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Table of Contents

PAKISTAN

PAKISTAN AFTER US-INDIA TALKS EDITORIAL.....	5
ANALYSING IS IN PAK-AFGHAN REGION BY FAISAL RAJA	7
THE NSG & PAKISTAN’S MEMBERSHIP BID BY SENATOR SEHAR KAMRAN	10
PAKISTAN DEVELOPING MARITIME DOCTRINE.....	13
THE STRUGGLE FOR KASHMIR BY PROF. KHURSHEED AHMAD	15
THE IMPENDING WATER CRISIS BY SIRAJ SHAWA	18
PAKISTAN’S LARGE STUNTED POPULATION BY SHAHID JAVED BURKI	20
STRENGTHENING PAK-RUSSIA TIES HINT AT POLICY SHIFT ACROSS SOUTH ASIA BY SHAMSHAD MANGAT	22
PAKISTAN, INDIA AND KASHMIR EDITORIAL.....	24
PAKISTAN WON’T LIMIT NUCLEAR PROGRAMME UNILATERALLY: ENVOY	26
FLASHPOINT KASHMIR AND UN EFFORTS EDITORIAL.....	29
NEEDED: A FOREIGN POLICY BY WAJID SHAMSUL HASAN’	31
US-INDIA PACT SHOULDN’T DISTURB STRATEGIC BALANCE IN S. ASIA: FO	34
THE PAKISTAN-INDIA WATER THREAT EDITORIAL	36
ACHIEVING GENDER EQUALITY BY MUHAMMAD SHAHID RAFIQUE.....	38

WORLD

A WORLD FREE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS EDITORIAL.....	40
MAKE AMERICA HATE AGAIN! BY ANJUM NIAZ	42
DYNAMICS OF INDO-US MILITARY COOPERATION BY DR HASAN ASKARI RIZVI	44
US, RUSSIA FAIL TO REACH SYRIA DEAL.....	47
ANALYSING US-CHINA RELATIONS BY SHAHID M AMIN.....	49
AN ERA OF OPPORTUNITY BY BAN KI-MOON	52
WORLD REFUGEE PROBLEM BY SHAHID JAVED BURKI.....	54
CLIMATE CHANGE AND POVERTY REDUCTION BY NASIR ALI PANHWAR.....	56
COLD WAR IS OVER. CYBER WAR HAS BEGUN BY DAVID IGNATIUS.....	58
OBAMA AND AFGHANISTAN BY TOUQIR HUSSAIN	60
THE NUKES ARE SAFE EDITORIAL	63

UNIQUE US PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION BY TALAT MASOOD 65

ECONOMY

MONETARY POLICY | EDITORIAL 68

BARRIERS TO WOMEN’S ECONOMIC INPUT | EDITORIAL 69

IRAN WANTS TO BE PART OF CPEC: ROUHANI BY SALIM BOKHARI 70

THE NEW GLOBAL GAME BY M ZIAUDDIN..... 73

PAKISTAN’S TAXATION CRISIS | EDITORIAL 75

THE ROAD TO KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY BY NAVEED IFTIKHAR..... 77

CPEC SECURITY | EDITORIAL..... 80

THE NFC AWARD BY MUHAMMAD SHAHID RAFIQUE & NAZIA ABDUL GHAFFAR..... 81

EDUCATION

EDUCATION’S MISSING PRIORITIES BY RABEA MALIK 83

EDUCATION EMBEZZLEMENT | EDITORIAL..... 86

DILEMMA OF EDUCATION IN PAKISTAN BY SALMAN ALI 87

MISSED EDUCATION TARGETS | EDITORIAL 90

THE ABYSMAL STATE OF PUBLIC EDUCATION | EDITORIAL..... 91

PAKISTAN

PAKISTAN AFTER US-INDIA TALKS | EDITORIAL

US support of Indian concerns of cross-border terrorism and its reiteration to Pakistan to “do more” with regard to terrorists using Pakistani soil to perpetrate attacks abroad raised quite a few alarm bells in Islamabad. All of this was said during the meeting between US Secretary of State John Kerry and Indian External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj on Tuesday as the two countries move closer together and extend cooperation on a number of things including support for India’s civil nuclear programme, and increasing defence ties to check China’s expanding role in the region. While Pakistan has cause for concern at the growing closeness between India and US, there is very little that Pakistan can do to actually stop this. India is a much bigger country than Pakistan with an immensely large market and a growing economy, which makes it far better placed to serve US interests in the region than Pakistan. However, the problem in Pakistan is to view this changing regional dynamic through the lens of a zero sum game. Not only does this engender unlikely conspiracy theories of India and US scheming together to destabilise Pakistan, but it has also led to falsely believing that hard alliances would serve to counter this, an approach that risks plunging Pakistan into international isolation.

In essence, all that was said between Kerry and Swaraj is nothing new for Pakistan. The US has long been asking Pakistan to do more and India has always alleged Pakistani involvement in cross-border terrorism. Unfortunately, India has taken advantage of its image of being a liberal democracy to constantly demonise Pakistan at the international stage. Its politics have been petty to say the least, and the tit-for-tat approach of India has effectively ruled out meaningful dialogue to take place between the two countries. Pakistan’s raising of the Kashmir issue at the international level has irked India, and it is now using its diplomatic muscle to isolate Pakistan. It is very unfortunate that Swaraj has ruled out talks with Pakistan until Pakistan “takes steps on the Patankhot terror attacks.” It seems lost on the Indian external affairs minister that only dialogue can break the present atmosphere of mutual hostilities and misgivings between Pakistan and India, and create the conditions necessary for the initiation of such measures.

However, Pakistan needs to engage in introspection and ponder the reasons behind its stigmatisation at the international level. It is very unfortunate that when India talks about cross-border terrorism, it can talk about the freedom with which Hafiz Saeed can issue

statements from within Pakistan and use that as proof of Pakistani state's reluctance to act against non-state actors who perpetrate terrorism beyond its border. Pakistan is in dire need of rebranding itself, and for this to happen it cannot neglect the work that needs to be done within its borders. Terrorism has become a transnational phenomenon, and Pakistan knows that those terrorists who perpetrate attacks within it have linkages to groups outside it. Hence, without regional cooperation, it would be very difficult to effectively eliminate this menace. And for this very reason, it is essential that all terrorists must be targeted without regard for whether they perpetrate terrorism within Pakistan or outside it. In order to win this diplomatic battle against India, Pakistan must deprive India of the moral high ground through which it issues its sanctimonious statements, and the only way to do this is if Pakistan shows the world it is sincere in eliminating all terrorists without any kind of distinction.

Source: <http://dailytimes.com.pk/editorial/01-Sep-16/pakistan-after-us-india-talks>

ANALYSING IS IN PAK-AFGHAN REGION BY FAISAL RAJA

On April 18, 2015, while General Sher Mohammad Karimi, Afghan Chief of General Staff, was presiding over the 132nd passing-out parade at the Pakistan Military Academy, Kakul, the Islamic State (IS) field operators were carrying out its first deadly attack on Afghan soil in Jalalabad. The suicide attack at a bank was so powerful that 33 persons died on spot, and more than 100 were injured. Later, Shahid Ullah Shahid, posing as a spokesperson of the Islamic State, claimed the responsibility of the attack. Since then a spate of IS-linked or IS-inspired incidents have occurred including one on July 22, 2016 in which more than 80 members of the Hazara community were killed when they were protesting over a development project in the capital.

These strikes echo a number of significant security concerns for the Pak-Afghan region. We shall also evaluate the imprint of such attacks on other insurgent groups and tactics of US-Afghan security forces in the region. There are three important areas where the likely prominence of IS in Afghanistan can cause security restructuring and national safety recalibration.

First, Taliban on both sides of the Durand Line could find a competitor among them for future power-sharing set-up in Kabul. The Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) already in search of a consensus leadership for structural compactness may embrace the emergence of IS as an opportunity to revive its position in the area. Since the beginning of the last year, there has been signs of IS presence in Pak-Afghan region though in Pakistan its presence remains low and ambiguous. However, these attacks have removed any apprehensions about footprints of IS in Afghanistan. It shall be matter of months if not days before these incidents translate into bolstering IS position in the Pak-Afghan region.

The power structure in Afghanistan is based on three important elements: tribe, territory and terror. Whosoever controls the most powerful tribes or exerts appreciable influence over tribal leaders, regulates territorial transportation lines, and maintains a spell of terror over population can rule with longevity and persistence in Afghanistan. Imagine if IS manages to control the three T's the whole security threat paradigm would shift in the region. The strategic calculations about Taliban actions against Kabul can be reviewed through IS, which is traditionally anti-Taliban with a larger global agenda. The importance of outside players, currently enjoying considerable influence with Taliban, may also dwindle with the emergence of IS. A deadly conflict for power struggle between IS and Taliban may result into weakening of the latter and strengthening of the former.

Second, a new terror organisation like IS could operate in the region with different organisational structure and foot operators. Like private contractors working in major conflict zones, and carrying out difficult jobs that are unimaginable for formal security forces, troopers of terror may be paid workers without any strong religious and ideological affiliation with organisational aims and objectives. The higher IS echelon in Afghanistan may be galvanised through handsome finances from foreign countries. No extra effort for human resource recruitment is required as defection from current insurgent groups can inflate IS numbers from 7,000 to 13,000 according to a latest estimate. Such an organisation can then become a major tool for changing inner security dynamics of Pak-Afghan region.

The more the numbers of the Islamic State grow in Afghanistan, the more projection it receives worldwide. The high propaganda warfare may be coupled with management of savagery in war zone, an important tactic for getting attention through breaking news and leading captions on the front pages of international and regional newspapers. Traditionally, tactical operators in Taliban ranks consist of religiously motivated youth drawn from different areas having similar sectarian, ethnic or tribal base. IS, on the other hand, may have more tribal-cum-sectarian groupings hemmed in with heavy financial support. All anti-Taliban forces can now assemble under the banner of IS to put paid to the reign of terror in the region with another period of brutal suppression.

The United States could exploit the regional emergence of IS, and use them as a tool against the Taliban. Since the organisation would contain local tribal elements, therefore, important information on Taliban movement and its members could be obtained with relative ease. The Afghan National Army (ANA) could also maintain a tacit contact with IS for making inroads in central and southern parts of Afghanistan. IS militants could also goad the members of the TTP to join its ranks for proper operational activities within Pakistan.

Third, the resurgence of IS poses a number of challenges for Pakistan. A lot of questions could be raised on the efficacy of the Zarb-e-Azb if IS holds its foot in FATA or other settled areas in Balochistan. It might be possible that IS inspires urbanised youth for possible killing operations. Hiring foot soldiers for IS on the basis of financial assistance rather than on religious affinity poses an even greater threat for Pakistani intelligence agencies. If the TTP dissolves and joins IS it would get better logistical and technical support from Afghanistan. Different Punjab-based splinter groups that are currently associated with the TTP may also decide to embrace IS, which would present a different level of strategic insecurity for the state of Pakistan.

The IS may also be controlled completely through foreign handling and assistance, which can dent the current intermediary efforts of China and Pakistan with Afghan government for a possible settlement with Taliban. The nuclear deal between Iran and the West inked in the start of current year has further lowered the strategic relevance of Pakistan. Pakistan would also lose its strategic geographic edge once the United States attains a better regional penetration through Iranian engagement. Therefore, top Pak civil-military authorities see China-Pakistan-Economic-Corridor as a strategic equaliser that restores country's relevance on international calculus.

In today's environment terror organisations operate with flexibility on the basis of financial resources and logistical needs. There seems to be a clear departure from erstwhile unambiguous functionality to a state-of-flux capability, and these organisations search for better options for their survival and existence. The spectacular rise of IS in Iraq is the direct consequence of foreign finances, localised energy resources and high availability of weapons in the conflict zone. If IS secures the opium export routes, and regulates trade transmission centres along with maintaining free flow of weapons there is strong possibility of its evolution and sustenance in the Pak-Afghan region.

The writer is a senior superintendent of police

Source: <http://dailytimes.com.pk/opinion/03-Sep-16/analysing-is-in-pak-afghan-region>

THE NSG & PAKISTAN'S MEMBERSHIP BID BY SENATOR SEHAR KAMRAN

Pakistan has recently applied for the membership of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG). Much has been written on the subject, but as is always the case with matters of such complexity, much more remains unsaid. In the context of the upcoming plenary session of the group, it has become exceedingly important however that these conversations take place.

The NSG is part and parcel of a series of mechanisms that feed into the international non-proliferation regime. Membership of the NSG allows a state potential access to the technology and fuel – particularly in the context of nuclear energy – that can move it into the future in leaps and bounds.

Pakistan has operated secure and safeguarded power plants for over 40 years – despite the withdrawal of vendor support but the current electricity mix is only 4.3% or 2200 MW. Given the extreme shortages we currently face, Pakistan has ambitious plans to expand its nuclear energy profile, as outlined in the Nuclear Vision 2050, whereby we plan to increase generation to 40,000MW. Thus far, all of Pakistan's nuclear power plants have been operating under IAEA safeguards, and the country remains committed to synergizing its efforts with nuclear supplier cartels to harness this vast potential. Without access to the NSG however, this process becomes very difficult.

The fact that Pakistan is not party to the Non-Proliferation Treaty has been the reason cited for its exclusion to date. What this argument does not consider however, is the recent push for the unilateral entry of India into the Group, particularly by the United States, or even the Waiver that it was granted in 2008 to circumvent this regime altogether. What is also not considered is the fact that in keeping with the spirit of this regime, and reiterating Pakistan's commitment to its principles, the country has suggested a Strategic Restraint Regime as well as bilateral moratorium on nuclear testing, and both these overtures have been met with silence.

Now I believe that one of the aims when establishing the NSG was also to engage into the non-proliferation regime countries that were advanced in nuclear sector but were not party to the NPT. Pakistan has an advanced nuclear program, and has had one for approximately four decades. It has the experience, expertise, credentials and immense untapped market potential, in addition to the manpower, infrastructure and ability necessary to supply NSG controlled items. Short of being a signatory to the NPT, it possesses every quality to render it an invaluable addition to the group. Pakistan has not only the potential to become a recipient but also a supplier of a full range of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. And unlike the second membership applicant – India

– Pakistan has also not enjoyed the benefits of an exceptional ‘waiver’, and as such is also an important new market for NSG member states.

Pakistan’s application therefore, stands on solid grounds of technical experience, capability and well-established commitment to nuclear safety and security, as well as great potential for actual growth. We currently provide a market that is larger than that of the UK, France and Germany combined!

Furthermore, what we often overlook is that while many non-proliferation experts discuss the matter of the NSG membership from technical, legal and procedural viewpoints, they, perhaps inadvertently, deemphasize the political aspect which remains a dominant factor in shaping policies of key NSG members. Put simply, for several years now the political and economic interests have influenced decisions and policies to a far greater extent than technical, legal and procedural guidelines. Had it not been so, we would not have witnessed the American nuclear deal with India and the subsequent Waiver in 2008.

There would also not be such disproportionate support for the unilateral entry of India into this prestigious group, despite the fact that the country has failed to uphold an alarmingly significant number of its commitments that were pre-conditions to the Waiver, including the separation of its civil and military nuclear facilities. Geopolitical and geo-economic objectives continue to create space for exploiting loopholes in NPT provisions and NSG guidelines. The unfortunate reality remains that despite its hefty portfolio, Pakistan continues to be sidelined and neglected.

It is also important to remember that today, the non-proliferation regime and the various multilateral arrangements working under its umbrella are faced with a host of challenges, at the heart of which is their relationship with de-facto nuclear weapon states (such as Pakistan and India), and how to incorporate them into the mainstream without impinging upon the goals and objectives of NPT regime.

Given the challenges, the question that presents itself is whether there are any ‘alternative’, pragmatic approaches to the question of the NSG membership of non-NPT, and how would they be applied? Will the international community oversee the continuation of an ‘exceptional’ approach, or will applications be tested against singular criteria in a uniform manner, particularly when discriminatory approaches have not only aggravated regional imbalances (and Pakistan’s security concerns) but also undermine the underlying principles of the non-proliferation regime?

Pakistan currently faces the worst energy crisis in its history, hindering its capacity to deliver on various socioeconomic and industrial development programs, despite the fact that it has been a highly responsible nuclear power. Pakistan's civilian nuclear programs extend beyond the realm of energy to include cancer diagnoses and treatment, agriculture, food preservation, and water management amongst others. Pakistan has also made modest contributions to IAEA's activities by sharing its experience and providing services of experts in diverse technical areas such as nuclear radiation, transport and waste safety, nuclear security, application of nuclear technology in agriculture, medicine, industry and nuclear energy.

The clearest example is that of the 18 nuclear medicine and oncology hospitals currently being operated by the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission, that are a source of solace not only for Pakistani people, but also the people from other poorer or war-torn parts of this region, despite their increasingly insufficient capacity.

All imbalances can be remedied however, and we remain hopeful that NSG member states will consider all these factors as they work towards a criteria-based approach for membership of non-NPT states.

Source: <http://nation.com.pk/columns/12-Sep-2016/the-nsg-pakistan-s-membership-bid>

PAKISTAN DEVELOPING MARITIME DOCTRINE

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan is developing its maritime doctrine in response to 'disturbing developments' in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) to protect its maritime interests and respond to conventional and sub-conventional threats emerging there.

The draft doctrine is being reviewed at different levels in the navy and government ahead of adoption.

Senior Research Fellow of Pakistan Navy War College and author of the doctrine retired Commander Muhammad Azam Khan, speaking at the Centre for International Strategic Studies (CISS), said the doctrine aimed at developing coherence and uniformity of thought and action within Pakistan Navy and promoting cooperation with Army, Air Force, allied navies and coalition partners.

