

INTERNATIONAL
A Recipe for Friendship

August 2012

SOUTHASIA

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The Regional Business & Economic Review

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Change at the Top

AFGHANISTAN

The New Big Four

BANGLADESH

Plagued by Corruption

NEPAL

A Bad Break-up

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Aiming Higher, Rising Stronger

Surviving against all odds, Pakistan is ready to take control of its destiny and direct its future.



Watan Ki Mitti Azeem Hai Tu Azeemtar Hum Bana Rahe Hain

“My message to you all is of hope, courage and confidence. Let us mobilize all our resources in a systematic and organized way and tackle the grave issues that confront us with grim determination and discipline worthy of a great nation.”

Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Eid-ul-Azha Message to the Nation - October 24, 1947

In the soil of our beloved homeland lies that which is sacred to us: our identity. Proud to be Pakistan's Energy Company, PSO continues to drive the wheels of progress with zeal and commitment. Today, we ask you to join us in pledging to pay heed to the words of our Quaid, to stand united and to strive ever harder to enable our great country to reach its destined goal amongst the most progressive and strongest nations of the world.

**Azeem mitti ko aayay azeemtar
banayen, hum aur aap**



Pakistan State Oil

Mazare-Quaid sculpted in sand by Muhammad Arif

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As you sow ...

The Coalition troops in Afghanistan find themselves in a peculiar situation – the very Afghan soldiers they have trained are turning their guns on them. There have been several incidents over the past weeks and months when coalition soldiers have been killed by Afghan security forces. According to reports, the so-called green-on-blue attacks (a reference to the color of uniforms of Afghan and NATO forces), in which Afghan soldiers are reported to have turned their weapons against their foreign allies, have led to the killing of a substantial number of international soldiers. Though NATO and the US authorities tend to camouflage such attacks in the guise of personal grievances, there is certainly more than meets the eye. According to top officials, the “blue-on-green” incidents are, in fact, seriously threatening the progress the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) has made in Afghanistan over recent years.

There is a possibility that these incidents are a result of the dismissal of the Afghan ministers of defense and interior which may have created a loss of momentum gained since the summer of 2011. According to a senior US general, this could also be the result of increased disillusionment of the local people with the war and Karzai’s government, which in turn could have boosted local support for the Taliban. However, coalition officials say they are working with their Afghan partners to try to mitigate the “green on blue” attacks. NATO has some 130,000 soldiers on ground in Afghanistan, purportedly helping the Afghan government fight insurgent Taliban Islamists and training the Afghans to take over. According to author and analyst Ahmed Rashid, as far as the future partnering and training and mentoring of Afghan forces by NATO and the US is concerned, this is going to have a very negative effect and the lack of trust between the two sides is expected to grow.

While the US and coalition forces have not been very sure about how many troops to leave behind once the major troops withdrawal takes place in 2014, considering the new wave of mistrust between the foreign troops and local forces, they now need to further reevaluate the numbers. It is also important to ensure that the coalition’s plans to transfer security responsibilities to local forces by the end of 2014 are not derailed as a consequence of these developments.

The US and coalition commanders as well as their national leaderships need to sit down and do some soul-searching of their own to assess the very reasons for the presence of the huge military force in the region and the green on blue phenomenon. It is clear that the US has gained a strong foothold in Afghanistan and, as a result, now possesses a stronger capability of keeping a closer eye on Iran, Pakistan, China, Russia and the CIS. But in fulfilling its long-sought goals, it has also made sure that Afghanistan and its people do not emerge from their sorry plight and remain consigned to the backwaters of history. No wonder then that it is a case of reaping as you sow.



Syed Jawaid Iqbal

Revising Strategy

Your cover story on the extent of US involvement in the broader South Asian region was extensive, informative and very thought-provoking. While the argument can be made that the US need only stay involved in the countries where it currently has a military footprint, history has illustrated the US as an undependable friend; one that swoops into vulnerable countries unannounced with a magic wand to make all the said country's political worries go away. Currently, the South Asia region remains both volatile and



vulnerable to political upheavals and foreign interference.

Nepal, void of a constitution, is mired in political instability. The Maldives faces a political crisis amidst a growing Islamist threat. Af-Pak has remained, and will continue to remain, a military and diplomatic challenge. Riots and anti-government protests in Bangladesh hamper economic development. While economic giant India remains the one ray of hope, strong political internal threads and the recent elections in the country could certainly change the game.

It will be no surprise if in the next year or so the US conveniently swoops into Nepal, the Maldives or Bangladesh with a dominating strat-

egy of "controlling the situation."

