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November 2019

Kartarpur is a Welcome Initiative



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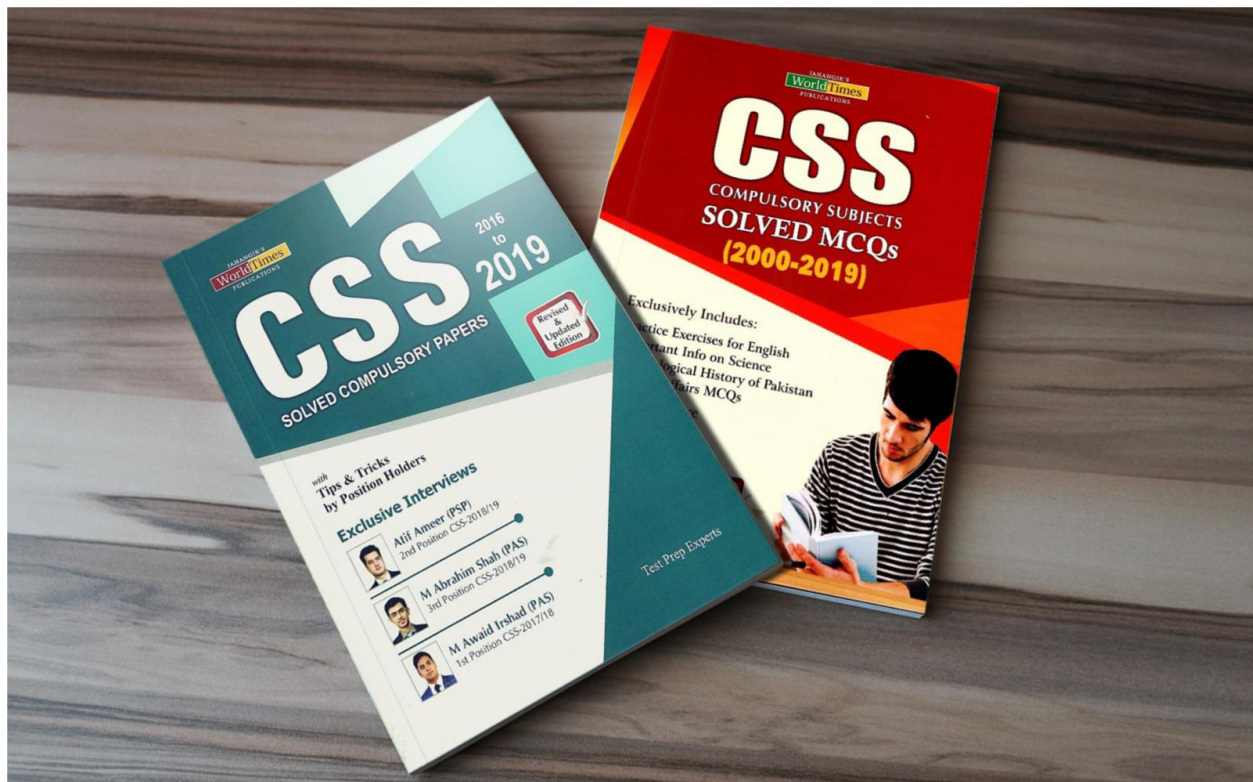
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PAKISTAN

The Peace Corridor | Editorial

It's a giant leap towards peace in the subcontinent. On Nov 9, Prime Minister Imran Khan inaugurated the Kartarpur Corridor facilitating Sikhs from India to visit the place where Baba Guru Nanak – the founder of the Sikh religion, spent the last days of his life – without a visa. The four-kilometer passage links Narowal district to Dera Baba Nanak in Gurdaspur, India. Formerly, Indian Sikhs first travelled to Lahore and from there they went to Kartarpur. Now pilgrims will be saved from travelling long distances to visit Kartarpur. The two nuclear-armed neighbours laid the foundation stones for the corridor last year. Proposed during former Indian prime minister Vajpayee's 1999 Lahore visit, the project could not materialise because of the mostly strained relations between the two nations. The project, which many call the corridor of peace, has been completed in 11 months by both countries.

PM Khan has waived the \$20 fee for those coming to Kartarpur from India on the day of the inauguration to attend the 550th birth anniversary of Baba Guru Nanak. He also announced two other relaxations for the pilgrims coming from India: they will only need a valid national identity card, and will not have to register 10 days in advance.

Former Indian prime minister Manmohan Singh, Chief Minister of Indian Punjab Amrinder Singh, and Congress leader Navjot Sidhu were also present at the inauguration. The Kartarpur Corridor is a landmark peace move. The "peace corridor" will likely lead to a thaw in Pakistan-India relations vitiated by the Modi government's decision to annex the disputed state of Jammu and Kashmir entirely against the wishes of the people of that state.

It is, however, unfortunate that the Indian Supreme Court's decision allowing the construction of a temple at the place of the demolished Babri Masjid has come on the day of the inauguration of Kartarpur Corridor. The Indian SC has ordered that Muslims should be given alternative land to build a mosque. Pakistan has rightly described the court verdict as a political decision.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2096738/6-the-peace-corridor/>

Pak, Russia on New Trajectory | Editorial

OVER the last few years, Pakistan and Russia have shown the strong desire to put their bilateral relations on a positive trajectory whilst forgetting the past bitterness which indeed will have benefits not only for both the countries but the entire region.

In the latest important development, Pakistan has finally decided to sign a deal with Moscow to settle a 39-year old exporters' claims case pending since the disintegration of the Soviet Union, paving the way for Russia to invest over \$ 8 billion dollars in Pakistan. The government has authorized its Ambassador to Russia to sign the deal. Under the agreement, the Pakistani government will return \$ 93.5 million to Russia within ninety days of the signing of the deal and clear pending exporters' claims to the tune of \$ 23.8 million as per the settlement agreements reached on October 6, 2016 and subsequently December 2017. The efforts to sign the deal with Russia were kicked off by the previous government but the incumbent regime took the initiative to execute it, which in our view, should have been signed much earlier given the benefits Pakistan could accrue from the Russian investment. According to the Russian law, it cannot invest in countries with which it has disputes. Moscow has reportedly already conveyed to Pakistan that it would invest eight billion dollars in the country's energy sector and Pakistan Steel Mills after the resolution of this dispute. Thus, this agreement will augur well for both the countries to bolster their economic and trade relations. Today, we understand Pakistan and Russia enjoy strategic ties. In the last few years both the countries have been seen collaborating closely in the defence field and now we understand that time has come to transform this relationship into a strategic economic partnership. Russia has shown interest to use Gwadar port for its trade and given the relationship the country enjoys both with Pakistan and China, they will be more open to it. We rather will suggest the government to invite the Russian companies to invest in the SEZs being established under the CPEC. The people of Pakistan are also anxiously waiting for the long overdue visit of Russian President Vladimir Putin to Islamabad and we hope this will take place soon in order to take the bilateral relationship to new heights.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/pak-russia-on-new-trajectory/>

Thaw in Pak-Afghan Ties? | Editorial

After weeks of tension, there are signs of a thaw in relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan as Foreign Secretary Sohail Mahmood with Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) chief Lt-Gen Faiz Hameed met Afghan officials in Kabul to resolve thorny issues. This is a welcome development and it demonstrates Pakistan's resolve to have friendly relations with Kabul. Both high-profile officials met Afghan National Security Adviser Hamdullah Mohib and discussed ways to resolve the matter of harassment of diplomats in both Kabul and Islamabad, dispute over an Afghan market in Peshawar and border firing incidents. These incidents marred the spirit of Pakistan's good will gesture of opening the border point round-the-clock at Torkham in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in September. The measure was meant to facilitate people and trade between the countries. The modern age demands round-the-clock operations in trade and travel sectors. Both countries were to benefit from the move and bilateral trade went up by 55 percent with the border post's opening.

Everything was going normally when both governments traded barbs over the issue of the Afghan market last month. After a court verdict over the disputed market, the Peshawar police raided it to remove an Afghan flag hoisted there. The Afghan government put up resistance and took the protest to such a diplomatic level that it closed down its consulate in Peshawar. The dispute had nothing to do with the Pakistani government, as the litigants were a private citizen and the Afghan government, and after years of trial the court decided in favour of the Pakistani man in 1998. The present possessor of the market, the Afghan Bank, did not let the litigant implement the verdict, which resulted first in a police raid, and later the diplomatic row. According to reports, both sides have agreed to resolve the market row through a committee.

Then the rows took a bloody turn when both sides exchanged fire two weeks ago. Guns fell silent after leaving several troops and civilians injured on the Pakistani side of the border in Chitral. Remarkably, Pakistani troops showed restraint to the unprovoked firing from the other side. Lastly, diplomats in both countries also became parties. First, the Afghan foreign ministry alleged that its ambassador in Islamabad was being harassed, but Islamabad countered that diplomats of the

Pakistan embassy in Kabul were being attacked on roads, forcing the consular section to suspend its services.

Hopefully, the recent visit will normalise the relations as it will benefit both countries.

Source: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/499233/thaw-in-pak-afghan-ties/>

Re-assessing Pakistan-US Centrality By

Hannan R Hussain

For Pakistan and the United States, it has been a year of limited bilateral successes, widening counterterrorism perceptions, and frequent economic threats. Experts in both Islamabad and Washington have begun to question whether the centrality of the Pakistan-US ties to South Asia is withering. Some deem it a fresh start while others construe rhetoric as a diplomatic reset. Despite the splits, a joint pursuit for peace in Afghanistan, shifting economic alliances, and differing counterterrorism priorities indicate that the Pakistan-US relationship is likely to maintain its centrality to the South Asian region.

First, both powers have forged economic partnerships with countries of their choosing. The Trump and Modi leaderships have been at the centre of a robust Indo-US economic alliance. Bilateral trade crossed \$142 billion in 2018, long considered to be en route to the \$500 billion mark.

Pakistan on the other hand has resisted its historic reliance on US aid, and chosen to immerse itself in a multi-billion dollar economic partnership with its iron-ally, China. Naturally, a bulk of the cooperation centres on the \$62 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) whose potential to generate returns is deemed inevitable by both Chinese and Pakistani officials.

In the light of Islamabad and Washington's shifting economic trajectories, a favourable recognition of each other's independent pursuits becomes vital for a regional engagement. Washington must acknowledge the Pakistan-China alliance in the same light as the Indo-US economic partnership itself, if the end goal is to prioritise future Pak-US cooperation in South Asia.

Second, both Pakistan and the US desire a political settlement to the Afghan conflict, and remain primary stakeholders in its outcome. Islamabad has served as a "fallback option" for Washington each time talks between the Afghan Taliban and the US have undergone friction. For instance, Islamabad's decision to host the Taliban after the Camp David fallout provides strong evidence of the Taliban's receptivity to Pakistan's reconciliation call. The move also set the groundwork for Mr Trump's latest advance towards Kabul, aimed at reviving the Taliban-US peace talks. Hence, Pakistan's decades-long familiarity with the Taliban — coupled with

American backchannel diplomacy — confirms the relationship as indispensable to Afghan peace and regional stability.

Third, divergent counterterrorism positions — including limited US operations against anti-Pakistan militias in eastern Afghanistan — make cooperation between Pakistan and the US evermore pivotal. The Trump administration has made it very clear that it wishes to eliminate all present and future militant outfits within South Asia. However, Washington shows no signs of accelerating crackdowns against Afghan-based Islamist groups that continue to target military and civilian facilities in Pakistan, especially Jamaat UI Ahrar.

There is also a routine perception in Washington that Islamabad's domestic counterterrorism measures identify as fiction and that no degree of Pakistani cooperation will ever prove adequate. In fact, the Trump administration continues to cite Pakistan as a major player for South Asian peace, while simultaneously dismissing its contributions — in both blood and treasure — to the very same counterterrorism cause. Numerous testimonies by US experts to the Congress see to this contradiction, one which with every passing speech is becoming difficult for the Trump administration to conceal.

The solution lies in recalibrating counterterrorism priorities which is only possible if the Pakistan-US security cooperation continues uninterrupted in the region.

Ultimately, shifting economic alliances, joint pursuits for peace in Afghanistan, and differing counterterrorism positions are likely to sustain Pakistan-US centrality to South Asian stability. Undermining the relationship could not only compound existing challenges, but potentially starve the region of a viable alternative.

Published in The Express Tribune, November 6th, 2019.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2094137/6-re-assessing-pakistan-us-centrality/>

Kartarpur is a Welcome Initiative But Can it Break The Ice With India? By Ashraf Jehangir Qazi

Opinions should only be based on facts

Love is wise. Hatred is foolish — Bertrand Russell

WHAT is the significance of Kartarpur? Can it be scaled up to impact India-Pakistan relations? Can it be extended to a Kashmir settlement? Many Indians see it as a ploy by Pakistan to cultivate Sikh goodwill to counter India's policies towards Pakistan. Nevertheless, Narendra Modi expressed his appreciation for Imran Khan's initiative.

In Pakistan the initiative is very welcome but it is not expected to break any ice with India especially after the Aug developments in India-held Kashmir (IHK). However, some do hope one good gesture might lead to another including the possibility of Modi taking a more farsighted and statesmanlike approach to Kashmir and India-Pakistan relations.

Coinciding with the opening of the Kartarpur Corridor the Indian supreme court decided the Babri Masjid or Ram Janmabhoomi case in favour of the Hindu community. This elicited condemnation from the Pakistan's foreign office and a response from the Indian foreign office. The goodwill and possibilities generated by the Kartarpur Corridor opening may have been diluted by the decision of the Indian apex court.

Kashmir has been in lockdown for more than a quarter of a year. The situation is likely to get worse. The Line of Control cannot remain quiet in such circumstances. India is not likely to reverse its decision on Kashmir in the absence of real international pressure, nor is it likely to eliminate the Kashmiri resistance short of an exponential escalation in its already massive human rights violations in the Valley. The international community is well aware of a potential human rights catastrophe in IHK. But, like with climate change, it is currently not politically motivated enough to avoid the worst outcomes.

What is to be done? Pakistan needs to keep its nerve. It has to clean up its act on all fronts.

In a worst-outcome situation, neither Imran Khan nor the Pakistan Army will be able to restrain the people of Azad Kashmir and Pakistan from responding. That will raise the risks of an Indian assault on Pakistan with all its possibly existential consequences for both countries. The very first and least of these consequences would be the closing of the Kartarpur Corridor.

To avoid worst possible outcomes, the UN Security Council will need to get off its butt. While most of the major powers may be inclined to concentrate their pressure on Pakistan, this is not likely to succeed because of the even greater domestic pressure in Pakistan to stop a perceived genocide in IHK. In such a situation, only the veto-wielding powers in the UN Security Country would be in a position to persuade India to relent in order to avert a war, including the real risk of nuclear exchanges.

An alternative scenario is for Pakistan to abandon the Kashmiris in IHK to their fate while maintaining a furious and largely futile diplomatic campaign against Indian atrocities. There are many in Pakistan who quietly or openly advocate such an approach to ensure the survival of the country. Many suspect the government is itself wedded to this approach despite its public denials.

This approach hopefully assumes the Kartarpur initiative might have the potential to set in train a series of developments that could eventually convince India to review its Kashmir policy, restore the status quo before Aug 5, and resume dialogue with a Pakistan that manages to get off the FATF grey list.

But why would Modi respond to such an approach? He certainly resents criticisms of his policies but is under no pressure to revise them. Moreover, his Hindutva base would instantly reject him if he revised the Aug 5 decision. He sees Pakistan not India up the creek. He sees Pakistan not India doing U-turns. He sees himself as having finally settled Kashmir. He sees himself as the embodiment of a triumphant ideology that has given India great power status while putting an end to Pakistan's dreams of Kashmir.

Modi may even see himself as joining an Asian trio of superpowers (China, Russia and India) that leaves Pakistan out in the cold. He might see this as providing India even greater leverage with the US. He believes Indira Gandhi had an historic opportunity to finally settle Kashmir during the Shimla negotiations in 1972 but was outsmarted by Bhutto. He intends to do no such thing with Imran Khan. In this scenario, Kartarpur will have been a one-off happening.

What is to be done? Pakistan needs to keep its nerve. It has to clean up its act on all fronts. It has to structurally transform itself politically, economically and socially in order to achieve stability and increasing prosperity and, just as importantly, project a positive image to the world which will allow its point of view to register. None of this is happening. When it does the people will acknowledge it loud and clear without the government having to shower praise on itself.

What 'out-of-the-box' initiatives are available to the prime minister? He could consider a statement reiterating his commitment to take risks for peace even at this hour of minimal hope. He could stun the world by indicating a willingness to travel to Delhi to make a joint statement with Modi in which both leaders acknowledge the urgent need to address the following:

- (i) common threats especially climate catastrophe;
- (ii) the need to work towards eliminating conflict which could escalate dangerously for the two countries, the region and the world;
- (iii) the core concerns of each other ie eliminating terrorism in all its forms including state terrorism, and moving towards a principled settlement of the Kashmir dispute acceptable to the people of Kashmir, India and Pakistan;
- (iv) curbing, minimising and eliminating mutually hateful narratives, negative media coverage, etc;
- (v) the revival of Kashmir- and LoC-related understandings and CBMs to reduce tensions and provocations;
- (vi) a comprehensive plan of bilateral exchanges, trade and investment, conferences and seminars on a range of relevant issues; and

(vii) developing a national consensus in support of these initiatives.

The ball would be in India's court.

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Published in Dawn, November 15th, 2019

Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1516825/the-kartarpur-factor>

No to Others' Wars | Editorial

PRIME Minister Imran Khan has said that Pakistan had suffered a lot due to its policy of becoming a part of foreign conflicts in the past, vowing that the country from now onwards will only play a conciliatory role between rival nations. Addressing an international conference 'Margalla Dialogue '19' – organised by Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI) in the federal capital on Thursday he said one main lesson we learnt in the last four decades is that we must not ally ourselves with any country where we have to fight someone else's war.

The commitment expressed by the Prime Minister would widely be welcomed by all Pakistanis who care about present and future of the country and want our leadership to learn from mistakes of the past. The approach to mediate in conflicts and not become part of the problem has, as we witnessed recently, the potential to raise prestige and image of the country in the comity of nations. Pakistan has paid a heavy price for its uncalled-for alignment with some particular powers and unnecessary and unjustified enmity and tension with others. Unfortunately, decisions on crucial policy issues have consistently been made on the basis of personal whims or petty personal and group interests rather than on the basis of core interests of the country. Right from decision of the then Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan to ignore invitation from Moscow and visit instead Washington, we deviated from the fundamental principle of safeguarding national interests at all costs and in all circumstances. We joined SEATO and CENTO to strengthen the impression of becoming active part of the so-called cold war and it is widely believed that it was because of such follies that the country was dismembered in 1971. It is all the more shocking that our allies used us mercilessly to advance their agendas and designs but left us in the lurch when the country faced challenges including those of survival. Again most of our problems today have their origin in our thoughtless strategy to become a party in the long drawn Afghan conflict. The country has badly been entangled in ticklish issues like terrorism, extremism, arms and narcotics smuggling and social and economic consequences of unending presence of millions of refugees due to our inability to resist the temptation of becoming part of regional or global conflicts. The problem would remain there despite clear-cut announcement of the incumbent Prime Minister until and unless decisions are institutionalized and not made by individuals on the basis of vested

interests. There is also need to strengthen economy of the country as we cannot protect our political sovereignty with a begging bowl.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/no-to-others-wars/>

Threat to regional peace and security By

Malik Ashraf

PRIME Minister Imran Khan addressing an International conference 'Margalla Dialogue 19' organized by Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI) on last Thursday rightly observed "India is in the grip of extremist ideology based on hatred and racial superiority which is similar to the ideology of the Nazi Party in Germany. When the Nazi Party came into power in Germany, no one had the idea where it was heading to India is facing the similar situation today. If international community does not intervene in the Kashmir conflict there will be catastrophe as the two nuclear armed countries have come face to face".

It was indeed a strong reminder to the world community based on historic facts of the consequences that a supremacist ideology can unfurl. World War II was the bloodiest war in the human history in terms of death and destruction that it inflicted. According to estimates it accounted for 7 to 85 fatalities, nearly 3% of the world population at that time, most of whom were civilians as a result of massacres, genocide of the Holocaust, strategic bombing, premeditated death from starvation and the use of nuclear weapons.

Germany itself was the worst sufferer. If Hitler knew the consequences of the course adopted by him he would have shuddered at the likely scenario after the war. He started the war never knowing where it would lead to the RSS ideology of 'Hindutva' unfortunately takes inspiration from the supremacist ideology of Hitler as is quite evident from the communal politics pursued by BJP, treatment meted out to minorities, particularly Muslims and Christians, stripping 1.9 million Bengali Muslims in Assam of the Indian citizenship, scrapping of the articles 370 and 35 A of the Indian constitution which gave loK special status and barred settlement and purchase of property by people from outside the valley and laying of siege on 80 million people of Kashmir since then.

What Modi government has done in the loK is the most dangerous move which also constitutes affront to the conscience of the world community and the UN. It virtually is repudiation of the UN resolutions on the Kashmir dispute and the bilateral agreements between India and Pakistan to resolve the decades old conflict. Modi seems to have done it without realizing, like Hitler, the consequences

of his moves. History is a witness to the fact that independence movements cannot be suppressed through decrees and military muscles. The dispute is not about a piece of land but the right of self-determination of a people which is universally recognized and has been promised to the people of Kashmir by UN and the Indian leadership at that time.

India has tried to sell the move to scrap Article 370 of the Indian Constitution as its internal affair but it is encouraging to note that it has found very few takers of her contention. The UNSC, UN Human Rights Commission and growing number of countries have not only expressed concern on the Indian action in loK but have also urged her to end the lockdown but also reiterated Kashmir as a disputed territory and the issue waiting to be resolved in conformity with the UN resolutions. The international media has all along been exposing Indian atrocities and violation of human rights in loK.

The latest snub to the Indian government has come from the Human Rights Commission of the US Congress which in its hearing on 15 November called upon India to end systematic violation of human rights in loK and acknowledged that Kashmir has always been an international issue. An Indian-American democrat Pramila Jayapal wants India to do the right thing in Kashmir and is contemplating to move a resolution in the Congress to this effect.

All the foregoing developments are surely the outcome of a sustained and well conceived diplomatic offensive launched by the PTI government under the stewardship of Prime Minister Imran Khan and his thought provoking address at the UN General Assembly in which he like his address to the Margalla Dialogue exposed Indian machinations in loK, violation of human rights and consequences of the Indian action to end the special status of loK. But it is regrettable to note that those who really matter and can help in finding a solution to the Kashmir tangle, including the UN, are not focusing on the real issue and removing the root cause of the problem. The situation will remain volatile and fraught with unforeseeable consequence until this dispute is resolved in consonance with the UN resolutions.

It is a fact that successive governments in Pakistan have tried their best to resolve the Kashmir dispute and other contentious issues through dialogue but unfortunately India has always shied away from such engagements on one pretext or the other. Pakistan has shown remarkable patience in the face of provocative

actions by India. What India did in the backdrop of Pulwama incident could easily have drawn the two countries into a full-fledged war. Pakistan wisely resisted the provocation and kept her faith in dialogue and peaceful means to settle the issue of Kashmir either through bilateral or global forums such as the UN supported by the world community.