He said the doctrine would further give contextual clarity to all stakeholders and observers of maritime developments in Pakistan.

Cdr Khan gave an overview of the doctrine and said its formulation had been necessitated by the evolving threat matrix and maritime environment in the IOR.

"With the regional environment of IOR being marred by uncertainty and political instability, Pakistan has to maintain its maritime security, be cognisant of its security interests and put forth its doctrinal assumptions based on concepts governing application of maritime forces, the command and control structures and a carefully crafted role for its naval forces," he said.

Besides the security element and development of better ties with allied navies, the doctrine also envisages protection of shipping and commercial interests and addressing issues like climate change and rise of sea level.

Retired Naval Chief Admiral Asif Sandila spoke about sea-blindness in Pakistan's doctrinal thinking — an inability to appreciate the central role the oceans and naval power play in securing strategic security and economic prosperity.

Adm Sandila said the two areas that required special attention in the debate on maritime doctrine were development of an assured second-strike capability and the increasing need for delving into cooperative mechanisms as a tool for crisis management.

CISS Executive Director Amb Ali Sarwar Naqvi stated that Pakistan was located strategically with a multidimensional naval force whose force structure made it a reckonable power in the Indian Ocean Region.

“The evolving strategic environment in the region requires Pakistan Navy to develop a balanced mix of capabilities to rise up to the challenge,” he said.

Published in Dawn, September 6th, 2016

Source: <http://www.dawn.com/news/1282336/pakistan-developing-maritime-doctrine>

THE STRUGGLE FOR KASHMIR BY PROF. KHURSHEED AHMAD

8th July 2016 has become a milestone in the history of the freedom movement of Kashmir. The martyrdom of 21 years old Burhan Vani and his companions has taken this movement into a new and decisive period. I think it is a historical turn. It should be understood completely. It is the need of the hour that comprehensive, concrete and effective policies should be made in the light of the deep understanding and realistic opportunities of the future. We should definitely pay a rich tribute to Burhan. But the real thing is to understand the present circumstances. We should concentrate on the measures that can be taken for the protection, progress and completion of this movement. If we want to pay a tribute to the martyrs, we should struggle to promote their movement. Pakistani nation, its political and military leadership, whole Muslim Umma and the lovers of freedom should care for it.

The month of July was important for two reasons regarding Kashmir issue for the previous 85 years. The historical struggle of the Muslims of Jammu and Kashmir against Dogra Raj started on 13 July, 1931. All the Muslims of the sub-continent supported it. The political destination of the people of Jammu and Kashmir was settled with the affiliation with Pakistan resolution of Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference on July 19, 1947. Muslim Conference won 16 seats in the elections of Kashmir in 1947 and got the position of spokesperson of the Muslims of Jammu and Kashmir.

From July 1931 to July 2016, the freedom movement has been passing through great ups and downs in different periods. But the martyrdom of Vani and his companions on July 8, has disclosed the futility of Indian policy on Kashmir. India is using force mercilessly to restrain the freedom movement, the severe reaction and passions of the Kashmiri Muslims. More than 60 people have been martyred and 3500 persons are injured. The curfew is imposed constantly. Life has come to a standstill. All popular sources of information, like newspapers, internet and phone are disconnected. In spite of that public enthusiasm is remarkable and the slogan of freedom is as popular as it was emerged after the martyrdom of young Mujahidin. The Indian media, scholars, institutions that have influence on policies and international powers that were ignoring the freedom movement of Kashmir ruthlessly, they are slightly moved. They are compelled to say, "What is happening? Should we review the policies that were acted upon to face this situation?"

The place where Burhan Vani was martyred has become a place of pilgrimage for everyone. A reporter of Aljazeera TV reached Bamdoor a little village, the birth place of Vani and Taral where he was buried, after five days of his martyrdom. His personal remarks and the opinion of the people that was broadcast in the programme of July 15,

are quite helpful in understanding the ground realities. The report is present on the website of the TV and it has long duration. Few extracts are given below.

The journey of becoming a Mujahid, inviting others for the mission and his last journey has been described in this way. In 2010, Vani lifted the gun. He was only 15 years old then. But neither had he concealed his identification nor did he adopt any title. He posted his pictures and videos to Facebook and social media. He made an appeal to the young generation of Kashmir. The concept of armed resistance was embedded in the minds of the people. Vani became popular among the public. Two lac people offered his last prayer (Namaz-e-Janaza) in the Saturday morning in Taral. When he was buried, people had led a revolt against the Indian Government.

It has been expressed in detail in other reports that his Namaz-e-Janaza was offered 40 times in Taral and the number of the people that participated in the prayer was 6 lac approximately. Similarly, there was a large number of people in the prayer offered in Srinagar. No important place was left, where his prayer have not been offered. Same was the case in the foreign countries. The reporter of Aljazeera visited the whole area including hospitals, where injured were being treated. He summarised the whole circumstances that are being faced by the Kashmiri Muslims. He stated their feelings, passions and intentions clearly. It is necessary that these aspects should be kept in mind for understanding different stages of the movement and to keep it on the right track. A 79 year old woman told her autobiography in the hospital in these words. She said, "The local policemen tortured her in her house near Gorevan. They came to arrest her younger son, that was a well-known protester. Her right leg was swollen and was injured from ankle to the knee. Her left leg had 13 stitches on it." She said that they beat her without caring that she was old and ill. She also said that one of them forced her to lay on floor and sat on my chest. Her grandson Mohammad Asif said that policemen beat him with a wooden stick. They beat all the women present at home. Another 15 years old grandson said that they undressed his 12 year old sister, and now the young boys wants kill those policemen who have committed this shameful act. When police arrest such well-known protesters, then the signs of revolt can be seen. It is for the first time that the world is becoming aware of the conditions in which Kashmiris are leading their life for 85 years. We can see a new determination to face the difficulties in the minds and hearts of the people. Now they are fearless and confident.

Indian and western media have adopted the policy of ignorance or black out on Kashmir. Probably, it is for the first time that we see few things in Indian and western media. Kashmiris are responding to Indian cruelty with a fearless resistance. The role of the youths, which is the 60% of the total population, is most important in this struggle. There is hatred for Indian rule and local government and other elements sponsored by

India. There is a need to re-consider the circumstances in the light of these changes. It has become necessary to take measures for the situation in Kashmir in Pakistan, India, Islamic world and on international fronts.

Source: <http://nation.com.pk/columns/06-Sep-2016/the-struggle-for-kashmir>

THE IMPENDING WATER CRISIS BY SIRAJ SHAWA

“Thousands have lived without love, not one without water.” — W H Auden

Pakistan is heading towards a momentous and great exigency: the water crisis. Everyone — government, intelligentsia, eggheads, public — are apprised of the forthcoming challenges pertaining to water scarceness, but still they have turned a blind eye towards it. No serious steps have been taken nor are any in the offing to deal with the imminent adversity.

A report of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) states: “Pakistan is one of the most water-stressed countries in the world, not far from being classified as ‘water scarce’ with less than 1,000 cubic meters per person per year.” While according to experts the water availability per capita will be declined to almost 855 cubic meters by 2020.

As per the ABD, Pakistan’s water storage capacity is confined to a 30-day supply, which is well below the recommended 1,000 days for regions with a similar climate. This is more than 33-folds difference. For an average, ordinary nation this would have been a dreadful situation. But the authorities in Pakistan appear to be complacent about the approaching terrible circumstances.

Water is widely misused by people without having an idea of its significance.

Broadly speaking, our community is a religious one but we do not give importance to water preservation in accordance with the teachings of Islam. Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) is believed to have said, “Conserve water even if you are on the bank of a river.” Even so water is wasted ruthlessly. Most of the people who have plenty of water to access keep the tap running while brushing their teeth, shaving their beards, or doing dishes etc. Generally, leakages in water pipes go unnoticed.

Low rainfall and silting of the available water reservoirs ring more alarms. Salinity and sodicity make it even worse. The quality of ground water is undergoing deteriorated because of human activities, and its quantity is decreasing day by day. Reservoirs and aquifers are rapidly drying up. Water is pumped out from ground on a faster rate than it is replenished naturally. The phenomenon of climate change and frequent weather changes are the other major factors that are contributing to the impending water crisis. There is a dire need of robust, comprehensive, and implementable national water policy.

Pakistan is an agricultural country where 43 percent of the labour force is employed in agriculture, which makes up 24 percent of our GDP. For agriculture, water is an

indispensable resource. There are also a lot of industries that consume a large amount of water for manufacturing of several products. Furthermore, Pakistan is the third largest producer of milk in the world. Livestock also require an adequate supply of good quality water.

All these lucrative spheres will be gravely affected in case of a water shortage. If some remedial measures are not taken on time, the lingering water crisis will soon be at our doors, and the whole nation will have to face dire consequences. We are on the verge of encountering a situation that might prove to be the most precarious one we ever faced in our history if not dealt with promptly and sagaciously.

Our economy, which is already on thin ice, will hit the skids. The unemployment ratio will go from bad to worse. All this will contribute towards the already tense situation in the country. Disputes among provinces may arise regarding rights on rivers' water, which may bring about a very uncertain and terrible course of events.

Government should declare a water emergency sooner than later; concerned authorities must shift their focus to water development and water management. The issues vis-à-vis construction of the Kalabagh dam need to be resolved; provinces that get supernumerary benefits should compensate the other provinces for the losses they will suffer if the Kalabagh dam is built. Moreover, other small and big reservoirs should be made operational without any further delay.

An all-inclusive water strategy should be formulated. Every year, floods wreak havoc in many areas of Pakistan. This liability can be converted into a benefit by building reservoirs to preserve that water. Public should be educated via campaigns by media, political leaders and even religious scholars regarding water usage and its consequences if wasted incautiously. Celebrities can also play a meaningful role in this regard.

Pakistan is one of the major victims of climate change; government should acknowledge this reality, the sooner the better. We are losing our glaciers, which are shrinking in enormous numbers every year, affecting many of our districts downstream. The effects of climate change can be minimised by campaigns like billion-tree tsunami, a commendable initiative by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government. Moreover, water should be protected from pollution, and sewerage system needs to be improved. Wasted water can also be re-used for irrigation, which would help to save water for future. A water budget should be properly planned and thoroughly prepared. But for all this a sense of responsibility and a sense of purpose are needed on part of our political leaders.

PAKISTAN'S LARGE STUNTED POPULATION BY SHAHID JAVED BURKI

Pakistan has not managed well its well-endowed sector of agriculture. At one time, the areas that now make up Pakistan produced enough food grains surplus to their needs to feed the entire eastern part of British India. These parts had suffered repeatedly from famines that had taken millions of lives. The British Indian administration invested large amounts of resources to bring vast virgin lands in Punjab and Sindh under the plough. But once Pakistan became independent, it neglected agriculture. Given the right kind of attention and with the adoption of a supporting set of policies, agriculture could become a driver of country's economic growth. This is the theme of the annual report that the Lahore-based Burki Institute of Public Policy will release early next year. Pakistan has also not taken full care of its large and still rapidly growing population. The result of these policy approaches is that the country now has one of the most stunted populations in the world, a fact not well known in the country.

In the recently released Global Nutrition Report, Pakistan has the fourth most stunted population in the world. The report is sub-titled From Promise to Impact: Ending Malnutrition by 2030. Some 45 per cent of Pakistan's population falls in the category of stunted. Timor-Leste, Madagascar, and Guatemala do worse than Pakistan. Pakistan's record is much worse than that of other countries in South Asia. Sri Lanka with "stunting prevalence" of 14.7 per cent is the best performing South Asian nation. The Maldives with 20.3 per cent, Bangladesh with 36.1 percent, Nepal with 38.7 percent and India with 38.7 per cent have done much better than Pakistan. Later in this column I will use the report's findings to suggest that Pakistan needs to study why it has done so poorly in terms of providing good nutrition to its people.

The above-cited report was produced by the Washington-based International Food Policy Research Institute. The IFPRI was established following the World Food Conference held in Rome in 1974. Since its founding the institution has shifted its attention from food production to consumption. Since the level of nutrition around the world became a concern of the international community, the IFPRI was charged with the task of monitoring the situation. Over the past decade, momentum focused on nutrition has been building. In 2012, the World Health Assembly adopted the 2025 Global Targets for Maternal, Infant and Young Child Nutrition. A year later, in 2013, targets were adopted for reducing the incidence of noncommunicable diseases including those caused by poor nutrition. The same year at the first Nutrition for Growth (N4G) Summit, donors committed \$23 billion to programmes and projects aimed at improving nutrition. With the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2) in 2014 and with the recent naming of 2016-2025 as the United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition, more policymakers have begun to recognise the importance of addressing malnutrition in all

its forms. Without action in this area, sustained economic growth cannot be attained. In 2015, the UN Sustainable Development Goals included the objective of “ending all forms of nutrition,” by 2030.

The authors of the IFPRI report write: few challenges facing the global community today match the scale of malnutrition, a condition that directly affects one in three people. Malnutrition manifests itself in many different ways: as poor child growth and development; as individuals who are skin and bone or prone to infection; as those who are carrying too much weight or are at risk of chronic diseases because of excess intake of sugar, salt or fat; or those who are deficient in important vitamins, minerals. Malnutrition and diet are by far the biggest risk factors for the global burden of disease: every country is facing a serious challenge from malnutrition. The economic consequences represent losses of 11 per cent of gross domestic product every year in Africa and Asia, whereas preventing malnutrition delivers \$16 in returns on investment for every \$1 spent. The world’s countries have agreed on targets for nutrition but despite some progress in recent years, the world is off track to reach those targets.

Pakistan is one of the countries that are seriously falling behind achieving the targets accepted by the international community. Why is that happening? The IFPRI report does not provide a precise answer. It suggests five reasons for malnutrition and stunted growth and for each it has made estimates for the countries covered. For Pakistan the numbers are as follows. Total calories in food supply (2520), calories from non-staples (51 per cent), access to piped water (39 per cent), access to improved sanitation (64 per cent), and female secondary enrollment rate (32.2 per cent). For India the numbers are total calories (2390), calories from non-staples (40 per cent), access to piped water (28 per cent), access to improved sanitation (40 per cent), and female secondary enrollment (66.3 per cent). Pakistan does poorly in only one of the five contributing factors: female education. The Indian female enrollment rate at the secondary level is more than twice as high for Pakistan. Even with more food and better access to drinking water and sanitation, Pakistan has a much larger proportion of stunted population for the reason that mothers are poorly educated. This is the area where the government needs to give greater attention and provide more public sector resources. The private sector is helping out in this area but it cannot provide the kind of coverage needed for women’s education. The government’s footprint has to be much larger, in particular in the less doubled areas of the country.

Published in The Express Tribune, September 19th, 2016.

Source: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1183829/pakistans-large-stunted-population/>

STRENGTHENING PAK-RUSSIA TIES HINT AT POLICY SHIFT ACROSS SOUTH ASIA BY SHAMSHAD MANGAT

ISLAMABAD: New alliances are being developed rapidly to maintain the balance of power in South Asia and the relations between Pakistan and Russia seem to be getting stronger and both the countries are going to hold their first ever military exercise called "Friendship 2016" in December.

India is making Afghanistan its stronghold in the region offering financial aid to the tune of \$1 billion dollar per annum to Afghanistan by ignoring her own poverty. It looks like in the new course of alignment India, USA and Afghanistan will be in one camp while Pakistan, China and Russia would emerge as new regional partners in future. Pak-Russia defence exercises would be named "Friendship 2016", which would be commenced in the last month of current calendar year. Some 200 soldiers from each side would participate in the joint exercises.

A proposal is also on the cards of top Pakistani military brass to procure latest war airplanes SU-35 from Russia to make the country's defence impregnable. In addition to this, Pakistan also shows a desire to buy anti tank arms and an air defence surveillance system from Moscow. The sources said that the military leadership had several tours to Russia during last 15 months during which, an agreement was inked between Islamabad and Moscow for purchase of MI-35 Helicopters. Pakistan is finding ways to purchase aircrafts from other countries including Turkey and Jordan to make her defence invincible.

The watershed moment that appeared in Pakistan's foreign policy is due to change of the USA's attitude towards India. On the other hand, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, who is on a tour of India nowadays, is not only towing the Indian line but also threatening Pakistan. In a fresh statement he said without naming Pakistan that anyone who tried to block the way between India and Afghanistan, would be blocked itself.

India has given the indication to the touring Afghan president to mull over a proposal to connect airports of each other's country. India is facing problems in the fields of education, health and agriculture, but offered to provide Afghanistan assistance in these sectors.

It is pertinent to mention here that India had utilised over \$ 2 billion in Afghanistan in different ways since 2001. In June this year, the Indian Prime Minister inaugurated a hydroelectric dam. The project would cost \$290 million. In addition to this, India is spending \$90 million on the new building of Afghan Parliament in Kabul. Though the

increasing term between New Delhi and Kabul are a matter of concern for Pakistan, India is very worried and disturbed about the improving relations between Pakistan, China and Russia. On the recommendations of Ambassadors and Envoy Conference , which was held recently at Islamabad , Pakistan took a U-Turn in foreign policy and this is the very reason that USA forbade Lockheed Martin , manufacturer of F-16, to sell eight fighter jets to Pakistan on the old plea that Pakistan was not doing enough against terrorism.

It is worth mentioning here that Russia was reluctant to improve relations with Pakistan as she did not want to displease India in the past, but now India has fallen into the lap of America like a ripped fruit and also devoted all her resources to Afghanistan. In these circumstances, it became extremely necessary for Moscow to develop new terms with Islamabad.