Currently, with elections drawing even closer, US attention (and diatribe) is focused solely on the Af-Pak region. However, it is imperative that the administration broaden its expertise and personnel on South Asia and develop a more cohesive approach. The region is bound to become a major player, for reasons good and bad, in the next few years and it would be to the benefit of the US to remain consistently engaged with it rather than striking a strong friendship at the thirteenth hour. Partners are of course not made overnight.

Rohit Sharma
Kathmandu, Nepal

2. This is a crucial election year for the United States and the administration is focusing on a very steady agenda. With problems building up at home, it is difficult for the US to constantly push a broader and more involved foreign policy, especially when domestic opinion demands otherwise. Unlike South Asia, where foreign policy issues are largely considered domestic matters, the United States differentiates between the two and focuses more extensively on solving the problems at home. Your comments section complimenting the cover story was essential to bring to light the sentiments in the US. When it comes to South Asia, the US, for all intents and purposes, is concerned, involved and focused on the Af-Pak region. This is perhaps the biggest challenge for the US and one that demands an increasing level of military support and diplomatic focus. It would be unwise for the US to become involved with other South Asian countries at this time.

It would also be correct to say that with serious problems such as high unemployment, increased level of racial attacks and a chronic debate revolving the healthcare bill, brewing at home, the US will show an increased level of commitment to addressing the

problems at home, after the elections. Having to face tough questions from voters, the Obama administration will have to shift its focus if it hopes to secure another term in office. An increased level of commitment to a foreign policy agenda might just ruin the plan.

Jill Shores
New York, USA

Litmus Test

Following the French decision to withdraw troops earlier than the expected withdrawal of 2014, NATO finds itself in quite a quandary. As mentioned in your article, the French



decision is not an instinctive act but rather a reflection of French public opinion and a comprehensive strategy developed by its administration.

However, President Hollande's decision to withdraw troops by 2013 has dealt a strong blow to allied forces in Afghanistan. NATO forces are already facing a severe crisis in training Afghan forces to take over and the consequences of a 2014 withdrawal remain uncertain and foreboding.

Despite this, the French decision could be beneficial for all involved in what could otherwise be a destabilizing withdrawal strategy. By pulling out troops earlier, France has put the withdrawal in high gear and this could certainly prove to be a litmus test for foreign forces remaining in the country. The French exercise could force foreign forces to develop a more cohesive and workable withdrawal

strategy and take note of the gravity of the situation. It is perhaps a blessing in disguise for the greater good of the Afghan region which will undoubtedly face difficult times following the large-scale withdrawal.

Uzma Laurente
Washington DC, USA

Reviving Music

I thoroughly enjoyed reading your article on the Coke Studio in Pakistan. This wonderful initiative has become a source of pride for Pakistanis around the globe and comes at a time when the country could really afford to boost its soft image. Pakistan has immense musical talent and its culture is closely tied to the craft as well.

It is commendable that Coke Studio and Rohail Hyatt in particular, make a conscious effort to bring to the forefront a healthy blend of classical and modern music in collaboration with folk singers and rap artists, for example.

The initiative has provided a much-needed platform to new talent and has successfully revived the cultural roots of Pakistan. No other initiative has been able to generate an interest in traditional musical instruments, folk singers, classical roots and Urdu poetry. In a globalized world where the youth is increasingly westernized, it is remarkable that Coke Studio has nurtured the concept of original songs and focused on Pakistani music rather than promoted the typical trend of highlighting cover bands and western songs. Bringing together not only new talent and

popular Pakistani artists, Coke Studio has also showcased independent folk artists and lesser-known musical prodigies. More power to you!

Rehana Gilani
Islamabad, Pakistan

Need to Change

It is a pity that even in the 21st Century, archaic practices, for some reason or the other, continue to paralyze numerous societies. Child brides in Bangladesh are one such pressing issue. It is appalling that the practice is still carried out due to social conditions or religious beliefs. No mat-



ter the effort put in by NGOs already working in the field, no real change in social practices will come about till the Bangladeshi government is not involved.

It is imperative to address this problem at the state level and while efforts have been made, little action has been taken.

Child brides remain common and this hampers a society that remains impoverished. Girls are viewed as a burden to their families and perhaps it would be worthwhile to conduct an educational drive or exercise in areas where this remains common practice.

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Your article highlighted some very young and committed individuals who are slowly making a critical difference and changing the tide in impoverished neighborhoods. Perhaps they can serve as a source of inspiration for an apathetic government.