Indian bellicosity, denial of the right of self-determination to the people of Kashmir and its actions deriving inspiration from the extremist ideology of Hindutva are the biggest threat to peace and security in the region as pointed out by Prime Minister Imran Khan and the international community needs to intervene before it is too late. The Indian leadership also needs to understand the dangers involved in pursuing the policy of Hindutva. Hitler brought death and destruction upon the whole world, more so for his own country. Pursuing the same course could also bring the similar consequences for India and the world.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/threat-to-regional-peace-and-security/>?

Pakistan's Peace Efforts and India's Anti-Pakistan Games By Col (R) Muhammad Hanif

While Pakistan was giving the finishing touches to the Kartarpur peace corridor for the Indian Sikh community, on August 5, 2019, India's Modi-led government abrogated Articles 35A and 370 of India's constitution, ended Jammu and Kashmir's special autonomous status, and divided the state into two union territories, named as Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, in clear violation of the UN Security Council resolutions.

At the same time, to suppress Kashmiris' expected reaction, the Muslim majority Kashmir valley has been kept under curfew with all communications closed for the last 105 days. The Indian security forces have, reportedly, arrested about 13,000 young men, and are carrying out genocide of Kashmiris, who despite these restrictions are protesting and asking for their right to self-determination.

Despite Pakistan's fierce protests and its best possible diplomatic campaign, led by Prime Minister Imran Khan himself, to gain the support of the world powers, and in spite of the UN and world powers' repeated advice to India to lift the curfew and resolve the Kashmir dispute by holding a dialogue with Pakistan, India continues with the curfew and communications blockade and genocide in the Kashmir valley.

In spite of India's unilateral hostile actions in the occupied Kashmir and its provocations of showing Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan as part of its new map, and giving belligerent statements of attacking Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan completed the Kartarpur Corridor on time. And, on November 9, 2019, Prime Minister Khan performed the opening ceremony of the corridor, and enabled the Sikh community of India and the world to attend the 550th birth anniversary of Sikhism founder Baba Guru Nanak on November 12, 2019. This peace initiative is based on religious perspective, and any Sikh from any part of the globe is welcome to visit Kartarpur.

Disregarding Pakistan's Kartarpur corridor initiative, India's policy of continuing with its enmity with Pakistan is persisting. In this context, by providing military

assistance to the current Afghan government, India is trying to create a two-front war scenario for Pakistan. Recently, according to Afghanistan's Tolo News, India has given two MI-24V Gunship helicopters to Afghanistan. Being against peace in Afghanistan, with the Taliban a part of any Afghan set up, India is also against the US-Taliban peace talks.

Moreover, India is playing power politics to end Pakistan's international support on the Kashmir dispute. Feeling the pinch of Turkey and Malaysia to have stood by Pakistan on the issue of Kashmir during the UN General Assembly session of 2019, it is now pressurising these two countries to change their principled stance on Kashmir. While India has met the Cyprian president (which implies an anti-Turkey stance) it is also threatening Malaysia to stop importing palm oil from it. In this regard, India should know that Pakistan's bonds of friendship with Turkey and Malaysia are too strong for it to attempt any division.

India will never hold a dialogue with Pakistan on the Kashmir dispute until the time Kashmiris are in a position to start a civil disobedience movement to get their right to self-determination

India is also trying to mislead the world about the Kashmir situation by countering the facts being projected in social media by world's Muslim youth. This is being done by airing a video named the 'Kashmir Truth' on Doordarshan, depicting the so-called real situation in Kashmir, but the video is a false depiction of the reality of Kashmir. India cannot mislead the world as the real situation in Kashmir is also being projected by western media, like CNN, BBC, News 24, DW, The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Independent, human rights organisations and voices in the US Congress, EU and UN, which India cannot refute.

Also, Indian minorities, especially the Muslims of India and the Kashmiris, are now sceptical whether the Supreme Court of India can give impartial decisions to protect their religious rights. This perception is supported by the pro-Hindu decision of the Indian Supreme Court to construct a Hindu temple in place of the historic Babri Mosque, the very late hearing of the Kashmir lockdown case, and hearing of the case against the abrogation of Articles 35A and 370 being still pending.

In view of the above-discussed points, anti-Pakistan policies of India, despite Pakistan's peace offers, including its efforts to resolve the Jammu and Kashmir

dispute through a dialogue, it seems that after August 5, 2019 assault on Kashmiris, India will never hold a dialogue with Pakistan on the Kashmir dispute until the time Kashmiris are in a position to start a civil disobedience movement to get their right to self-determination.

To live with India as a neighbour with dignity and honour, to compel it to resolve the Kashmir dispute through a dialogue and to stop it from fiddling with the Indus Basin Water Treaty, it is therefore necessary that Pakistan focuses on becoming a strong economic power in the next ten years so that it can defeat India's anti-Pakistan plans and policies with strong and excellent peace-making, diplomatic and military strategies.

The writer is a former research fellow of Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI)

Source: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/503865/pakistans-peace-efforts-and-indias-anti-pakistan-games/>

Smog Another Environmental Challenge By

Reema Shaukat

For the past few years, the cities of central Punjab are facing different kind of environmental pollution. Keeping aside the hazards caused by air pollution over the years to the world globally, the new phenomenon of Smog is different and difficult too. Smog is a kind of air pollution, originally named for the mixture of smoke and fog in the air. According to scientific basis, classic smog results from large amounts of coal burning in an area and is caused by a mixture of smoke and sulphur dioxide. Like any other kind of pollution, smog also affects humans and emerging as a problem in a number of cities and continues to harm human health.

Known as the atmospheric choking layer, some cities in Pakistan's Punjab including Lahore are facing trouble because of smog for the past three years or so. Though it started from India where farmers are engaged in stubble or hay burning and because of wind direction in winters, the smog engulfs areas in Pakistan too. But with passage of time, every year this issue is getting critical and instead of blaming cross border pollution, we need some serious approaches to be made by government and public. According to the Air Quality Index developed by U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to help explain air pollution levels to the general public, eight-hour average ozone concentration of 85 to 104 ppbv are described as "Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups", 105 ppbv to 124 ppbv as "unhealthy" and 125 ppb to 404 ppb as "very unhealthy." Smog can form in almost any climate where industries or cities release large amounts of air pollution. Also the latest figures, issued by Amnesty International Levels of air quality have been rated "near unhealthy" and "very unhealthy" for most of the year in Punjab. During the "smog season" – from October to January – air quality reaches "hazardous" levels, as recorded by multiple, independent sources including the air quality monitors installed by the United States Consulate in Lahore and the crowd sourced data collated by the Pakistan Air Quality Initiative. The Air Quality Index (AQI) in one of days in Lahore reached 484. The threshold for hazardous levels of air quality is 300, where people were advised to avoid all physical activity outdoors. Prolonged or heavy exposure to hazardous air can result in severe health issues including asthma, lung damage, bronchial infections and heart problems and shortened life expectancy hence putting at risk people's right to life and to health, as well as the right to a healthy environment. The so-called "smog season" is where

poor fuel quality, uncontrolled emissions and crop burning worsens the quality of the already unhealthy air, from October to December. Apart from hazardous breathing problems, low visibility during smog results in accidents and loss of life. It's not only in Pakistan but because of rising air pollution in both neighbouring countries-India and Pakistan-Indian authorities recently had to declare a public emergency after pollution level in New Delhi became so high that experts said it was like smoking up to 50 cigarettes a day.

There is a number of ways to tackle air pollution and control smog. Interesting example from history is of UK, where thick smog used to frequently blanket the UK capital in the 19th and 20th centuries, when people burned coal to warm homes and heavy industry in the city centre pumped chemicals into the air. Referred to as "pea-soupers", the most famous of these events was the so-called Great Smog of London in 1952. In 1956 the UK passed the Clean Air Act. It regulated both industrial and domestic smoke, imposing smoke control areas in towns and cities where only smokeless fuels could be burned and offering subsidies to households to convert to cleaner fuels. The act was extended in 1968, and air quality substantially improved in London through the following decades. China's growing industrialization also brought challenge in the form of air pollution but the country tackled this issue wisely by cutting vehicle emissions, government incentives for private businesses, data transparency and diversifying the economy away from heavy industry to successfully cut pollution levels.

In case of Pakistan, steps and measures to reduce air pollution be taken on immediate grounds. Main contributing factors in smoke pollution are transport sector, followed by crop burning, waste burning and emissions from brick kilns and steel furnaces. It is important to note that air pollution is a silent killer, and according to official sources because of this hazard the economic cost of environmental degradation over the last decade has gone up by as much as three per cent, from six per cent to nine per cent and air pollution is contributing to 50 per cent of the total cost. One of the steps government is taking is to establish air quality monitoring stations which will provide more reliable data to make informed decisions and data will also be available to the public for awareness and preventive measures. Another step can be to help subsidise industries to shift away from pollutant technologies, which in turn will help reduce emissions. Vehicle inspection and certification systems can help cut the emissions in the transport sector. Enhancing the quality of fuel used in automobiles or shifting to electric powered

cars can be another option to reduce pollution. The plantation campaign initiated by the government is another good initiative and clean and green Pakistan can be model for others to follow but for that consistent approach on all levels is must. Everyone at school, city or district level must ensure measures to keep the surroundings environment friendly.

— The writer works for Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies, a think-tank based in Islamabad.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/smog-another-environmental-challenge/>

Globalizing Kashmir | Editorial

Kashmir is capturing global attention. Though the pace is slow, the Indian excesses in the region have forced the world to be alarmed given the complete blackout of the valley after India's revocation of Articles 35A and 370. The speakers and participants at an international conference in Turkey's capital Ankara agreed that the only solution for Kashmir was honouring of a UN-mandated referendum on the right to self-determination.

READ MORE: AC extends Khursheed Shah's judicial remand by 15 days

Thanks to the silence of the international community that the Kashmiris are living their days and nights under curfew. India's desire to rule the region with Iron hand is evident from the nominating controversial Bharatiya Janata Party MP Pragya Thakur as a member of the joint consultative committee of parliament on defence. Let that sink in that the likes of Ms Thakur, accused of spreading terrorism, will be on the defence committee that will plan a strategy to gag Kashmir voices against India's recent belligerent steps. What is surprising is that we have yet to hear concerns raised by any human rights organization.

Nevertheless, at present where many champions of human rights are keeping their criminal silence on Kashmir, Turkey is keen on calling a spade a spade. The conference held in Ankara attests Turkey's unrelenting support for Kashmiris' right to self-determination. The world must respond to the words of Sardar Masood Khan, President of Azad Jammu & Kashmir. The more-than-100-days blackout in the Indian Occupied Kashmir, undoubtedly the nuclear flashpoint, carries the seeds of another conflict between India and Pakistan. The primary responsibility for that conflict will be on the United Nations (UN), in general, and the Security Council (SC), in particular.

While Indian Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi tried to appease the believers in Hindutva by annexing Kashmir, he committed a dramatic own-goal. The unanimous passing of a Pakistan-sponsored resolution, which reaffirms the right to self-determination for peoples subjected to foreign and alien occupation, by a key UN committee means that the resolution will come up for the General Assembly's endorsement next month.

The fierce urgency of now demands the UN and SC take up Kashmir issue once again. Any delay in finding out a solution according to the wishes of the Kashmiris will have far-reaching consequences on the security of the region. India's reliance on the brute force in Kashmir to silence the population is enough to tell the world what the Kashmiris want. It is "Azadi". They will settle for nothing less than Azadi.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/23-Nov-2019/globalizing-kashmir>

Foreign Policy Fine-Tuning? By Khalid Saleem

Some years ago, one took the liberty of drawing up a “foreign policy wish-list” in the vain hope that the powers that be in this blessed land may possibly be receptive to “new ideas”. That, one now recognises, was perhaps not only premature but also a trifle on the over-ambitious side. Nevertheless, there would appear to be little harm in going over some of those ideas.

To begin with, a frank and above-board discussion with the US is overdue in order to separate the grain from the chaff. For starters — to fall back on an Americanism — need is felt to clarify to our “friends” and world at large that “terrorism” is not strictly our baby, even though we may have been left holding it due to circumstances beyond our control. A decade should have been enough to atone for whatever sins of omission and commission we may have been guilty of.

On to our relations with India! With the extreme dispensation in India having been re-elected, the goalposts appear to have been discernibly moved to our detriment. Granted, the quest for normalising relations with our neighbour is unexceptionable, but would it be realistic to aim for shortcuts to it? There is an imperative need to see some tangible evidence of progress on the settlement of contentious issues before going overboard.

Dealings with the Muslim world leave a lot to be desired. Our past policy bordered on deliriousness. No doubt we should be one with the Muslim world as brothers but do we have to be the standard-bearers? It may well be time to lower our profile a bit. No country should feel the need to sacrifice its national priorities for others, as we regrettably have shown a tendency to do in the past. We must also steer well clear of denominational issues within the Muslim world.

terrorism issues deserve top priority. Above all, tangible efforts to reduce our foreign debt are called for. An in-depth exercise on the meandering path this debt profile has adopted may not be such a bad idea. Remember the several previous pious declarations to smash the wretched begging bowl? The time has come to break out of semantics and to do something concrete about this resolve. Due to the ill-advised policies to attract foreign investment adopted so far, we have only

attracted the wrong kind of investment. It's also time the prosperous dual-nationals were asked to do their bit to help the country out of its economic woes. The phenomenon of these individuals' sole interest in buying prime real estate in this country and/or grabbing lucrative official assignments on offer is neither here nor there!

The wish-list needs must include the pious hope that hollow ostentation would be eschewed. A low profile is what is called for. Above all, we need to avoid getting involved in international ventures that may shine but have little substance. Emphasis should be on improving ties with friendly states like China, the regional states and with the developing world in general. Developing newer liaisons with far off lands and exotic destinations can wait. There is also a need to cut down on our bumbling efforts in multilateral diplomacy — a luxury this country can indulge in only at its own peril.

Overall, what is needed now is a thorough and dispassionate introspection of our past foreign policy experiences. And this should cover a stringent re-appraisal of the yardstick that has been used hitherto in the process of selecting 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 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 necessary, drastic surgery. To delay would be to miss a God-sent opportunity. There may not be another waiting down the road.

Published in The Express Tribune, November 25th, 2019.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2105910/6-foreign-policy-fine-tuning/>

ECONOMY

Building Momentum on CPEC By Dr Talat Shabbir

A narrative built on negativity sells quicker than the one built on positive indicators and reflections. This is what is precisely happening to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as the negativity haunts the multi-billion dollar mega project since the time it had been conceived and implemented. The chatter in Islamabad about CPEC is loud and it says that CPEC is going slower than intended. Ill-founded views like CPEC being held up or stalled draws audience, as both the detractor and hopefuls of CPEC look at it from their standpoint though for their own reasons. The detractors have a biased assessment that CPEC has gone out of focus of the current government and has been pushed down the list of priorities, whereas hopefuls pin their hopes to it as a window of opportunity for the revitalisation of the economy and prosperity of the country.

Consequent to the general impression in a section of the press that the latest visit of Prime Minister Imran Khan was aimed at 'revival of stalled CPEC projects', someone no less than the Prime Minister himself had to reiterate that the timely completion of CPEC projects remains the top priority of his government though he also, in the same breath, admitted that there are certain 'bottlenecks' towards the implementations of the CPEC framework. Perhaps no clearer reassurance could have come from the Prime Minister while he was flying for his third official visit to China in a span of one year.

There is unanimity of views among most segments of society as to what CPEC has in store for us. It's a massive opportunity that can potentially do wonders to address our core issues. CPEC offers enormously in terms of Pakistan's economic revival through a framework that assured investment and development in the most crucial sectors such as energy, infrastructure and industrialisation. China has also been unswerving in its support, either financially or in terms of expertise, besides offering great development model to emulate. Of the key components of the CPEC

framework, we are largely nearing the mark by meeting the set objectives for phase one. Energy and infrastructure were major issues that Pakistan confronted around the time when serious work on CPEC began in 2014. We are now over with the phase of energy and infrastructure and have entered into the phase of industrialisation. This significant phase has schemes of joint ventures and relocations of industries with the objective of building Pakistan's export capacity, in turn adding to foreign exchange earnings and improving Pakistan's financial state. Based mainly on the success of the industrialisation phase, certain experts in CPEC planning quarters expect the creation of 1.2 million jobs by 2030. This entails exciting possibilities for those who wish to invest and look for joint ventures. It offers enormous opportunities for job seekers in the host of industry related sectors.

Caught between myth and reality, CPEC was confronted with challenges from planning to implementation. There were errors of foresight during the planning stage and there are capacity and performance issues at the execution stage. Pacing up with the Chinese government that holds centralised assertive implementation mechanism remains a challenge. Expecting deliverable with feeble governance structure that we have at home is hard to justify. Admittedly, there was a huge gap between what was expected of CPEC and what has been carried out on ground.

Five years down the road, an appraisal of planning and implementation would reveal that there were challenges to demonstrate matching response to what was required of such a mega venture that could be attributed to the lack of foresight and the lack of coordination among key stakeholders like industrialists, traders, entrepreneurs, officials and political leaders. With regard to deficiency, four factors appeared prominently: incapacities of most stakeholders, absence of an appropriate regulatory authority, decentralisation at the cost of effectiveness, and lack of mechanism for mid-course correction.

As referred above, Prime Minister Imran Khan does have the political will to carry out the CPEC project as a top priority and has, on a number of occasions, reiterated to push it as far as possible. CPEC is not only an economic venture but it marks the special relationship that Pakistan and China have built over a period of time. Many analysts still cite the call from Prime Minister's adviser on commerce, textiles, industries and investment's for "putting everything [regarding CPEC] on

hold” in order to undermine the will of the current government to carry on with the project. Moreover, the government’s occupation with other issues of serious nature such as India’s unconstitutional step to annex Jammu and Kashmir followed by hot confrontations on the Line of Control has also pushed CPEC out of every day’s gossip. There may be few instances of falling short on enthusiasm but nothing is likely to deter Pakistan from undertaking consensus economic ventures.

With a view to building momentum on CPEC, we need to carry out an honest appraisal of the project. We should carry out course correction and devise strategies to attain set objectives. For coordination and swift action, one-window CPEC authority is an apt initiative that will essentially be an implementing body whereas all the stakeholders — which may include representative of the federal government down to the residents of Gwadar — will form part of an advisory body. Most important is that we embrace ownership of CPEC. It’s a project that serves our national interest and has promise of our well-being and prosperity. It is ‘we’ who have to make it a success. CPEC is a silver lining on the grim horizon of Pakistan and we can take a huge advantage of it, if we do it right.

Published in The Express Tribune, November 1st, 2019.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2090997/6-building-momentum-cpec/>

IMF Sees Steady Signs of Economic Stability

By Shahbaz Rana

Pakistan and the International Monetary Fund have reached a staff-level agreement on completion of the first review of the \$6 billion programme, as the Fund sees steady signs of economic stability and slight slowdown in pace of inflation.

The IMF has cut its inflation forecast for Pakistan from 13% to 11.8% for this fiscal year 2019-20. But it has kept the overall macroeconomic projections largely unchanged.

Pakistan and the IMF mission reached the agreement on the first review under the Extended Arrangement (EFF), which, subject to the Executive Board meeting, would pave the way for release of \$450 million second loan tranche on December 19th.

All performance criteria for end-September were met with comfortable margins and progress continues towards meeting all structural benchmarks, the IMF stated in a handout issued at the conclusion of the talks.

Pakistan met the conditions on net international reserves, reduction in net foreign currency swaps, reduction in primary deficit, zero borrowing from the central bank and cap on issuance of new sovereign guarantees.

An IMF mission led by Ernesto Ramirez Rigo visited Islamabad from October 28 to November 8, 2019 to conduct the first review under the EFF. The government's policies have started to bear fruit, helping to reverse the build-up of vulnerabilities and restore economic stability, said the IMF.

The external and fiscal deficits are narrowing, inflation is expected to decline, and growth, although slow, remains positive, it added. However, it said that sustaining sound policies and advancing structural reforms remain key priorities to enhance resilience and pave the way for stronger and sustainable growth.

The IMF stressed the need for implementation of the Financial Action Task Force action plan, and implementing structural reforms and advancing power sector reforms, as committed by Pakistan with the international lenders.

“The Pakistani authorities and IMF staff have reached a staff-level agreement on policies and reforms needed to complete the first review under the EFF. The agreement is subject to approval by IMF management and the Executive Board of Directors,” Rigo said.

Completion of the review will enable disbursement of SDR328 million or around \$450 million and will help unlock significant funding from bilateral and multilateral partners, Rigo, the IMF’s Mission Chief to Pakistan, added.

“The near-term macroeconomic outlook is broadly unchanged from the time of the programme approval, with gradually strengthening activity and average inflation expected to decelerate to 11.8% in fiscal year 2019-20.”

However, domestic and international risks remain, and structural economic challenges persist.

IMF keeps macroeconomic projections unchanged

Rigo said that despite a difficult environment, programme implementation has been good, and all performance criteria for end-September were met with comfortable margins. Work continues towards completing the remaining structural benchmarks for end-September.

Significant progress has been made in improving the AML/CFT framework, although additional work is needed before March 2020, stated Rigo. He added that the international partners also remained committed to supporting the authorities’ reform efforts, providing the necessary financing assurances.

“On the macroeconomic front, signs that economic stability is gradually taking hold are steadily emerging”, said Rigo. The IMF did not disclose whether it was retaining the 2.4% economic growth rate for this fiscal year.

The IMF chief said that external position was strengthening, underpinned by an orderly transition to a flexible, market-determined exchange rate by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) and a higher-than-expected increase in SBP's net international reserves.

Budgetary revenue collections were growing on the back of efforts on tax administration and policy changes and despite the ongoing compression in import-related taxes, said the IMF. But it did not mention whether the Fund was ready to cut the Rs5.503 trillion revenue collection target, which cannot be achieved in the given circumstances.

"Inflation pressures are expected to recede soon, reflecting an appropriate monetary stance," said Rigo. Importantly, measures to strengthen the social safety net are being implemented, and development spending is being prioritised.

Rigo said that discussions focused on policies to support Pakistan achieve strong and balanced growth. He added that Pakistan needs to maintain fiscal prudence to reduce fiscal vulnerabilities, including by carefully executing the fiscal year 2019-20 budget.

Rigo said that there was also a need for implementing the new public finance management legislation, and continuing to broaden the tax base by removing preferential tax treatments and exemptions, while protecting critical social and development spending.

Advancing the strategy for electricity sector reforms, agreed with international partners, is important to put the sector on a sound footing, and remove recurrent arrears and accumulation of debt.

An official of the Power Division said that the IMF asked to completely address the circular debt problem before end of next calendar year. It also sought to address the nearly Rs850 billion circular debt that is parked in the Pakistan Holding Limited, he added.

Further efforts to strengthen SOE governance and operations, advance anti-corruption reform, and improve the business environment are key to mobilise investment and support growth and job creation.