Source: <http://dailytimes.com.pk/pakistan/17-Sep-16/strengthening-pak-russia-ties-hint-at-policy-shift-across-south-asia>

PAKISTAN, INDIA AND KASHMIR | EDITORIAL

Indian government's refusal to accept the offer of United Nations high commissioner for human rights Sheikh Zeid Raadal-Hussein for a UN human rights fact finding mission in India-occupied Jammu and Kashmir is another example of the churlish intransigence that has characterised India's approach on the Kashmir dispute. According to the statement of the Indian External Affairs Ministry "Indian democracy has all that is required to address legitimate grievances." However, the situation in Kashmir paints an entirely different picture altogether as the unrest in the Indian-held valley has claimed at least 81 lives, and with over 800 injured. Moreover, Pakistan's acceptance of the UN human rights investigation in Azad Jammu and Kashmir given India agrees to it in India-occupied Jammu and Kashmir has to a great extent undermined Indian claims of Pakistani oppression in the area.

To say that India is as democratic for Kashmir as it for the rest of the country is mere eyewash and amounts to negating the legitimate grievances of the Kashmiri people. For Kashmiris their movement, symbolised in the slogan of azadi, is a long standing struggle for their dignity and freedom. Draconian and oppressive laws such as the Public Safety Act and the Armed Forces Special Forces Act, which give Indian security forces nearly unchecked powers of arrests and detention show the hollowness of Indian claims for democracy in Kashmir. And it is because of such a setup that the democratic process is considered a farce by Kashmiris while those parties that take part in this process discredited by most of the people of the valley because of it implying partnership with New Delhi.

India has a lot to answer for when it comes to its treatment of Kashmiris. It is rarely the case for the Kashmir issue to gain this much attention at the international stage, and for India to maintain its reputation of a liberal democratic country, it is pertinent for it to address the human rights concerns in the valley. Needless to say it would be very difficult for India to continue the present state of affairs in Kashmir while hiding behind the veil of democracy. For Pakistan while it is true that the short-term goal should be to put pressure on India to bring peace in the valley by highlighting the Kashmir issue on the international stage, the long term goal should be to find common ground from which to initiate talks on the dispute. By adopting positions that are completely opposite to one another and refusing to budge from them at the slightest, neither Pakistan nor India are doing any favours to the people of Kashmir. And in this battle of egos between the two countries, the biggest losers have been the people of Kashmir. Perhaps, this time Pakistan and India could sit down with the people of Kashmir, and work out a formula that is acceptable to all three parties. While the optimists would continue to hope for

such an endeavour, the chances of it happening remain as bleak as always as jingoism and misplaced feelings of grandeur continue to dominate the discourse on Kashmir.

Source: <http://dailytimes.com.pk/editorial/16-Sep-16/pakistan-india---and--kashmir>

PAKISTAN WON'T LIMIT NUCLEAR PROGRAMME UNILATERALLY: ENVOY

NEW YORK - Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Maleeha Lodhi has said that Pakistan cannot limit its nuclear programme unilaterally.

"Pakistan's nuclear programme cannot be limited," she said. "The world should first put an end to nuclear activities undertaken by India," she added.

Addressing a joint press conference with Foreign Secretary Aizaz Chaudhry in New York on Tuesday, she said Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif made it clear to Secretary John Kerry that India should also be asked to take same measures what are demanded from Pakistan.

Foreign Secretary Aizaz Ahmed Chaudhry said India should be pressured about how to maintain good ties with its neighbours. He said the PM's speech includes a mention of Indian interference in different areas of Pakistan.

He said, "We will also work out some solution to end Turkey's reservations on Pak-Turkish schools being run in the country."

Aizaz said the world acknowledged efforts and sacrifices rendered by Pakistan in fight against terrorism. He further said that no other state had acted against terrorism as much as Pakistan had.

Nawaz Sharif has been in New York to address the 71st session of United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), where he is busy fighting the case of Indian-occupied Kashmir (IoK).

The premier has been holding meetings with world leaders in a bid to garner support on Kashmir issue and to bring India to negotiations table to resolve this longstanding dispute.

Meanwhile, two American lawmakers yesterday introduced legislation in the US Congress to designate Pakistan as a terrorism sponsoring state.

The development came hours before Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was to address the 71st session of UN General Assembly wherein he was to tell the world about the India's state terrorism in Occupied Kashmir.

Over past two and a half months, Indian troops have killed more than 100 innocent civilians and injured thousands of protesters demanding right to self-determination, as promised by the UN resolutions.

The bill was moved by Congressmen Ted Poe and Dana Rohrabacher, both of them Republicans and Pakistan haters. Poe is also the Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Terrorism.

Rohrabacher is a strong opponent to Pakistan and, towing India's line, he has been blowing Balochistan issue out of proportions to malign Islamabad.

"Not only is Pakistan an untrustworthy ally, Islamabad has also aided and abetted enemies of the United States for years. From harboring Osama bin Laden to its cozy relationship with the Haqqani network, there is more than enough evidence to determine whose side Pakistan is on in the War on Terror. And it's not America's," Poe said in a statement on Tuesday announcing the bill.

"It is time we stop paying Pakistan for its betrayal and designate it for what it is: a state sponsor of terrorism," Congressman Poe said in his stinging remarks.

The bill is largely symbolic considering the current Congress is now in its final days, and only a small fraction of the thousands of bills it takes up become law in any case.

Moreover, observers say the timing of the bill suggests that it has more to do with Kashmir than Pak-US alliance in war on terror. It looks to be another effort by the Indian lobby in the US to offset pressure New Delhi is facing because of Kashmir oppression, they said.

The bill is however significant in that it will require the Obama Administration to formally answer the question whether or not Pakistan has provided support for international terrorism, the President must issue a report on this within 90 days of passage.

Thirty days after that, the Secretary of State must issue a follow-up report containing either a determination that Pakistan is State Sponsor of Terrorism or a detailed justification as to why Pakistan does not meet the legal criteria for designation.

The text of the bill cited multiple infractions by Pakistan in its sponsorship of terrorism, including US threat assessments that revealed "Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence

(ISI) facilitated al-Qaida's movement of fighters to and from Afghanistan as well as the terrorist organisation's purchase of weapons."

The Indian connection to this sinister bill was quite clear when Poe, in a separate statement ahead of the presentation of the bill, condemned the terrorist attack on the Uri military camp in India and bashed Pakistan.

This is just the "latest consequence of Pakistan's longstanding irresponsible policy of supporting and providing operational space for all stripes of jihadi terrorist groups", he said.

"Pakistan's reckless behavior in this regard is a serious security risk to its neighbors - and India unfortunately pays the price all too often. We condemn this tragic attack, as well as Pakistan's support for many criminals like the ones who carried it out, and stand firm in our commitment to our friends in India," Poe said.

Pro-India US lawmakers had also made a failed attempt to designate Pakistan a terrorist state in 1993 after India wrongly accused Pakistan of engineering the Mumbai serial blasts through Dawood Ibrahim.

Published in The Nation newspaper on 22-Sep-2016

Source: <http://nation.com.pk/national/22-Sep-2016/pakistan-won-t-limit-nuclear-programme-unilaterally-envoy>

FLASHPOINT KASHMIR AND UN EFFORTS | EDITORIAL

With the atmosphere getting extremely tense following a militant assault on Indian army headquarters in the Kashmiri town of Uri, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has made a passionate pitch to world leaders to help extinguish the flames in the disputed territory of Kashmir. The PM, who is in New York to attend the United Nations annual jamboree, has written letters to leaders of the UN's veto club in the latest push by Islamabad to shine light on the grave human rights violations committed by Indian security forces in the occupied state. More importantly, the missives sent to five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, better known as P-5 countries, underscore the risks to regional peace and security if the festering wounds of Kashmir are left unattended and unaddressed. Even as jingoistic rhetoric from across the eastern border reaches a crescendo, and threatens to despoil an already volatile situation, Pakistan's response appears calm and calculated.

The PM rightly pointed out that non-resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute is a constant source of tension and instability in the region and a threat to international peace and security. Nawaz, in his speech at the UN General Assembly on Wednesday, is likely to pick up this theme again to expose the uglier side of the Indian face. The UNGA session provides a great opportunity to champion the cause of Kashmiris, who are groaning under a reign of terror unleashed by New Delhi. The PM will likely be seizing that opportunity with both hands, as he has in his meeting with John Kerry, the US Secretary of State, on the fringes of the UN session. During this meet-up, the PM slammed India's bid to wag accusatory finger at Pakistan over the Uri episode, in which 18 Indian soldiers died. He was at pains to emphasise that Islamabad has always fought terrorism as a moral obligation, and that he has reached out to neighbouring countries for regional peace, stability and prosperity. He was upbeat that the US administration and Secretary Kerry will use their good offices to help resolve issues between the two nuclear-tipped neighbours. When he delivers his speech at UN, he should highlight how the brutal use of pellet guns in IHK by India continues to be ignored by the international community. Also, the indigenous nature of the uprising touched off by the killing of Burhan Wani is a development that has returned the Kashmiri struggle to its roots, i.e. a population completely alienated from India and absolutely refusing all political overtures by New Delhi because they have invariably failed to address the core grievance. His speech will be closely watched for its tone and tenor given his attempts to improve ties with India. The current speech comes at a time when relations have dipped to new lows and therefore whatever Sharif says will have a huge bearing on our civil-military policy towards India in context of latest development in IHK. But away from the hurly-burly of New York, top commanders in Rawalpindi have made it explicit that they are ready to meet any challenge. Chairing a meeting of corps

commanders, Army Chief General Raheel Sharif said Pakistan was ready to defeat any design against its integrity and sovereignty. “We are fully cognisant and closely watching the latest happenings in the region and their impact on the security of Pakistan,” he said in response to antagonistic statements issued by the Indian leadership after the Uri attack.

Given how things look grim, Islamabad will do well to continue mounting both political and diplomatic offensive to put India in a tight corner, so much so that it feels impelled to repair its frosty relations with Pakistan. As regards the Uri incident, India must furnish actionable intelligence to Pakistan if it wants the latter to cooperate in the probe it is conducting. Hurling of allegations against its neighbour will scarcely yield any positive results.

Published in The Express Tribune, September 21st, 2016.

Source: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1185254/flashpoint-kashmir-un-efforts/>

NEEDED: A FOREIGN POLICY BY WAJID SHAMSUL HASAN'

Bakra' Eid is over. I hope we will not be seeing selfies of proud owners of sacrificial animals until the next one. More than two million 'faithful' performed the holy pilgrimage – except of course the usually large contingent from Iran. Being predominantly Shia, Iran stayed away from this year's ritual as the Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia reportedly declared Iran's Shia's non-Muslims – an event pregnant with likely adverse consequences.

Among the large multitude were nearly or more than 100,000 Pakistanis who participated in the holy ritual with the hair of each of the 200 million of their compatriots tied to its root with the burden of foreign debts that perhaps even our seven generations would not be able to shake off.

Notwithstanding the ongoing killings by terrorists striking at will despite claims that we are almost near to eliminating them, the matter that has been agitating the guardians of the self-assumed citadel of Islam is the fact that the holiest of all Imams – the Imam-e-Kaaba – forgot to mention and condemn the sad plight of Kashmiri Muslims in his prayers.

In deference to the sacred occasion no complaint has been formally made. Bound by the religious compulsions and as part of eluding Ummah as we are, people have been talking in whispers. They have been hurt, but they can't complain. Some have even asked the government to take to task its Ambassador for failure to remind the office of the Imam of Kashmir issue and the atrocities being perpetrated on its Muslim population.

Looking at this 'colossal' lapse, it has brought out perhaps glaringly the naiveté that our people and leaders endemically suffer from. We seem to be perpetually living within the four walls of a well where everything is measured within the precinct of the eye of the frog that has perhaps a brain as big or small as that of our clerics – with rhetoric of commitment to Ummah and not what is in the best interest of their own country.

When Pakistan's founder Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah made clear that religion would have nothing to do with the business of the state it was not just merely a reiteration of the fact that religion has to be a personal affair but it was more of a statement of far reaching connotation on the conduct of the affairs of the state on the whole.

Karl Marx's advises pragmatism in his quote: "Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people. This is as well manifested in the observation of British statesman Lord Palmerston: "Nations have no permanent friends or allies, they only have permanent interests."

Every nation, irrespective of religion, conducts among its foreign relations on the basis of the fact that there are no permanent friends, only permanent interests. Regretfully, the quixotic idea of states being established on the basis of religion has gone out of fashion though it remains a bug in the bigoted minds of few and Pakistan probably has most of these people.

Obviously the sound basis of a dynamic foreign policy can only be engineered by pragmatism, self interest of the nation and not individual whims. Our friends, who are custodians of the Holy Places, have lent credence to this fact as reflected in the absence of the mention of atrocities in Kashmir. Not that Pakistan is no more liked by them. Their growing relations with India have replaced their fraternal emotional impulses to realpolitik—a fundamental principle in all foreign policies.

When General Zia ul Haq was negotiating to be Knight Templar for the Americans against the erstwhile Soviet Union, I had forewarned that when two elephants fight, toads get crushed. Regretfully we continue to reap the bitter harvest of the seeds sowed then.

As a student of international relations one often came across an observation that when a country's writ ceases to operate on its borders, it ceases to be sovereign. And of course the most common principle learnt was that a country's external strength lies not only on its domestic prowess but how good its relations are with its neighbours. Lastly, old granny always said: as you sow so shall you reap. When we became a proxy for the United States in the eighties we could not visualise where it would lead us in 21st century.

One could be more candid in calling a spade a spade rather than beat about the bush in between the lines. Succinctly put: Pakistan does not have a foreign policy. Its leadership is clueless and the country directionless. Everyone who matters thinks he or she is the last word. Martyred Benazir Bhutto firmly believed that Pakistan's problems had become insurmountable and to grapple them need of the hour was collective wisdom of all who matter.

If it was true then, it is true now more than ever when the country is being described as dysfunctional as internal chaos grows. People at large look for hope behind individuals and not institutions – in the self claimed intelligence of mavericks rather than collective wisdom. While the outgoing Army Chief is doing what he thinks is best in the national interest, regrettably the civilian leadership has either frittered away in self-gains or abdicated its responsibility by rendering the country's supreme body – the Parliament – infructuous.

It is late but never too late. Parliament needs to get in action, reassert itself, debate the foreign policy, and recast it according to its pragmatic needs on the basic principles stated above rather than rhetoric of Pakistan being citadel for the Ummah that is neither here nor there. No doubt corruption should also be tackled by it on top priority – let Panama leaks be the starting point. A country indebted in trillions cannot afford ongoing corruption.

Source: <http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2016/09/20/comment/needed-a-foreign-policy/>

US-INDIA PACT SHOULDN'T DISTURB STRATEGIC BALANCE IN S. ASIA: FO

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Thursday expressed the hope that the recent defence agreement between US and India would not disturb the strategic balance in South Asia.

At a press briefing, Foreign Office spokesperson Nafees Zakaria said: "Pakistan hopes the set arrangements do not contribute to polarising the region by disturbing the strategic balance in South Asia and escalating the arms build-up."

Though the accord was an agreement between two sovereign countries, Pakistan hoped it would contribute to peace and stability in the region, he said.

About the Kashmir issue, Mr Zakaria said Islamabad would continue to extend support to the people in India-held Kashmir until "justice is done".

"We will continue to extend political and diplomatic support to Kashmiris till justice is done... and the brutalities against them come to an end," he said.

Pakistan's efforts aimed to highlight the Kashmir cause were a "matter of commitment" for the country.

The spokesperson said that Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif sent a letter on Wednesday to the United Nations secretary general, Ban Ki-moon, in response to the latter's letter acknowledging Pakistan's commitment to the Kashmir cause.

"The prime minister has called upon the UN secretary general to send a fact-finding mission to Kashmir, stressing that Azad Kashmir could not be compared with India-occupied Kashmir", particularly in view of the grim human rights situation there, he said.

Mr Sharif's letter also pointed out that Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's remarks on Balochistan were an attempt to divert international community's attention away from the Kashmir dispute.

Turning to the nomination of parliamentarians by the prime minister to highlight the Kashmir issue abroad, Mr Zakaria said the initiative would lead to opening of an effective and direct political channel which would be in addition to the efforts being made by diplomats and envoys.

He said Pakistan was prepared to hold dialogue with India whenever the latter was ready. However, he stressed that Kashmir issue should be part of the agenda for such talks.

“We cannot accept preconditions for talks,” he said when his attention was drawn to the statement of Indian External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj that India would not engage with Pakistan unless it handed over those involved in the Pathankot terrorist attack.

Published in Dawn, September 2nd, 2016

Source: <http://www.dawn.com/news/1281511/us-india-pact-shouldnt-disturb-strategic-balance-in-s-asia-fo>

THE PAKISTAN-INDIA WATER THREAT | EDITORIAL

Tensions between Pakistan and India are at a simmer after a deadly terrorist attack in Uri in the Indian-held Kashmir; 18 Indian soldiers died. New Delhi blamed this attack on Pakistan and started looking for ways and means to hurt Pakistan. One of the crucial matters that can cause serious repercussions for Islamabad is the suspension of water flowing from India to Pakistan. Reportedly, India is planning to “maximise” the amount of water it uses including by accelerating building of new hydropower plants, along three rivers that flow into Pakistan. Furthermore, in order to mount pressure on Pakistan, the Indian side has decided to suspend the upcoming meeting of the Indus water commissioners of the two countries, which are held twice a year. The exclusive use of certain rivers was divided between India and Pakistan under a treaty mediated by the World Bank. After the Indus Water Treaty was signed in 1960 by Pakistan and India, rights over the eastern and western rivers were divided between the two countries. According to the treaty, Ravi, Beas and Sutlej were allocated to India, and Pakistan was given the western rivers, Jhelum, Chenab and Indus. The Indus Waters Treaty between India and Pakistan is considered one of the great success stories of water diplomacy, especially as it has survived the India-Pakistan wars of 1965, 1971, 1999, and much bad blood during and after the wars.