Sujata Shankar
Dhaka, Bangladesh

Making New Friends

Given Pakistan's damaged reputation and its growing animosity with the US, the country is in dire need of new friends. China, increasingly concerned about US presence in the Asia Pacific is also desperately searching for stronger alliances and engaged partnerships. The 'all-weather' friends can surely offer a convenient alliance.

It is in Pakistan's best interests to focus on issues that are of major concern to China such as drug trade, terrorism and illegal migration. If Pakistan can't develop the responsibility to solve these issues for its own citizens, perhaps the attractive package of securing international aid and a strong deterrent to US domination, might do the trick. Illustrating a commitment to addressing outstanding concerns, Pakistan might be able to secure some new friends and slowly begin to crawl out of its disintegrating international reputation and become a more responsible global player.

Ali Dadabhoy
Karachi, Pakistan





“What we have been able to steer in Pakistan is a system-wide ownership of trying to make a difference of doing it differently. I will give full credit to the Foreign Office and others within the Pakistan system.”
Hina Rabbani Khar
Foreign Minister of Pakistan



“I would like to thank the people of this great country for conferring this distinction by electing me to this high office.”
Pranab Mukherjee
President of India



“You (deputy commissioners) are guardians of the administration that has been set up to realise expectation of the citizens of an independent state... so your mindset should be mass and welfare oriented.”
Zillur Rahman
President of Bangladesh



“The independence of the judiciary is very important, governments can't function without an independent judicial system”
Mahinda Rajapakse
President of Sri Lanka



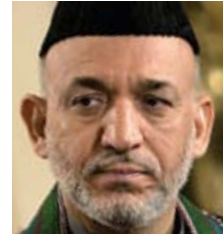
“This is the country of the Maldivian people. This government will not allow any international party to unduly influence this country.”
Mohammed Waheed Deen
Vice President of Maldives



“Bhutan wishes to forge formal diplomatic ties with China as soon as possible.”
Jigme Thinley
Prime Minister of Bhutan



“I will stand against all those decisions and policies that are against the national sovereignty.”
Narayan Kaji Shrestha
Deputy Prime Minister of Nepal



“Luckily, the international community continues to be supportive of Afghanistan's desire for a better life, for a stronger country, with strong and better institutions, and economy.”
Hamid Karzai
President of Afghanistan



Delivering Worldwide



PAKISTAN

Ready to Track Back

Pakistan Railways has been in a dismal state - a state that needs urgent revitalization. In efforts to revive this sector, the Ministry of Railways recently issued a statement announcing an investment of Rs.22.8 billion to execute 37 projects. This investment will be focused on restoring the infrastructure of the railways and strengthening its services in the fiscal year 2012-13, thus attempting to restore the organization again into a profitable entity. This is, however, a tall order.

A commercial loan of nearly Rs.6.1 billion will be allocated to repair 96 locomotives. If Pakistan Railways is to truly revive its services, the administration should heavily invest in the service and, apart from reviving old locomotives, also acquire new ones. A letter

of interest for the rehabilitation of 27 locomotives is already under consideration along with tenders to obtain 150 new locomotives. In order to enhance its services, the Railways ministry will also have to build new double tracks between Karachi and Lahore by December 2012.

While international standards permit a locomotive to run for only 20 years, the average running age of locomotives in Pakistan is 33 years. Furthermore, 55% of old tracks have served their maximum age limit and need to be overhauled. The ministry needs to adopt a dual strategy of long and short-term measures. It must provide short-term solutions to keep Pakistan Railways functional under



cost constraints. In the long-run, it must adopt a more cohesive approach which could include removing uneconomical routes, overhauling old and defective locomotives and reshuffling the Pakistan Railway board. **S**

AFGHANISTAN

Foreign Support

At the recent Tokyo Conference, Afghanistan received assurances from numerous international donors for a grant of nearly \$16 billion, which would fund the country over the next four years. This period is anticipated as a transitional phase for Afghanistan as well as the international community that has been involved in the country for over a decade and would oversee a stable withdrawal in 2014. It is only after this that the real burden of state-building and reconstructing Afghanistan will test international commitment to the region. However, a stipulation provides that the donors can sanction further aid if Kabul fails to implement measures against corruption and to strengthen democracy.

The Tokyo Conference, attended

by more than 70 countries and organizations determined the level of aid for Afghanistan until 2016. Apart from the funds pledged by international donors, the US will provide \$1 billion each year as part of the decade-long funding proposed by it.