The authorities recognise that decisive implementation of these policies is indispensable for entrenching macroeconomic stability and restoring robust and balanced growth, according to the IMF statement.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2096351/2-imf-sees-steady-signs-economic-stability/>

Global Economy Struggles With Negative Rates – Analysis By Will Hickey

Japan and the EU use negative interest rates to maintain feeble economic growth, but such low rates for the US could destabilize the banking system,

The world is confronting negative interest rates, a dilemma for savers who must pay banks to keep their money. This trend is accompanied by inverted yield curves, with interest rates paid for a short-term loan of a few weeks or months are higher than rates over the course of years. Both negative interest rates and inverted yield curves have loomed over world markets since the 2009 financial crisis. Today nearly \$17 trillion or 30 percent of the world's investment-grade debt issuance – including bonds, sovereign notes and more, mostly held in the European Union and Japan – is in negative rate territory and growing.

The Swiss pioneered negative interest rates in the early 1970s after the United States abandoned the Bretton Woods' gold standard and the US dollar cratered. Investors everywhere, frantically seeking a stable currency that was not easily devalued, poured money into the franc, causing its value to soar and wreaking havoc on Switzerland's economy. The Swiss central bank tried many unorthodox moves throughout the decade to stem capital inflows, but to no avail. Not until 1982, with exponentially rising interest rates in the United States, did money inflows into Switzerland stabilize.

Today's situation is different, with central banks using negative rates to spur any type of economic activity – forcing consumers not to hold cash for tomorrow, but rather spend and borrow today. The Bank of Japan, traditionally the poster child for a near-zero rate scheme, has been eclipsed by Europe, where negative rates were used by Sweden in 2009. The trend is most profound in Denmark, where negative rates now force negative home loans: The bank pays homebuyers to take a loan where they can expect to pay back less than the principal amount over time. Amid rising prices, home ownership is in decline. In Switzerland, accounts with large cash deposits now pay monthly fees, instead of being rewarded with any interest. Germany has a term for this penalty, strafzins.

Of course, there is no “free lunch” with negative home loans. Banks eventually recoup lost interest over time with various fees for loans. And the outcome is stalled credit expansion. Cheapening money to incentivize economic activity is no longer working. European central banks in particular are out of ideas to jump-start economic activity. The near negative and declining interest rates in developed countries around the world have caused the dollar to soar, which has a knock-on effect in developing countries like Indonesia, Turkey and Nigeria that have borrowed heavily in dollars and must repay them from earnings in local currencies that have steadily devalued.

Negative rates have a mal-effect on consumers and savers, though “real rates,” which account for inflation, are what they ultimately feel. Cheaper money does not necessarily filter down to the consumer at a retail level. Banks with interest-rate shortfalls in a world of near or actual negative rates will charge their customers higher fees for any service, whether overdrafts or use of out-of-network ATMs. Savers, in particular older people who rely on interest income receive nominal payments for saving, and struggle to make ends meet. About 25 percent of Europeans and 30 percent of Japanese are aged 60 or older. More alarming, pension funds – historically conservative investors – struggle to meet benchmarks of 7 to 8 percent returns, a common threshold for solvency, so shortfalls are emerging.

The big test may be if the United States as the world’s largest economy tries negative rates. Allianz Economist Mohamed El-rian said recently, negative yields in the world’ largest financial market would “break things.” By break, he means a systemic failure or bank collapse. Setting interest rates at zero or negative confounds long-term investment decisions.

US President Donald Trump frequently complains about the Federal Reserve’s reticence on reducing rates more quickly while other countries lower theirs, putting the US economy at a cost disadvantage with an overvalued currency. Nonetheless, marginally higher rates of Treasury and bond issues, guaranteed by the US government, make the country an investment magnet for the rest of the world.

There is a thirst for returns. Like lost travelers in a desert seeking water, bankers and managers of pension, insurance and investment funds around the world are

desperately seeking “yield,” or passive income on vast holdings. Similar to distressed travelers, investors make risky decisions during times of despair, such as drinking from tainted pools of water, which can have dire costs. Namely, negative rates push investors into riskier bets including private equity, junk bonds and speculative grade “emerging economy” assets.

Risky bets have reintroduced the concept of borrowing low in currencies that offer low interest rates, such as the dollar or yen, and then investing in currencies with high interest rates, such as the New Zealand dollar or Argentine peso. This is known as the carry trade, which is lucrative as long as the invested currency remains stable. If significant currency depreciation or large devaluations occurs, the losses can easily outpace any potential higher interest rate gain and eat into capital, albeit in dollar terms. For example, Argentina peso bank deposits currently pay over 50 percent interest, which seems like an astronomical amount until one considers the peso also lost more than half its value against the dollar in 2018, effectively zeroing out any real currency gains in US dollar terms. As of this writing, the peso has continued to depreciate with a newly elected Peronist government.

Global investors who can still access positive rates wonder anyone why would hold onto negative-rate bonds. Investors with a few hundred euros can hold on to cash, but brokerages, banks and nation-states cannot physically store billions of dollars in other currencies, and many may simply not trust having it on active investment ledgers during volatile times. Major holders must put their wealth somewhere safe, and sovereign bonds are a good bet, which also traded digitally. Recently the €500 note has made a resurgence in Germany and Austria. While no longer being printed, the note is still exchangeable and allows easy high-value storage for consumers. If people are penalized for saving money, instrumentality becomes key. This same rationale applies to the Swiss franc 1000 note – a recent Financial Times article recommended storing them in safe deposit boxes in a cash-obsessed world with negative rates.

The overall economic consensus has been that negative interest rates simply do not work as expected. New ways to spur economic activity are sorely in need. Options include reducing regulations on small business creation and opening up behemoth state-owned enterprises to private competition.

Many countries, particularly in the developing world, seek more value-added activity, but cling to top-heavy bureaucracies, red-tape and monopoly state-owned companies that create stability rather than initiatives to unleash entrepreneurial animal spirits, as described by George Akerlof and Robert Shiller. In the digital age, crypto currency such as Bitcoin or Facebook's proposed Libra project, artificial intelligence, 5G integration and other constructs are forcing cross-border activities not beholden to any sovereign-state, allowing individuals to communicate and create directly and freely. A better store of value beyond dollarized paper currency dictated by central banks or politically compromised monetary unions is where the future may lead.

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Source: <https://www.eurasiareview.com/08112019-global-economy-struggles-with-negative-rates-analysis/>

Collapse of the Threat of ‘Phase One’ Trade Deal By Azhar Azam

The elongated trade war between China and the US continues to haemorrhage the two largest economies of the world and subsequently ushering a slump to the global economy, which is expected to report a growth rate of 3% in 2019.

Despite the narrowing trade deficit with China, US trade deficit widened by \$24.8 billion or 5.8% for the nine-month period of 2019. Services surplus — the linchpin of US foreign trade — decreased \$20 billion or 10.1% on the back of increased services imports for January-September.

China’s customs also showed that the country’s global trade contracted by 2.5% for January-October. Although exports were roughly flat at minus 0.2%, the imports fell sharply by 5.1% year on year, to about \$1.7 trillion in the first 10 months of 2019.

Since weakened, Chinese imports ended up in over \$92 billion of fewer Chinese imports of goods and services from the world. The decline would drive the global economy to further plunge and increase job losses to the countries exporting goods and services to China.

The flagging Chinese imports epitomised that Beijing has cut its reliance on imported goods and relayed harms to its trading partners. On the other hand, China’s 10-month trade surplus which soared to \$340.3 billion since 2018 showed that its economy remained relatively immune to sustaining significant losses.

Beijing is aware of its falling imports and is therefore actively promoting its innovative China International Import Expo 2019 (CIIE 2019) to increase its imports and give an impetus to global trade and economic growth.

Hassled by the China-US trade war and impelled by the vast Chinese market, nearly 200 American companies showcased their products and services at the CIIE’s second edition. American participants were increasingly disinclined to endorse the US obsession of intervening in China’s Hong Kong affairs and slating

the Chinese economic model. They were largely of the view that the US should not impose its ideology on China.

The businessmen's sentiments need to be realised, and China and the US should step up efforts to wrap up the "phase one" trade deal. Favourably for world manufacturers and the global economy, hopes about a potential China-US deal have been piling up every day. However, the rolling back of tariffs would be crucial for a long-lasting and durable trade deal.

Last Thursday, Chinese commerce ministry spokesperson Gao Feng urged both sides to simultaneously cancel the tariffs, terming it an important condition for reaching an agreement. The White House was also "very, very optimistic" about a deal to end the 16-month trade war. Nonetheless, Trump's Friday remarks of "he hasn't agreed on anything [tariffs roll back]" could slay the talks.

While China has wielded relentless efforts to open its market to foreign companies and pledged to increase US imports, it would be extremely inequitable if the Trump administration doesn't agree to roll back tariffs, the root of the China-US trade feud.

As tariffs have been the sticking point between China and the US, the promising environment would restore business and investors' confidence and stabilise the global economy. Yet the hawkish elements are in quest of an opportunity to disrupt the trade deal by exploiting this issue.

Pragmatically, the spirit of the "phase one" trade deal was to annul tariffs imposed by either side. Having met all US pre-conditions and showing its intent to lift tariffs on American goods, China was inevitably likely to ask the US to roll back tariffs.

But the truculent Trump's aides and opponents are coming up with a fierce reproach against China for renegotiating the maiden trade handshake. If both sides are sincerely committed to signing a trade pact, they will have to push back hardcore mentors among themselves, otherwise the hopes to elevate the global and bilateral economies and secure millions of manufacturing jobs would fade briskly.

S: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2098985/6-collapse-threat-phase-one-trade-deal/>

Pakistan Got a Vote of Confidence From IMF – What’s Next By Khaleeq Kian

AS anticipated, Pakistan has successfully completed its first-quarterly review with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) under the \$6 billion Extended Fund Facility (EFF) finalised in May this year, and reached a staff-level agreement last weekend.

The staff agreement is subject to approval by the IMF management and executive board of directors, a formality provided a couple of minor inadequacies are addressed over the next couple of weeks.

The approval will lead to the disbursement of a second tranche amounting \$450 million (equivalent to around 328m IMF special drawing rights) in early December. The IMF expects this to unlock significant funding from bilateral and multilateral partners.

A positive note from the IMF is expected to help Pakistan when it goes to the international capital market, which is currently offering lucratively lower interest rates. Pakistan has set a target of generating about \$3bn bonds from the global market during the current fiscal year ending June 2020. The first launch could be as early as December.

IMF directors and senior officials have appreciated the robust take-off on the programme commitments by the authorities led by Dr Abdul Hafeez Shaikh as part of tough prior actions and their ownership by Prime Minister Imran Khan.

That stance was reinforced by the staff mission: “The Pakistani authorities and IMF staff have reached a staff-level agreement on policies and reforms needed to complete the first review under the EFF,” said a concluding statement of the fund mission indicating some quick actions required before a meeting of IMF executive board of directors is arranged for approving the disbursement.

IMF directors and senior officials have appreciated the robust take-off on the programme commitments by the government

Both sides chose not to hold a joint news conference, which is customary at the end of successful completion of a review under the IMF culture of engagements with member countries.

In another departure from the past practice, the government's side decided not to issue a formal statement at the conclusion of the review by the staff mission or engage with the media. Open question-and-answer sessions sometimes create dicey situations and both sides opted to go with the written word by one party — the IMF.

The mission, on the other hand, issued a carefully drafted statement with half-yes, half-no description of the overall situation.

For example, it began by saying: “Despite a difficult environment, program implementation has been good, and all performance criteria for end-September were met with comfortable margins. Work continues towards completing the remaining structural benchmarks for end-September.”

This is manifestation of the IMF's willingness not to go public with adverse commentary at the early stage of the programme, but it is tough enough to put on record that “work continues” to bridge end-September slippage on structural benchmarks before the management takes the case to the executive board.

These “structural benchmarks” include the issuance of licences for a track-and-trace system for excises on cigarettes and a set of measures on the electricity front.

Despite successive power tariff increases, the latest being the 85 paise per unit in the first week of October on account the 2018-19 fiscal year, similar more increases are also needed for the 2019-20 fiscal year besides some steps relating to a circular-debt capping and reduction plan that was only agreed to almost at the fag end of the review mission visit. This has to be approved by the cabinet at the earliest.

Without mincing words, the IMF highlighted that “advancing the strategy for electricity sector reforms, agreed with international partners, is important to put the

sector on a sound footing, and remove recurrent arrears and accumulation of debt”.

The outstanding task against the end-September deadline involved developing a strategy to address circular debt in the power sector in consultation with lending agencies as structural benchmark with quarterly targets for losses, collection and accumulation of arrears (flow) by the distribution companies.

Elements of this plan will include: a monitoring and incentive framework for strengthening the sector’s performance, including bill collection and distribution losses; improving distribution companies’ governance; reducing or eliminating implicit government subsidies to particular economic sectors; assessing investment needs in the sector and designing an investment plan; and addressing the stock of circular debt to service the interest on accumulated power sector debt.

This will in fact be used as a blueprint for future reforms in the power sector. Also, the government must ensure regular and timely notifications for end-consumer tariffs in the electricity sector. More importantly, the government is required to introduce automaticity of quarterly tariff adjustments. The next IMF review will be held in the first week of January.

In the latest review, the IMF expects government’s policies to bear fruit soon and help “reverse the build-up of vulnerabilities and restore economic stability”.

“The external and fiscal deficits are narrowing, inflation is expected to decline, and growth, although slow, remains positive,” the IMF statement said. But this came with a disclaimer: “Sustaining sound policies and advancing structural reforms remain key priorities to enhance resilience and pave the way for stronger and sustainable growth.”

On the macroeconomic front, the IMF said that “signs that economic stability is gradually taking hold are steadily emerging. The external position is strengthening, underpinned by an orderly transition to a flexible, market-determined exchange rate by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) and a higher-than-expected increase in SBP’s net international reserves.

“The near-term macroeconomic outlook is broadly unchanged from the time of the program approval, with gradually strengthening activity and average inflation expected to decelerate to 11.8 per cent in FY2020. However, domestic and international risks remain, and structural economic challenges persist.”

The Fund warned that “fiscal prudence needs to be maintained to reduce fiscal vulnerabilities, including by carefully executing the FY20 budget, implementing the new Public Finance Management legislation, and continuing to broaden the tax base by removing preferential tax treatments and exemptions”.

Published in Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, November 12th, 2019

Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1516015/a-thumping-vote>

Economic Outlook | Editorial

The government's economic team's hard work had indeed yielded some fruit, as the economy has started moving towards the path of stability, but the Prime Minister is perhaps patting his team on the back a little prematurely. There is still a long way to go before Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) can claim that it has 'fixed' the economy. Prices for most goods are still sky high – and not only due to hoarding as claimed by the Prime Minister. High levels of indirect taxes and increased costs of production have led to an overall rise in inflation in locally produced products, while increased taxes on imports and the devaluation of the rupee (which has more or less stabilised) obviously lead to a rise in the cost of imports.

However, this last factor has led to a marked decrease in Pakistan's trade deficit –a whopping 34% – with the current rate of \$7.7 billion finally reaching the globally accepted levels, and for this the government should be commended. But all good news related to the economy is currently a mixed bag, as the very slim increase of \$0.27 billion in exports tells us. A 3.84% increase in exports is not nearly enough to rejuvenate the economy and provide it with the necessary injection of funds it needs. While the government has indeed managed to clamp down on imports as promised, it must work harder to increase Pakistan's exports in the international market.

The decrease in imports and the government's taxation measures have also adversely affected business. Pakistan's domestic production would normally be a substitute for the imports, but given our failure to increase local productive capacity, this is not currently happening. The government must start moving towards phase two of rejuvenating the economy, which might necessitate abandoning the austerity measures and increasing government spending in a bid to boost economic activity in the country.

There are other indicators that have posted a poor showing as well. Pakistan's external debts and liabilities continue to increase, although as a percentage of GDP they have declined. The scariest aspect of Pakistan's debt however, is our debt-servicing requirement, which has now crossed the \$3 billion mark. What all of this tells us is that, Pakistan's economy is looking much better than it was this

time last year, but it is not even close to being out of the doldrums yet. More is needed from the government and it is hoped that the country's economic team is up to the task.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/17-Nov-2019/economic-outlook>

Current Account in Surplus After Four Years By Salman Siddiqui

Pakistan's current account surprisingly turned positive after a gap of four years as the inflow of foreign currencies surpassed the outflow by \$99 million in October due to a notable reduction in imports and firm worker remittances.

"This is surprising. This is a very big news," BMA Capital Executive Director Saad Hashmi said while talking to The Express Tribune.

A continued reduction in imports due to the implementation of structural reforms like rupee depreciation, high benchmark lending rate and regulatory duty on imports had raised hopes for a further drop in the current account deficit in October. "However, no one had expected the current account to show a surplus," he said. "Improved trade deficit – due to a significant fall in imports and better exports – and firm worker remittances helped turn the balance (of current account) into surplus in October 2019," he said. The trade deficit in both goods and services narrowed 47% to \$1.41 billion in October compared to \$2.68 billion in the same month of last year.

Worker remittances were recorded at \$2 billion in October compared to \$2.06 billion in October 2018, according to the central bank. A brief talk with experts suggested they were anticipating a current account deficit of around \$200-300 million in the month under review.

The current account deficit had been \$284 million in September 2019 and \$1.28 billion in October 2018. "The current account balance was last seen in surplus in September 2015," Arif Habib Limited Head of Research Samiullah Tariq said. Cumulatively, in first four months (Jul-Oct) of the current fiscal year, the current account recorded a deficit of \$1.47 billion. It was, however, 73.5% lower than the deficit of \$5.56 billion in the same period of previous year, the SBP said. The massive drop came due to a significant contraction of the trade deficit in Jul-Oct FY20. "The

current account deficit narrowed, thanks to the trade deficit, which went down 37% year-on-year to \$7.8 billion in four months compared with \$12.4 billion in the same

period of last year,” he said. Keeping in view the current account surplus in October, Hashmi said, external vulnerabilities had now been taken care of and the surplus had set the tone for economic stability and growth in future.

“We can expect a cut in the benchmark interest rate in the monetary policy to be announced on Friday (November 22),” he said. The next challenge for the eco

nomie managers is to accelerate economic growth. “The current slowdown in the economy is larger than expected. For example, no one had anticipated a massive fall in car sales,” he said. While structural reforms have helped turn the current account into surplus, they at the same time have adversely impacted the gross domestic product (GDP) growth. The central bank has anticipated a GDP growth of 3.5% for the current fiscal year, which is close to a nine-year low of 3.3% hit in the preceding fiscal year. He said the surplus should help further build the country’s foreign currency reserves.

“Foreign debt repayment remains an issue. However, it has been taken care of in the IMF loan programme.”

FDI at \$650m The current account surplus should also help improve the inflow of foreign direct investment (FDI) into different sectors of the economy like telecommunication, oil and gas exploration and power production. “Foreigners should now feel comfortable and can invest in long-term projects in Pakistan on the back of a stable external account,” he said. FDI stood at \$650 million in first four months (Jul-Oct) of the current fiscal year. It was 239% higher than the investment of \$192 million in the same period of previous year, the central bank said.

The significant rise in the FDI came following a Norway-based cellular service provider, Telenor, partially paid its licence renewable fee of \$224.6 million to the government last month. Excluding this, the overall growth in the FDI has remained sluggish in the four months under review. “We have studied...FDI will gradually improve along with the sentiment,” remarked SBP Governor Reza Baqir last week. As soon as people started believing that the core issues had been addressed, the future outlook would turn positive, he said, adding “we are confident FDI will improve gradually.”

Published in The Express Tribune, November 19th, 2019.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2102128/2-current-account-surplus-four-years/>

Pak-Afghan ties: peace through trade and culture **By Syed Akhtar Ali Shah**

During the 40 long years of conflict in Afghanistan, the superpowers and other actors might have reaped certain benefits in pursuit of their objectives, but people on either side of the Durand Line have enormously suffered the traumas of war. While the superpowers have been playing their own games on the chessboard of the world politics checkmating each other, the melodrama has also created misperception and mistrust, even among the people left with deep scars from the war. These scars are evident in their local poetry, music, songs, novels, short stories, and folklores. Pakistan and Afghanistan, having shared boundaries, are entangled in certain unnecessary issues at the cost of the socio-economic development of the people.

The populations on both sides have to do with one of the lowest socio-economic indicators in the world. At the moment their survival is at stake as they are caught in the middle of blazing guns of the state and the violent non-state actors. There cannot be two views on the fact that both sides stand at a crossroads of history. Their only burning desire is to have peace and fundamental rights.

The most effective way for minimising the existing trust deficit between the two countries is people-to-people contact. In order to bury the past hatchet, we have to be mindful that while forming an opinion, it is imperative to understand that history plays a decisive role in moulding the psyche of a nation. Once this is comprehended, public opinion on both sides can generate pressure over the policymakers to devise people-centric policies focusing on peace which is imperative for international trade. International trade is the best policy option to create capital and further investment for industrial production on both sides of the border.

People are the most important element of a state. Without people, no state can exist. In fact, in today's world, all organs of the state exist for the good of the people. Issues of governance revolve around the basic premise of a better quality of life by investing in human capital. Human happiness is now the philosophy of the modern state. The emphasis is on development. Development is now no longer used in a narrow sense and is not merely economic growth or an increase in per

capita income but a qualitative change covering the whole gamut of the life of a citizen. Cooperation between Pakistan and Afghanistan can act as a catalyst in addressing the recent challenges of poverty, development and terrorism. If this premise is taken as a paramount plank of policy, then all the emphasis would be on peaceful co-existence and respecting each other's sovereign status. This requires a major paradigm shift at the strategic level.

The trade between Pakistan and Afghanistan has significant geopolitical and economic importance for both countries. Pakistan has remained Afghanistan's largest trading partner until 2015 when the trade volume totalled around \$3 billion. But due to the spike in political tensions, it dwindled to around \$8 million. Comprehending and addressing challenges to the Pakistan-Afghan trade will smoothen the way for establishing peace in the region. Both countries are blessed with one of the most beautiful scenic tourist spots. Afghanistan has been bestowed with an abundance of natural resources ranging from minerals worth more than \$3 trillion to various regional fruits. Pakistan has not only been bestowed with industries but also with other raw materials. These resources can be best utilised if the Pakistan-Afghan relations evolve along with economic ties.

The regional scenario also offers the best opportunities for trade. In this context, the China- Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a pilot project of the Belt and Road Initiative, which is meant to provide a platform for international cooperation to achieve high quality development in the region while connecting 127 countries. The projects underway will develop industry and infrastructure in the first phase, and in the second phase, CPEC will focus on close cooperation and social livelihood. Involvement in minerals, copper, iron, gas and petroleum (Aynak Copper mine and Hajigak Iron ore deposit) are China's primary interest. With these opportunities in place, Chinese policymakers are also of the view that they would play a positive role in promoting peace and trade between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Prime Minister Imran Khan's announcement to keep the Torkham border open for 24 hours was a good step, but the handling of traders and other travellers by the insufficiently-equipped NLC personnel and Afghan forces gave rise to many grievances. Similarly, allowing Afghan refugees with a Proof of Registration to open a bank account has certainly created goodwill.