The treaty is facing the danger of abrogation on part of India as Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said that “blood and water cannot flow together” referring to the militants’ attack in Kashmir. However, this is not a solution to the longstanding conflict. Such statements only worsen relations. It is not easy to abrogate an international treaty on the basis of assumptions. From Pakistan’s side, Adviser to Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz has said that Islamabad would treat it as “an act of war” if India revoked the Indus Water Treaty. The spirit of jingoism is high on both sides. When the Indian authorities talk about the suspension of water to Pakistani territories, they actually threaten lives of millions of people. It is not that water from these rivers is in use by militants; rather, poor farmers, fishermen and other persons also rely on water related professions and earn their bread and butter.

Another thing to be considered is that a sanction like the closure of water could be the last option. It can only be used if both sides have exhausted all other options and taken all necessary measures to ease tension. In this perspective, both sides need to exercise restraint to avoid further conflicts as war or warlike tactics are not in the interests of both states. Wisdom calls for peaceful solution of all outstanding issues. In this regard, media in both countries carries great responsibility, and so far media has mostly played a negative role, as it is busy in presenting stuff according to its own whims and desires. There is a pick and choose policy in the presentation of news. Instead of playing a role

in easing tension, media negatively portrays certain portions of statements causing a further rift in the 'rival' states.

Source: <http://dailytimes.com.pk/editorial/29-Sep-16/the-pakistan-india-water-threat>

ACHIEVING GENDER EQUALITY BY MUHAMMAD SHAHID RAFIQUE

Gender equality is one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be achieved by 2030. Earlier, Pakistan ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all the forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1996. Two decades down the road CEDAW has not been implemented, and it shows our commitment to international conventions and covenants. Keeping in view the gender inequality prevalent in our country it is not difficult to ascertain as to why we lag behind the other nations in terms of socioeconomic development.

The Gender Gap Index 2015 ranked Pakistan second from the last among 145 countries in terms of prevalence of gender based disparities. Published by the World Economic Forum, the index measures national gender gaps in economy, politics, education and health. Second last position of Pakistan on the index reflects as to how women lag behind men in the country.

There are glaring patterns of inequality between women and men in our society. For example, women are more vulnerable and tend to suffer violence at the hands of their intimate partners more often than men. Women lag behind men when it comes to political participation and representation in decision-making bodies. Women and men have different economic opportunities. Women and girls constitute majority of the people being trafficked and involved in sex trade. These issues, among others, continue to hinder development of women and society on the whole.

Gender has become an issue these days because of the fundamental inequalities between women and men. These inequalities manifest themselves in a variety of ways. Let us have a look at some glaring inequalities women generally experience in their daily lives. Women are under-represented in political process across the globe. Thanks to quota system, women in Pakistan have fair representation. But, unfortunately, the beneficiaries of the quota system are women of political elite because our political institutions are not inclusive. Women from other segments of society are still under-represented and far from taking active part in politics. For majority of the women in the country, politics is no-go area. Resultantly, national, regional and even specific needs of community are often defined without seeking meaningful contribution from women who constitute half of the population. How can the policies yield the desired results when interests of half of the population are set aside?

Despite the constitution and other international instruments that proclaim equal rights for women and men there exist many gaps either by law or practice where equal rights to personal status, land, inheritance and employment are denied to women. For example,

women in Pakistan have a legal right to inherit property but, practically, in most of the cases they are denied the same.

In our society it is women who shoulder the responsibility of nurturing the family. Women also extend assistance to male members of family in economic activities.

Women in villages make an important contribution to food and other agriculture production. Working women in both rural and urban areas are doing the same by adding to their family income. These tasks add to women's workload and are an obstacle to engagement in political and social activities. This contribution of women often goes unnoticed. They are not even encouraged, not to speak of reward for women working in unpaid sector. Government must come up with policies to encourage and facilitate women so that they can play the above-mentioned roles along with taking active part in social and political activities.

Gender-based violence is also a manifestation of gender inequality. Almost every woman faces violence in one form or the other during her lifetime. Despite the existence of various laws, violence is on increase in our society. Gender-based violence is one of the main hindrances in the way of women to lead a normal life, not to speak of their socio-economic and political roles.

Gender inequalities are not confined to economic and political spheres but are reflected almost in every area of life and often in ways that are difficult to measure. The discriminatory behaviour women have to face is often grounded in gender stereotypes and patriarchal nature of society. These ideas and practices further complicate gender inequalities.

Achieving greater equality between women and men require changes at many levels including changes in attitudes and relationships, changes in institutions and legal frameworks, changes in economic institutions, and changes in political decision making structures. Without bringing these changes plight of women cannot be changed and they will be suffering, like ever, unheard and unseen.

For achieving gender equality and socio-economic development, it is important to incorporate gender perspectives in all areas of societal development. Sustainable development is possible only when gender perspectives are identified and addressed. If we are interested in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals priority should be given to gender equality as an important means of attaining them.

Source: <http://dailytimes.com.pk/opinion/28-Sep-16/achieving-gender-equality>

WORLD

A WORLD FREE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS | EDITORIAL

On the eve of the International Day against Nuclear Tests, Pakistan has reiterated its offer for a bilateral arrangement with India on non-testing of nuclear weapons. While speaking at the UN General Assembly meeting, Pakistani delegate Yasar Ammar said, “Our commitment of not being the first to resume nuclear testing in our region also testifies our resolve to support the treaty’s objectives and purposes.” Islamabad’s commitment is praiseworthy and needs to be reciprocated by India. Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are in the interests of nuclear-capable states. Nuclear capability is no more a deterrence; rather, it has become a liability, and sooner the nuclear-armed states get rid of these arsenals, better the world will be.

Despite making good progress on stopping the proliferation of nuclear arms, the world is facing a growing threat of a nuclear war among hostile states as well as misuse of nuclear weapons by extremists who are trying to have access to these arsenals. Soon after taking charge as the president of the US, Barack Obama had pledged to rid the world of nuclear arms -- a commitment that has not been materialised yet. The world needs to be more conscious of dangers associated with nuclear threat, and evolve failsafe strategies to save nuclear technology from going into the hands of terror groups. World powers should focus on efforts to lock down vulnerable atomic materials to prevent nuclear terrorism. A mutual ban on making further nuclear tests by Pakistan and India is need of the hour, and both states should cooperate in this regard. The leadership of both Pakistan and India claims that they have developed nuclear weapons as deterrence against any possible attack from either side. But these are only perceived fears that have no real grounds.

It is not rocket science. A nuclear war could yield an unprecedented human death toll and habitat destruction. Nobody is oblivious of the terrible consequences of using nuclear weapons. A total of 140,000 people were killed in Hiroshima on August 6, 1945 when the US dropped a nuclear bomb on the city. Therefore, these weapons are never going to be used in any case, and all states should cooperate and follow nuclear agreements in letter and spirit for the sake of humanity.

Although India and Pakistan have not signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and Non-Proliferation Treaty, yet, ironically, they harbor a deep desire to become a part of the 48-member Nuclear Suppliers Group. Instead of focusing on the acquisition

of more advanced nuclear capability, more efforts should be made to promote regional cooperation. Arms build-up by various states is hardly necessary in a world that badly needs peace. Instead of getting involved in the arms race and making irrational increases in defence budgets, rival states should spend money on positive usage of this technology. It is also necessary for Pakistan and India that instead of escalating tensions and increasing military expenditure, they should work for the establishment of lasting peace. Pakistan and India being neighbouring countries should focus on basic problems of their people. They should try to bring prosperity to their nations instead of indulging in an irrational nuclear arms race.

Source: <http://dailytimes.com.pk/editorial/03-Sep-16/a-world-free-of-nuclear-weapons>

MAKE AMERICA HATE AGAIN! BY ANJUM NIAZ

Hillary Clinton has rightly turned Trump's populist slogan 'Make America great again' into 'Make America hate again!' Trump is using the bully pulpit to spread conspiracy theories and hate against his opponents, TV anchors, Muslims, Mexicans and African Americans. And his fans are buying it. Because, according to statistics, there are at least 30 million American adults who cannot read. If Trump wins, it will prove that "even bigger part of the citizenry is politically illiterate," warn pundits.

Eidul Azha and 9/11 coincide this year. With Trump's outrageous lies that he saw "thousands" of Muslims celebrate while the World Trade Centre collapsed 15 years ago, American Muslims worry that their Eid celebrations may be mistaken as a provocation with Trump believers, including the provocateur-in-chief regularly inflaming anti-Muslim sentiments. Saying "sorry" is not the lingua franca of the flamboyantly conceited American. "I have no regrets," insists the billionaire New York real estate tycoon, not once but many times when asked about his feud with Khizr and Ghazala Khan, parents of Captain Humayun who died while saving the lives of fellow American soldiers in 2004. Sadly, most military families remained unmoved by Trump's cruel treatment of the Khans.

"Where arrogance, acquisitiveness and the sowing of discord are not sins," writes Michiko Kakutani, a columnist of The New York Times, "but attributes of leadership; a place where lies, contradictions and outrageous remarks spring up in such thickets that the sort of moral exhaustion associated with bad soap operas quickly threatens to ensue." She is, of course, referring to Trump. Her voice is drowned out by thousands of Trump's male, white, and poor supporters across America. They love him. He brings out the worst undercurrents of racism, nationalism, anti-immigration and anti-Muslim sentiments in them. To the millions of gun-toting Americans, Trump hints at assassinating Hillary should she as president take away their 2nd Amendment right to bear arms.

Zillions (hope I am proven wrong) have cloned into Trump's version of the ugly American that he has harvested over the last 14 months. His racist message has surfaced in schools and colleges where Trump's 'Mini-Me's' are telling their non-white classmates to get the hell out of America. Fanning prejudice and paranoia are his echo chambers Sean Hannity and Bill O'Reilly of Fox News, America's most popular network. Every night, these two men act as Trump's surrogates to seduce viewers into voting for this bigot. But the worst specimen of the ugly American hatching the two-headed monster of racial divide and white supremacy is a man called Steve Bannon. He is Trump's new campaign CEO. Billed as "the most dangerous operative in America," he

was the chairman of Breitbart Media, leading the 'alt-right' movement calling for ethnic and religious cleansing. The presidential election will be "rigged," whines Trump, the psychopath narcissist. This ridiculous notion sits well with the frenzied crowds chanting "change." What happens if their candidate loses? Can it spiral into a permanent movement by Trump's groupies sworn to make Hillary Clinton's presidential term a 'nightmare'? Who knows what is to come. But the signs for a divisive America are today as clear as daylight. Will he or won't he deport the 11 million undocumented immigrants living and working in America? Will he institute a religious and loyalty test for the thousands of incoming Muslims at every port of entry into America? Will he give a free reign to his openly racist and bigoted beliefs to sideline non-whites and people who don't practice his religious beliefs, whatever they are?

Let me reserve the last word for Trump's nemesis: the Khan family. They alone are the flag bearers of Muslims in America. Khizr Khan waving the US Constitution to shame Trump for his proposed ban on Muslims is flashed regularly on US TV channels. Ghazala and Khizr Khan are Trump's biggest challenge.

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Source: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1173758/make-america-hate/>

DYNAMICS OF INDO-US MILITARY COOPERATION BY DR HASAN ASKARI RIZVI

The US and India have embarked on a new course of action for military and diplomatic cooperation with the signing of the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement on August 29 in Washington, and the visit of US Secretary of State, John Kerry, to Delhi on the same day. The US and Indian militaries would work closely to provide logistics support to each other. There will be no permanent stationing of US troops/aircraft in India. However, American military personnel, aircraft and ships will have open access to India's military bases, get service and repair facilities and obtain supplies. This agreement is viewed as the first step for more military cooperation in the future. The frequency of American visits and the scope of cooperation can increase if the US is confronted with a difficult security situation in the region. Kerry's visit to Delhi underlined greater cooperation between India and the US in countering terrorism in the region. This includes intelligence-sharing and diplomatic consultation on terrorism and regional stability issues. These arrangements represent a major departure from India's tradition of avoiding formal military-related commitment with a major power.

This undertaking goes beyond the scope of two security-related arrangements of the past. In the first instance, the US and some other Western powers provided weapons and training facilities to India in the aftermath of the Sino-Indian war of 1962. India received such support without any reciprocal treaty obligation although it allowed the US to spy on China from its territory. From 1963, India began to receive Soviet weapons, including the first MiG aircraft. The second instance was the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation of August 1971. The treaty's text was crafted in a manner that it could not be described as a purely bilateral military treaty. However, the Soviets provided weaponry and diplomatic support to India for the 1971 war with Pakistan.

Now, in 2016, India under Prime Minister Narendra Modi has entered into a formal military arrangement with the US, which shows a major shift in the policies of both countries. The Modi government has gone far ahead of the previous BJP government under Atal Behari Vajpayee with reference to its relations with the US. This negates India's traditional non-aligned posture, although some analysts would argue that it had long abandoned this policy to get close to the US in the post-Cold War era. Three major factors explain this departure in India's foreign and security policy. First, the Modi government is promoting a Hinduism-based ultra-nationalism in the domestic context with the support of the Sangh Parivar that upholds an extreme right-wing and Hindu fundamentalist vision of India. In foreign policy, it advocates greater Indian assertiveness and a hard line towards external adversaries. Such a strident approach to foreign policy is strengthened from military and diplomatic cooperation with the US.

Second, the global foreign policy agendas of China and India are bound to clash in five to 10 years' time. China is on the way to becoming a global power. India is an aspirant for such a status. China's One Belt, One Road policy of global economic connectivity and trade has caused serious concerns in India and the US because such inter-continental connectivity gives much diplomatic and economic clout to China. In this connection, the CPEC gives a relatively secure sea access to China as there are no hostile states in the vicinity of Gwadar in comparison to the situation in South China Sea. However, US naval ships are often present in the area and these would increase surveillance of China's activity in Gwadar. A military cooperative arrangement between the US and India that includes the opening up of all Indian military bases to the US, serves the Indo-US shared agenda of keeping China under check.

Third, India's current repression in Indian-administered Kashmir has come to the notice of the international community. Pakistan is expected to raise this issue in a more vocal manner in the forthcoming UN General Assembly session. By linking up with the US military agenda in the expanded Asian region, India hopes to restrain the US and some of its allies from publicly criticising its ongoing efforts to suppress the Kashmiri struggle by coercive means.

The US has made two additional concessions to India. It has proposed an India-Afghanistan-US dialogue on the Afghanistan situation, and has extended full support to India's cross-border terrorism allegations against Pakistan. The US is attempting to kill two birds with one stone: bring India in line with the US military agenda in the region and increase diplomatic pressure on Pakistan. If the efforts of four powers (Afghanistan, China, Pakistan and the US) could not find a solution to Afghanistan's troubles, how could the US succeed by knocking out China and Pakistan from the process? If it is a question of Afghanistan's economic reconstruction, India can be helpful. However, if the idea is to settle the internal strife in Afghanistan, this is an unrealistic proposal, which ignores geographic realities. Further, the Afghan Taliban view the US, Afghanistan and India as their adversaries and they are not expected to enter into a dialogue with them for a political settlement in Afghanistan.

In view of US support, the Indian government will display more arrogance and belligerence than ever in its diplomatic interaction with Pakistan. It will insist more on a single-issue agenda of India's choice, for talks with Pakistan, i.e., Pakistan must satisfy India on the terrorism issue first while rejecting Pakistan's proposal for a mutually agreed agenda for the talks. Similarly, Afghanistan will also adopt a more hostile disposition towards Pakistan, knowing fully well that such a policy is in harmony with the policies of India and the US.

The US has increased direct diplomatic pressure on Pakistan to force the latter to pursue a counterterrorism policy to Washington's satisfaction. Its top leadership has joined hands with Indian leaders to publicly censure Pakistan on terrorism in the region. This policy will further reduce the prospect of any meaningful dialogue between India and Pakistan. The regional situation will slide towards more acrimony and conflict. India and the US will not be able to tame the Afghan Taliban and thus the current internal strife in Afghanistan will aggravate.

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Source: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1175969/dynamics-indo-us-military-cooperation/>

US, RUSSIA FAIL TO REACH SYRIA DEAL

HANGZHOU: Top diplomats from the United States and Russia on Monday failed to reach a deal to ease fighting in Syria, with a senior State Department official saying differences remained.

The official said a fresh round of crisis talks between Secretary of State John Kerry and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on the margins of the G20 summit in Hangzhou had ended without agreement.

A deal to provide aid to Aleppo's ravaged civilians and at least partially halt Russian and Syrian bombardments had looked likely on Sunday, before talks collapsed.

US officials accused Russia of backtracking on already agreed issues which Washington refused to revisit.

As so often in the five year conflict, which has killed around 300,000 people and forced millions to flee, the talks seemed overtaken by developments on the ground.

Syrian government troops encircled rebel-held parts of Aleppo, renewing a brutal siege.

Once Syria's economic powerhouse, Aleppo has been ravaged by the war that began with protests against President Bashar al-Assad's government in March 2011.

Presidents Barack Obama and Vladimir Putin were expected to meet later Monday, but it was far from clear that they could find agreement.

The White House has been reluctant to tether Obama to a deal that could well fail.

Earlier truces in Syria have rapidly deteriorated, and Obama warned Sunday that the US was approaching the talks "with some scepticism". "But it is worth trying," he said.

