one of the biggest arms and energy suppliers.

Over the years, the US has been using sanctions as a leverage to round up Russian and other world economies. Washington still believes these economic tactics can force Moscow to retreat from Kyiv. This may not since Russia has successfully reordered its economy to cope with the restrictions swiped in the aftermath of Crimea annexation. On the other hand America's response against the Kremlin has already reached the maximum so the only edge is wearing thin too.

Although the second round of talks between Kyiv and Moscow didn't bring any major breakthrough, it wasn't expected to. Still negotiations — as both sides reached a consensus to establish humanitarian corridors, “possible temporary ceasefire during evacuations”, and agreed to meet again — should help to chop the boiling temperature and usher the way for peace and stability.

The White House is watching the proceedings in Ukraine from the sidelines because of a messy US past that has been fraught with uninterrupted invasions, seriously limiting the superpower's capability to intervene in a global peace crisis. Under accelerating trend of the American decline, arrogance seems to be the Hobson's Choice for Biden to keep “(once) the headquarters of the world” relevant on a standoff, which really matters for the only living planet in the universe over threats of a World War III.

Source: Published in Express Tribune

Taliban Aren't Helping Themselves | Daily Times Editorial

Just when the Chinese foreign minister's surprise, unannounced trip to Kabul filled international headlines and brought hopes of greater international engagement with the troubled country, the Taliban leadership made its own case for recognition much weaker by going back on its word once again about the matter of female education; among so many other things. It turns out that barely hours after letting girls to back to school, the permission was suddenly revoked without any explanation. And the thousands of girls across the country who had finally rushed to their classrooms had to head back home with tears in their eyes. The Taliban haven't yet commented on this strange U-turn, except some junior officials saying that this decision came directly from Kandahar, which means the high-command issued it.

This is very troubling for at least two very important reasons. One, why did the Taliban give their word about just such things when they clearly had no intention of honouring it? It couldn't just be the haste to get the Americans out since they were clearly winning the war; and if they had waited for 20 years, surely they could wait out a few more months without even hinting at a compromise on their core values. Yet they first agreed to a number of things, of which women's rights and female education were two very prominent points, and then just chose not to honour their own promise.

And two, why drag religion into this? There are many Muslim countries in the world, and none of them have this particular issues. Why can't these countries, or outfits like OIC, take up such matters very seriously and solve them once and for all? How long must one group that can take power in just one country misrepresent a religion that is professed by a billion-and-a-half people across the world?

The Taliban's policies are not just harming Afghanistan's citizens, they're also not doing the government in Kabul, or the great religion of Islam, any favours. If Afghanistan's friends, of which Pakistan is clearly the most prominent one right now, are not advising them very strongly on this point, they are not helping the government Kabul either. *

Source: Daily Times Editorial

Biden's Forever War By Andre Damon

On Saturday, US President Joe Biden ended his week-long tour of Europe to mobilize Nato for conflict with Russia with a belligerent rant in Warsaw, Poland. Media coverage of Biden's speech was focused on its final passage, apparently ad-libbed, in which the American president said that Russian President Vladimir Putin "cannot remain in power".

But an even more important aspect of the speech went largely undiscussed: Biden's declaration of a 'commitment' by the United States to 'decades' of war.

Against the backdrop of the largest land war in Europe since World War II, Biden declared, "We must commit now to be in this fight for the long haul. We must remain unified today and tomorrow and the day after and for the years and decades to come". To what 'fight' is Biden committing the United States?

Just nine months ago, when Biden announced the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, he said, "We've been a nation too long at war. If you're 20 years old today, you have never known an America at peace". He declared, "It's time to end the forever war".

Now, Biden is committing the American population to a new perpetual war – one that he said will have immense 'costs' and 'will not be easy'.

In his speech, Biden declared that the decades-long 'fight' the US is initiating is a "great battle for freedom: a battle between democracy and autocracy, between liberty and repression, between a rules-based order and one governed by brute force".