These ties can be further augmented with the understanding that Pakistan and Afghanistan share poets, writers and philosophers like Jalaluddin Rumi, Hafiz Shirazi, Shah Hussain Hotak, Amanullah Khan, Rumi Balkhi, Allama Iqbal, Rehman Baba, Khushhaal Khan Khattak, Hameed Baba, Abdul Hay Habibi, Hamza Baba, Ghani Khan, Qalander Momand and Sulaiman Laiq. They also share musicians and singers such as Khial Muhammad, Rafiq Shinwari, Nashenas, Rahim Ghamzada, Ustad Shahwali, Qamar Gula, Gulnar Begum, Sardar Ali Takkar, Naghma and Wagma. So with these, new avenues of cultural exchange would further cement our ties of friendship.

The avoidance of war can be done by leading the path of trade and sharing culture. Augmentation of international trade would connect the region into what is a sure recipe for peace.

Source : <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2102783/1-pak-afghan-ties-peace-trade-culture/>

Pakistan's FATF Challenge: What Next? By Shariq Jamal Khan

The National Assembly's Standing Committee on Finance and Revenue was recently apprised of Pakistan's efforts to exit the FATF's infamous grey list. The meeting also lambasted the inequitable attitude of the global watchdog which had removed other countries from the grey list despite lesser compliance whereas Pakistan was being relentlessly railroaded to ensure 100 per cent compliance for the purpose.

Whilst the political undercurrents of the FATF rigmarole are too palpable to be ignored, Pakistan must eliminate the twin evils of money laundering and terror financing from the complex warp and woof of its delicate financial fabric for its own sake. An efficient anti-money laundering (AML) and combating financing of terror (CFT) institutional arrangement must function as an overarching strategic paradigm. It should encapsulate an ordered system of intelligence gathering/complaint lodgement, a sharp investigative methodology, a solid asset seizure and clearance mechanism, a proficient prosecutorial structure and a capable judicial apparatus having a high case disposal capacity. All these facets of the arrangement should be inherently inter-linked. To achieve that, Pakistan needs to reevaluate, reconceive and fine-tune its AML/CFT laws and procedures.

In Pakistan, money laundering and terror financing are, inter alia, governed by the Anti-Money Laundering Act, 2010 (AMLA); the Anti-Terrorism Act, 1997; the Control of Narcotics Substances Act, 1997; the SBP's Prudential Regulations M1 to M5, 2003/2016; and the SECP's AML measures, 2002/2018. Additionally, the Protection of Economic Reforms Act, 1992; the Foreign Currency Accounts (Protection) Ordinance, 2000; and the Income Tax Ordinance, 2001 are also relevant due to their financial undertones.

The National Executive Committee, formed vide section 5 of the AMLA and headed by federal finance minister, should constitute a body comprising representatives of the Ministry of Law and Justice, SBP, NAB, ANF, the Financial Management Unit (FMU), Ministry of Finance, SECP, FBR, FIA, the four provincial police organisations and global law experts. It should examine Pakistan's AML/CFT laws

and recommend corrective legislative measures as per Pakistan's atypical reality, international best practices and the FATF requirements.

The FMU, an autonomous body within the SBP, is the financial intelligence nucleus of Pakistan's AML/CTF regime. It receives, assesses and disseminates suspicious transaction reports (STRs) and currency transaction reports (CTRs). It should be reconceived; made forensically penetrative and a highly-skilled data assessing outfit; and connected with all the relevant LEAs through self-propelling legal means.

NACTA's National Task Force on CFT should be the go-to body for the resolution of all AML and CTF issues. It should collect, collate, assess and disseminate intelligence, particularly risk assessments over terror financing. It should focus on predicate crimes like drug-trafficking, corruption and smuggling and should have distinct institutional linkages with the FMU, FIA, NAB, ANF, the provincial CTDs, FBR, SECP and SBP. It should have the legal authority to receive data from LEAs on a quarterly basis so that it can assess their performance and steer them in the right direction.

Likewise, an AML/CTF Unit should be created in the FIA headed by an Additional DG and having several provincial directors. NAB already has an AML/CTF coordination cell which should be given a proper legal cover. CTDs should also have independent cells to handle obscure financial matters. All these organisations should be capable of converting financial intelligence into financial investigations which could result in court convictions. The officers in NACTA, FIA, NAB, CTDs, FBR, SBP, SECP, prosecution services and judiciary should be imparted training in Pakistan and abroad.

Investigators must have forensic financial investigation skills. Without an enormous capacity-building exercise, the AML/CFT system will remain dysfunctional. A well-thought-out, highly-coordinated effort is required to rid Pakistan of its AML/CTF demons. It is time to act.

Published in The Express Tribune, November 13th, 2019.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2098340/6-pakistans-fatf-challenge-next/>

Tax Collection Target | Editorial

The IMF's refusal to reduce the annual tax collection target for the ongoing fiscal year must be worrying for the government — and the people too. As confirmed by FBR Chairman Shabbar Zaidi, the government last month asked the Fund to allow a Rs300 billion cut in the tax collection target for FY20 — to Rs5.2 trillion from an ambitious Rs5.5 trillion. While the IMF has refused the requested downward revision, the FBR chairman has told the Senate's Standing Committee on Finance and Revenue during a recent appearance that he is optimistic the government will be able to bring around the global lender.

The FBR is doing a good job under Shabbar Zaidi, but not good enough to meet what is perceived by experts as an unrealistic target. The ongoing economic slowdown, done mainly through import compression, makes the target even more difficult to achieve, as cut in imports means cut in duties and a shortfall in overall revenue collection. According to provisional estimates, the FBR has collected Rs1.28 trillion in taxes in the July-October period of the ongoing fiscal year as against the target of Rs1.447 trillion, thus falling short of its four-month target by Rs167 billion. Going by this rate, the shortfall for the full fiscal year comes to something around Rs668 billion.

And the question that looms ahead of the IMF's executive board meeting next month to decide the release of the second tranche of the Rs6.6 billion package is how the government is going to bridge up the revenue shortfall. While there is all the likelihood that the second tranche, worth \$450 million, will be pocketed by the government, there are apprehensions that it is not going to happen without a caution from the Fund. We wish Zaidi good luck as regards his optimism to convince the IMF to reduce the tax collection target. But what if this optimism proves misplaced and the government is forced to take steps, like bringing in a minibudget, to plug the financial hole? In such an event, what the government can do the least is to bolster the social safety net so as to protect the poorest of the poor, at least.

Published in The Express Tribune, November 21st, 2019.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2103428/6-tax-collection-target/>

Stronger Economic Ties With KSA |

Editorial

PRIME Minister Imran Khan Tuesday expressed gratitude for Saudi Arabia's economic support to Pakistan and the initiatives which were underway to build a stronger economic relationship between the two countries. Talking to the visiting Prince Sultan bin Salman Al Saud in Islamabad, he appreciated the contribution of the Saudi royal family for the welfare work in Pakistan.

Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have always enjoyed unique relations and there is will and determination on both sides to take this relationship to new heights to the mutual advantage as has been highlighted by the remarks made by the Premier during his meeting with the visiting dignitary. Leadership of Saudi Arabia has been taking keen interest in the development of Pakistan and welfare of its people and this became evident not just through generous gestures of economic and financial assistance during difficult periods of Pakistan's history but initiation of welfare projects to ameliorate the lot of the common man. An example in point is Sultana Foundation, which has brought modern education within the reach of otherwise disadvantaged segments of the society. It started as a two-room primary school for boys in 1994 but currently has eight diversified educational entities including college of professional education, Institute of Technology, degree college for women, research centre and think tank besides project of University of Human Development. The welfare project is contributing significantly in efforts to empower the poor and especially girls from backward areas. Apart from this, Saudis have sponsored housing projects for the poor, development of basic healthcare units in rural areas, construction of schools and skill centres for children as well as social uplift projects like building of mosques. As for economic ties, these are, at present, mainly centred on Saudi oil supplies to Pakistan and export of manpower to KSA and there is need to diversify the economic engagement by way of launching of joint projects. It is also to be noted that during interaction between Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman and Prime Minister Imran Khan, the former expressed his resolve to invest billions of dollars in Pakistan's economy and high level exchanges are taking place to identify projects and areas for the purpose. This process should be accelerated for the sake of betterment of the people of the two countries.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/stronger-economic-ties-with-ksa/>

EDUCATION

Quality Education By Muhammad Zaman

Pakistan have total 185 universities both public and private sector and the number is increasing but the quality of education is debatable. The public sectors universities are 59% while 41% are private sector. About 1-5% population is enrolled in universities. Public universities have 81% students' enrollment and in the private student enrollment is 19%. This enrollment at Bachelor level subject is possible with 80% to 95% or even with higher marks that depicts the highest level of competition. This gives an optimistic future of the high intellect and high level of skills if the number game is measurement scale. Education is the fundamental agent of socialization and crucial institution which helps to nourish and socialize the youth and articulate them for their practical life. The purpose of of the education is the development and socialization of individual in productive way and help them to shape their personality and provide them life skills.

However, hardly anybody find any serious scholastic contribution, innovation, discoveries or even self-enlighten or even a sign of better life skills of university graduates in the country. Job market does not depict this state of affairs of the academic excellence. Unemployment is increasing day by day. Even if these young graduates are employed, many of them are unable to demonstrate adequate job skills to their employer.

These graduates are with degree but they are unable to write an adequate job application. Students are entering into the educational institutions just like a factory material and got printed degree with high marks. Some of them are with gold medals, but if one asks them how many books they have read during university education? The answer is "no" book at all or even not a single text book majority of them have finished during or even after their degree completion. If one may ask them the names of the eminent writers/ scholars of their respective discipline. These graduates are hardly able to name 2-5 scientists/ scholars of their field of specialization. Meanwhile, these graduates are on the information super highway but why they are still unskilled or semiskilled and universities are honoring them

with high grades? This is the big challenge for the academicians, educationist and university management as well as policy challenge to the Government.

A student often spent 13-15 years at the Bachelor level and 16 to 18 years in school and college if they enter at the Master level education. However, these students are unable to produce a couple of pages quality write up

Generally, university is responsible for this kind of the state of affairs but one may not exclude school and college education. A student often spent 13-15 years at the Bachelor level and 16 to 18 years in school and college if they enter at the Master level education. However, these students are unable to produce a couple of pages quality write up. We found that schools and colleges are awarding over 95% marks to their students or students are getting these marks in the intermediate and secondary education level exams, but they lack critical thinking and writing skills. This raises a big question on the school and college education. This mess deteriorate the universities quality.

Personal and collective motives of the students are important to achieve academic excellence. In some cases, one may find some serious students who are dedicated, work hard and pursue academic excellence. Many students hardly focus on their education or skill development. In private universities, they are engaged in fun, thrill and pursue for high academic grades. Students are engaged in strikes, violent activities and malign the system. Meanwhile, if they have to write a term paper, it is burden for them. They plagiarize their text and for them paid services are available for thesis/ dissertation writing and they have nothing to do but invest the money and get a “piece of paper” called “degree”.

It is a big challenge for a serious teacher to get their concentration for five minutes of those students as many of these students are engaged on the phone and using social media. It is observed that a person spends hours on social media. Overindulgent of the students in social media is making them dull, obsessed and drowsy in the classes and they seem to be highly demotivated to excel. It is believed that social media gives freedom of expression, brings enlightenment but its results are questionable and may need to investigate as it is producing a generation of highly demotivated. They feel are bored, need break and it is a big shock for them if teacher ask them to read a book or paper and get engaged in scholarly work. Often a teacher gets a response from student “teacher, your

expectations are too high”. They raise eyebrow and labeled him or her as a “strict teacher”. However, if a teacher is engaged in gossips, give chance to be absent from the lectures and hardly ask to read any literature, he may be termed as a favorite teacher. Both students and teachers are evaluated positively with latent understanding. Only a few students in this case may get success with personal efforts and not the institutional support.

Quality education is being affected due to multiple reasons including but not limited to schools, colleges and university systems. Meanwhile, the excessive use of the social media contributed in the deteriorating education of Pakistan.

The writer teaches sociology at Quaid-i-Azam University Islamabad

Source: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/495054/quality-education-2/>

Intervention strategies to improve the quality of education By Lt. Gen (R) Arshad Mahmood

Our educational system assumes that every student can learn each subject material with the same method or pedagogy, and a standardized universal measure can accurately assess a student's learning ability. As currently applied, it is heavily biased towards a linguistic mode of instructions (or lecture method) with a theatre style sitting, without assessment or evaluation. Howard Gardner, a Harvard University Psychologist, argues that a contrasting set of assumptions are more likely to be educationally effective, as every student learns in different ways that are identifiably distinctive, to his/her intelligence and aptitude. The broad spectrum of students and perhaps our economy as well as our society as a whole would be better served, if disciplines could be presented in different ways, adaptive to student population's learning styles. Learning styles could be assessed through a variety of means, i.e. Multiple Intelligences Assessment, Psychometric Aptitude Assessment and Leadership Evaluation, within the given parameters of the syllabus.

For the last year and a half, current government is planning to improve quality of education by developing a standardized syllabus across Pakistan. Syllabus is an outline of main points of the subject material to be taught to a relevant age group in any course. This syllabus has been designed to nurture left side of the brain responsible for logical mathematical and verbal skills, while the child's abilities of visualization, imagination and creativity in the right brain are ignored. The outdated syllabus of Lord Mc Aulay's vintage, encourages rote learning at best, and is teacher-centred. It does not specify methods of instructions or pedagogy and assessment and evaluation strategies for comprehension and easy learning. Whereas, curriculum, which is learner-centred, comprises of three (3) important ingredients:-

a syllabus (contents) or knowledge that needs to be disseminated or shared with students a pedagogy or methods of transmission of subject matter (lectures, tutorials, seminars, workshops, multimedia, computers, TV, radio, research / field work and industry field trips, etc.) and assessment and evaluation strategies, to

assess child's potential and develop his personality to be a useful member of the society.

We are using syllabus but ironically call it curriculum without its important ingredients applied for assessment and evaluation of the students abilities and aptitude.

Syllabus is teacher-centered because it relies on lecture in the classroom, resulting in rote learning without a conceptual understanding of the subject matter. However, a curriculum offers planned learning opportunities, learning experiences and targeted learning outcomes, to enable students to not only acquire skills, but to apply them too, using Product-based learning techniques. A curriculum is more comprehensive and application of knowledge focused, which relies on use of a student's inherent ability to utilize his/her creative and critical thinking to apply knowledge gained, to solve industry problems.

Each child is unique, and born with certain inherent abilities, which if discovered, could help reach his/her potential. This ability mix or talent pool helps each student in learning things in his/her own way. Our current Single Unit Examination System, which is based on old vintage syllabus, expects students to secure excellent marks across all subjects, without evaluating student's inherent ability mix. On the other hand, a curriculum, which is assessment oriented, is designed to match optimum subject mix according to student's aptitude.

In order to optimize impact on students, with implementation of a standardized syllabus across Pakistan, we must complement it by building intervention strategies, targeting assessment and evaluation of students, to create a fit with syllabus. By assessing intelligences, aptitudes or potential of students, we move to empower our youth, through self-discovery, which will result in better subject and career fit for our future workforce. For example a student good in English but weak in Mechanical abilities and the other, good in Mechanical abilities and weak in English, will have the same IQ, if they are of the same age, but will differ in their abilities. The parents, however, without assessing the aptitude, ask the child to take up the subjects, which are not of his/her choice, as a result 50% of the students drop out, due to lack of interest in studies, at primary and secondary level, as also get confused at under-graduate level regarding their career path or higher studies.

In our existing education system a student has to be a high achiever in at least 5 out of 6 subject, to secure admission in a good school/college/university. A student securing excellent marks in one or two subjects is not encouraged but, rather considered weak and motivated to join a tuition center. As a result, we average out the exceptional performance in one or two subjects, which could be connected to his/her aptitude and/or career choice later. This phenomenon, more often than not, leads to a low self worth, a possible lack of self-confidence and eventually future poor academic performance.

Therefore, we must apply intervention strategies to profile students, in order to evaluate their ability mix, helping connect their aptitudes with their subjects of choice. Starting with 7th grade, onwards to FA/FSc, up till under graduates, must be given their summary reports or profiles for discussions with their influencers (parents, peers etc). The criteria for admission should be top scoring one or two subjects, weighted with other subjects, so he/she may pursue choice of subject accordingly to their aptitude mix, rather than chasing marks across all subjects.

In addition, every one cannot be good in studies, so we need to find out those children through assessment, who cannot continue studies beyond class 6th to 10th and 12th, due to lack of aptitude to study, or are unable to get good marks in all the subjects for admission, economic reasons of the family and difficulty in getting admission due to shortage of schools. For such children there should be vocational classes in all the schools, to train them as community workers, to undergo diploma/short courses for 3 to 6 month as electricians, vehicle mechanics, plumbers, AC mechanics, etc. so that they start earning their lively-hood, instead of adding to the number of unemployed and become burden on the society. This is not being done at present in our education system, which needs a serious considered.

In addition, there are more than 22million children out of schools, due to the reasons that schools are located quite far away, at a distance of 5 to 10 km or even more from their residences. Some of the schools have been converted into cattle farms and shortage of funds to construct new schools. To overcome this problem we need to use the present schools in the evening shift, to provide education to all children and also use mosques as primary/secondary schools, as the mosques (every village has 1 or 2 mosques) are not under use from “Fajar” to “Zuhar”

prayers. This was the practice during the period of Khlufa-i-Rashdeen/ Ottoman Umpire. Why can't we do it in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan?

We should launch a system of assessment and evaluation of student's multiple intelligences, Aptitude and Leadership Evaluation as follows:-

Multiple Intelligences: We should, determine the best intelligence of the students, based on Howard Gardners Theory of 8 Multiple Intelligences: logical mathematical, linguistic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, bodily kinesthetic, spatial, musical and naturalist, which help in easily understanding, quickly comprehending and applying the subject matter to facilitate learning.

Aptitude Assessment: We should also measure students potential through aptitude assessment in verbal reasoning, numerical ability, mechanical reasoning, abstract reasoning, space relations and language usage, to assess genetic and environmental aptitude for life-long learning. Accordingly students should be advised, if they could continue higher education or to become community workers based on their aptitude/choice.

Multiple Leadership Evaluation: We should also measure Multiple Leadership Evaluation by profiling leadership characteristics: developing others, team leadership, collaboration, achievement, strategic intent, entrepreneurship, interpersonal, influencing others and intellectual capacity.

This assessment and evaluation process, through intervention strategies will make them self-learner, confident, self-directed and motivated, to achieve excellence in their academic and professional lives. The teachers can also be trained to apply the assessment for development of student's personality. On the other hand, if the students do not have aptitude to continue higher studies, they can be offered to become community workers, based on their choice, within the framework of their abilities and aptitude. Therefore, we should not make any effort to make a uniform syllabus, as the subjects taught at various levels are appropriate to the relevant age structure in all the provinces, so no need to make the syllabus uniform. What we need to do, is to apply the curriculum instead of syllabus to assess the abilities potential and aptitude of the students.

The measurement of aptitude is, therefore, crucial, as it facilitates the enlightened growth of students (14-23 years) by predicting their talent, traditionally referred to as a student's aptitude, to be developed by further enhancement of skills. This will create interest and improve their academic performance. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that instead of making the syllabus uniform across Pakistan, we should convert the syllabus into curriculum by introducing intervention strategies in our assessment system, to discover students abilities, potential and aptitude for the development of the personality of the students and contribute towards the National development.

Source : <https://nation.com.pk/31-Oct-2019/intervention-strategies-to-improve-the-quality-of-education?>

English Rules Our Education By Numan

Bacha

Different regimes have been heard with tall promises of bringing true reforms in the education system of Pakistan. But reforms in our education system have always been one step forward and two steps backward. In 2013, when the PTI came into power in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, it introduced the English medium in almost all state-run schools. All the text books of the lower classes were converted from Urdu to English. The decision was, no doubt, taken with the aim to make the state-run schools' environment parallel to the private ones. Why? Because in Pakistan, there is a catastrophe that English is regarded as the yardstick of measuring the mental capacity of a student.

In our education system, there are several factors that have been affecting the studies of students of almost all levels, among which curriculum courses being in English is on the top of the list.

There is only one way to ensure quality education, that is to impart knowledge to students in their mother tongue. Of course, this is an undeniable fact and has been widely acknowledged that any country cannot move ahead until imparting education in mother tongue is ensured in it. It is also said that true learning and inculcating something is possible in one's own mother tongue.

We cannot ignore the scope and reach of the English language as it is an international language, but promoting the idea of education in mother tongue is the need of the hour

If we take the example of China, it had gained its freedom later two years than our country but it is years ahead of us in different walks of life. One of the factors behind their success is that they are not producing philologists but there the students are taught in their mother tongue. Also, not a single example can be provided of developed countries where other languages are that much preferred as in our country. Also, in the USA students do learn French and Latin as well as other foreign languages, but there whole curriculum courses are never converted into Latin and French or other foreign languages.

Contrary to this, reviewing the system of Pakistan's education, before the independence the people of the Subcontinent suffered at the hands of the British, and after Independence their language (English) has been ruling on us despite seven decades elapsed of the independence of the Pakistan. There have a number of movements been run by many people in order to alter this system and to promote the idea of imparting education in mother tongue, but by bad luck all they went waste.

We have been hearing this phrase for many years that thousands of kids are out of school, but it wonders that why nobody dare to say that those who are in schools; they suffer from the effects of a broken education system. A student first has to focus on learning English, and only then he or she may learn something further. A report said that Pakistani students of specifically state-run schools can barely read a sentence. The reason behind this is nothing else but the English language, that has been made mandatory and all the courses of primary level are in English which students find difficult to learn and is like an obstacle between the students and true learning.

If quality education and real learning are needed, then students must be imparted knowledge in their mother tongue. Students don't gain the exact idea or knowledge in the right way as the way they may gain it in their mother tongue. There is nothing bad in English, nor do I oppose it, as I myself had English as my major subject in my academics, but how can this fact be brushed aside that true learning is only possible in one's mother tongue.

Is the high priority given to the English language in our country aimed to keep the students away from quality education or just to limit the learning of students to learning English?

We cannot ignore the scope and reach of the English language as it is an international language, but promoting the idea of education in mother tongue is the need of the hour.

Source: <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2019/11/20/english-rules-our-education/>

Democratisation of Education By Zarak Khan

In Pakistan, there is a need to add variations and contemporary changes in our education system. The future of Pakistan lies in the hands of youth, but the discrimination and inequality in the system is paralyzing our youth. Those who succeed in gaining education are unable to get jobs. Most of our youth is suffering the atrocities of unemployment. The “rich” and “poor” class division is destroying our education system too.

We should adopt the Chinese model of education which will not only enhance the confidence of our young minds but also as a medium; to economic stability and success. Education is seen by all the “players” in the China Rises stories, as both an ends and a means to economic success. The history of China demonstrates that education is the catalyst for expanding capabilities of individuals to have the choice to do more, live a long life, to escape avoidable illness, and to have access to the world’s stock of knowledge. For the country as a whole, the level of adult literacy skills is an indicator of enhanced personal welfare and improved productivity. Thus China must carefully reflect on the past as well as the future to examine how to make the present education system as democratic as possible. Democratic education in this context refers to education that has open access and equal opportunity, but always with the preservation of a strong core of high quality into which only those who can qualify may enter. It implies an education system whose curriculum and pedagogy is designed to ensure that all have access to the possibility to become citizens who are skilled at making decisions that benefit individuals and society and who are autonomous reflective thinkers.