"To the extent that there are children and women and innocent civilians who can get food and medical supplies and get some relief from the constant terror of bombings, that's worth the effort."

The White House is also reluctant to offer Putin a high-profile stage to gain international legitimacy after his backing for a regime that has used chemical weapons.

US officials had hoped to build pressure on Moscow over its support for Assad's government during the G20 and upcoming UN General Assembly.

They have gone as far as suggesting Moscow is complicit in war crimes.

Without Moscow and Tehran's support most experts believe Assad would have been unable to remain in power.

“You have the Assad regime which has been killing its own citizens with impunity, supported by the Russians and the Iranians,” Obama said on Sunday.

Source: <http://www.dawn.com/news/1282194/us-russia-fail-to-reach-syria-deal>

ANALYSING US-CHINA RELATIONS BY SHAHID M AMIN

In case Donald Trump wins the forthcoming US presidential election, the world must brace itself for new tensions and crises, which could lead to unpredictable consequences and might end in disaster. He is threatening to build a wall between the US and Mexico to prevent illegal immigration from Mexico, and insists that the latter must pay the cost of building it. Mexico has refused to do so. It is an important neighbour and an old friend. Trump's stance could jeopardise that relationship.

More disturbing is Trump's tough talking against China, which is far stronger than Mexico. In a policy paper, he laid out a chargesheet against China. He argues that the Bill Clinton administration made a great mistake in 2000 by supporting China's entry in WTO. Since then, "Americans have witnessed the closure of more than 50,000 factories and the loss of tens of millions of jobs. America fully opened its markets to China, who has not reciprocated. Its Great Wall of protectionism uses unlawful tariff and non-tariff barriers to keep American companies out of China and to tilt playing field in its favour." The policy paper accuses China of currency manipulation, cybercrime, forced technology transfer, and violation of intellectual property laws. "This theft costs the US over \$300 billion and millions of jobs each year." Trump has warned China of a "swift, robust and unequivocal response. If China wants to trade with America, it must agree to stop stealing and to play by the rules." He accuses China of violating WTO rules by giving illegal export subsidies, tax breaks or rebates and cash bonuses to stimulate exports. As President, Trump "will not succumb to the financial blackmail of a Communist dictatorship." He will bolster US military presence in the South China Sea to discourage Chinese adventurism. A strong military presence will be a clear signal to China and other nations in Asia and around the world that "America is back in the global leadership business."

The Chinese response to such vituperation has been restrained. Xinhua stated that Trump was playing the China-bashing card in an attempt to rescue his falling poll numbers. His "inflammatory" rhetoric was meant to appeal to blue-collar workers. His remarks were "dangerous and offered nothing of substance to improve bilateral relations." Trump is not known for moderation or sound judgement and his views could be seen as an aberration. But the fact is that many circles in the US have serious concerns not only about China's economic policies but also its overall geostrategic posture. The alarmist view is that US and China see each other as serious rivals who are heading towards a confrontation in long-term. A more realistic analysis is that there are areas of both convergence and divergence between them: both remain committed to a policy of mutual accommodation.

China's view is that Sino-American strategic stability should be the "new model of major-country relations" which should avoid confrontation and conflict, respect one another's political systems and national interests and pursue win-win cooperation. Some American sceptics hold that acceptance of such a model would create an international environment conducive to China's rise. It would allow China to become the preeminent power in Asia without any great power competition or conflict. These sceptics see the Chinese proposal as a ploy designed to trick the US into acknowledging China's extensive territorial claims, and undercutting the interests of America's strategic partners in the Asia-Pacific region.

In international relations, conflict between a rising power and an established power often happens. This has been termed as "Thucydides' trap". The ancient Greek historian Thucydides had concluded that the rise of Athens and the fear that this inspired in Sparta had made war inevitable. Interestingly, President Xi Jinping recently said that "we all need to work together to avoid the Thucydides trap –destructive tensions between an emerging power and established powers. Our aim is to foster a new model of major country relations." This is easier said than done. The last decade has seen the US establish a strategic alliance with India. The underlying motive for this alliance is their common rivalry with China. On the other hand, China has deepened its existing strategic alliance with Pakistan by launching the ambitious China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. Russia has also been drawing closer to China, making for a possible trilateral partnership. India is wooing Vietnam and Myanmar, two neighbours of China. A shifting of alliances seems to be taking place.

One issue which is potentially explosive is the current tension in the South China Sea involving the Spratly Islands. These are 14 islands and over 100 reefs. The archipelago lies off the coasts of the Philippines, Malaysia and south Vietnam. It has no indigenous inhabitants and contains significant oil and gas deposits. Seven of the islands are occupied by the Philippines, six by Vietnam and one by Taiwan. China's claims to the islands are mainly based on historical records.

China's position on the Spratly Islands has been hardening over a period of time. Defence Minister Chang told his American counterpart Chuck Hagel in 2014: "The territorial sovereignty issue is a Chinese core interest. On this issue, we will make no compromises, no concessions.." The US position has similarly hardened. It recently launched a new Asia-Pacific Maritime Security Strategy which aims to "safeguard the freedom of the seas, deter conflict and escalation, and promote adherence to international law." American Defence Secretary Ashton Carter has stated: "Make no mistake, we will fly, sail, and operate wherever international law permits. We will do that

at times and places of our choosing.” China has ignored these warnings and increased its activities and military presence in the area.

An international court recently rejected China’s claims over the maritime area around Spratly Islands. But China has refused to accept the verdict. President Obama has now met his Chinese counterpart during a G-20 Summit in Hangzhou. The biggest convergent interest between the two countries remains the economy. The US is China’s largest market. China wants to concentrate on its economic progress and wants to avoid armed conflicts. President Xi recently said that when the two countries work together, it is good for world peace, e.g. the Paris Climate Change Agreement, the Iran nuclear deal and cooperation on North Korea.

— The writer served as Pakistan’s Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, the ex-Soviet Union, France, Nigeria and Libya.

Source: <http://pakobserver.net/analysing-us-china-relations/>

AN ERA OF OPPORTUNITY BY BAN KI-MOON

Our world faces formidable challenges. Gulfs of mistrust divide citizens from their leaders. Extremists push people into camps of “us” and “them”. The Earth assails us with rising seas and record heat. One hundred and thirty million people need life-saving assistance, tens of millions of them children and young people, our next generation already at risk. Yet after ten years in office, I am convinced that we have the power to end war, poverty and persecution, close the gap between rich and poor, and make rights real in people’s lives. With the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, we have a new manifesto for a better future. And with the Paris Agreement on climate change, we are tackling the defining challenge of our time.

These great gains are threatened by grave security threats. Armed conflicts have grown more protracted and complex. Governance failures have destabilised many societies. Radicalisation has threatened social cohesion; precisely the response that violent extremists seek and welcome. The tragic consequences are on brutal display from Yemen to Libya and Iraq, from Afghanistan to the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin. The conflict in Syria is taking the greatest number of lives and sowing the widest instability, as the Government of Syria continues to barrel bomb neighbourhoods and powerful patrons keep feeding the war machine. Accountability for atrocious crimes such as the recent attack on a UN-Syrian Arab Red Crescent aid convoy is essential. I continue to press all those with influence to get talks started towards a long overdue political transition. The future of Syria should not rest on the fate of a single man.

In too many places, leaders are rewriting constitutions, manipulating elections, imprisoning their critics and taking other desperate steps to cling to power. Leaders must understand that holding office is a trust, granted by the people, not personal property. The recently adopted New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants can help us to better address the largest forced displacements of people since the Second World War. All too often, refugees and migrants face hatred, Muslims in particular. The world must speak out against political leaders and candidates who engage in the dark and dangerous political math that says you add votes by dividing people and multiplying fear.

Looking back over ten years in office, I am proud that UN Women came to life and has become a champion of gender equality and empowerment, aiming for a “50-50 planet”. I am proud to call myself a feminist. Yet we must do far more to end deep-seated discrimination and chronic violence against women and to advance their participation in decision-making. I have also strongly defended the rights of all people, regardless of

ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation, as well as the freedoms of civil society and independent media to play their essential roles.

Continued progress will require new heights of solidarity, and continued efforts to strengthen peace operations and adapt the UN for 21st century challenges. Member States have still not agreed on a formula for reform of the Security Council, a continuing risk to its effectiveness and legitimacy. Far too often, I have seen good ideas and widely-supported proposals blocked in the Council, General Assembly and other bodies in the search for consensus. Consensus should not be confused with unanimity. Doing so ends up giving a few countries or even just one State disproportionate power, holding the world hostage on important issues.

I have visited almost all the UN's Member States over the past decade. What I have seen, more than Government buildings and global landmarks, is the remarkable power of people. A perfect world may be on the far horizon. But a route to a better world, a safer world, a more just world, is in each and every one of us. Ten years on, I know that working together, working united, we can get there.

Published in The Express Tribune, September 30th, 2016.

WORLD REFUGEE PROBLEM BY SHAHID JAVED BURKI

The world has a serious refugee problem. An unprecedented 65.3 million people have been forced from home. Among them are nearly 21.3 million refugees and of these, over half are under the age of 18. People move mostly for economic as well as security reasons. Many diasporas have been formed across the world by people looking for security or in search for better economic opportunities. The largest post-World War II movement took place in South Asia when 14 million people crossed the newly created border between India and Pakistan. Eight million Muslims left India for Pakistan while six million Hindus and Sikhs moved in the opposite direction. In the 1980s, Pakistan hosted four million Afghan refugees who left their homes to escape the war against the Soviet Union. While some Afghans have gone back, most remain in Pakistan and Iran.

The continuing civil war in Syria has caused enormous human suffering. Close to half a million people have died while half of the country's population of 21 million has left home. Some six million Syrians are now in several neighbouring countries. More than a million of the people displaced by war have headed for Europe causing a major crisis for that continent. Had the refugees not gone to Europe, the suffering of refugees around the world would not have received global attention.

Three city-leaders in the West came together and contributed an article for The New York Times on immigrants. The article titled, "Our Immigrants, Our Strength" appeared on the eve of the United Nations' summit on international migration. Held in New York, on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly, the summit was attended by several world leaders, including President Barack Obama. The authors of the article included Bill de Blasio, Mayor of New York City, Anne Hidalgo, Mayor of Paris, and Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London, who is the descendent of Pakistani immigrant parents. New York and Paris suffered terrorist attacks carried out by foreigners and by people of Middle Eastern descent. Meanwhile, a day before the article was published, an American citizen of Afghan descent was alleged to have placed three home-made bombs in different locations in the states of New York and New Jersey. One of the bombs in New York City's Chelsea area injured 27 persons. There were other incidents involving migrants living in the United States. These attracted considerable attention as the contest for the country's presidency heated up.

"The United Nation's Summit for Refugees and Migrants and President Obama's Leader's Summit on Refugees represent a watershed moment that is putting a global spotlight on the need for an effective response to a growing humanitarian crisis," wrote the three mayors. "Our shared perspective is informed by the sober awareness of the dangers we face. In the aftermath of an explosive device going off in the Chelsea

neighbourhood of New York last weekend, and other attacks in cities throughout the world, we recognise that the security of all our residents is paramount in large, open, and democratic societies. But it is wrong to characterise immigrant and refugee communities as radical and dangerous; in our experience, militant violence is vanishingly rare.”

The three mayors provided some insight to the programmes their cities had initiated in order to bring about greater integration of immigrants into the local economies, cultures, and political systems. In New York, nearly half of all business owners are immigrants while London has three million citizens who were born abroad. Counting those who were born to immigrants, the proportion of immigrants in the city is estimated at close to 40 per cent. It is not surprising that after a hard-fought campaign the city of London chose Khan, from an immigrant family, as its mayor.

Several major cities with large migrant populations have launched programmes to better integrate new comers. New York has begun an identification programme that is increasing a sense of belonging among immigrants. In 2015, London boroughs provided support to more than 1,000 unaccompanied, asylum-seeking children. Paris is one of the major cities to open a refugee centre in the heart of the city. Programmes such as these are needed and are producing impressive results. “We must continue to pursue an inclusive approach to resettlement in order to combat the growing tide of xenophobic language around the globe. Such language will lead only to the increased marginalisation of our immigrant communities, and without making us any safer,” continued the mayors.

These sentiments notwithstanding xenophobia abetted by Islamophobia had entered the mainstream of politics in the West. Donald Trump, the representative of the Republican Party in the US presidential contest, had deliberately taken anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim positions. His “make America great again” campaign slogan was clearly meant to cleanse his country of all presence of foreign elements. While the hunt for the person behind the New York attacks was still going on, Trump and Hillary Clinton, his rival from the Democratic Party, took opposite positions. The Republican blamed Clinton and President Obama for adopting immigration and foreign policies that brought terrorism to American shores. Trump called for vigorous police profiling of people from the Muslim world living in the United States and drew a direct equation between immigration and national defence. Clinton took the opposite position, arguing that immigrants will play an important role in the development of the United States. This debate will continue while continuing turmoil in several disturbed regions of the world will go on adding to the pool of refugees.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND POVERTY REDUCTION BY NASIR ALI PANHWAR

Despite international efforts, poverty has become more widespread in many countries in the last decade, making poverty reduction the core challenge for development in the 21st century. In the Millennium Declaration, 189 nations have resolved to halve extreme poverty by 2015 and all agencies involved in this paper are committed to contribute to this aim. However, climate change is a serious risk to poverty reduction and threatens to undo decades of development efforts. Currently over one billion people, two-thirds of them women, live in extreme poverty on less than one dollar a day.

This figure rises to 2.8 billion if the standard of two dollars a day is used. Climate change will compound existing poverty. Its adverse effects will be most striking in the developing countries like Pakistan because of their geographical and climatic conditions, their high dependence on natural resources, and their limited capacity to adapt to a changing climate. Within these countries, the poorest, who have the least resources and the least capacity to adapt, are the most vulnerable. Projected changes in the incidence, frequency, intensity, and duration of climate extremes including heat waves, heavy precipitation, and drought as well as more gradual changes in the average climate, will notably threaten their livelihoods. This would further increase inequities between the developing and developed worlds. Climate change is, therefore, a serious threat to poverty eradication. However, current development strategies tend to overlook climate change risks.

An approach that uses both mitigation and adaptation is needed. Current commitments to mitigate climate change by limiting the emissions of greenhouse gases (GHGs) will not, even if implemented, stabilise the atmospheric concentrations of these gases. Developing adaptive capacity to minimise the damage to livelihoods from climate change is a necessary strategy to complement climate change mitigation efforts.

All those responses to climatic conditions that reduce vulnerability are, therefore, an integral and urgent part of overall poverty reduction strategies. Adaptation should not be approached as a separate activity, isolated from other environmental and socioeconomic concerns that also impact on the development opportunities of the poor. A comprehensive approach is needed that takes into account potential synergistic and antagonistic effects between local and global environmental changes as well as socioeconomic factors.

Today, it is widely agreed by the scientific community that climate change is already a reality. The rate and duration of warming observed during the 20th century are unprecedented in the past thousand years. Increases in maximum temperatures,

numbers of hot days, and the heat index have been observed over nearly all lands during the second half of the 20th century. Collective evidence suggests that the observed warming over the past 50 years can be mostly attributed to human activities. The warming trend in the global average surface temperature is expected to continue, with increases projected to be in the range of 1.4 to 5.8 °C by 2100 in comparison to 1990.

Even though climate change is a global threat, it is also very much a problem for development, since poorer countries, having the least adaptive capacity and hence the most vulnerable populations, are expected to suffer the greatest adverse effects. This is because many of the world's poor are found in geographically vulnerable places, and live under vulnerable environmental, socioeconomic, institutional, and political conditions. Climate change provides an additional threat that adds to, interacts with, and can reinforce existing risks, placing additional strains on the livelihoods and coping strategies of the poor.

Strategies to strengthen capacity to cope with current climate variability and extremes and to adapt to expected future climatic conditions are mutually supportive and will have immediate benefits. They will also help identify and take advantage of the positive impacts of climate change. There is much experience to date of coping with climate variability and disasters from which useful lessons for adaptation can be drawn. Ensuring that the poor are able to adapt to current and imminent climate variability is the first step. The task ahead for the development community is to enhance the adaptive capacity of the poor and poor countries and to help to implement specific actions for addressing climate change impacts.

The writer is Executive Director Centre for Environment & Development

Source: <http://dailytimes.com.pk/opinion/23-Sep-16/climate-change-and-poverty-reduction>

COLD WAR IS OVER. CYBER WAR HAS BEGUN BY DAVID IGNATIUS

Contemplating Russian nuclear threats during the Cold War, the strategist Herman Kahn calibrated a macabre ladder of escalation, with 44 rungs ranging from “Ostensible Crisis” to “Spasm or Insensate War.”

In the era of cyberwarfare that’s now dawning, the rules of the game haven’t yet been established with such coldblooded precision. That’s why this period of Russian-American relations is so tricky. The strategic framework that could provide stability hasn’t been set.

Russian hackers appear to be pushing the limits. In recent weeks, the apparent targets have included the electronic files of the Democratic National Committee, the private emails of former secretary of state Colin Powell, and personal drug-testing information about top U.S. athletes.

The Obama administration is considering how to respond. As in most strategic debates, there’s a split between hawks and doves. But there’s a recognition across the U.S. government that the current situation, in which information is stolen electronically and then leaked to damage and destabilize U.S. targets, is unacceptable.

“A line has been crossed. The hard part is knowing how to respond effectively,” argues one U.S. official. Retaliating in kind may not be wise for a country that is far more dependent on its digital infrastructure than is Russia. But unless some clear signal is sent, there’s a danger that malicious hacking and disclosure of information could become the norm.