Biden picked a strange place to launch a struggle for 'democracy'. This year, the Berlin-based Civil Liberties Union for Europe accused the Polish government of "seizing further control of the justice system, civil society and media, while cutting basic human rights and fuelling divisions by scapegoating migrants and other minority groups".

The Polish government is controlled by the ultra-right, chauvinist, anti-Semitic and authoritarian PiS party. President Duda – Biden's constant companion during his warmongering crusade – heads a government that has completely banned

abortion as a form of family planning, persecutes the LGBT community, and criminalizes the exposure of Polish complicity in the Holocaust.

As with the 'war on terror', which saw the most grievous violations of democratic rights in American history, Biden's new decades-long war invokes 'democracy' as a throwaway line that no one is to take seriously. In his speech, Biden himself made clear the extent to which the United States had provoked Russia's invasion by arming a Nato proxy on Russia's border.

"In the years before the invasion, we, America, had sent over \$650 million, before they crossed the border, in weapons to Ukraine, including anti-air and anti-armor equipment. Since the invasion, America has committed another \$1.35 billion in weapons and ammunition".

Everything that Biden has done over the past week has been intended to stoke up the US-Nato proxy war in Ukraine. He called the Russian president every name imaginable, from 'butcher' to 'murderous dictator' to 'war criminal' to 'thug'. He has poured weapons into Ukraine and doubled the forces deployed on Russia's borders. As Edward Luce of the Financial Times commented, "US liberals are at least as hawkish as conservatives".

Biden's speech in Poland followed the conclusion of the Nato summit in Brussels, Belgium, where the leaders of the Nato alliance plotted out a major escalation of the conflict. At the summit, Nato announced a doubling of its forces on Russia's border, and the New York Times reported plans by the US for full-scale war with Russia.

The actual causes of this new 'forever war' are to be found in the documents of US military planners.

In 1991, amidst the dissolution of the USSR, then US President George H W Bush declared that the Gulf War against Iraq would usher in a 'New World Order' led by the United States.

The following year, the Pentagon published a Defense Planning Guidance, termed the 'Wolfowitz Doctrine', proclaiming that the United States' "first objective is to prevent the re-emergence of a new rival, either on the territory of the former Soviet Union or elsewhere, that poses a threat on the order of that posed formerly by the Soviet Union".

The outpouring of US militarism initiated by the first invasion of Iraq was followed by three decades of perpetual war, including the bombing and breakup of Yugoslavia, the destruction and occupation of Afghanistan, the invasion and occupation of Iraq, the overthrow of the Libyan government and the years-long regime change in Syria.

Now, these wars are metastasizing into a direct US conflict with Russia and China, with potentially incalculable consequences.

The 2018 National Defense Strategy announced a pivot from US military engagements in the Middle East to efforts to combat Russia and China. “Inter-state strategic competition,” it proclaimed, “not terrorism, is now the primary concern in US national security.”

In this context, it is clear that Biden’s withdrawal from Afghanistan was nothing but a redeployment of forces in preparation for military conflicts on an even greater scale.

Despite the efforts by the White House to walk back Biden’s statement, Biden’s ad-libbed declaration was the inescapable conclusion of the entire speech. Biden’s statements clearly reflect the actual US policy, the aim of which is the military isolation and economic ruination of Russia, the ouster of its government and the installation of a puppet regime that would turn it into a rump state.

Biden’s declaration of a new, decades-long commitment comes just days after his proclamation before leaving for Europe, that “there’s going to be a new world order out there, and we’ve got to lead it”.

Seven years ago, in his preface to *A Quarter Century of War: The US Drive for Global Hegemony 1990-2016*, WSWS International Editorial Board Chairman David North wrote:

The last quarter century of US-instigated wars must be studied as a chain of interconnected events. The strategic logic of the US drive for global hegemony extends beyond the neocolonial operations in the Middle East and Africa. The ongoing regional wars are component elements of the rapidly escalating confrontation of the United States with Russia and China.

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