Democratic Education, will help in stabilizing the youth and will also help in breaking the binaries of rich and poor stature. Currently, our education structure is suffering from the class division. In my point of view, we should provide equally embellished education to both rich and poor class, this will not only provide equal education to every child but will also help in stabilizing our economy.

The equal system of Education will provide healthy environment to the young souls to practice and enhance their talent. In this way we will manufacture skillful and

intelligent labor for Pakistan. In order to eradicate unemployment from our country, we should provide equal opportunities to each and every young citizen.

Pakistan China Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry is planning to provide a platform to the young students and entrepreneurs to start their business in the most competent way. I believe that we should welcome the new innovative ideas of our young ones, they can help us in making our economy better and smooth. We will be signing MOU with China to provide jobs for our young graduates in order to eradicate unemployment and to inculcate confidence in our youth. PCJCCI is also working on providing internships to the graduates in China as well as in Pakistan.

My aim is to eradicate unemployment from Pakistan, and I want government to work on this important factor to transform our youth in self-reliant and compassionate citizens. Pakistan China Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry also conduct various seminars and sessions with the experienced and enthusiastic business tycoons of Pakistan as well as of China, on monthly basis. These sessions are totally free for the young entrepreneurs and fresh graduates. Our aim is to provide easy communication between the business tycoons and the young entrepreneurs.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/25-Nov-2019/democratisation-of-education>

Education Above All | Editorial

Among the series of sufferings we are faced with, nothing is more painful than to see children ages 5 to 16 on the street as they are not going to school. According to UNICEF Pakistan, the country is home to the world's second-highest number of out-of-school children with an estimated 22.8 million children (5-16) not attending school. This is a huge number and is 44 per cent of the total population in this age group. This number includes dropouts and those who have never been to school, mainly due to gender, geographic and socio-economic gaps. All over the world, 59 million children are in the out of school children category.

The world is turning to drop the ugly number and in this connection, world's biggest forum on education – World Innovation Summit for Education of 2019 – has promised to bring these children to school besides addressing the chronic issues impeding learning and teaching standards in schools. The war on illiteracy and poor education quality is led by Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, founder and chair of the Education Above All Foundation, an initiative of the Qatar Foundation. This year's summit discussed the strategies to win global advocacy while Sheikha Moza pledged her commitment to ensuring universal primary education for every child in the world. Such kind of spirit and dedication is needed from other corners of the world too.

The Education Above All has benefited one million children in Pakistan, whereas on the global front, the programme has met its commitment to enroll 10 million out of school children in active collaboration with governments and partner non-governmental organisations. To reach the milestone of the zero out of school children, much more is needed to be done to invent strategies to increase enrollment, retention and classroom learning targets. Some countries are near achieving universal primary education goals by developing sustainable education systems. Events like WISE provide them with a platform to share their strategies to open the heart and schools to children whose dreams and rights to education remain unmet. Barriers to beat illiteracy, dropouts and poor learning can be lack of resources, lack of innovative techniques, increasing conflicts and ensuing displacement and migration. A global struggle is needed to overcome dropouts, out-of-school-population and poor learning, and Education Above All is spearheading the drive.

The Pakistani government has taken a right step towards increasing enrolment by initiating a second shift in public schools. The strategy to lift the status of disadvantaged children by empowering them with education is the best thing, the government can do.

Source: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/506167/education-above-all/>

WORLD

Global warming and rising global temperatures By Aisha Khan

Global warming is one of the most critical issues the world is facing in the twenty-first century, one that will affect every living creature on the planet. It is also an extraordinarily complex problem, which everyone needs to understand as clearly and completely as possible.

The climate of the earth is constantly changing due to a variety of factors. These factors include, among others, changes in the earth's orbit, changes in the sun's intensity, changes in the ocean currents, volcanic emissions, and changes in greenhouse gas concentrations. The temperature of the earth is controlled by the balance between the input from energy of the sun and the loss of that back into space. Certain atmospheric gases are critical to this temperature balance and are known as greenhouse gases.

The two most important greenhouse gases are carbon dioxide and water vapour. Currently, carbon dioxide accounts for 0.03-0.04 percent of the atmosphere, while water vapour varies from 0-2 percent. Over the past 150 years, the amount of carbon in the atmosphere has increased by 30 percent. Most scientists believe that there is a direct relationship between increased levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and the rising global temperatures. One proposed method to reduce atmospheric carbon dioxide is to increase the global storage of carbon in terrestrial systems.

An environmental component that absorbs and stores carbon for an indefinite period of time is known as the carbon sink, for example, forests and soils. The one that is discharging or emitting carbon is known as the carbon source, for example, volcanic eruptions and industrial emissions. The flow of carbon from one stock to another (carbon fluxes) involves various physical and biological processes e.g. fossil fuel combustion and biological growth.

Most scientists believe that there is a direct relationship between increased levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and the rising global temperatures

Terrestrial carbon sequestration is the process through which CO₂ from the atmosphere is absorbed by trees, plants and crops through photosynthesis, and stored as carbon in biomass (tree trunks, branches, foliage and roots) and soils (USEPA 2017). In the terrestrial system, carbon is sequestered in rocks and sediments, in swamps, wetlands and forests, and in the soils of forests, grasslands and agriculture. About two-thirds of the globe's terrestrial carbon, exclusive of that sequestered in rocks and sediments, is located in the standing forests, forest under story plants, leaf and forest debris, and in forest soils.

In addition, there are some non-natural stocks. For example, long-lived wood products and waste dumps constitute a separate human-created carbon stock. Given increased global timber harvests and manufactured wood products over the past several decades, these carbon stocks are likely increasing as the carbon sequestered in long-lived wood products and waste dumps are probably expanding.

In contrast to many plants and agricultural crops, which have short lifespans or release much of their carbon seasonally, forest biomass stores carbon over decades and centuries. Moreover, carbon accumulation potential in forests is large enough that forests offer the likelihood of sequestering significant amounts of additional carbon in relatively shorter time periods. On the other hand, forest carbon can also be released rapidly, as in forest burning. Unexpectedly, forests managed for timber, flora and fauna or for ecological restoration stocks carbon through sequestration as a by-product phenomenon. Forests may also be managed specifically for sequestration purpose. But this could reduce the expanse of other forest ecosystem services such as biodiversity. Yet, if forests managed for carbon sequestration are allowed to reach maturity, one of the long-term impacts may be enhanced biodiversity.

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Source : <https://dailytimes.com.pk/492596/global-warming-and-rising-global-temperatures/>

Modi's Kashmir Policy Leading to a Blind Alley By Iqbal Khan

The illegal and unilateral changes effected by India are in no way an internal matter as the Jammu and Kashmir dispute remains on the agenda of the Security Council. Pakistan and China have vehemently rejected the formal revocation of the constitutional autonomy of India-occupied Kashmir (IoK) and splitting the disputed state into two federal territories in a bid to firm its grip over the territory. "Everything changes on Thursday [October 31]. From a state, we are reduced to a municipality," said a retired Kashmiri judge, Hasnain Masoodi, a member of India's Parliament. "The entire exercise is unconstitutional. The mode and methodology have been undemocratic. People were humiliated and never consulted." Masoodi represents the National Conference, a powerful pro-India Kashmiri political group whose leaders have been detained.

The symbolic change is the absence of Kashmir's own flag and constitution, which were eliminated as part of the region's new status. And India's tricolour flag is hoisted in Srinagar to nominally mark the final absorption of territories into India. Status of IoK has been reduced from a province to two municipalities. Lieutenant Governors of J&K and Ladakh, Girish Chandra Murmu and Radha Krishna Mathur respectively, have assumed their offices. Indian authorities have also changed the name of the state-run radio station Radio Kashmir Srinagar to All India Radio Srinagar. But the most contentious point for many people is the threat of land grabs by Indians living outside the IoK region, facilitated through the formal abrogation of Article 35-A of the Indian Constitution that safeguarded Kashmiris' exclusive right to land ownership and job protection. The real motive is to alter the demographic structure of the Muslim majority state in pursuance of advancement of the extremist "Hindutva" ideology.

India has formally initiated colonial rule, foreign occupation and alien domination in the IoK. Tens of thousands of police and paramilitary soldiers fanned out across the occupied valley, patrolling the streets and manning checkpoints, as the new legislation went into effect on 30-31 October midnight. Angry protesters took to a main thoroughfare in Muzaffarabad, the main city of Azad Kashmir, on 31 October to condemn the bifurcation of the occupied Kashmir into two federal territories. "Down with India" and "We want freedom [for our brothers in IoK]", they chanted.

BJP government is now focusing on implementing “the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization Act” by allowing Indian nationals to buy property, cast their vote and permanently settle in J&K. Under the Act, delimitation of electoral constituencies will also take place which will benefit the Hindu nationalist BJP. To win over the sympathies of around 450,000 government employees, a salaries hike plan has been rolled out. The real motive is to alter the demographic structure of the Muslim majority in the J&K. The international community must take notice that transfer of civilian population from outside into J&K is in grave violation of the international laws, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention.

Pakistan has rejected the “bifurcation” of loK. Changing of status quo in occupied territory is in complete violation of the UN Security Council resolutions and bilateral agreements between India and Pakistan, especially the Simla Agreement. No step by the government of India can change this status. These changes are illegal and void as per the relevant UNSC Resolutions, and do not effect the right to self-determination of the people of occupied Jammu & Kashmir. The foolhardy approach Modi regime would ultimately turn out to be an illusion. UNSC, UNGA and Human Rights Council will ultimately pass resolutions against India, further building on two consecutive reports by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). Even the International Court of Justice may pass a non-binding but biting opinion. The Communist Party of India Marxist (CPI-M) in a statement issued in New Delhi termed as “shameful” the decision to formally declare separation of Ladakh from Jammu and Kashmir. It said the territory was divided without taking the opinion of its citizens and reiterated its strong opposition to the abrogation of Article 370.

Reacting to the development, China said the bifurcation of India-occupied Kashmir into two Union territories was unlawful, void and ineffective and will not change the fact that the area was under its actual control. “China deplores and firmly opposed that. India unilaterally changes its domestic law and administrative divisions, challenging China’s sovereignty and interests. This is awful and void, and this is not effective in any way and will not change the fact that the area is under China’s actual control,” said Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesperson. Modi’s decision to change the loK’s status and tighten its grip on the region has stoked anger and resentment amongst the residents of loK. At least 20 incidents of stone-pelting were reported from Srinagar and other parts of the Kashmir Valley on October 30, a state police official said.

It doesn't matter to Modi regime whether the Valley's eight million beleaguered people hate the Indian military and its occupation, because the regime considers land and not people as a source of its power. "The unfulfilled dream of integrating Jammu and Kashmir has been accomplished," said Home Minister Amit Shah, who is leading the political strategy to deal with Kashmir. New Governor in Srinagar has stated that state elections in J&K will be held after the delimitation commission is through with its work. This means there would certainly be a BJP-led government in IOK as pro-liberation political parties would stand further marginalised. But, the people of Indian occupied Jammu and Kashmir will never accept the illegal and forceful occupation. Ultimately, only justice, and not the brute force, would bring peace to Kashmir.

—The writer is a freelance columnist based in Islamabad.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/modis-kashmir-policy-leading-to-a-blind-alley/>

The United States Should Fear a Faltering China By Michael Beckley

The defining geopolitical story of our time is the slow death of U.S. hegemony in favor of a rising China. Harbingers of Beijing's ascent are everywhere. China's overseas investments span the globe. The Chinese navy patrols major sea lanes, while the country colonizes the South China Sea in slow motion. And the government cracks down on dissent at home while administering a hefty dose of nationalist propaganda.

Beijing's newfound assertiveness looks at first glance like the mark of growing power and ambition. But in fact it is nothing of the sort. China's actions reflect profound unease among the country's leaders, as they contend with their country's first sustained economic slowdown in a generation and can discern no end in sight. China's economic conditions have steadily worsened since the 2008 financial crisis. The country's growth rate has fallen by half and is likely to plunge further in the years ahead, as debt, foreign protectionism, resource depletion, and rapid aging take their toll.

China's economic woes will make it a less competitive rival in the long term but a greater threat to the United States today. When rising powers have suffered such slowdowns in the past, they became more repressive at home and more aggressive abroad. China seems to be headed down just such a path.

RED FLAGS

In March 2007, at the height of a years-long economic boom, then Premier Wen Jiabao gave an uncharacteristically gloomy press conference. China's growth model, Wen warned, had become "unsteady, unbalanced, uncoordinated, and unsustainable." The warning was prescient: in the years since, China's official gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate has dropped from 15 percent to six percent—the slowest rate in 30 years. The country's economy is now experiencing its longest deceleration of the post-Mao era.

A growth rate of six percent could still be considered spectacular. By way of contrast, consider that the U.S. economy has been stuck at a rate of around two percent. But many economists believe that China's true rate is roughly half the

official figure. Moreover, GDP growth does not necessarily translate into greater wealth. If a country spends billions of dollars on infrastructure projects, its GDP will rise. But if those projects consist of bridges to nowhere, the country's stock of wealth will remain unchanged or even decline. To accumulate wealth, a country needs to increase its productivity—a measure that has actually dropped in China over the last decade. Practically all of China's GDP growth has resulted from the government's pumping capital into the economy. Subtract government stimulus spending, some economists argue, and China's economy may not be growing at all.

Subtract stimulus spending and China's economy may not be growing at all.

The signs of unproductive growth are easy to spot. China has built more than 50 ghost cities—sprawling metropolises of empty offices, apartments, malls, and airports. Nationwide, more than 20 percent of homes are vacant. Excess capacity in major industries tops 30 percent: factories sit idle and goods rot in warehouses. Total losses from all this waste are difficult to calculate, but China's government estimates that it blew at least \$6 trillion on “ineffective investment” between 2009 and 2014 alone. China's debt has quadrupled in absolute size over the last ten years and currently exceeds 300 percent of its GDP. No major country has ever racked up so much debt so fast in peacetime.

Worse still, assets that once propelled China's economic ascent are fast turning into liabilities. In the 1990s and early 2000s, the country enjoyed expanding access to foreign markets and technology. China was nearly self-sufficient in food, water, and energy resources, and it had the greatest demographic dividend in history, with eight working-age adults for every citizen aged 65 or older. Now China is losing access to foreign markets and technology. Water has become scarce, and the country is importing more food and energy than any other nation, having decimated its own natural endowments. Thanks to the one-child policy, China is about to experience the worst aging crisis in history, because it will lose 200 million workers and young consumers and gain 300 million seniors in the course of three decades. Any country that has accumulated debt, lost productivity, or aged at anything close to China's current clip has lost at least one decade to near-zero economic growth. How will China handle the coming slump?

WE'VE SEEN THIS BEFORE

When fast-growing great powers run out of economic steam, they typically do not mellow out. Rather, they become prickly and aggressive. Rapid growth has fueled their ambitions, raised their citizens' expectations, and unnerved their rivals. Suddenly, stagnation dashes those ambitions and expectations and gives enemies a chance to pounce. Fearful of unrest, leaders crack down on domestic dissent. They search feverishly for ways to restore steady growth and keep internal opposition and foreign predation at bay. Expansion presents one such opportunity—a chance to seek new sources of wealth, rally the nation around the ruling regime, and ward off rival powers.

The historical precedents are plentiful. Over the past 150 years, nearly a dozen great powers experienced rapid economic growth followed by long slowdowns. None accepted the new normal quietly. U.S. growth plummeted in the late nineteenth century, and Washington reacted by violently suppressing labor strikes at home while pumping investment and exports into Latin America and East Asia, annexing territory there and building a gigantic navy to protect its far-flung assets. Russia, too, had a late-nineteenth-century slowdown. The tsar responded by consolidating his authority, building the Trans-Siberian Railway, and occupying parts of Korea and Manchuria. Japan and Germany suffered economic crises during the interwar years: both countries turned to authoritarianism and went on rampages to seize resources and smash foreign rivals. France had a postwar boom that fizzled in the 1970s: the French government then tried to reconstitute its economic sphere of influence in Africa, deploying 14,000 troops in its former colonies and embarking on a dozen military interventions there over the next two decades. As recently as 2009, world oil prices collapsed, which led a stagnating Russia to pressure its neighbors to join a regional trade bloc. A few years later, that campaign of coercion spurred Ukraine's Maidan revolution and Russia's annexation of Crimea.

When fast-growing great powers run out of economic steam, they become prickly and aggressive.

The question, then, is not whether a struggling rising power will expand abroad but what form that expansion will take. The answer depends in part on the structure of the global economy. How open are foreign markets? How safe are international trade routes? If circumstances allow it, a slowing great power might be able to rejuvenate its economy through peaceful trade and investment, as Japan tried to

do after its postwar economic miracle came to an end in the 1970s. If that path is closed, however, then the country in question may have to push its way into foreign markets or secure critical resources by force—as Japan did in the 1930s. The global economy is more open today than in previous eras, but a global rise in protectionism and the trade war with the United States increasingly threaten China’s access to foreign markets and resources. China’s leaders fear, with good reason, that the era of hyperglobalization that enabled their country’s rise is over.

The structure of a country’s home economy will further shape its response to a slowdown. The Chinese government owns many of the country’s major firms, and those firms substantially influence the state. For this reason, the government will go to great lengths to shield companies from foreign competition and help them conquer overseas markets when profits dry up at home. A state-led economy like China’s is unlikely to liberalize during a slowdown. Doing so would require eliminating subsidies and protections for state-favored firms, reforms that risk instigating a surge in bankruptcies, unemployment, and popular resentment. Liberalization also could disrupt the crony capitalist networks that the regime depends on for survival. Instead, regimes like China’s usually resort to mercantilist expansion, using money and muscle to carve out exclusive economic zones abroad and divert popular anger toward foreign enemies. The most aggressive expanders of all tend to be authoritarian capitalist states, of which China is clearly a prime example.

TROUBLE AHEAD

China’s recent behavior is a textbook response to economic insecurity. Back in the 1990s and the early years of this century, when the country’s economy was booming, China loosened political controls and announced to the world its “peaceful rise,” to be pursued through economic integration and friendly diplomatic relations. Compare the situation today: labor protests are on the rise, elites have been moving their money and children out of the country en masse, and the government has outlawed the reporting of negative economic news. President Xi Jinping has given multiple internal speeches warning party members of the potential for a Soviet-style collapse. The government has doubled internal security spending over the past decade, creating the most advanced propaganda, censorship, and surveillance systems in history. It has detained one million Uighurs in internment camps and concentrated power in the hands of a dictator for life.

State propaganda blames setbacks, such as the 2015 stock market collapse and the 2019 Hong Kong protests, on Western meddling. These are not the actions of a confident superpower.

China has projected its power abroad throughout this turbulent period—tripling foreign direct investment and quintupling overseas lending in an ambitious attempt to secure markets and resources for Chinese firms. Beijing also has gone out militarily, launching more warships over the past decade than the whole British navy holds and flooded major sea lanes in Asia with hundreds of government vessels and aircraft. It has built military outposts across the South China Sea and frequently resorts to sanctions, ship-ramming, and aerial intercepts in territorial disputes with its neighbors.

If China's growth slows further in the coming years, as is likely, the Chinese government will probably double down on the repression and aggression of the past decade. When the country's leaders cannot rely on rapid growth to bolster their domestic legitimacy and international clout, they will be all the more eager to squelch dissent, burnish their nationalist credentials, and boost the economy by any means necessary. Moreover, powerful interest groups—most notably, state-owned enterprises and the military and security services—have developed a vested interest in maintaining China's current strategy, which funnels money into their coffers. As a result, the government would struggle to extricate itself from foreign entanglements even if it wanted to.

WASHINGTON'S BALANCING ACT

The danger to the United States and its allies is clear. Rampant espionage, protectionism, a splintered Internet, naval clashes in the East and South China Seas, and a war over Taiwan are only the more obvious risks that a desperate and flailing China will pose. U.S. statecraft will need to contain these risks without causing China to lash out in the process. To that end, Washington will have to deter Chinese aggression, assuage China's insecurities, and insulate the United States from blowback should deterrence and reassurance fail. The inherent tension among these objectives will make the task a very difficult one.

Chinese power will gradually mellow. Now, however, is a moment of maximum danger.

Some initiatives could help strike the proper balance. Instead of deterring Chinese expansionism by sailing provocative but vulnerable naval armadas past China's coastline, for instance, Washington could deploy mobile antiship and surface-to-air missile launchers on allied shores. If the United States joined the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership—and invited China to join, too—Beijing would have the motive and means to reduce its trade-distorting practices without fighting a 1930s-style trade war. China might spurn the offer, but then the treaty would at least strengthen the commitment of its signatories to the free flow of goods, money, and data. In so doing, it would limit the spread of China's mercantilist and digital authoritarian policies. The United States could supplement this stance by investing more in scientific research and investigations into specific Chinese companies and investors, so that it can maintain technological superiority without banning Chinese investment and immigration into the United States. These moves would not eliminate the root causes of U.S.-Chinese rivalry, but they would protect U.S. interests while avoiding a slide into a cold or hot war.

Perhaps in a few decades, Chinese power will gradually mellow. Now, however, is a moment of maximum danger, because China is too weak to feel secure or satisfied with its place in the world order but strong enough to destroy it. As China's economic miracle comes to an end, and Xi's much-touted Chinese Dream slips away, the United States must contain China's outbursts with a careful blend of deterrence, reassurance, and damage limitation. Compared to gearing up for a whole-of-society throwdown against a rising superpower, this mission may seem uninspiring. But it would be smarter—and ultimately more effective.

Source: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2019-10-28/united-states-should-fear-faltering-china>

Will Donald Trump Really End the ‘Endless Wars’? By Daniel R. DePetris

Like all presidential candidates, Donald Trump made a boatload of promises when he was running for the nation’s top job in 2016. He was the overly blunt, prickly, obnoxious non-politician who was going to turn the United States around with lower taxes, more jobs, a booming economy, fewer federal regulations, and a complete overhaul of the country’s broken immigration system.

Trump’s most significant commitment during the campaign, however, was pulling the United States out of the unending, costly wars that have dominated U.S. foreign policy for nearly 20 years. In the typical, coarse language he was known for throughout his four decades in the Manhattan real estate business, Trump blasted the war in Iraq as a “big, fat mistake” and called out Republican candidates on the debate stage (like Jeb Bush) who were unwilling to admit it. He condemned the stupidity of U.S. leaders for continuing to throw tens of billions of dollars into Afghanistan, declaring as far back as 2012 that it was time for U.S. troops to get out. Trump has continued with the theme in his first term as president: Iraq was a disaster; Afghanistan was a tragic waste of lives of resources; Syria was a land of “sand and death”; and the nation-building campaigns in the Middle East were a sad joke.