As always with foreign-policy problems, a good starting point is to try putting ourselves in the mind of our potential adversaries. The point of this exercise isn’t to justify Russian behavior but to understand it — and learn how best to contain it.

The Russians have a chip on their shoulder. They see themselves as the aggrieved party. The United States, in their view, has been destabilizing Russian politics by supporting pro-democracy groups that challenge President Vladimir Putin’s authority. To Americans, such campaigns are about free speech and other universal human rights. But to a paranoid and power-hungry Kremlin, these are U.S. “information operations.”

Russian officials deny meddling in U.S. politics, but it’s clear from some of their comments that they think the United States shot first in this duel of political destabilization.

This payback theme was clear in Russian hackers' disclosure this week of information stolen from the World Anti-Doping Agency about Olympic gymnast Simone Biles and tennis superstars Serena and Venus Williams. The Russians have been irate about the exposure of their own doping, which led to disqualification of many Russian Olympic athletes. And so — retaliation, in the disclosure that Biles and the Williams sisters had been given permission to use otherwise banned substances. If you're a Russian with a sense that your country has been humiliated and unjustly maligned since the end of the Cold War — and that seems to be the essence of Putin's worldview — then the opportunity to fight back in cyberspace must be attractive, indeed.

How should the United States combat Russian cyber-meddling before it gets truly dangerous? I asked a half-dozen senior U.S. officials this question over the past few weeks, and I've heard competing views. The Defense Department's cyber strategy, published last year, argues that the United States should deter malicious attacks by a combination of three approaches: "response . . . in a manner and in a place of our choosing"; "denial" of attack opportunities by stronger defense; and "resilience," by creating redundant systems that can survive attack.

A few caveats to this official strategy were cited by many of the officials:

- The U.S. response probably shouldn't come in cyberspace, where an advanced America is more vulnerable to attack than a relatively undeveloped Russia, and where the United States lacks sufficient "overmatch" in cyberweapons to guarantee quick success. "Don't get into a knife fight with someone whose dagger is almost as long as yours," explains one expert.
- The Obama administration should disclose more of what it knows about Russian actions, much as it did with Chinese and North Korean hacking. But getting in a public argument with Moscow will be fruitless, and the United States may blow its cyber "sources and methods" in the process.

What would the Cold War "wizards of Armageddon" advise? The nuclear balance of terror finally gave way to arms-control agreements that fostered stability. But this model probably doesn't work in cyberspace. Such agreements wouldn't be verifiable in a world where cyber-warriors could reequip at the local Best Buy.

Source: https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/global-opinions/the-cold-war-is-over-the-cyber-war-has-begun/2016/09/15/bc4ca5c0-7b87-11e6-bd86-b7bbd53d2b5d_story.html?utm_term=.5dcc2c4ce4ad

OBAMA AND AFGHANISTAN BY TOUQIR HUSSAIN

As President Obama prepares to bow out of office, it is time to evaluate his successes and failures in the Afghanistan war and the prospects of peace and stability in that country. The story has its remote origins in the Democratic Party's primaries debate in 2008 when a question was asked of the candidates how they would respond if they got a 3am call about some grave security crisis. It was aimed at testing the two main candidates, Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton, on the issue of national security. The assumption was that Obama would be weak in the area.

Here is what weighed on Obama's mind in answering that question. Two wars were raging in Iraq and Afghanistan. His ultraliberal support base wanted out from both. But he had to own at least one of the wars as a proof of his strong credentials on national security without which he could not win the election. The Iraq war, he had already opposed as a senator. So he was left with only the Afghanistan war to adopt whether he liked it or not — in fact he did not. By speaking in support of the Afghanistan war, he ended up burnishing his credentials in the security area. And the media ran away with the label of Afghanistan as "Obama's war". As happens so often, the reality was the opposite.

Essentially, Obama was an anti-war president. He tried to mask that reality in Oslo in 2009 at the Nobel Prize ceremony by speaking both for and against the war. He said that "war is sometimes necessary, and war at some level is an expression of human folly". About the Afghanistan war, his words were: "But in a world in which threats are more diffuse, and missions more complex, America cannot act alone. America alone cannot secure the peace. This is true in Afghanistan."

For the following seven or eight years, it has been a story of Obama dealing with his deeply conflicted approach to the war. His politics pulled him in opposite directions between his anti-war liberal base that got him elected, and the pro-war army and the conservatives whose support he needed for re-election. Politics prompted him to start giving deadlines for withdrawal that were short enough to placate the anti-war constituency and long enough to give assurance of victory to the supporters of the war. And the policymaking was not without its own conflicts, strife-torn as it was by turf wars, inter-agency rivalries and bureaucratic tensions involving the military high command, the CIA, the Defense Department and the State Department. Not only were there systemic issues, but also the fact that it is hard to fix a broken war. Three generals were fired or removed prematurely like General David D McKiernan, Stanley McChrystal and General David Petraeus. And larger than life Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, Richard Holbrooke was about to be fired before his sudden death.

There was a recurring clash of politics, policy and personality as the White House wanted to be in control, driven by electoral politics more than the imperatives of an elusive strategic success chronicled by former Defense Secretary Robert Gates in his book *Duty* and by Vali Nasr in his book *Dispensable Nation*. To make matters worse, whatever emerged from this fragmented and contested policymaking process got exaggerated by the highly politicised working of Congress. The reality is that Obama had given up on Afghanistan even before he started, in his eagerness to leave behind the legacy of getting America out of two wars. But legacies and strategic interests do not always go well together. One thing gets sacrificed at the altar of other. And that became particularly true of Afghanistan.

Advertising the withdrawal plans in advance for political reasons as well as for legacy enabled the Taliban to wait out until the American departure. The Taliban control more territory now than at any time since their fall from power. The IS reportedly has found a home along the AfPak border. And Afghanistan's National Unity Government is clearly not working.

After seeing the mess in Iraq with the rise of IS that is being blamed by the president's critics on his early withdrawal from that country, Obama has been postponing the deadlines for withdrawal from Afghanistan. Around 8,400 troops will now remain through 2017 at least. This will not improve the prospects of war. The move is basically meant to absolve Obama of any criticism if anything goes seriously wrong after he leaves office that might be blamed on his withdrawal decision.

Sadly, Afghanistan has endured one of the most devastating conflicts of our time, while simultaneously struggling with the building of national unity, and political, governance and state institutions. The Taliban and the Haqqani network and their sanctuaries in Pakistan have no doubt contributed to the failure of the Afghanistan war but do not exhaust the causes of the country's troubles. Despite the fact that the US has contributed a great deal towards creating a new Afghanistan, it still has many issues — ethnicity, tribal rivalries and tensions, religious radicalism, urban and rural divide, the role of regional strongmen and power brokers, the drug mafia, and the corruption, all of which are hindering its stabilisation. Not to mention, Pakistan-Afghanistan relations for which both sides are to blame.

But neither Afghans nor the Americans would admit the reality. The American military has been unhappy about the faltering war and Congress has been up in arms. So Pakistan became a lightning rod for all the criticism of the war. Obama knew well that the denial of aid funds or withholding of funding of F-16s will not change Pakistan's

behaviour, but politically it had become desirable to fix the blame somewhere. It ended up affecting relations with the very country whose support was crucial in stabilising Afghanistan.

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Source: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1178227/obama-and-afghanistan-2/>

THE NUKES ARE SAFE | EDITORIAL

While the United States has tried to push India's entry into the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) on more than one occasion, another supposed ally of America, Pakistan, has had to regularly issue statements about the safety of its nuclear assets. Foreign Secretary Aizaz Chaudhry reiterated the government's stance at a nuclear security summit yet again on Thursday, which is unsurprising given that many international observers have posed questions in the past. While militancy had become a major problem in the past few years, the nuclear arsenal of the country remains as safe as it ever was. What then, is the purpose achieved by this marked difference between two allies of the US?

The answer of course, lies in India's burgeoning markets and its relevance in countering China's increasing power. But with all of that in mind, the problem with India joining the NSG while refusing the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) is that Pakistan, its greatest rival, also a nuclear power, is not granted a seat at the same table. The two countries essentially developed their nuclear arsenal as a counter to the other, and Pakistan's refusal to sign the NPT or to rollback its nuclear arsenal is a reaction to the attitude of its neighbour.

Pakistan has always maintained that it will sign the NPT the moment India does, while the latter has made no such promise. If India is granted more preferential treatment than it already gets, the international community is further alienating a country that is not only a nuclear power but is also at the front-lines of the global war on extremism and militancy.

There are lacunas still present naturally; there are still extremist groups that continue their fund-raising activities and organise rallies for their supporters; whether the state ignores these because it sees them as toothless or due to darker intentions is still debatable. However, the efforts of the security forces in direct operations along the border and in the agencies have proved to be fruitful, even according to impartial observers. Anyone that claims that Pakistan nuclear assets are unsafe because of terrorism is ignorant about the political setup and security structure of Pakistan. Foreign assumptions that Pakistan is a failed or rogue state come from a lack of knowledge of our region.

It is time the world takes notice of these facts. Pakistan needs support from the global community in its efforts to combat terrorism, and the unnoticed sacrifices of our people need to be brought into the spotlight. The US, with military presence in Afghanistan and

as a key ally of India, has the ability to bridge this gap and knows that if it issues its trust in Pakistan's efforts, the rest of the world will not be far behind.

Source: <http://nation.com.pk/editorials/09-Sep-2016/the-nukes-are-safe>

UNIQUE US PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION BY TALAT MASOOD

As November 8, the date of American elections draws closer, the important question is how will its outcome impact the world in general and Pakistan in particular. This election in many ways is fairly unique. Donald Trump, the Republican Party nominee, is not a conventional candidate. He is the very antithesis of what the Party has stood for since its very inception. His frequent transgressions during his campaign speeches and interviews are a source of serious embarrassment for the conservative Republican leaders. His nomination is clearly a reflection of how low the Party has sunk in its cohesiveness and political correctness that in the past had the distinction of being led by such outstanding and eminent persons like Abraham Lincoln, Dwight Eisenhower and Ronald Reagan. Trump's offensive remarks about Muslims and reference towards Pakistan reflect deep prejudice and general lack of understanding of the geo-political and strategic nature of the relationship of the US with Pakistan and other Muslim countries. His in-built racial prejudices and introverted thinking could throw the US and the global economy in a spin. Moreover, Trump has indicated that he would support India's dominance of the region. If he were to become president, his hard and unpredictable stance will not augur well for Pakistan.

Trump's nomination has brought to the fore serious lacunas in the American election system that needs major correction. But despite these weaknesses, he commands a huge following and there are significant reasons for that. Trump is the first presidential candidate who after a long time is giving voice to the frustrations of white Americans more than anyone else. More significantly, he has articulated these by breaking all barriers of political correctness and that has found a large audience. His hard-hitting speeches resonate with white Americans and especially those with a conservative mindset. He is exploiting the weakness of the current US economic policies that have given rise to the wide gap that exists between the income of the two per cent rich and the remaining vast majority whose standard of living has been going down and finding it difficult to balance their budgets. The appeal of Trump is more in rural and southern America than in major urban centres. In essence, he is challenging the status quo by taking on the power centres within political parties and the establishment that supports the status quo. This appeals to the disenchanting and are willing to give him a try. It is apparent that he has no hard principles and shows considerable flexibility in taking position on major issues if they come under severe criticism. And as a reputed columnist described him, he goes by the mood of the crowd and says things to please them rather than pursue consistent policies on major issues.

As opposed to Trump, Hillary Clinton has a deep understanding of the world and is very familiar with South Asia. In her capacity as Secretary of State in the Obama

Administration, she had frequent dealings with Pakistan and knows the dynamics of the region. She, too, would strengthen the strategic partnership with India to jointly countervail China's growing influence in the region. With regard to Pakistan, Hillary is likely to keep up the pressure, especially on issues related to Afghanistan. It appears she stands a better chance of winning the elections, but suffers from some serious shortcomings that could stand in her way. She has a credibility problem and is not universally trusted; that is especially the case each time there is a scandal that reinforces the impression. The recent FBI report on her private email server would further keep the issue alive and provide her detractors the opportunity to project her in bad light. Moreover, Hillary represents the status quo and is generally considered as pro-establishment and pro-corporate America. Those who see her negatively are likely to either vote for Trump or elect to be absentee voters.

For Pakistan, the election of either candidate is unlikely to make much difference. Apart from areas of divergence between the US and Pakistan on issues related to India and Afghanistan, there will be additional pressure on us due to the China factor. Pakistan's close strategic relationship with China and the implementation of the CPEC has not been viewed positively by Washington and there are misgivings that it provides China new avenues to expand its influence and create additional strategic space in a critical region. Pakistan and China have already built in measures to secure the corridor and are emphasising that the CPEC is primarily an economic project and not directed against any country. Apart from the criticality of Pakistan in the Afghan peace process and China-Pakistan collaboration, there will not be many other areas of immediate interest for the Americans. But Pakistan has an intrinsic importance that cannot go unrecognised. It is an important Muslim country of 200 million people located in a strategic area. And one of the few Muslim countries set on the democratic course, even if it is fragile and in transition. It is a nuclear power and its armed forces are highly professional and battle-hardened. The build-up of fissile material does attract attention but the US realises that it has to accept this as long as India keeps building its stocks. Despite the differences, Pakistan's national interests demand that it should maintain a collaborative relationship with the US. Experience has shown it is not advisable to lean heavily on any one country, even if it is as reliable a friend as China. In fact, the Chinese have been advising us to improve relations with our neighbours. Besides, the US is an important trading partner and there is a potential of increasing the share of its market provided we take concrete measures to improve the quality of our products and widen the range of our products.

Irrespective of which candidate wins the elections, Pakistan's future relations with the US and the rest of the world will be determined largely by how we are able to

consolidate our democracy, improve economic performance and achieve internal stability and cohesiveness.

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Source: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1177546/unique-us-presidential-election/>

ECONOMY

MONETARY POLICY | EDITORIAL

IT has taken them a long time, but finally the State Bank has come around to the view that the deteriorating situation on the external sector presents risks to macroeconomic stability. The latest monetary policy statement says “the current account deficit is at the risk of widening further owing to declining exports and rising imports”. This is a departure from its usually sunny pronouncements throughout last year as the stresses on the external sector mounted. In May, for example, it could talk about the “stability in the balance of payments” which owed itself to “[s]teady workers remittances and lower oil prices”. Never mind that exports and FDI were showing deteriorating numbers. As late as July 30, the State Bank could still say that “[t]rends in the external sector are likely to continue in FY17”, even though evidence of worsening was mounting.

It appears the large spike in the current account deficit during the first two months of this fiscal year tipped the balance. The deficit rose by 93pc compared to the same period last year, making it difficult to paper over it by pointing towards remittances and inflows from creditors. There may well be a continued expansion in the economy, in terms of output, from CPEC projects and development spending by the government. But the quality of this expansion needs further comment because it is accompanied by a massive slowdown in agriculture and textiles. The announcement has a short focus on monetary aggregates, and briefly mentions “ongoing stability in the market interest rates”, which have come down all through the year. But again, whether this is healthy or not depends on who you ask. Banks are scrambling to find quality lenders, but the search is taking the form of a price war to bag public-sector borrowers instead of a ramped-up effort to introduce innovative products or venture into areas starved of credit like small and medium enterprises or agriculture. Given the mixed picture, it was prudent to keep interest rates constant.

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Source: <http://www.dawn.com/news/1285897/monetary-policy>

BARRIERS TO WOMEN'S ECONOMIC INPUT | EDITORIAL

Despite forming half the population of the world, women in both developed and developing countries lag behind their male counterparts when it comes to participation in the workforce and economy. The pay gap between genders has hardly shrunk even in some of the world's most advanced economies and there exist several legal and social barriers which prevent women from maximising their work potential either at salaried positions or through independent ventures. In developing countries these issues are exacerbated by laws and unwritten rules of behaviour that are still biased against women's economic independence. In Pakistan for example, although there are some examples of extremely successful female professionals and business owners, women are largely absent from discourse pertaining to economic activities. Underrepresented both in legislative bodies and the management level of the corporate sector, new female entrants to the workforce find their paths blocked by policies that have been devised without keeping their needs or thought processes in mind.

In Pakistan, women's primary role is still considered to be that of a caregiver. Although many now find their way to university, there is a tacit understanding that a choice will inevitably have to be made between building a family or building a career and that these are two incompatible goals. Under such pressures and confronted with such realities as their diminished status in matters of inheritance, lower pay, lesser chances of promotion and workplaces that do not accommodate working mothers all contribute to their giving up. Women who decide to set up their own businesses must contend with laws which do not consider them to be an independent individual but rather the dependent family members of their father, guardian or husband. As a consequence, women find it difficult to have their business ideas taken seriously and also to secure the necessary funding. It is also an uphill battle to develop extensive networks required for a successful business. Needless to say, there is much more that needs to be done by government bodies to support women who wish to join the workforce.

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Source: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1186648/barriers-womens-economic-input/>

IRAN WANTS TO BE PART OF CPEC: ROUHANI BY SALIM BOKHARI

NEW YORK - Expressing complete convergence of bilateral, regional and international issues, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani yesterday lauded the vision of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif for translating China-Pakistan Economic Corridor into reality and expressed his country's resolve to be part of this mega economic activity.

He made these remarks during his meeting with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly's 71st Session.

Rouhani also extended an invitation to Prime Minister Sharif for visiting Iran, which the latter accepted happily.

The two leaders expressed unanimity that CPEC was vital to the progress of the region.

They were of the view that Gwadar and Chabahar were complimentary to each other, shunning all negative propaganda unleashed by vested interests. They were confident that commissioning of CPEC would boost regional trade manifold.