The second largest donor for Afghanistan, Japan has pledged to provide \$3 billion till 2016 while Germany will assist with \$536 million per year. As NATO forces withdraw from Afghanistan in 2014, financial aid will serve as a monetary stabilizing factor to help the country maintain law and order with its own security forces.

Aware of international concerns, President Karzai, has vowed to fight corruption with a strong resolve and work



diligently towards establishing a code of conduct and a mode of democracy. Japanese officials have urged Afghanistan to establish a method that would monitor the proper allocation of funds and minimize squandering. Later, in a surprise visit to Afghanistan, US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton emphasized the US's commitment to the country and declared Afghanistan a major non-NATO ally, thus making it easier for Afghanistan to receive military aid. **S**

Farewell to a Revolutionary

Veteran leader of the Communist Party of India-Marxist, Captain Lakshmi Sahgal died on July 23, 2012 at the age of 97. Regarded as the Tigress of Azad Hind Fauj, Sahgal worked with revolutionary Subhash Chandra Bose during the struggle for Independence. Former Indian President, Pratibha Patil described her as a great patriot and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh lauded her efforts, saying that the country had lost an icon of selfless service.

Inspired by the revolutionary ideology of Netaji, Sahgal emerged with a mandate to set up the women's regiment: the Rani of Jhansi Regiment of the Azad Fauj in 1943, which earned her the title Captain Lakshmi. She

bravely fought alongside the Axis Powers in the Second World War and served as the Minister of Women's Affairs in the temporary Azad Hind government. In post-independence India, Sahgal joined the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and represented the party in the Rajya Sabha. She utilized her background in medicine and joined the All In-



dia Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA) that saw her campaign for political, economic and social justice.

A revolutionary and freedom fighter, Sahgal's work in the Indian National Army (INA) was exemplary and the government recognized her contributions to public service

through the Padma Vibhushan award in 1998. **S**

through the Padma Vibhushan award in 1998. **S**

Expanding Trade with Ghana

An eleven member delegation from the Bangladesh Export Promotion Bureau, led by Vice President of the export promotion bureau of Bangladesh, Shubhashish Bose, recently visited Ghana to build trade and bilateral relations between the two countries. The Bangladeshi business delegation attended a number of meetings and interacted with representatives from the Ghana Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GCCI). Recognizing the trade potential of West Africa, Bangladesh is looking to invest in various sectors of Ghana's economy through a range of business strategies that include mergers and acquisitions, joint ventures and enhanced business part-

nerships.

Prosper Adabla, Vice President, GCCI, appreciated the delegation's efforts to increase trade with Ghana and

suggested that BD open a consulate in Ghana to facilitate business and trade relations between the two countries. Adabla hoped such a consulate here would foster expansion of trade between Ghana and Bangladesh."

Ghana is particularly attractive to the Bangladeshi business community because of its significant economic growth, stable political environment and easy access to cheap labor. Ghana too has much to gain from Bangladesh, the second largest global exporter of garments, leather and knitwear. Bangladesh also manufactures 97% of its own pharmaceuticals and is eager to bring that into the export sector. **S**



MALDIVES

Going Green



In efforts to establish the Maldives as a carbon neutral country by 2020, the voluntary tax on tourists who visit the luxury resorts could rise up to \$100 million a year. Composed of nearly 1,192 low-lying islands situated in the Indian Ocean, the land surface in the

Maldives has an average height of nearly 5 feet about ground level, making it the lowest country in the world and one of the most vulnerable towards rising sea levels due to climate changes.

In 2009, former President, Mohamed Nasheed presented a plan for the Maldives to become the

first carbon neutral country but after his forced resignation, proposals followed to enforce a \$3 tax on tourists to fund the plan. Current President, Mohammed Waheed Hassan, prefers to implement a voluntary tax, saying

“We have proposed the idea of a voluntary fund for air travellers coming to the Maldives. Even if each tourist contributed \$10, that’s \$10 million (a year) and a substantial contribution to the carbon neutral program. I believe most of the tourists who come to the Maldives are environmentally conscious and quite happy to make a contribution to making the Maldives carbon neutral.”

The Maldives is also trying to secure nearly \$30 million from the Climate Investment Funds, an organization that channels funds from different development banks to facilitate poorer countries to run low carbon projects. **S**

SRI LANKA

Energy Woes

Sri Lanka’s state-run Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB) has announced that it will cut electricity supply to homes, shops, offices and government buildings for three hours every day due to a severe shortage in supply from hydropower stations.