To the majority of Americans, including the very veterans who were ordered to prosecute these military campaigns, the president’s rhetoric was a breath of fresh air. Whether you love him or hate him, there was some truth in Trump’s interpretation of events. As the Pew Research Center reported this July, 64% of veterans and 62% of the general population don’t believe the war in Iraq was worth fighting. Solid majorities in both groupings have the same belief about the war in Afghanistan, which is already the longest conflict in American history, sucking up nearly a trillion dollars in taxpayer money and tens of thousands of American casualties over a period of 18 years. The American people are sick and tired of seeing their sons, daughters, brothers, and sisters in uniform being deployed on missions that never seem to end in the pursuit of rosy objectives that on its best days are about as likely to be achieved as fixing the New York City subway system.

Unfortunately, Trump's rhetoric doesn't match reality. While he remains eager to campaign on downsizing U.S. investment in overseas entanglements and lessening the burden on Washington's shoulders, the wars—and America's involvement in them—continue like the hamster wheel that keeps on going and going and going. It's as if all of these military campaigns are on auto-pilot: regardless of how expensive and pointless they are, it's simply more convenient for policymakers in the Beltway to preserve a bankrupted status-quo.

Regrettably, Trump is at risk of becoming a member of the foreign policy establishment he so strongly despises. As Quincy Institute President Andrew Bacevich writes in the Los Angeles Times, Trump's repugnance of the foreign policy status-quo "doesn't extend much beyond making noise. Even his troop withdrawals result in little more than repositioning."

Indeed. Syria is a case in point. In December 2018, Trump broadcast to the world that U.S. troops were packing up and going home after a 4-year military operation against the Islamic State. It took less than an hour for most of Capitol Hill, former national security officials, think tank analysts, and the Washington Post editorial board to charge the White House gates in rabid fury. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and the administration's own counter-ISIS envoy, Brett McGurk, resigned in protest. Lindsey Graham, always happy to see himself on television, jumped on the airwaves and tried to shame Trump into reversing his decision. And, sure enough, the pressure campaign succeeded.

The American people were given an extreme case of deja-vu over the last three weeks. Yet again, Trump announced that U.S. troops would be moving on. And yet again, the wolves showed their teeth. Graham and Gen. (Ret) Jack Keane rushed to the White House, maps in hand, to argue that leaving Syria's oil fields to the Iranians and the Russians was like handing the keys of the region over to America's enemies (a silly proposition if there ever was one). The steady drumbeat of criticism on TV, the editorial pages, and social media proved to be too much for Trump to resist. As this piece is being written, U.S. armor has crossed the Iraq-Syria border en route to the oil fields in Deir ez-Zor, preparing for a mission that was neither authorized by Congress or thought through in the inter-agency. By the looks of it, we could be looking at a situation where there are more U.S. troops on the ground in Syria after Trump's fake withdrawal than there were before he made the announcement.

Meanwhile, the war in Afghanistan goes on despite the president's supposed revulsion about the conflict. 12,000 Americans remain in-country, essentially holding the line indefinitely in order to maintain a years-long stalemate between a vicious Taliban insurgency and an entitled Afghan government. By the Special Inspector General's own count, more U.S. munitions were dropped this past September than any month since October 2010, when about 100,000 U.S. soldiers were risking their lives clearing villages, building schools, paving roads, and trying to help Afghan political leaders reform. Years later, many of those villages are now in Taliban hands and Afghan politicians remain more concerned with their self-enrichment than their constituents.

Needless to say, none of this is conducive to ending the endless wars looks like. If Trump were serious, he wouldn't have authorized the deployment of 3,000 military personnel to Saudi Arabia since September, a country that has become increasingly erratic since Mohammed Bin Salman started consolidating the reins of power. He wouldn't be sending U.S. soldiers on a fool's errand in eastern Syria, protecting oil fields that amount to a small puddle of the region's total oil supply. And he most certainly wouldn't risk the life of one more American soldier in Afghanistan, a country that can only free itself from four consecutive decades of internal conflict if all Afghan stakeholders have an incentive to end it peacefully.

The phrase "end the forever wars" is now vulnerable to becoming one more campaign slogan without much substance. For the majority of the American people desperately in search of a smarter, shrewder, more restrained foreign policy, that would be a shame.

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Source: <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/skeptics/trillion-dollar-question-will-donald-trump-really-end-endless-wars-94461>

UN Needs to be Reformed By Rashid A Mughal

THE role played by the UN in resolving international disputes, conflicts and wars has come under intense discussion and review. Muslim world particularly has lost hope in the UN and has become increasingly critical of its domination by superpowers. The conflicts and disputes amongst and within Muslim countries and with other countries have dragged for years and years and in spite of firm resolutions, no effort has been made to either resolve long pending and outstanding disputes nor action has been taken against the aggressors who openly flout the UN Charter. The case of Kashmir and Palestine is a living example. These two unresolved conflicts, which have resulted in numerous wars between the parties in the past, are capable of throwing the entire world into a nuclear arena and may be the cause of third world war, if the UN apathy continues. Over the years, there have been numerous initiatives to reform the UN. These range from summits of heads of state, to panels of experts and to the reform efforts by UN Secretary Generals. Just six months after taking office as Secretary General in January 1997, Kofi Annan announced his plan for United Nations reform. He set out an agenda of better management and coordination across the entire UN system as well as stronger human rights promotion and peacekeeping operations. In 2002, Annan announced further reforms, coinciding with the beginning of his second term. These proposals took up earlier technocratic themes, including enhanced coordination of organizations in the UN system and greater “focus” in the UN’s work.

Over the years, Annan’s priorities reflected financial and political pressure from Washington amid a deep crisis in UN funding. In such a cash-starved setting, reforms tended to reshuffle resources and bleed important programs to serve ever-new priorities. The results brought some modern management into a cumbersome bureaucracy, but they also made the UN more conservative and less democratic, by shaping it to a neo-liberal, security-driven US agenda. In March 2005, Annan presented his most comprehensive reform and policy agenda to date. His report “In Larger Freedom” addressed issues such as terrorism, financing for development, enlarging the Security Council and replacing the Human Rights Commission. Annan wanted states to adopt all proposals as a package and urged delegations to come to consensus in time for the Millennium+5 Summit, before the

60th session of the General Assembly in September 2005. Instead, after several months of negotiation, the United States demanded hundreds of line-by-line revisions just three weeks before the Summit. As a result, other states proposed new amendments of their own and the negotiating consensus unraveled. Eventually, when world leaders assembled in New York, the text had been reduced to a set of vague generalities. After the summit, observers wondered about the future of multilateralism in the face of US hostility. But the debate continues over how the UN should be reformed and with what goals for the future.

Annan's latest effort revolved around management reform. He released in March 2006 his report, "Investing in the United Nations" which met with controversy from UN staffers and many member states. Proposals included outsourcing and new authority for the Secretary General to shift budgets and close programs without consulting the General Assembly. Many observers argued that Annan's agenda had been set by the US. Later, when Ban Ki-moon became Secretary General he did not lay out any clear-cut strategy to meet the political and economic challenges facing the United Nations. "So far his performance and what appears to be his future approach do not reflect anything close to the independence, strength of character, willingness to stand up to powerful governments and commitment to equality of nations and peoples," said Phyllis Bennis, Director, New Internationalism Project at the Washington-based Institute for Policy Studies. These are qualities that would be required if the United Nations had any chance of rebuilding its tattered reputation and its potential capacity, said Bennis, author of several books on the world body, including "Challenging Empire: How People, Governments and the UN Defy US Power".

Lately there have been open criticism, particularly from Muslim countries, both at the UN and other international forums regarding the way UN is being run and the role it has and is playing in solving the problems which directly affect Muslims. The world knows about the role and influence of the Jewish lobby in moulding the UN decisions. Frequent use of Veto Power by anti-Muslim and pro-Jewish lobby have seriously and severely damaged the impartiality of UN. There is a growing sentiment of mistrust and lack of faith in the world peace body being expressed loudly by poor countries. At the last General Assembly session of UN in September, leaders of the countries affected by UN apathy did not mince their words in criticizing the path being treaded by UN and warned of the domination of big powers in running the UN Affairs. Amongst the most vocal speakers was the

Prime Minister of Pakistan, Imran Khan, who once again drew the attention of the world community to the long pending dispute of Kashmir between India and Pakistan which remains un-resolved despite clear resolutions of UN itself for holding a plebiscite so that the Kashmiris can decide their own future. Similar demands came from the President of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Mahatir Muhammad, the Prime Minister of Malaysia. Both went to the extent of forging unity between three countries by forming a regional alliance of cooperation which in itself is a brilliant idea.

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Source: <https://pakobserver.net/un-needs-to-be-reformed/>

Babri Masjid Verdict | Editorial

Secular India is dead. Just read the world's most respected newspapers for proof. India is now "fundamentally a Hindu nation" and "not the secular republic promoted by the country's founders", reads The Washington Post. "India's Supreme Court...[handed] the prime minister and his followers a major victory in their quest to remake the country as Hindu and shift it further from its secular foundation," reads The New York Times. The "major victory", of course, is the verdict in the Babri Mosque case. The case was, as described by The Wall Street Journal, a "litmus test for how vigorously the court would enforce protections for minority religions in an era when Hindu nationalists are pressing for the government to more-prominently advocate for the interests of the country's Hindu majority".

Well, long story short, the court failed. The destruction of the mosque and the case for rebuilding were always political acts of illegal violence, but no court dared to stand up to the BJP. They have seen what Hindutva mobs do to people they disagree with. After all, "Since Modi and the BJP took power in 2014, the rebuilding of a Ram temple at Ayodhya has been at the forefront of their Hindutva agenda," read The Guardian. And then, there is the unfortunate truth that BJP members led crowds of thousands during the attack on Babri Masjid in December 1992. More than 2,000 people were killed in the rioting and violence that ensued, and some BJP members are still facing trial for their role in the violence.

After the verdict, All India Majlis-e-Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen (AIMIM) chief Asaduddin Owaisi rightly asked on Saturday night that if Babri Masjid was illegal, why were former home minister and BJP co-founder LK Advani and others being tried in connection with its demolition. "If Babri Masjid was legal, then why was [the land it was built on] handed over to those who demolished it. If it was illegal, then why is a case going on? Withdraw the case against Advani [if it was illegal]," Owaisi said.

Unfortunately, this was a verdict born not out of legalities, but rather out of the Indian state's capitulation to a fascistic ideology.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2097696/6-babri-masjid-verdict/>

The Post-Brexit World: Closer UK-ASEAN Economic Ties? – Analysis By Kaewkamol Pitakdumrongkit

Sooner or later, the United Kingdom (UK) will leave the European Union. The Brexit fallout will compel the UK to engage more with ASEAN economies as it searches for alternative markets and investment destinations. However, this may not easily translate into closer UK-ASEAN economic relations.

As October 31 dawned, Brexit appears to have been postponed once more. The United Kingdom dodged another deadline as the European Union (EU) agreed to postpone it to 31 January 2020. The EU also gave the “flexextension” option allowing the UK to leaving earlier on 1 December 2019 or 1 January 2020.

What this means is that sooner or later, the UK will depart the European bloc. Regardless of the terms struck between the UK and EU, the following will likely happen in the post-Brexit era.

Post-Brexit Scenarios: ASEAN

First, the UK and EU will likely trade and invest less with each other. The EU will likely impose stricter regulations and restrictions on the UK’s goods and services as the EU does not want to reward the leaving party with favourable terms that its members enjoy. In other words, granting Britain such privileges will be a strange way to punish a leaver.

Therefore, the state will likely suffer from an economic slowdown. The UK’s National Institute of Economic and Social Research estimated that the current Brexit deal pushed by Prime Minister Boris Johnson will shrink the country’s GDP by 3.5 percent within ten years. As a result, the state will be more eager than before to look beyond Europe for alternative markets and investment destinations.

Some signs are showing that Britain has been increasingly keen to augment its ties with Southeast Asian economies. For example, in May 2018, Foreign and Commonwealth Office ministers met with ambassadors of ASEAN states in

London to stress the British commitment to Southeast Asia and forge stronger UK-ASEAN relations. The country also deployed its ambassador to its mission to ASEAN in Jakarta in 2019.

Why Britain Looks to ASEAN

Several reasons elucidate Britain's soaring enthusiasm. The first factor involves ASEAN's economic potentials. For instance, the 2018 PricewaterhouseCoopers estimated that by 2030 its middle-income bracket will constitute two-thirds of ASEAN's population.

According to HSBC, Southeast Asia is witnessing rapid urbanisation. Between 2015 and 2030, about 100 million people are predicted to move from the countryside to cities. Such phenomena will generate market opportunities for British businesses.

For instance, the middle-incomers will heighten demands for several services such as tourism and customised healthcare which UK firms can provide. Rapid urbanisation will amplify Southeast Asia's needs for infrastructure to improve city dwellers' security and well-beings. As the Asian Development Bank found, the region is suffering from an infrastructure financing deficit.

It is because from 2016 to 2030 Southeast Asia will need around US\$184-210 billion annually, but the ASEAN Infrastructure Fund can only chip in about \$485 million. This combined with competitions among other extra-regional states such as China's Belt Road Initiative and Japan's Partnership for Quality Infrastructure begets ample room for the UK to play a larger role in regional infrastructure building.

Regional Economic Integration

Regional economic integration is another reason why Britain finds ASEAN attractive. Although the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) was formally established in December 2015, Southeast Asian states have been implementing the AEC Blueprint 2025 to further advance regional economic deepening.

Ten regional economies combined constitute a market of 650 million people and are predicted to become the world's fourth largest economy by 2030. In addition, ASEAN states are negotiating the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) with its six Dialogue Partners – Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, and South Korea. This pact, if all signed on, will consolidate five existing ASEAN+1 free trade agreements (FTAs) into a single contract.

If concluded, RCEP will create a market of 3.4 billion people or about 45 percent of the world's population and encompass around one-third of the world's GDP. Accordingly, the combined markets resulting from these integration efforts tempt British entrepreneurs to invest in the region to reap the benefits of the arrangements.

Stronger UK-ASEAN Economic Ties?

Will the UK's interest to engage more with Southeast Asian countries coupled with ASEAN's future demands result in tightened, stronger UK-ASEAN economic ties? One should not be too optimistic. The UK's willingness to enhance economic ties with ASEAN states may not translate into closer UK-ASEAN economic relations.

Leaving aside the issue of Britain's lack of manpower and experience in conducting trade talks with other countries, Southeast Asian economies will not rush to seal a new deal with the UK for several reasons. For one thing, the regional states can formally negotiate an FTA with the latter when it is formally out of the EU.

Also, even though the UK is able to assemble a team to negotiate with individual Southeast Asian nations, ASEAN's rising non-tariff barriers loom large. While tariffs in the region are virtually zero, the report by the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia revealed that in the 2000-2015 period, the number of non-tariff measures rose from 1,634 to 5,975 measures.

Such protectionist policies can be found in all ten economies. For example, Indonesia possesses multiple non-tariff measures in machinery and textile industries. Also, Thailand imposes foreign ownership restrictions in land transport, making it difficult for foreign corporations to provide express delivery services in the country. These obstacles render it challenging for the UK government to strike a deal with ASEAN nations.

RCEP Better Than UK?

Moreover, during their negotiation with the UK, ASEAN countries will likely have an upper hand given the fact that RCEP just made significant progress early this week. According to the Joint Statement of the 3rd RCEP Summit, 15 members “have concluded text-based negotiations for all 20 chapters”. India is holding out due to some internal difficulties, and the door is left open for it to return next year.

With or without Delhi’s participation, the remaining RCEP parties will next year endorse the agreement which will create the world’s biggest trading bloc. To Southeast nations, this pact will not only deepen transnational supply chains but also enable them to lessen the undesired impacts of US-China trade war.

As a result, these states have less urgency to strike another arrangement with the UK. Therefore, they will likely bargain hard and press Britain to make certain concessions in exchange for its greater access into their markets. ASEAN members’ demands may be too much for Britain to accept. Haggling for the middle ground would take some time to settle.

In sum, Brexit has tempted the UK to engage ASEAN economies as a hedge against its reduced ties with the EU and economic slowdown. However, this may not easily convert into closer UK-ASEAN economic relations due to ASEAN’s non-tariff barriers and less urgency to seal another trade agreement with Britain.

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Source: <https://www.eurasiareview.com/12112019-the-post-brexit-world-closer-uk-asean-economic-ties-analysis/>

Toward A Diverging BRICS Future – **Analysis By Dan Steinbock**

Two decades ago, the BRIC economies were projected to surpass the advanced G6 economies by the early 2030s. Today, the huge potential of the BRICs prevails, but the pace has slowed and country trajectories have diverged. China and India are on track, Brazil and Russia are not, thanks to geopolitics.

In the early 2000s, Goldman Sachs projected that the four largest emerging economies – Brazil, Russia, India and China, or the BRICs – would surpass the major advanced economies by the early 2030s.

When the first BRICS Summit took place in Yekaterinburg, Russia in 2009, the combined economic power of the BRIC countries amounted to barely 12 percent of the collective economic power of the major advanced economies, the Group of Six (G6); the US, Western Europe (Germany, UK, France, Italy), and Japan.

At the time, the US economy was some 2.5 times bigger than that of China but amid the worst asset-bubble burst since the Great Depression. Japan, the world's second-largest economy, was coping with a second lost decade. Chancellor Merkel's Germany and President Sarkozy's France still led the ailing Europe, where the global recession would soon morph into a series of sovereign debt crises. In Brazil, President Lula drove a dramatic growth catch-up, while reducing historical income polarization. In Manmohan Singh's India, growth was accelerating. In Russia, President Putin had multiplied the size of the economy by more than five-fold in one decade, thanks to rising energy prices.

But where are the BRICs today?

Projected Versus Actual Growth

To gain a better understanding of what has happened in the past two decades, let's compare Goldman Sachs's original BRIC projections in the 2000s, which rested on the economic development in the 1980s and 1990s, with the actual BRIC prospects today, which are the net effect of the past two decades.

What Goldman Sachs projected was a dramatic expansion of China whose GDP was anticipated to grow more than 14-fold between 2000 and 2025. At the same time, India's economy would increase by almost tenfold and was projected to grow relatively faster than China in the late 2010s. Brazil was expected to expand fivefold and Russia more than tenfold. In light of the fact that, in the same time period, the US, the largest advanced economy, was projected to expand more than twofold, these were stunning projections indicating solid catch-up growth in the largest emerging economies.

So what happened? Here's the bottom line: If peaceful conditions prevail and trade protectionism can be kept in check, China could deliver more than expected, while India is on track as well. However, the potential of Brazil and Russia, respectively, has been undermined by geopolitics (Figure 1).

After China joined the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001, its economic expansion intensified dramatically, fueled by the export-led growth model. Since the early 2010s, that model has been morphing toward consumption and innovation. By the mid-2020s – again, assuming peaceful conditions and managed trade tensions – China's economy could expand more than 17 times, relative to its size in 2000. It is set to surpass the size of the US economy in the 2030s, which may well be the key to the Obama military pivot to Asia in the early 2010s and to Trump tariff wars more recently.

While India's growth trajectory has periodically slipped, it has been pushed harder by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, despite recent growth pains. If things go right, India's economy could expand the projected tenfold by the mid-2020s. New Delhi is engaged in a cautious balancing act between economic development and rising prosperity, which is what the country needs, and geopolitics and rearmament, which is what Washington would prefer.

Under President Lula's leadership, Brazil's GDP grew even faster than expected by the original BRIC projection. But since the mid-2010s, the contested impeachment of President Rousseff and particularly the imprisonment of Lula, Brazil's growth trajectory has plunged. The geopolitical soft coup, which critics claim paved the way to radical right's President Bolsonaro and the dreams of a new military dictatorship, could result in a lost decade. By the mid-2020s, Brazil's

GDP may reach the level where it first was at the end of the Lula era, already in the early 2010s.

Instead of being almost a fifth of the US GDP by the mid-2020s, Brazil's economy may prove to be less than 9 percent of the US (over half smaller than originally projected). The dreams of tens of millions of Brazilians of a better future have been undermined.

In Russia, President Putin was able to reverse the economy's drastic fall in the 1990s and restore the growth trajectory in the 2000s, when Russian economic prospects were in line with the BRIC projections. As Stephen F. Cohen has argued, Washington initiated a "new Cold War" against Russia before the 2008 global crisis. Due to the continued softness in oil prices and particularly the still ongoing sanctions, the Russian economy could have been almost a fifth of the U.S. economy by 2025. Thanks to the new Cold War, the Russian economy could prove to be less than a tenth of the US GDP in the period. Thanks to the new Cold War, Russian economy could prove to be less than a tenth of the US GDP in the period.

Russian economy could increase by six to seven times, but it cannot deliver its full potential.

BRICs positioned to surpass G6 in early 2030s

The peak of the advanced economies' global power was in the 1980s and '90s. In 2000, the economies of the major advanced nations of the "West," as reflected by the G6, were still almost ten times bigger than the BRICs. But increasing debt, military overstretch and aging populations have hit hard the advanced West.

In 2010, the BRICs accounted for more than a third of the G6; and in the mid-2020s, that figure will be two-thirds of G6. The original Goldman Sachs projections suggested the BRICs would catch up with G6 by the late 2020s. Thanks to geopolitical interventions, the actual convergence is likely to take a 5-10 years longer

(Figure 2).

Of course, if the six G6 countries would be compared with the six largest emerging economies – not just the four BRICs – Indonesia and Mexico could be added to the group. In that case, convergence would happen a few years earlier.

As International Monetary Fund reported in 2007, the large emerging economies have fueled global economic prospects since the 2000s. Recent efforts to undermine their economic potential reflect efforts at destabilization and regime change, critics argue. In the absence of significant policy U-turn, collateral damage is spreading.

As US pivot to Asia is promoting competition rather than cooperation, the economic promise of the Asian Century is threatened. The Trump tariff wars have played a key role in the plunge of world trade, the fall of world investment and rising migration barriers, which have caused the number of the globally displaced to soar to more than 70 million; far higher than they were after World War II. At the same time, global economic prospects continue to diminish in a way that could push major advanced economies into secular stagnation earlier than anticipated.

Spearheading the world's largest emerging and developing economies, China, India, Brazil and Russia together pace global economic prospects. And as they go, so will the world economy.

The original commentary was released by China-US Focus on November 10, 2019.

Source: <https://www.eurasiareview.com/11112019-toward-a-diverging-brics-future-analysis/>

Why Trump’s Shapeshifting Syria Policy Worked—Until It Didn’t By Frances Z. Brown

Throughout U.S. President Donald Trump’s nearly three years in office, analysts have lamented the muddle of his foreign policy, from its seeming lack of a grand strategy to its abrupt changes of course in countries as disparate as Afghanistan, China, Iran, and North Korea.

When it came to Syria, however, these criticisms of Trump’s erratic foreign policy missed a central truth: until very recently, that ambiguity was useful. Intentional or not, lack of a coherent policy allowed the president to claim he was taking the fight to the Islamic State (ISIS) one day while promising to withdraw the United States from perpetual wars the next. It also allowed Trump’s national security team to carry on much as the previous president’s team did, prosecuting a campaign against ISIS in partnership with local forces and a multinational coalition. In truth, the administration’s Syria policy resembled a Rorschach inkblot—an ambiguous shape to which observers could ascribe their own preferred meaning.