The Iranian leader expressed great enthusiasm during the meeting and went on to say: "Pakistan's security is security of Iran.

We consider Pakistan's economic development as ours".

Exploring areas in which Pakistan and Iran could closely cooperate, President Rouhani asserted the two brotherly countries could work together in the field of defence and added the future of Iran and Pakistan was similar and bright. The Iranian leader suggested Iran can install a power plant on the border with Pakistan to supply electricity.

"We consider Pakistan's economic development as our development. There is a history of defence cooperation between the two countries and it is needed today," the Iranian president averred.

" In addition, President Rouhani said: "There is also immense need for cooperation between Iran and Pakistan in the field of science and technology; we need to benefit from each other's strong points in science and technology.

" It may be pointed out that opportunities for bilateral cooperation in the field of energy, especially oil, gas and electricity were also discussed.

The two sides noted that progress on Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline and electricity import from Iran would help overcome Pakistan's energy shortage in the coming years.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, reciprocating the sentiments expressed by the Iranian leader, said he would nominate two focal persons who would finalise energy projects with Iran.

The prime minister was assisted among others by Sartaj Adviser on Foreign Affairs Aziz, Special Assistant to PM on Foreign Affairs Tariq Fatemi and Foreign Secretary Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry.

The two leaders had last met during President Rouhani's visit to Islamabad this year.

The prime minister apprised the Iranian leader of Indian brutalities in Kashmir, particularly in the past two months.

"The people of Jammu and Kashmir have been victims of heinous acts of state-sponsored terrorism at the hands of Indian occupation forces," he affirmed.

The prime minister shared the latest Kashmir situation which continues to remain tense in the wake of the uprising that surfaced in response to Indian barbaric acts in the Valley and stressed the need for building unity and cohesion within the Muslim world, particularly at the time of such a great deal of turmoil.

Later, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif met UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and handed over dossiers of Indian state crimes against the innocent Kashmiri people struggling for the liberation of their occupied territory. The dossiers included the pictures of the innocent and defenceless Kashmiris victimised through brutal use of force.

The UN Secretary General expressed his shock while seeing the pictures of the victims of pellet guns being used by Indian occupying forces.

The prime minister briefed Ban Ki-moon about gross human rights violations being committed by India that have resulted in over 100 deaths and injuries to thousands during the last 74 days.

Nawaz Sharif, it may be recalled, has sent letters to the leadership of P-5 member states as well as the UN Secretary General to draw attention of the international

community to the Kashmir situation and call upon India to immediately end violence in the Valley.

Published in The Nation newspaper on 23-Sep-2016

Source: <http://nation.com.pk/national/23-Sep-2016/iran-wants-to-be-part-of-cpec-rouhani>

THE NEW GLOBAL GAME BY M ZIAUDDIN

Geo-economics is the name of the new global game that has just been kicked off and the ball is still in the mid-field as the defenders of the veterans led by the US are being severely tested by the youthful attackers led by China.

To be sure, this new game is qualitatively too dissimilar to the one that was played during the Cold War days between two teams, one led by the US and the other by the USSR. Geopolitics was the name of this Cold War game and it was being played on ideological grounds. It was clearly a game of attrition. And by the time it ended one side was totally obliterated.

As opposed to this, the new game called geo-economics is being driven by global trading trends. Trade wars would be the order of the day and tussle for capturing markets would see new product innovations for quality and economy which in turn more likely than not would accelerate global growth hopefully with equity and inclusiveness.

Prefacing his study of Western diplomacy with a reflection on the 'New world Order', Henry Kissinger (Diplomacy, 1994), had hypothesised that: On the level of the relations among states, the new order will be more like the European State system of the 18th and 19th centuries than the rigid patterns of the cold war. It will contain at least six major powers—the US, Europe, China, Japan, Russia and probably India, as well as a multiplicity of medium-sized and smaller countries. Neither the US nor China would like to hurt their respective global business prospects. Indeed, China has in the past year delinked its growing business relationship with India from persisting differences on the political and diplomatic front.

China's sustained economic growth of the past quarter century has increased its economic, political and strategic profile in Asia and in many other parts of the world. Therefore, it is in India's own national security interest to avoid any non-economic tussle with China and instead improve its trade with such a vast market as well as with the global economy. And already India is a very important member of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the BRICS New Development Bank.

And many in the US believe that the best course for Washington would be one of selective buy-in: it should participate in the One Belt, One Road projects that advance its interests, such as infrastructure investments aimed at improving intraregional trade in South Asia, while avoiding or resisting those that undermine them. For its part, they insist, Beijing should prioritise projects that benefit both China and the US, and it should put vanity projects on the back burner.

Already China and the US both appreciate the looming environmental catastrophe, and are working together to head it off. Ocean conservation was first put on the foreign policy agenda at the 2014 Our Oceans Summit, convened at the behest of the US. The substantive elements of bilateral cooperation were launched at the 2015 Strategic and Economic Dialogue, which for the first time included a high-level special session on conserving and protecting the oceans.

China and the US subsequently agreed to several important maritime initiatives. These included the expansion of an existing effort by the US and Chinese Coast Guards to combat illegal fishing; an agreement to work together within the Regional Fisheries Management Organisations responsible for setting catch limits in different parts of the ocean; the creation of a partnership to reduce the flow of waste into the ocean; and joint research on ocean acidification in the Southern Ocean.

Thomas C Schelling, winner of the Nobel Prize for economics in 2005, in his seminal work on strategy of conflict and the 'nuclear game' took economics beyond the more mundane pre-occupation with the economics of war and national security that grabbed the attention of many Western economists during and after the Second World War. Professional economists continue to be hired both by the US Defence and State Departments and by the British and Commonwealth Office. In China, it was at a defence establishment think tank that Chinese strategists developed the notion of Comprehensive National Power, which gave a higher weight to economic and social aspects of national security over the purely military.

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Source: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1182922/new-global-game/>

PAKISTAN'S TAXATION CRISIS | EDITORIAL

Whether they indulged in legal tax avoidance or evaded taxes under the counter, leaked documents of a Panamanian firm revealed quite a lot in April about a number of Pakistani politicians and businessmen. Tax evasion has of late become synonymous with Pakistan because of its failure to overcome its taxation crisis. Despite oft-reiterated resolutions by the subsequent administrations to improve its taxation net, taxpayers have not yet shown any remarkable increase. With a dismal 0.3 percent of its population that exceeds 190 million filing taxes, Pakistan is slated amongst countries with the lowest tax to GDP ratio (9.4 percent).

This narrow tax base is greatly facilitated by the dismissal attitudes of well-off Pakistanis who look out for loopholes in the system in lieu of paying voluntarily. This dilemma of tax evasion was once again brought to light by a tax directory released by Finance Minister Ishaq Dar that focused on the tax paid by parliamentarians. According to the report, Senator Taj Muhammad Afridi was found to have filed the highest income tax (Rs 41.712 million) this year, while the lowest tax was paid by MPA Muhammad Javed Awan (Rs 920). Save a few exceptions, the laughably low-income taxes paid by most of the legislators paint a stark contrast with their princely lifestyles.

Nevertheless, legislators alone cannot be blamed for giving rise to a non-functional revenue system. In a country where most people are willing to spend in the name of charity but not as taxes, the fact that the rich find it easier to achieve tax avoidance should come as no surprise. The official exemptions made through the 'Statutory Regulatory Order' are one of the many ways that these taxpayers avail to avoid taxation. Non-existent agricultural taxes, failure to register the informal workforce and corruption in the tax administration further facilitate revenue losses. Had the administration been serious enough to effectively deal with this monstrosity, the revenue earned from tax evaders could have easily taken the place of external loans.

What the country now needs is a coherent and functional system that acts against all tax dodgers. As long as an improved governmental process is not worked upon, this trust deficit would continue to encumber development. Accountable tax systems would not only help Pakistan get rid of foreign dependency but also assist in the realisation of many developmental projects. The shambolic health and education sectors that at present receive only 0.7 percent and two percent of GDP respectively can be fundamentally developed if assigned greater funds. Adequate welfare expenditure can also expedite the poverty alleviation of more than 30 percent of its population currently living under the poverty line. However, such reforms require funds, which can only be gathered if all seven million Pakistanis eligible to pay income taxes are willing to do so.

Pakistan needs to let go of its perpetual reliance on indirect taxation in favour of more successful and embracing tax reforms. The Federal Board of Revenue should act in conjunction with governmental agencies to document the economy in an efficient yet thorough manner so that all potential taxpayers could be targeted. Failures in the tax system could also be overcome if the corrupt and cumbersome elements in the collection agencies are removed. One-window operations and audits of tax returns should be initiated to ensure smooth collection sans any evasion. The day Pakistan manages to achieve its long-deprived revenue from its taxpayers it would also establish an absolute trust in its institution to run in accordance with its law.

Source: <http://dailytimes.com.pk/editorial/12-Sep-16/pakistans-taxation-crisis>

THE ROAD TO KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY BY NAVEED IFTIKHAR

Peter Palchinsky, an engineer by profession and policy adviser of the Soviet Union, was executed in 1929 by the then tyrannical Soviet regime. His unpardonable sin was the independent opinion on the Soviet Union's infrastructural, industrial and scientific ambitions at that time. He was of the view that keystones of a knowledge economy and technological advancement were political, social and educational. In short, he was against autocratic decision-making and a top-down approach to development. Some time ago, several aspects of his life were uncovered in the book, *The Ghost of the Executed Engineer: Technology and the Fall of the Soviet Union*. Palchinsky failed in his ambitions, and so did the Soviet Union in chasing the goal of becoming a knowledge economy.

Slogans of turning Pakistan into a knowledge economy have been echoing in the political corridors but the reality is that the country ranks 126 out of 140 countries in the global competitiveness indicator of the World Economic Forum — while India is ranked 55, Iran 74, Turkey 51, South Africa 49, Kenya 99, Ethiopia 109, Malaysia 18 and Indonesia 37. When it comes to innovation and sophistication factors — sub-indices of the same dataset — Pakistan is ranked 89, Indonesia 33, China 34, Sri Lanka 41, India 46, Turkey 56 and Ghana 65. I won't delve into the accuracy and relevance of this (or other similar) indicator(s) in this piece, so will take the aforementioned ranking as an approximation of the current state of knowledge, institutions and competitiveness. If you ask anyone in the country about the reason behind this poor performance, the answer would be resource constraints. However, I feel that the question of the abundance or paucity of resources comes at a later stage. The foremost prerequisite is to be open to new knowledge and ideas, something which does not need a lot of money. A knowledge spillover can be achieved and sustained by attracting and respecting talent. Unlike in the erstwhile Soviet Union, government officers and policy experts are not hanged (at least by the state) in Pakistan on account of their independent opinions. But they are isolated and stereotyped for their independence of thought. Governments don't want diversity of opinion on projects and plans. Resultantly, the public sector is no more a talent magnet.

Recently, a piece by Ayesha Siddiqi titled "The old man & the sea" appeared in this newspaper, which powerfully articulated our aversion to talent and lack of alternative voices in foreign policy circles. Unfortunately, the public sector is not unique in this regard. The business sector — and society as a whole — is also not open to diversity and talent. A routine practice is to appoint an ill-mannered and spoilt family member as chief executive instead of bringing professionals to run family businesses. Our business firms are as bureaucratic as the public sector. If you ask a business owner about the

challenges he/she faces, they will give you a laundry list of governmental weaknesses while giving little thought to what can be done without the government — being energy efficient, focusing on product/process innovation, value addition, managerial excellence and so on. Innovation and knowledge are produced and transmitted in flatter and decentralised business organisations where ideas jumble up to produce new products and processes or improve the quality of existing ones.

Internationally, businesses are collaborating and pooling resources — even with their competitors — to bring innovation to their products and services. But deceptive practices and rent-seeking through allying with the power corridors appear to be the ultimate goals of many businesses in Pakistan. During my experience of managing public-private dialogue in the country, I rarely came across businessmen talking about collective gains. Instead, the focus was always on taxation issues and exemptions. The irony is that many of the so-called civil society organisations have also turned themselves into contractors instead of developing the civic capacity to address social, political and economic issues at the grassroots level. The education sector continues to suffer due to a host of factors. Developing a knowledge economy isn't just about sending a higher number of kids to school, it is also about the quality of education and the way it is imparted and aligned with local and global needs.

Higher education institutions are the ideal platforms for cross-fertilisation of ideas if the academia can think beyond its current overwhelming focus on internationally-funded studies. However, the nascent effort of Information Technology University, Lahore to attract qualified faculty and to connect scholarship with industry and society is a remarkable shift. The Punjab government has also recently announced the development of a knowledge park for which details are still awaited. We need to be cognisant of the fact that concentration of high-value businesses emerges when there is a spontaneous interaction of diverse ideas and resources.

Public policy does have a role i.e., of providing quality infrastructure, enabling institutions, and funding for research and education. The objective should be to create an ambience for knowledge and innovation instead of imposing a solution. Society as a whole needs to demand and practise innovation. For example, parochial norms and dominance of big corporations in South Korea made the culture there averse to small-scale innovation and entrepreneurship. However, the new generation challenged these norms to demand space for new ideas and exploited knowledge spillovers from big corporations. South Koreans were successful in completely transforming their culture. And their government supported the revolution with the world's highest per capita funding for research and development.

Let's turn to cities as they are considered engines of growth and hubs of knowledge and innovation. In the middle of the last century, American urbanist Jane Jacobs advocated the fostering of mixed, lively neighbourhoods, and revolutionised the movement against top-down projects in New York City. She also critiqued Adam Smith's idea of efficiency and came up with the notion that cities develop by adding new and better products/services, not with efficiency of existing activities. She wrote: "If we were to measure economic development rate of a city, we could not do so just by measuring its output in a year or any group of years. We would have to measure, rather, the additions of new work to its older output, over a period of time, and the ratio of new work to the older work."

Our cities continue to make failed attempts to improve efficiency of existing low-value business activities. There is little thinking about diversity and new knowledge. The road to knowledge economy has to be paved with the fostering of enabling socio-political institutions and respect for talent and diversity.

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Source: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1179484/road-knowledge-economy/>

CPEC SECURITY | EDITORIAL

Questions have been raised about the difference between the Chinese and the Pakistan work ethic in connection with progress on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), namely that the Chinese approach tends to be to get things done as soon as possible whereas the Pakistan approach is to get things done — eventually. There are already many thousands of Chinese in-country working on various elements of the CPEC and the federal government long ago decided — rightly — on the formation of a special security division that must be deployed for the protection of the Chinese workers who have been attacked in the past and remain vulnerable in some parts of the country today.

It is now learnt that the provinces have yet to give authorisation for the deployment of the special security force, mainly because of challenges to the CPEC from assorted “regional powers” — read vested interests — that see the development of the CPEC as a threat to their own assets and/or interests. This wrinkle in the implementation process emerged during a meeting called to review progress. The National Highway Authority raised the matter relative to the deployment of the Special Force on the Thakot-Havelian stretch of the CPEC and was informed that “administrative issues” were the problem and specifically the jurisdiction of the new force and its rules of engagement.

This and other issues should have long ago been ironed out, not presenting today as impediments. The provinces — Punjab apart — have not responded to letters written to them in this regard and the interior secretary has now given them a week to respond to the Ministry of the Interior. We anticipate that this is not going to be the only instance of provincial hampering of the CPEC as there was much that should have been discussed and finalised before the project as a whole got the green light. There are serious provincial reservations, particularly relating to which province is going to be the greatest beneficiary, with Punjab believed to be the biggest winner. The Chinese have already expressed their frustration at slow progress and it is not unreasonable to expect more of the same.

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Source: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1178218/cpec-security/>

THE NFC AWARD BY MUHAMMAD SHAHID RAFIQUE & NAZIA ABDUL GHAFAR

Inter-provincial harmony, undoubtedly, plays an important role not only in the development of a nation but also in promoting and maintaining democracy. The centre plays a conciliatory role by ensuring that the provinces seek a solution to the issues through amicable negotiations, and by avoiding unnecessary interference in matters where the interests of the provinces lie so that all the federating units can co-exist in harmony.

Fiscal decentralisation is one of the basic principles of democratic federalism. The constituents units, provinces, in democratic federation possess the right to collectively decide the extent to which the resources are provided to the centre to run its business. But in Pakistan's case things go in the opposite direction. Almost seven decades down the road, and even after the passage of the 18th constitutional amendment, the provinces are still at the mercy of the federation when it comes to distribution of resources.

Since the inception of Pakistan the National Finance Commission (NFC) award has been controversial, and has caused a great deal of resentment between centre and the provinces and within the provinces. Population was not the basis of the award when East Pakistan was part of the federation; rather, it was revenue and inverse population density that formed the basis. But after the separation of East Pakistan, population was made the sole basis for the distribution of the NFC award instead of the previous criteria.

There is hardly any federal state in the world where financial distribution among federating units is made solely on population. After the separation of East Pakistan, six NFC awards from 1974 to 2006 were given on the basis of population.

According to the current, the seventh, NFC award, 44 percent is directly taken by the centre, which is dubbed as vertical distribution. Out of the remaining 56 percent, Punjab gets 51.74 percent, Sindh 24.55 percent, Khyber Pukhtunkhwa 14.62 percent, and Baluchistan 9.09 percent. The allocation is termed as divisible pool. Keeping in view the level of backwardness and poverty in provinces other than Punjab, this distribution does not seem to be justified. Under this arrangement, Punjab takes the major share from both sides, whereas Sindh contributes about 70 percent to the total financial income of the country. If the assessment is made on the basis of revenue, the share of Punjab comes to 23.04 percent, and Sindh should get 69.02 percent. This is what makes the

NFC award a contentious issue between the centre and the provinces as well as among the provinces.