But last month, the limitations of this approach were laid bare. On a phone call on October 6, Trump told Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan that he would remove U.S. troops along the Turkey-Syria border, according to an immediate readout from the White House. It was a startling reversal of U.S. policy, and in the days after the call senior staffers scrambled to walk it back. But by then it was already too late: Erdogan had taken Trump at his word and rolled troops across the border, gobbling up territory that had previously been watched over by U.S. forces and their Kurdish partners and threatening to erase five years of progress against ISIS. Unfriendly actors, it turned out, could capitalize on the White House’s mixed messages as well.

STRATEGIC AMBIGUITY

From the early days of his candidacy, Trump’s statements on Syria were contradictory. He promised to “bomb the shit out of ISIS” while at the same time proclaiming his intent to keep the United States “out of endless wars.” The

confusion only intensified after his inauguration. Trump's "America first" mantra caused most observers to presume that his administration would take a laissez-faire stance toward the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. But after Assad deployed chemical weapons in April 2017 and again in April 2018, Trump responded with air strikes on some of Assad's military installations. U.S. officials even spoke of a future for Syria beyond Assad. In early 2018, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson publicly called for a transition to a "post-Assad leadership" in Syria, and more recently, James Jeffrey, the U.S. special envoy for Syria, has stressed that Washington wants an "irreversible political transition" away from the Assad regime.

Ambiguity also shrouded the U.S. partnership with the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). In early 2017, the Trump team authorized additional support for these forces, judging them to be most viable partner in the campaign against ISIS. Yet it was never clear how long or to what extent the United States would maintain its partnership with the SDF. Some administration officials claimed that the collaboration was only "temporary, transactional, and tactical." Others underscored a more committed partnership, insisting that the United States was "not in a hurry to pull out" from the portion of Syria where it served as the SDF's guarantor.

Even the stated objective of U.S. involvement in Syria kept shifting. Whereas at first the focus was on defeating ISIS, by 2018 the administration had identified two additional goals in Syria: expelling Iranian-commanded forces and bringing about a political resolution of the conflict. Some Trump officials touted these objectives to the point of incantation, but Trump himself rarely mentioned them.

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

For two and a half years, this ambiguity allowed for multiple readings of Trump's Syria policy. The different readings, in turn, allowed Trump, his national security team, and even the United States' Kurdish partners to avoid acknowledging the fact that their policy preferences often conflicted.

One major disagreement hinged on whether the United States should keep a small complement of troops in Syria after it demolished ISIS' territorial caliphate in March. Many military and civilian experts argued, with reason, that Trump's goal

of an “enduring defeat of ISIS” required the continued presence of U.S. troops supporting the SDF in northern Syria. Should Washington want to pursue its two additional objectives in Syria—countering Iran and facilitating a political transition away from Assad—U.S. boots on the ground would give it vital leverage.

But in the fleeting moments when he focused on Syria, Trump seemed to view things differently. In April 2018, and again in December 2018, the president proclaimed that he wanted to pull all U.S. troops out of the country. He claimed that ISIS had been 100 percent defeated, and said nothing about the other two putative U.S. policy objectives.

After the president declared for the second time that he intended to withdraw U.S. troops from Syria, some senior U.S. officials, including Secretary of Defense James Mattis and Brett McGurk, the special envoy for Syria, resigned in protest. But in the ensuing months, the rest of the president’s national security team quietly sidestepped Trump’s directive, withdrawing only half of the 2,000 troops from the region and continuing to partner with the SDF.

Military operators simply kept quiet to avoid reminding Trump that they were active in Syria.

According to news reports, military operators simply kept quiet to avoid reminding Trump that they were still deployed and active in northern Syria. Official communications from the State Department and the United States Agency for International Development continued to cite the underlying objectives of defeating ISIS, minimizing Iranian influence, and guiding Syria toward a new political settlement. With an easily distracted president who didn’t sweat the details, U.S. officials were able to pursue a maximalist mission in Syria that was often at odds with Trump’s own stated desire to disentangle from the country.

But Trump also gained from this arrangement; he managed to have his cake and eat it, too. He boasted about his administration’s success in defeating ISIS while claiming credit for bringing U.S. troops home from overseas—both actions that were popular with the American electorate. Trump’s military response to Assad’s chemical weapons strikes gained him bipartisan plaudits and even praise from Syrian-American activists, some of whom hoped the move signaled a newly aggressive U.S. stance against Assad. Subsequent chemical weapons attacks by

Assad prompted no comparable U.S. response, but amid the chaos and noise of the Trump administration, who was keeping track?

The vagueness of the administration's Syria policy also presumably allowed Trump to enjoy cordial, affirmative conversations with select foreign counterparts. The White House has provided scant information about Trump's multiple conversations about Syria with Erdogan and Russian President Vladimir Putin. But those two leaders undoubtedly sought assurances that the United States would not pursue a long-term presence in the country alongside the SDF. Trump, who is famously averse to personal confrontation, most likely didn't tell them otherwise.

THINGS FALL APART

Policy ambiguity on Syria worked for a time, but it was destined to become a liability at some point. Since Trump's call with Erdogan and the subsequent Turkish invasion of Syria, the United States has lost considerable sway over events there. Those who have gained at the United States' expense, it bears mentioning, are actors who clearly articulated and then consistently pursued their objectives. Russia and Turkey have both gained territory and clout. The Assad regime has sailed into areas that it would have struggled to win militarily, and through it Iran has expanded its influence in the country. Even ISIS stands to gain from the new order in Syria, as the SDF pivots from guarding ISIS prisoners to fighting Turkey. The results of Trump's muddled Syria policy have been especially wrenching for the Kurdish-led forces and for the hundreds of thousands of civilians in the path of the Turkish offensive, which has already produced credible accusations of atrocities.

Policy ambiguity also makes it difficult to prepare contingency plans. Until very recently, the president's team avoided grappling with the uncomfortable fact that Trump was not committed to a long-standing U.S. military presence in Syria. As a result, the administration had not developed firm plans for a responsible U.S. withdrawal. There was no long-term strategy for securing ISIS prisoners or for facilitating a rapprochement between the SDF and the Assad regime under reasonable terms.

Despite the failure of its ambiguous Syria policy, the White House remains prone to fuzzy, impulsive, and contradictory thinking about the country. Trump reversed

course again in late October, commanding U.S. troops back into parts of northeast Syria to secure oil fields, ostensibly as part of the larger mission to defeat ISIS. As if on cue, his national security team now insists that “our three goals remain” unchanged in Syria, even as the “conditions have changed.” As before, the Rorschach inkblot might allow many parties to see what they want in Trump’s directive. But it is vital to recall that ambiguity worked until it didn’t. And when it didn’t, the consequences were grave: diminished U.S. leverage, a weakened counterterrorism campaign, frayed U.S. partnerships, and enormous human suffering. What the administration needs now is clarity on Syria.

Source: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/turkey/2019-11-13/why-trumps-shapeshifting-syria-policy-worked-until-it-didnt>

The US's South Asian Dilemma By Khalid Chandio

South Asia is one of the most sought regions by the world's sole superpower, the US. Stability in South Asia has often remained the cornerstone of the US foreign policy towards this part of the world. If one closely follows the current US policy towards South Asia, that too, specifically under President Trump, one would find Afghanistan and India continue to decide the fate of not only the entire region but also the future of Pakistan-US relationship. Since Afghanistan does not show any signs of stability shortly, so is the case with regional stability and Pakistan-US relations. The US seems to have decided to engage Pakistan via Afghanistan but the road ahead is slippery. Right from the beginning, the international community, especially the US, relied on swift short-gains in Afghanistan, which kept on ignoring the long-term future costs involving the country. The strategic community in Islamabad stands well aware of nature and scale of problems in Afghanistan and its spillover effects on Pakistan-US relations.

The US steers India, and India determines Pakistan's response. Likewise, Pakistan's navigation of its predicaments in such a situation makes the US-Pakistan balance in jeopardy. No matter what India claims about de-hyphenating the US relations in the Indo-Pakistan context and dealing bilaterally with the US, the Indo-US relationship would often be at the mercy of how geopolitical puzzle, about Afghanistan, Pakistan and China, evolves in the region. Pakistan would try everything to equalise concerning the Indian conventional superiority as Pakistan faces discrimination when it comes to South Asian security dynamics. The US is putting its strategic weight behind India, making Indian posture offensive in nature. India is part of America's global strategy and both Indian and American policymakers know this well. Using and exploiting geopolitical dynamics of the South Asian region along with that of China and Iran is a dangerous game for not only the US's interests but also for India as the region is marred by complexities.

The US is the only country that has the leverage to defuse tensions, especially between Pakistan and India

The Pakistan-US relationship saw and survived the most difficult times in the past. But, today, India has been trying to influence the US policy towards Pakistan and

the dotted past between Pakistan and the US and between India and Pakistan may serve as an accelerator. For example, during the “2+2” talks between US and India in September 2018, former Defence Secretary, James Mattis, in reply to a question on India’s plans to buy sophisticated air-defence system from Russia had said, “Freedom means that at times nations don’t agree with each other,” and “that doesn’t mean we can’t be partners. That doesn’t mean we don’t respect the sovereignty of those nations.” But when it comes to Pakistan, the US officials often have different meanings of respect, sovereignty, and freedom. Even, Pakistan’s economic engagement with China in the CPEC, does not go well with the US.

The US is the only country that has the leverage to defuse tensions, especially between Pakistan and India, and it did so successfully in the past. But, during the recent crisis between India and Pakistan, the US somehow remained oblivious of the dangers in the region. The US’s role as a sole superpower should not be seen as permitting, encouraging or rewarding one country in the region over others. Being the sole superpower, the US must realise South Asia is not India only, there are other important states too. Until and unless the US keeps on looking at Pakistan through Afghanistan and Indian prism, relations may not stabilise between the two. India has been making every effort in making the US realise that stronger and pro-US India is in the interests of the US. At the expense of the regional peace, a stronger India is neither in the interests of the US nor South Asia. The US must understand that an imperative to ensure stability is to set the basics right, i.e. lingering disputes, especially the Jammu and Kashmir should be resolved in the region.

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Source: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/501831/the-uss-south-asian-dilemma/>

Afghan Peace Process in Limbo By Talat Masood

It is indeed tragic that whereas all the three parties to the Afghan conflict — the Afghan government, the United States and the Taliban — seek peace, it has eluded the country for over 18 years. What is even more distressing is that the US and Taliban leadership after having completed the eight round of talks were close to signing a peace deal on September 20. The credible Washington Post reported that agreement had been reached and the US was to withdraw 5,000 troops from the Afghan soil. The US chief negotiator for Afghan reconciliation, Zalmay Khalilzad, was all buoyed up hoping that his efforts were coming to fruition. However, this was not to happen as President Trump cancelled the peace talks after the attack in Kabul that killed 11 people and an American soldier in September 2019. It was indeed wrong on the part of the Taliban to have stepped up the violence at a critical phase of negotiations as an assertive tactic. Not realising that for building bridges the antagonists need to tone down their rhetoric and control firepower.

The US impeachment proceedings against President Trump are a serious distraction that is preventing him from addressing the Afghanistan issue. He would probably like to delay the peace agreement for a while and keep the Taliban in suspense. Apparently the US military is not supportive of a hasty withdrawal and this may be added reason for the delay.

Moreover, the September 2019 Afghan presidential elections have been mired in controversy. The election commission's attempts to conduct a recount have been stopped by President Ashraf Ghani's rival Abdullah Abdullah who feels the election process is not credible. It is unfortunate that the trust level in state institutions is so low that it invariably leads to a political crisis. It is not the first time that national elections in Afghanistan have become controversial. Even in the previous elections, Abdullah cast serious doubts on the process and the Americans found a way to pacify him by creating the post of chief executive. In Pakistan or for that matter in several developing countries, casting doubts on the credibility of the election process by the losing side has become a norm. The current street protest by Maulana Fazlur Rehman is a demonstration of this phenomenon.

President Ghani, however, feels confident of having won the elections. This has given a sense of credibility to the Afghan president and he would like to have a role in the negotiations with the Taliban. The US too would like to involve President Ghani in the talks to put pressure and lessen the importance of the Taliban leadership. Branding the Afghan government as puppets by the Taliban leadership and refusing to engage with them would only result in perpetuating the conflict. The Afghan government may not be fully representative of the people but it has earned legitimacy through elections — however imperfect they may have been. After all, Afghanistan's experience with democracy is very new and was introduced in an extremely chaotic environment. Its other strong point is that it represents the more educated classes and is the link to the world.

For Pakistan, peace in Afghanistan is vital. No country would be that adversely affected as Pakistan if Afghanistan regrettably fails in its endeavours to find a peaceful solution to the ongoing civil war. It could result in a fresh influx of thousands of Afghan refugees, further increasing Pakistan's security and economic challenges. In view of the unpredictability of the Afghan situation and also to regulate traffic and movement of goods and services, the Pakistan Army has stepped up fencing of the Afghan border. This was also necessary for securing the constituents of erstwhile Fata and ensuring their peaceful development. These seven entities now stand merged with Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa.

The Afghan government initially was fiercely opposed to any kind of barrier and did create impediments but realising Pakistan is not going to give up, has since reconciled. Fencing the border has been a Herculean task in terms of logistics and security challenges and it would take another year or more to complete the project.

Most of Afghanistan's neighbours — China, Russia, Iran and Central Asian states — are interested in promoting peace in Afghanistan even if their priorities or the groups they are supporting may be different. Ideally, the peace process should have been Afghan-led and Afghan-owned as Pakistan's official stance has been. But in the prevailing circumstances that prospect seems unrealisable unless its neighbouring countries and the US support the effort.

China has been playing an important role in engaging with the Taliban. It is one country that has stayed away from past conflicts in Afghanistan and thus carries

more weight and influence. Russia too has been hosting the Taliban and other Afghan leaders in the quest to promote peace in Afghanistan.

Pakistan in the early stages has been earnest and active in facilitating the Taliban leadership to engage in dialogue with the US. The US, although recognises Pakistan's efforts, continues to harp on Pakistan needing to push the Taliban more. There are limits to Pakistan's influence on the Taliban. Having dominated the battlefield and exercising about 50 to 55% control over Afghanistan's territory, the Taliban are less amenable to outside influence.

Pakistan understandably has been wary of Indian influence on the Afghan government. Despite serious and sincere attempts by PM Imran Khan and the COAS to pursue policies that will bring peace and stability to Afghanistan, we have not been able to win over their confidence. The Afghan government's blame game continues and there are repeated violations of the border by Afghan security forces. Sadly, they appear to be influenced by the Indian narrative and its machinations. In order to develop mutual trust, Afghanistan and Pakistan will have to step up their engagement at official and unofficial levels and refrain from public accusations against each other.

As the chapter of American involvement in Afghanistan draws closer the burden of bringing peace rests essentially on the Afghans themselves. Pakistan and other neighbours can only do so much.

Published in The Express Tribune, November 20th, 2019.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2102780/6-afghan-peace-process-limbo/>

Has Russia Re-emerged as a Strategic Challenge to NATO States By M Alam Brohi

The Soviet Empire lasted almost 7 decades before collapsing under its weight. The multiple factors leading to its demise were anchored in the coercively dictatorial political system, raw exploitation of the natural resources of the Soviet Republics by the Kremlin and the highly bureaucratized Marxist economic system. Though the Soviet leadership was well conscious of the inherent political and economic weaknesses of their socialist empire, they remained embroiled in a multi-dimensional rivalry with the West with intensified political, economic, cultural and military contests in the various regions of the globe. As rightly put it by Ms. Margret Thatcher in her 'Path to Power', they lost this war across the board in 1990.

The architect of the political and economic reforms known as perestroika and Glasnost, Mikhail Gorbachev, admits that when he took-over power, the country reminded him of an overheated boiler with the lid tightly closed. His perestroika and glasnost aimed at creating a political and economic system based on the rule of law, openness, democracy and decentralization, autonomy of the Socialist Republics, economic liberalization and free entrepreneurship. All this meant renouncing the monopoly of the power held by the Communist Party in favour of political pluralism. Gorbachev believed 'so long as the authoritarian bureaucratic system was preserved, all attempts to improve political and economic conditions would, in the final analysis, prove futile'.

Mr. Gorbachev knew this central point of reforming a society and had the needed courage. But his colleagues did not have that spirit and that precise knowledge. He knew that the most difficult task of a leader is to change the attitude of people; to close the past and open the future. However, in his sincere attempt to introduce openness or glasnost in the highly centralized Soviet society, he failed to open the tightly closed lid of the overheated boiler, skillfully. He failed to grasp the consequences of opening this flood gate.

There was a tumult of political events beyond his imagination faster than the pace of perestroika and glasnost. This rush of events stirred by his over ambitious Socialist colleagues and encouraged by the Western leaders overtook the gradual change his perestroika and glasnost had envisioned to bring, creating trepidations

in the mini world from Oxus River to the Russian Steppes, Baltic Sea and the Central and Western Europe, and threatening to displace over 75 million ethnic populations from the former Soviet satellite states. In the words of Margret Thatcher, “The part of the world that emerged from the Soviet iron curtains had many of the features of the Europe of 1914 and 1939 – ethnic strife, contested borders, political extremism, nationalist passions and economic backwardness. There were many hands to fan this chaos. Gorbachev was alone trying to contain it. From 1985 to 1990, Mikhail Gorbachev worked hard to give a human face to the highly authoritative Soviet Union introducing political pluralism and democratization, and dismantling the bureaucratic Marxist structure of the economy liberalizing and restructuring it on free entrepreneurship, foreign partnership and market system. He was fully engaged with the world leaders to ease the cold war tensions in Europe and elsewhere. His reorientation of the Soviet foreign policy from hostility to cooperation between the two Socialist and Capitalist camps – was well received by the USA and the Western leaders, albeit with some lingering signs of distrust in the moves and pledges of the new Soviet leadership. He closely interacted with his peers in Europe and the USA to bridge this gulf of mistrust he inherited from the past years of competition and tension.

The post-Soviet Union conditions in the Russian Federation reflected a painfully long and deep political crisis – a steep economic fall, a weak and a directionless leadership

The evolving cooperation between the two camps was quite perceptible on the crisis of Afghanistan, the Middle East and the issue of disarmament which aimed at reducing by 50% the conventional forces and correcting imbalance in the offensive weapons, strategic arsenal and renouncing the manufacture of biological weapons. His talks on the liberalization of trade and investment with the USA had also progressed well. Finally, he was even able to sign treaties on disarmament and trade and investment with the US in 1990. His reoriented foreign and security policies combined with the domestic political and economic reforms would have taken the Soviet Union in a diametrically different direction and we would have still lived in a bipolar world with two super powers countervailing each other. This could not happen not because of his political and strategic mistakes but due mainly to the ambitions of his power hungry colleagues including Boris Yeltsin.

The post-Soviet Union conditions in the Russian Federation reflected a painfully long and deep political crisis – a steep economic fall, a weak and a directionless leadership. Boris Yeltsin found himself quite incapable of dealing with the unfolding events. Gorbachev had set in motion a trail of political freedom and economic liberalization. It was impossible to reverse the process. Boris Yeltsin and his colleagues being product of the authoritative Soviet system, could not measure up to the growing public hunger for democratic and economic reforms. The old guards in the security and bureaucratic apparatus were reluctant to overcome their deep-seated addiction to authoritative rule. There was a constant conflict between the forces of reform and the old system. The country slipped from one political crisis to another.

The economy was taken over by mafia-like groups siphoning the wealth of the country and transferring their loot to safe financial havens. The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), a brainchild of Boris Yeltsin and his Ukrainian and Belarusian colleagues replacing the Gorbachev's proposition for Union of Sovereign States could not take off. On the contrary, the Russian Federation came to grapple with a growing threat of further territorial dismemberment posed by the violent secessionist movements of the Muslim Republics of Chechnya and Dagestan. The Muslims constitute 15% of the Russian population of 142 million. The country struggled with these political, economic and security problems for almost one decade. The second tenure of the sick and alcoholic Boris Yeltsin was a disaster.

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Source: <https://dailymtimes.com.pk/503140/has-russia-re-emerged-as-a-strategic-challenge-to-nato-states-part-ii/>

Iran and the Middle East Conundrum By **Shahid Javed Burki**

What happens in the Middle East would have direct consequences for Pakistan. For analytical purposes we should divide the region into three parts: the Arab region and the countries to its east that include, in addition to Afghanistan, three of the largest nations in the Muslim world — Pakistan, Iran and Turkey. The third part is made up of the Central Asian nations that were once part of the Soviet Union. Having been given independence in 1991, these five nations are searching for their identity and are also seeking to connect themselves with the parts of the world that have been out of reach for them. It is in this context that we should view the arrival of China in the region. Its Belt and Road Initiative, the BRI, is designed in part to provide connectivity to the landlocked countries in Central Asia.

There are a number of developments — some of them recent and some going back many decades — that continue to unsettle the Middle East. Some of these are political, some demographic and some are the result of the budding large-power rivalry. I will begin with a discussion of the last. For close to half a century after the end of the Second World War, the intense competition between the United States and Soviet Union resulted in the Cold War. The two superpowers worked hard to increase the geographic space in their respective domains. The Middle East was a contested area and for some time Egypt, the Arab world's largest country in terms of population, sided with the. In 1979, with the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union, the Cold War became hot in a limited sense. However, when Moscow was forced out of Afghanistan it led to a chain of events that culminated with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the demise of communism in Europe. With the communist ideology gone, Western-style liberal democracy emerged as the preferred system of governance.

The United States was now the dominant power. Its domination was challenged in the early 2000s not by a state but by a series of stateless operators starting with Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda. The United States invasion of Afghanistan in December 2001 led to the weakening of the group. However, when Washington followed up on this operation with another military intervention — this time in Iraq — it laid the ground for the emergence of the Islamic State (IS). The West — in particular the United States — has not found a way of tackling this phenomenon.

The rise of these Islamic groups has led to the re-engagement of Russia in the Middle East with Moscow taking advantage of both the semi-withdrawal of the United States from the region and the regrouping of local powers in the area.

Pakistan would be affected by these mostly adverse global developments in several different ways. Most important of these developments was the withdrawal of the United States as a supporter of democracy and human rights around the globe. Donald Trump did not hide his admiration for strong, authoritarian leaders. He felt comfortable in the company of rulers such as Erdogan of Turkey, Sisi of Egypt, Muhammad bin Salman of Saudi Arabia and Narendra Modi of India.

Iran is now in the eye of a storm that is the result of the stiff sanctions imposed by the Trump administration. Washington had withdrawn from the 2015 nuclear deal the Obama administration had negotiated and was signed by all major world powers. The reason for the withdrawal was the stiff opposition by Israel that regarded the agreement not going far enough. Israelis wanted Iran to be pushed back not only from the programme to develop a nuclear bomb but also to give up the development of missiles. The beefed-up sanctions have caused hardship for the Iranian people. When in mid-November Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's Supreme Leader, supported a gas price increase, it spurred three days of protests. At least 12 people died. More than 1,000 were arrested and the government imposed an almost complete nationwide internet blackout on November 17. This was one of its most draconian attempts to cut off Iranians from each other and the rest of the world. In the past one month Iran had faced a fierce backlash in regional countries such as Lebanon and Iraq where protesters called for ending Iran's outsized influence in their domestic affairs.

Both the United States and Israel were troubled by the Iranian support of militias in the Middle East. On November 19, 2019 The New York Times and The Intercept, published a long story — one of the longest carried by the former in recent months — based on leaked files that told the story of how the Iranian intelligence agencies had penetrated Iraq especially after the United States invaded the country in 2003. The US also maintained a strong intelligence presence in the country. There was a tacit agreement between Iran and the United States, that the person given the seat of power as the prime minister in Baghdad would have the approval of both countries. The current holder of the job, Adil Abdul Mahdi, was acceptable to both.

In Iraq, Lebanon and Syria, which Iran considers crucial for its national security, the country's Revolutionary Guards — and in particular its elite Quds Force led by General Qasim Suleimani — determines Iran's policies. In gaining influence in Iraq, the Iranians relied on the network created by the US Central Intelligence Agency, the CIA. Tehran also made an attempt to recruit a spy inside the State Department. "In interviews, Iranian officials acknowledged that Iran viewed surveillance activity in Iraq after the United States invasion critical to its survival and national security," wrote the authors of the long story. President George W Bush had declared Iran to be part of an "axis of evil" and Iranian leaders believed Tehran would be next on Washington's list of regime change.

With shared faith and tribal affiliations that span a porous border, Iran has long been a major presence in Southern Iraq. Its main worry is the possibility of Iraq falling apart, from breeding Sunni militants on the Iranian border; from descending into sectarian warfare that might make Shias the targets of violence; and from spinning off an independent Kurdistan that would threaten regional stability and Iranian territorial integrity.

The way the Iranian situation evolves would matter not only for the entire Middle Eastern region but also for Pakistan. The recent visit by the Pakistani Army Chief to Tehran is an indication that policymakers in both Rawalpindi and Islamabad are watching the developing situation.

Published in The Express Tribune, November 25th, 2019.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2105872/6-iran-middle-east-conundrum/>

The Future Of Values In The EU Global Strategy 2020 – Analysis By Maryna Rabinovych and Zuzana Reptova

The revised version of the EU Global Strategy is to be released by the next High Representative, Josep Borrell. What potential is there for introducing a new focus on fundamental values in order to boost the EU's global role at a time of crisis for the international liberal order?

In June 2019 the EU marked the third anniversary of the EU Global Strategy (EUGS), adopted as a response both to the increasingly complex, contested and conflict-prone external environment and to internal divisions that threaten the coherence of the EU's external action. Compared with the initial 2003 European Security Strategy (ESS), the EUGS's distinctive features encompass an explicit recourse to the EU's self-interest and the downscaling of the transformative ambitions of the EU's foreign policy. As opposed to the ESS, the EUGS has been 'more conscious of the limits, imposed by our own capabilities and by others' intractability', and more specific about the EU's strategic priorities ('Security and Defence', 'Building State and Societal Resilience', 'Integrated Approach to Conflicts and Crises', 'Cooperative Regional Orders', 'A Rules-Based Governance' and 'Public Diplomacy'). According to the recent report on the implementation of the EUGS, a sharp focus on the EU's vital interests and strategic priorities, listed above, helped the Union achieve considerable progress in a number of foreign policy domains, ranging from defence to countering external crises. Furthermore, as exemplified by the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), the launch of the EUGS has also been conducive to foreign and security policy integration among the Member States. However, to further promote a 'stronger Europe in a fragile world', in light of new intra-EU and external developments, Josep Borrell, the new HR/VP, will have to review the EUGS.

We argue that the EUGS 2020 would benefit from a new emphasis on values and a more open and elaborate position on 'principled pragmatism' (a concept introduced by the EUGS to 'reconcile' the EU's self-interest and its normative commitments). To substantiate this argument, we follow several steps. First, we analyse the extent to which the EUGS has offered a 'paradigm change' with regard

to the EU's external value-promotion and the interplay between values and self-interest. Next, we look at the demand for a more normative EU, as expressed both within and outside the Union, with regard to the different domains of its external action. Finally, we explain how the renewed emphasis on values and a clearly shaped interplay between fundamental values and self-interest can boost the EU's role as a global player against the background of a crisis of the international liberal order.

Analysis

(1) The EUGS 2016: 'paradigm change' with a 'pinch of compromise'

Back in 2003 the European Security Strategy (ESS) was quite optimistic about the global 'progressive spread of the rule of law and democracy', enabling authoritarian regimes to transform into 'secure, stable and dynamic democracies'. Over a decade later, the EU Global Strategy (EUGS), in sharp contrast, pointed to the increasing complexity and strife in the international environment, and has been widely regarded as embodying the 'paradigm change' in the worldview behind the EU's foreign policy. The 2016 EUGS's express reference to self-interest and the emphasis on 'security and defence' as the EU's top priority testify to the Union's primary concern about its ontological security rather than the external projection of its values. A similar argument can be made concerning the EUGS's novel concept of resilience that stresses the local ownership of state-building and dealing with risks, rather than the virtue of transplanting European values into a foreign context. The ultimate aim of external action seems to have shifted from building an area of shared stability and prosperity based on common values ('a safer Europe in a better world') towards security through pragmatic interconnection, specifically in areas of interest to EU domestic security ('EU Global Strategy starts at home'). Furthermore, both the substance of the EUGS's strategic priorities and the wording of the achievements in the 2019 Report by Federica Mogherini show that the EU is, first and foremost, seeking a new level of ambition in the security and defence domains, as well as the promotion of multilateralism to counter global fragmentation and strife. In effect, the EUGS and the recent progress report portray democracy, the rule of law and human rights not as values in themselves but as components of the EU's peace-, resilience- and multilateralism-building agenda.

As a slight compromise, there is a hint of an idea of 'principled pragmatism', ie, of finding some middle ground between self-interest and values. Acknowledging that 'principled pragmatism' is important to embrace different axiological 'pathways,

recipes and models', Special Advisor to HR/VP Nathalie Tocci pointed to 'international law and its underlying norms' as a benchmark for deciding what is acceptable for the EU. Elaborating on the resilience of states and societies in the Middle East, Mogherini addressed these priorities as complementary and non-substitutive in relation to democracy, human rights, the rule of law and sustainable development. Moreover, it was emphasised within the the 2019 Report that resilience should not mean 'supporting stability by condoning authoritarianism'. Nonetheless, the Report did not shed light on whether and how the EU applied 'principled pragmatism' in practice, or on the role of international law in 'reconciling' the EU's self-interest and values, predominantly focusing on the EUGS's value for the security of the Union and its citizens.

(2) The 'why': why a new emphasis on values in the EUGS 2020?

(2.1) The demand for a more normative EU

Does such a focus on self-interest and the securitisation of the EU's foreign policy mean that values lose their importance? The answer should most assuredly be 'no', since the demand for a more normative Union exists both internally and outside the EU. Whilst fearing uncontrolled migration and terrorism, the people of the EU continue considering 'the EU's respect for democracy, human rights and the rule of law' one of the Union's key assets. Being confident that the EU, as a democratic actor, cannot ignore their yearning for stronger protection and border controls, EU citizens, nonetheless, view improving the situation in countries from which migrants come as a key long-term priority to be pursued by the EU. Interestingly enough, roughly a third of EU citizens distinguish democracy and human rights as the essentials of development cooperation. A slightly higher percentage of citizens underline that development cooperation is a 'moral obligation' for the EU, thus making visible the transpiring the idea of the EU as a 'force for good'. Contrary to the ever-louder populist claims, EU-wide opinion polls reveal that citizens tend to support a 'double-headed' and, whenever possible, non-contradictory strategy that allows the EU to be both a strong security provider and a normative player.

Externally, the polycentric global order inevitably becomes an arena of normative contestation and diversity that threatens to evolve into a normative chaos. Against the background of the US abstention from global liberal leadership (or even US action against the order it shaped and upheld), the EU has acquired a valuable chance to boost its role as a peaceful manager of normative diversity at its

commencement. The EU's commitment to multilateralism was emphasised in the EUGS: as explained in more detail in the 2019 Report, such a commitment embraces support for the reform of multilateral institutions, investing in multilateral initiatives and implementing them. This is, however, not enough for the EU to engage in the ambitious mediation and management efforts required to deal with the normative diversity phenomenon. Instead, to be heard, EU action requires three components. First, as already partly implied in the interpretation of 'principled pragmatism' by Nathalie Tocci, it is important for the EU to position itself as a player, aware of the fact that contemporary multilateral cooperation requires the recognition of normative diversity, tolerance of divergent views and outstanding abilities to compromise and negotiate. Secondly, the EU should simultaneously continue positioning itself as a 'force for good', ie, a principled actor that, whilst becoming more reflective of surrounding normative diversity, observes its values. Such a stance inevitably includes making sure that one's own fundamental values are respected at home, within the Union. Thirdly, to be increasingly recognised as both a non-threatening 'force for good' and an actor with an outstanding capability to deal with normative diversity, the EU needs more clarity as regards the interplay of its values and interests, and the strategies to deal with the values-interests dilemma. In other words, a more pronounced response is needed to discourses, framing self-interest and values in 'either-or' terms. This can best be conceived at the level of specific contexts and issues rather than in grand abstractions.

(2.2) The EU still uses normative foreign policy instruments

Apart from the people's demand for a more normative EU, an additional reason to be more open about the external projection of the EU's values is its continued application of a normative power's toolbox. Beyond the security and defence domain, one would be surprised to see that the EU actually continues using foreign policy instruments that remain to a great extent connected to its liberal value-oriented agenda, despite the alleged 'paradigm change' in the EUGS. The EU's strategic documents change the emphasis but often use old forms of action. For instance, the EU uses its ambitious market integration and rules-convergence agenda to promote non-trade-related goals such as labour and social rights (or, in terms of Ian Manners' classical normative power concept, uses the 'transference' pathway of value-promotion). So far, it is difficult to argue that the EU has become more effective in enforcing the respective obligations of partner countries, whilst lacking effective enforcement instruments, as exemplified by the EU-South Korea ongoing consultations on labour issues. Nevertheless, according to the 2017 and

2018 non-papers by the European Commission services, the EU will facilitate the development of new legal instruments to achieve a better enforcement of non-trade-related obligations in its FTAs with third countries. Furthermore, the EU continues putting much effort into the support of good governance-oriented reforms in partner countries (eg, multi-aspect public administration reforms with an emphasis on transparency and accountability), as exemplified by the case of the ‘associated’ Eastern Neighbourhood. Last but not least, closely linked to the EU’s democracy, human rights and rule of law promotion agenda, civil society support remains one of the Union’s key strategies to influence internal affairs abroad. For example, the EU’s outreach and involvement with local civil society actors in the European Neighbourhood had a scope that was unprecedented by any other actor in development cooperation.

(2.3) Some areas of EU external action with a stronger emphasis on values

This statement can be, inter alia, exemplified by the EU’s trade and development policies. Whilst aspiring to ‘tackle new economic realities’ and being linked to the EU’s strategic interests, the 2015 Commission’s Communication ‘Trade for All. Towards a More Responsive Trade and Investment Policy’ devotes particular attention to the promotion of sustainable development, human rights, good governance and countering corruption through free trade agreements. In line with a commitment to democracy and human rights, the Commission’s overall discourse highlights ambitions in shaping a more transparent, inclusive and responsive trade and investment policy. That would, in particular, include a stronger voice for the Member States, the European Parliament and civil society, and enhance consumer protection via regulatory cooperation.

In line with the 2030 Agenda –an ambitious consensus-based global development agenda–, the EU also stressed the links between its efforts, aimed at sustainable development, and the promotion of values, such as peace, the rule of law and human rights. Notably, before the introduction of the Agenda-based new European Consensus on Development in 2017, the EU’s value-promotion activities tended to be separate from its development cooperation efforts.

(3) The outlook and the ‘how’: what are the pathways to strengthening the values dimension of the EUGS 2020?

The 2016 EU Global Strategy has been the HR/VP’s valuable effort to find a ‘middle ground between overambitious liberal peacebuilding and under-ambitious

stability'. It evidently brought about numerous tangible results, ranging from the launch of the Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC) and the European Defence Fund to the implementation of ambitious assistance programmes for Syria and Ukraine. Nonetheless, having introduced an ambitious 'principled pragmatism' concept, the EUGS 2016 and a number of related reports did not shed light on the interplay between the EU's self-interest, its self-portrayal as a normative global actor and the role of normativity in pursuing its interests. At the same time, as explained above, values still matter (and, to our mind, should matter even more) for at least three interconnected reasons. First, whilst demanding a more inward-looking and secure Europe, EU citizens also wish it to be 'good', including its commitment to poverty eradication and peace-building. Secondly, boosting the EU's global role in the era of troubled multilateralism requires not just a pragmatic approach to reforms and investments but being recognised by others both as a legitimate 'force for good' in its own terms and an actor, respecting normative diversity and capable of managing it. Thirdly, despite declaring an emphasis on self-interest, the EU de facto uses the toolkit of a normative power and even strengthens its identity as a value-promoter in certain domains of its external action, with this development being virtually absent from the shaping of the EUGS 2016 and the 2019 Report.

Hence, it is a must for the EUGS 2020 to bring values back to play and adhere to them in a consistent manner, whilst aspiring to strengthen the EU's global role. We suggest four key steps for the new HR/VP to introduce an operational emphasis on values in the EUGS 2020: (1) having a clear commitment to being a 'force for good'; (2) being a manager and mediator of normative diversity; (3) a more nuanced explanation of what 'principled pragmatism' means; and (4) a 'nexus' approach to external action and policy coherence.

(3.1) A clear commitment to being a 'force for good'

Foremost, as the EUGS 2016 generated much uncertainty about the EU's intention to engage in 'Realpolitik', we recommend that the EUGS 2020 introduce a clear commitment for the EU to act as a 'force for good' on the international arena. Such a commitment shall not, however, preclude the EU's pursuit of self-interest via its foreign policy or, at the other extreme, express itself as a narcissistic power, positioning its values as an absolute for others. Instead, given the global trend towards the contesting of norms and the competition of ideas among different powers, the EU's normative commitment is to be initially marked by the

components of reflection and the readiness to consider and accept the values and views of others. Here, reflection can be defined as an entity's ability to critically re-think its ideas and actions over time, and acknowledge the aspects of policies that could have been implemented in a better, more ethical or more cohesive way. In turn, the acceptance of others' values can serve as a foundation for the EU's chance to become a mediator/manager of normative diversity under the complex settings of modern multilateralism, as mentioned earlier and discussed later on.

(3.2) A manager and mediator of normative diversity

Hence, positioning itself as a 'force for good' and a key proponent of the rules-based multilateral order, the EU has a chance of using its image and experience of managing a diversity of norms and views among Member States to mature as a global norms' diversity manager. An international actor's profound expertise in a particular field of international policy tends to benefit its power in the international arena, as repeatedly proved in the literature on 'middle powers'. Regardless of the EU's undoubted expertise in many aspects of international relations (eg, development cooperation and humanitarian aid), the relative novelty and sensitivity of the phenomenon of contesting norms raises the value of an expertise in managing normative diversity. In this respect, the EUGS 2020 should make a particular effort to bring together the EU's commitments to the diversity of views and norms, and its management, on the one hand, and the rules-based international order, on the other. Moreover, to gain respect as a power, capable of managing normative diversity, the EU should introduce a more straightforward and detailed explanation of its 'principled pragmatism' approach to reconciling values and self-interest.

(3.3) A more nuanced explanation of what 'principled pragmatism' means

'Principled pragmatism' can beyond doubt be considered the most controversial concept introduced by the EUGS 2016. There have so far been no explanations on the practical application of 'principled pragmatism' apart from the suggestion mentioned above of using international law as a benchmark to reconcile 'pragmatism' and principles, as expressed by the Special Advisor to the current HR/VP Natalie Tocci. In turn, a more nuanced and, possibly, a more legalistic approach to 'principled pragmatism' (eg, designed in the spirit of the Court of Justice's strategy to balance individual and community interest) would contribute to the EU being perceived as a normative power, capable of solving complex dilemmas due to its strategically elaborate EUGS 2020.

(3.4) A 'nexus' approach to external action and policy coherence

One of the trends that shapes modern policy-making on both the regional and international levels is the closer interconnectedness between issue areas, increasingly referred to as a 'nexus' approach. The application of the 'nexus' approach can best be exemplified by the 2030 Agenda and the new European Consensus on Development, both of which underline the importance of detecting trade-offs and uncovering synergies between different issue areas and developing coherent policies to consider them. The proliferation of the 'nexus' philosophy behind the policy-making processes has led to values gradually 'seeping' into a variety of EU external policies, such as trade, regulatory cooperation and development. Against this background and the criticism of the EU as a normative hegemon, we suggest that the EUGS 2020 strategise the normative effects of the entire spectrum of its external policies, thus further enhancing the coherence of its external policies.

Conclusions

Ultimately, the combination of the four steps outlined above would help the EUGS 2020 bring values back to play and strengthen the EU's image of a normative power that is, nonetheless, not hegemonic, but inclined to accept normative differences and reflect on its own action.

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Source: <https://www.eurasiareview.com/23112019-the-future-of-values-in-the-eu-global-strategy-2020-analysis/>

Shaping Foreign Policies – A Historical Perspective By Rashid A Mughal

FRANKLIN Roosevelt, the 32nd President of USA (1933-45) described the American foreign policy in following words “We must do more than end wars. We must end the beginnings of all wars. I am not interested in perpetuating the reckless foolishness of the military-industrial-complex, and as President I will not. With the establishment of a United States Department of Peace, I will make peace-building my highest priority for just that reason. I will transform the culture of the State Department, re-aligning its mission with what I see to be the most important items on a peace-building agenda: diplomacy, mediation, support for democratic institutions and expansion of economic opportunities for women, providing educational opportunities for children, reducing violence against women, and ameliorating unnecessary human suffering. For when those factors are present, the statistical incidence of peace increases and conflict decreases. In a Williamson Administration, desperate people will be seen as a national security risk. For desperate people are more vulnerable to ideological capture by genuinely psychotic forces. Those kinds of things are not a matter of corporate profits, but they can well become a matter of life or death for millions of people”. Beautiful description indeed. FDR has been a towering figure in US history because of his statesmanship, vision, diplomacy and above all embracing peace as his number one priority and denouncing wars.

What we are witnessing today is completely opposite to the policy framework and parameters visualized by those leaders. This is a time in history unlike any other. A post-WW2 order that was built with great care and which mainly held for most of the last 75 years, now appears to be eroding. Heroic attempts are being made to shore it up, particularly in the light of the present American President’s failure to appreciate the role of a European Alliance in maintaining such an order.

But be that as it may, and for whatever reasons, the templates have shifted underneath our feet and nothing is at all the way it was.

The 20th Century is no more, and with it have gone not only the conditions that defined it but the attitudes that prevailed within it. A sophisticated observer of the world today is dealing with a much different set of questions than that which leaders in the last half of that Century faced. Leaders then were trying to discern what kind of world they wanted to create; leaders today must discern what kind of world will be habitable and survivable in another 50 to a 100 years.

20th Century leaders had nuclear bombs yes, but not many of them-while leaders today are dealing with a plethora of nuclear bombs, and criminals around the world who are working around the clock to get one into their hands.

Both of those things represent historically different kinds of challenges. They also bring with them the necessity that we find new ways of dealing with those challenges, a new kind of problem-solving as different from 20th century problem-solving as are the problems themselves .Power in the 20th Century, and thus problem-solving in the 20th Century, was primarily an expression of brute force. In the 21st Century, it is not brute force that will save us, but rather soul force. It will not be our ability to kill one another but rather our ability to relate to one another that will save our species from extinction. In the words of Martin Luther King Jr., “We must learn to live together as brothers or perish together as fools.”

According to Marianne Williamson, an author of 12 books, “in the 21st Century, the people who are the most dangerous to the world order are those who have stripped the foreign policy of the United States of any real commitment to moral values. Since WW2, nothing has been a more stabilizing factor in world affairs than that. With notable exceptions, America at least tried to be the good guy. God knows we often failed – even spectacularly – yet until very recently people still gave us high marks for at least trying. There was always a sense that we were prone to goodness and would somehow get back to it. Yet not any more. In one of the most tragic reversals of the modern era, America has become known more for flirting with imperialism than for championing democracy, and less a champion of peace than a champion of war”.

She goes on to say, “one can only imagine what Dwight Eisenhower would be thinking today. His warning us of the “military-industrial complex” seemed, at the very least, not to have stuck. And for those of us who bemoan the role of the military-industrial-complex in turning our national defense strategy into a multi-billion-dollar piggy bank for the defense industry more than a force for democracy and peace around the world, another president’s injunction is equally relevant.”

The basic principle on which foreign policies are made these days is the element of exigency. New friends are made and old one’s are sometimes ditched due to exigencies. Often foreign policies are dictated by superpowers and the weaker and poor countries which relay on aid from those super powers have no option but to take the dictation.

Presently Northeast Asia is encountering turbulences. The present US President is running the foreign policy via twitter leaving the State Department to do the damage control. China and Japan are still grappling with historical and territorial disputes. The relationship between China and South Korea is chilled over the deployment of Terminal High Attitude Area Defence System. The North Korean nuclear issue is mired in a deadlock. The once manageable geopolitical situation seems quite vulnerable in the face of external influences.

But, as more people desire to have better life in the times of globalization and regional integration, positive signs are emerging in relationship between China and its neighbours. If China, Japan and South Korea can speed up negotiations on the trilateral Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and finalize it in the near future, it will help form strong regional community in Northeast Asia.

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Source: <https://pakobserver.net/shaping-foreign-policies-a-historical-perspective/>

Closer To Peace? | Editorial

United States President Donald Trump's surprise trip to Afghanistan for Thanksgiving may have been an unexpected treat for the American troops stationed there, but for regional stakeholders it had been long overdue. Months away from the end of his first term, the US President has yet to fulfill his most prominent foreign policy agenda; bringing an end to the nearly two decade long military intervention in Afghanistan.

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This is not for a lack of trying. US officials immediately opened communication channels with the Taliban when Trump came to the White House. However, his bellicose, take it or leave it style of negotiation has further weakened the already weak US bargaining position. The Taliban have been fighting for 18 years, and by their estimation, they are finally starting to change the tide of the conflict in their favor. The battle-hardened militant in the mountains can eke out another two years the way they have for so long; it is the US military that is desperate to find an end to this expensive and dangerous invasion.

As such it is high time that it realizes that it cannot indulge in brinkmanship considering its precarious position.

Donald Trump's visit seems to indicate that he, and the US administration, has finally arrived at the same conclusion. His tone was much more conciliatory and his assurance to the assembled troops that a peace deal is imminent indicates that trust building measures – such as the mutual release of held prisoners – have borne fruit.

It is hoped that US President sticks to his current stance this time. Pakistan and regional stakeholders – such as China, Iran and Russia – for their part should facilitate this renewed peace initiative with full vigor. Foreign policy concerns aside, on a humane level, it is time that this war be bought to an end and two decades of devastation can be reversed.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/30-Nov-2019/closer-to-peace>