The Pakistan People's Party government announced the seventh NFC award in 2009 according to which share of the centre and the provinces was fixed as indicated above, which according to the principle that was practised before the 1996 award should have been 20 and 80 percent respectively. The distribution of the present award is based on multiple criteria but, unfortunately, 82 percent of the distribution is still based on population, whereas a share for poverty and backwardness, production and collection of revenue and inverse population density is 10.3 percent, five percent and 2.7 percent respectively. This reflects that distribution of resources among the provinces is far from what can be termed as just and satisfactory. According to the 18th amendment, the share of the provinces could be increased but cannot be decreased from the share fixed in the seventh award.

After the 18th amendment, the NFC award has become more crucial because the provinces need to fund important services like education and health adequately. However, the present government has cut a sorry figure in doing the needful. Instead of updating the award, they have resorted to ad hoc extensions. Now the smaller provinces have protested the delay in a recently held finance commission meeting. It is startling to note that the NFC award was not discussed once during the 18 meetings of the Council of Common Interests held in the last 10 years.

The smaller provinces feel that the delay in announcement of the new award suits the federal government because it gives them space to arbitrarily hand out the withheld money. It also gives the impression to smaller provinces that the government serves only the interests of Punjab. This will further create feelings of alienation among the provinces. The government must not act in a haphazard manner, and the new award should be announced by giving smaller provinces their due share. Keeping in consideration the circumstances the country is faced with this development would also create harmony and good will among the provinces.

Source: <http://dailytimes.com.pk/opinion/04-Sep-16/the-nfc-award>

EDUCATION

EDUCATION'S MISSING PRIORITIES BY RABEA MALIK

PAKISTAN's education crisis is often discussed in the news in the following terms: large numbers of out-of-school children, very low learning outcomes, wide achievement gaps and inadequate teacher efforts. How do we fix this?

Our current policies are ambitious and well intentioned. The latest provincial education-sector plans detail interventions ranging from teacher recruitment, professional development, public-private partnerships and learning assessments. Furthermore, focus has shifted from building infrastructure to improving the quality of learning.

But three actions to ensure all children get to school, remain in school and learn while in school are not receiving enough attention: making education inclusive for children from marginalised backgrounds; making school assessments focus more on systems than test scores and; including teachers in the policy design process.

Despite well-intentioned policies, key actions to ensure all children get to school are still absent.

These priorities were emphasised at a recent consultation I attended on teaching, learning and disadvantage, hosted by Collaborative Research and Dissemination in Delhi, where I was reminded that this is not just a Pakistani problem but a South Asian one. Learning from India's experiences in education offer valuable insight for improving our own system.

In greater detail, this is why the aforementioned priorities matter:

Education must be inclusive for children from marginalised backgrounds. Marginalisation affects learning and teaching in many ways. Teachers' attitudes may be biased against poor children, girls, children with disabilities and children from minority ethnicities or religions. Marginalisation also creates negative consequences outside the classroom. Children living in poverty, for example, may be deprived of proper nutrition and support from their parents, both of which inflict harm on their ability to learn.

A teacher's understanding of the challenges faced by marginalised students can make the difference between a child being unfairly labelled as having a 'behavioural problem' and the same child being supported to learn. Good schools can nullify the negative

effects of external circumstances by creating an environment in which all children can excel. This happens only through recognising differences in students' backgrounds and building evidence to guide how policies can best intervene to address marginalisation in access and learning.

Assessments of schools should focus more on systems than test scores. Right now, determining progress in school quality focuses disproportionately on standardised assessments, which are an insufficient measure of learning. Focusing solely on test scores reduces the process of knowledge exchange and acquisition to what is quantifiable. This glosses over the challenges of the larger system in which teachers operate and the socioeconomic contexts that often give some children advantages over others.

Currently, assessments emphasise cross-school comparisons that fail to highlight how individual student achievements have changed over time. As long as students are performing relatively worse than other schools — regardless of whether they have improved by their own standards — they are still made out to be the problem. Failing to recognise these limitations can lead to policies that merely name and shame schools, teachers and students with low test scores rather than fix problems within the system.

This is not to say that there should be no assessments. If we do not assess students, we will not know the problems they face or how to fix them. But the education policy discourse in South Asia as a whole is missing an understanding of the limitations of assessments. By acknowledging where standardised tests fall short, we can begin to rethink them so that they account for disadvantage and incorporate student improvements over time into their measure of quality.

Teachers' voices should be included in designing the policies that affect them. Provincial governments have expanded the standardisation of curriculums and pedagogies in response to the chronically low quality of teaching. In Punjab, for example, lesson plans are sent from the provincial capital to classrooms in all districts. Language of instruction policy is defined at the provincial level for all regions, rural and urban. Accountability measures, such as determining teacher appraisals based on test scores, are piloted by the provincial government in the hope of improving learning.

While policies are ultimately about teachers and what they do in classrooms, teachers' voices are notably absent from the policy design process. There is also little recognition of the fact that teacher performance is reflective of the expectations and support provided by the systems they operate in. The demands of this system — such as non-

teaching duties, political interference and lack of autonomy at the school and classroom levels — reduce the capacity of teachers to respond to the needs of their students.

So how do we incorporate these priorities into the reform agenda?

It may be as simple as tweaking existing mechanisms to improve sensitivity to marginalisation as opposed to major overhauls. For example, existing teacher-training mechanisms have the potential to influence teachers' attitudes and equip them with pedagogical skills necessary for teaching children from challenged backgrounds. School-level programmes such as midday meals, remedial or extra support may be designed to provide support to students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Existing mechanisms for assessments can be recalibrated to test broad, functional skills rather than narrowly defined curriculum requirements, and track achievements over time.

Channels for including teachers' voices — as well as the broader voice of other stakeholders — into the policymaking process must be experimented with. The draft education policy in India is open for comment to the public. Can Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan also consider opening up the next education-sector plan's documents to concerned stakeholders for public comment?

But in order for policies to work, we need more research conducted to compile evidences of linkages between disadvantage, teaching strategies and learning outcomes. That evidence is being collected in a project I am collaborating with international researchers on called Teaching Effectively All Children. As time comes for the next education sector reform plan to be drafted in 2017-2018, there may be an opportunity to base reforms for greater inclusivity in school on actionable data.

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Source: <http://www.dawn.com/news/1284156/educations-missing-priorities>

EDUCATION EMBEZZLEMENT | EDITORIAL

It is an extremely sorry state of affairs that an official audit has discovered embezzlement worth billions of rupees in the federal government's Basic Education Community Schools (BECS) programme. The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) was informed by the office of the auditor general that Rs800 million was unlawfully disbursed for this project and a five-member inquiry committee from the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training had established that the amount was disbursed illegally.

The BECS programme has been controversial since 2012 when reports had surfaced that the performance of community schools was dismal and the management neither provided books to students nor paid teachers on time, which disrupted their education. In view of these issues, the Punjab government had directed its provincial education department to enrol students of BECS in the formal schools. Considering the massive corruption that has been unearthed, those complaints are justified, as the sum that was allocated for these schools, never reached them in the first place.

A scrutiny of the accounts of the BECS revealed that the National Database and Registration Authority (Nadra) had also detected over 2,000 fake CNICs of BECS teachers. How these fake CNICs evaded the notice of the authorities for all these years is abysmal. The report said that a sum of Rs140 million was disbursed to these fake teachers every year, yet no inquiry was initiated to fix responsibility for the scam. According to the report, the BECS administration paid Rs80 million for a bogus project and Rs160 million was paid against teachers' salaries. The amount was disbursed secretly; the BECS administration did not even maintain a list of the teachers who were paid.

This degree of corruption in a government run programme must not go unpunished. The education sector continues to suffer due to greed, nepotism and corruption and this must not go unaccounted for.

Source: <http://nation.com.pk/editorials/23-Sep-2016/education-embezzlement>

DILEMMA OF EDUCATION IN PAKISTAN BY SALMAN ALI

How can we forget that on 1st April 2016, the incumbent federal government made a startling claim that 100 per cent primary-age children will be enrolled in schools across the country in just one month? Really amazing statement but the federal government is unaware that the task that could not be accomplished in over 68 years would be done in only one month.

Then a few days later again Federal Minister for Planning and Development, Ahsan Iqbal, advised the National Commission for Human Development (NCHD) to chalk out an action plan to achieve a 90 per cent adult literacy rate by 2025. Good intentions apparently, and a good directive. But, how? Nobody knows, even the minister himself would not know, if you ask him, how this target would be achieved. I read both the statement twice, then thrice, and then suddenly a thought flashed through my mind.

These statements were issued on April Fools' Day. That means the Ministry of Planning was perpetrating a cruel joke on the people of Pakistan. The details given in the plan are interesting, and require, at least, one serious reading.

According to the 'working paper,' prepared by the Ministry of Planning, the implementation strategy has been distributed among all stakeholders: all four provincial governments and other territories under the government of Pakistan. The paper clearly defined that from April 1st to 30th; the federal and provincial governments will do their utmost to get 100 per cent primary school children enrolled.

The provinces will run enrolment campaigns under the leadership of their chief ministers. Before we go into further details, let's see who these provincial chief executives are and who will execute this plan. What have been their priorities, and what have they done so far for the cause of education?

First of all, the chief minister of Punjab, whose party the Pakistan Muslim League-N is ruling the roost at the Centre also. How much importance is given to education by the Punjab CM is evident from the fact that recently almost all development funds for the education and health sectors were diverted to the Orange-Line Metro Train (OLMT) project in Lahore to avoid suspension of work on the project. The opposition parties stated in the Punjab Assembly recently that the funds for 611 education and health sector projects, approved in the annual budget, had been given over for completion of the OLMT project.

A cursory look at the development projects in Punjab shows that the chief minister is interested only in big road and mass transit schemes in Lahore. The OLMT project, signal-free corridor (Jail Road), canal road extension in Lahore city would cost the people of Punjab Rs. 210 billion. Lahore Ring Road project is being completed at a cost of over Rs. 29 billion. The Rawalpindi Metro Bus project's cost is Rs. 45 billion.

But where is education on this priority list? The Punjab chief minister must know that Article 25-A has not been implemented in his province yet, that binds the government to provide free education to all children in the age group of 5 to 16 years. According to the Annual State of Education Report 2015, over 15 per cent of children between ages of five and 16 are still out of school. The standard of education being imparted to children is not satisfactory at all. The report shows that 30 per cent children in grade five are unable to read a grade two-level text in Urdu. Tens of hundreds of schools lack basic facilities. In such circumstances, how would the chief minister enrol all children in schools is better known to the chief minister or the other authorities concerned.

The situation seems equally difficult for the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa chief executive also. Only 1, 605 educational institutions, out of a total 3, 669 extensively damaged in the 2005 earthquake, have been rebuilt and over 2, 000 still await the attention of the chief executive of the province. Also, according to an Alif Ailaan report issued in December 2015, 75 per cent of out-of-school children in KP have never been to school.

The report says that despite tall claims, the KP chief minister has failed to impose an education emergency in the province with 26, 500 schools still lacking basic facilities and the Tameer-e-School Programme is yet to materialise. At least 10, 000 schools do not have electricity, 7, 500 are without drinking water, 5, 000 lack boundary walls and 4, 000 have no washroom. The education minister recently admitted that some 159 schools had been closed in different parts of the province, mostly because of non-availability of teaching staff.

However, in Sindh almost half the children, under five years of age, are facing malnutrition in his province, that the percentage of out-of-school children in Sindh is the highest in Pakistan, and that the problem of over 40, 000 ghost teachers and 5, 229 ghost schools are un-addressed in the province. Around 60 per cent schools are without drinking water facility, 40 per cent without electricity and 35 per cent without any boundary wall.

The Balochistan government, being run by a coalition dominated by the PML-N, has already shown its helplessness to improve the state of education in the province. Data shared by the education department, reveals that almost half of the population of the

province does not have access to education. In provincial assembly, a few months back a session was being held in which it was briefed that there are only 12, 500 schools — 7, 000 amongst them with only one room and one teacher — for over 22, 000 human settlements spread across the province. The enrolment rate amongst boys is no more than 35 per cent and the figure decreases by 50 per cent as far as girls are concerned. While 1.1m children receive primary education, only 50, 000 manage to complete matriculation. A mere 30, 000 students go on to receive higher education.

Education authorities in Pakistan are good at setting ambitious targets but inept at following through. Successive governments have abandoned policies of the previous administration and adopted new and more ambitious targets, wreaking havoc on the education system and squandering billions of rupees. As a result, Pakistan has failed to achieve the United Nations' Millennium Development Goal of primary education for all children by 2015.

I personally believe that lack of political will and sincerity of this failure. Every other ruler announces a campaign to bring all children to school. But nothing happens except for publication of the government advertisements in newspapers and sloganeering on the electronic media for a few months in this regard. Our educational system needs to be harmonised and equalised. One language, one syllabus and one system are the solutions of our problems that hinder to our national progress. In the view of importance of education, the Government should take solid steps towards implementation instead of projecting policies. In this regard, the allocations should be made easy and timely from provinces to districts and then to educational institutes. Also, every member of the society must play his/her role to advance the country by leaps and bounds.

Source: <http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2016/09/15/comment/dilemma-of-education-in-pakistan-2/>

MISSED EDUCATION TARGETS | EDITORIAL

For the umpteenth time, we are forced to rue the fact that the state of education in Pakistan is appallingly dismal. Periodic survey reports of local and international agencies keep casting lurid light on the decrepit condition of our schools, pathetic teaching standards, low enrolment, thin attendance, high dropout rate, ghost teachers and what not. One such report, titled UN Global Education Monitoring Report 2016 is just out and has delivered another damning indictment of the abysmal shape of our schooling system. The report notes that Pakistan is over 50 years behind in achieving its primary and over 60 years behind in achieving its secondary education targets. Last year, world leaders committed to the target of ensuring that all girls and boys are able to complete free quality primary and secondary education by 2030, but chronic underfunding is holding back progress. While this general assessment is true in case of other nations, lack of funding is not the sole affliction plaguing Pakistan's education sector.

The more alarming issue, as a Care Foundation report aptly points out, is the inefficient use of allocated funds with high proportions remaining unspent and those that are spent contributing little to good quality education. Small wonder then that 5.1 million Pakistani children of primary school age are out of school. This is the second highest in the world and is over twice as many as in India. These cold, hard statistics bespeak of the skewed priorities of successive governments, which shrank from their duty to place education, and not politics of patronage, high on their agenda. A course correction is still possible, though. Punjab, Sindh and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa are ruled by three different parties that could compete, as they do in politics, to outdo each other on how well they bolster and upgrade their education systems and put their young population in schools. A continued poor showing when it comes to education will only ensure that our progress as a nation and as a knowledge economy will continue to flounder.

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Source: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1178219/misled-education-targets/>

THE ABYSMAL STATE OF PUBLIC EDUCATION | EDITORIAL

The decision by Chief Minister of Punjab Shehbaz Sharif to construct 10,000 additional classrooms in the province comes in the background of an abysmal education system that has failed to produce learned citizens. Not only does Pakistan have a lack of qualified workforce, but even the major part that is ostensibly qualified do not have the knowledge to match their qualification. Essentially, education in Pakistan has been reduced to nothing more than the mere acquisition of a degree. However, to make things clear, this is just part of the problem as lack of education facilities coupled with abject poverty has deprived the majority of the population from even the opportunity of attaining an education. It is not that the poor do not understand the value of education. Rather, they simply cannot afford to send their children to school, be it in the form of lost earnings through their labour or not being able to pay their school fee. All of this means that the education crisis in Pakistan is a multilayered one containing many aspects, and unless a holistic approach is not taken to address it, attainment of substantial progress in the sector of education would be difficult.

It is true that lack of infrastructure is a major part of the problem when it comes to the country's education woes. Shortage of classrooms, substandard facilities, and even non-existence of schools in certain areas altogether are serious concerns when it comes to public schools in Pakistan. Not only does this deprive students of a basic standard of school environment, but it also deters qualified teachers from working there. After all, it would take a great amount of commitment to the cause of education along with strong intrinsic motivation to teach at these schools. All this leaves with mostly those teachers in these schools who have very little qualification, and this in effect renders them ineffective at imparting good education. Effectively, the whole public education system has been locked into a self-defeating cycle because of this phenomenon, with them producing good students not as a norm but as an exception.

Moreover, teaching in public schools is not a lucrative career, as the parallel private school industry has sucked all competent teachers towards itself. It would indeed be very difficult for public schools to compete with the salaries that the private sector offers. However, even if that is not possible in the short run, public school teacher salaries must at least be made good enough so that teachers do not have to sacrifice a decent standard of living for their career. More importantly, public private partnerships are required to address the structural deficiencies in the public education sector. Ranging from the reform of organisational structure to teacher selection and training, the public education sector would have to overhaul itself to become efficient and to provide quality service to the public.

Lastly, without redesigning the curriculum of public schools, a good standard of education would be impossible to achieve. Pakistan certainly lacks quality publishers, and this is one area where partnerships with foreign publishers, through which their books can be sold in Pakistan at subsidised rates, can prove to be very beneficial. It is grossly unfair that while a small portion of the students, mostly belonging to a privileged class in Pakistan, get to take advantage of good books, the majority has to make do with substandard and badly written textbooks.

It cannot be emphasised enough that education is one sector that holds the key towards progress, and Pakistan should strive towards providing equally good education to all of its citizens.

Source: <http://dailytimes.com.pk/editorial/31-Aug-16/the-abysmal-state-of-public-education>