The load shedding will rotate around various parts of the country. Sri Lanka faces a serious energy crisis after two dry monsoon seasons caused a drought in the central region, prompting the energy ministry to take this step. Announcing the step, the energy ministry commented, “We are facing difficulties in balancing the supply and demand. The only alternative is to carry out power cuts across the country until further notice.”

There is a possibility of further power

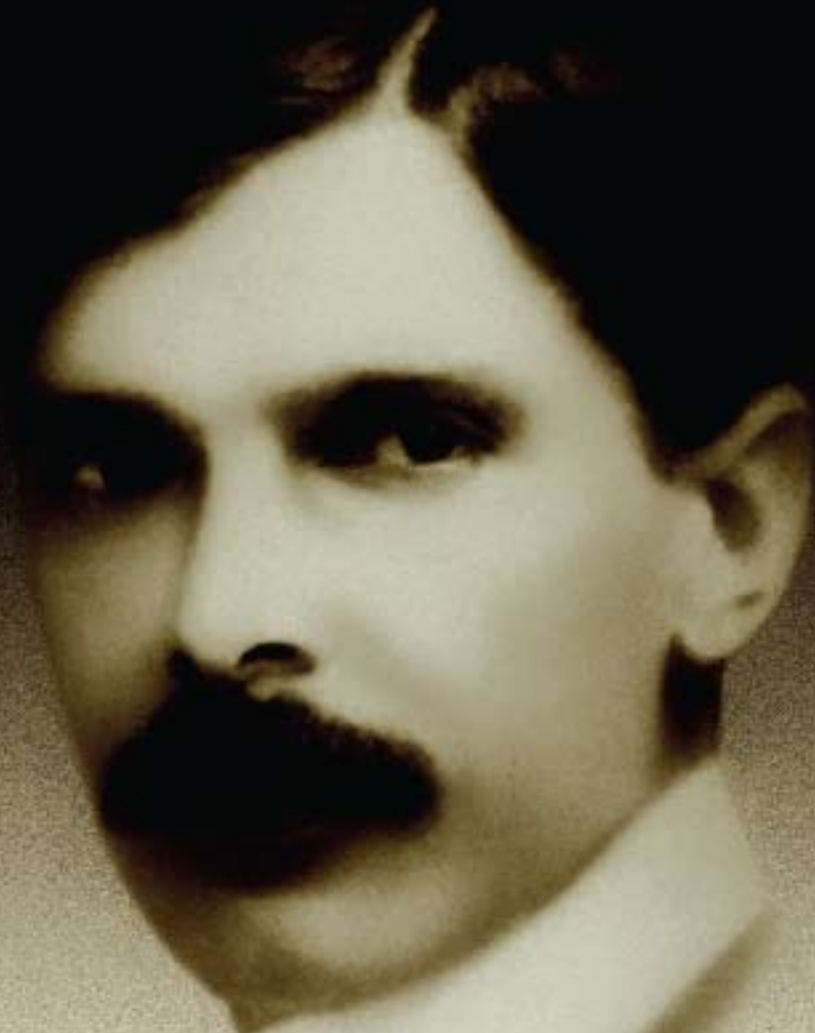
cuts that could hamper economic growth. Sri Lanka has already lost nearly 22 percent of its capacity to meet the demands of 1.81 gigawatts (GW) due to power station failures, thus impacting industries and commercial production. The country usually generates 3.1 GW of electricity but the drought this year has critically reduced output by more than

1 GW. In line with the energy crisis, President Mahinda Rajapakse has or-



dered to clear deposits from reservoirs to increase water capacity. **S**

It's never too late!



“ You are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques or to any other place of worship in this state of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion or caste or creed - that has nothing to do with the business of the state. ”

*Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah
addressing the Constituent Assembly
on August 11, 1947*



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Another Birthday

Pakistan enters its sixty-fifth year with quite a hefty baggage -- insulted, humiliated and beaten out of shape by its protector and provider.

By S.G. Jilanee

It is always said that before the start of the next year we should pause and ponder, take stock of the past, draw up a profit and loss account and make plans for the future. This routine has been going on ritually. But when we actually do enter the next year we forget the past and continue with what we have been doing all along.

At the threshold of its sixty-fifth birthday, Pakistan carries the ignominious baggage of 2011, which began with the assassination of the Punjab governor Salman Taseer and the daylight murder of two men in Lahore by Raymond Davis in January. The first event exposed the naked religious intolerance among not only less educated people like his security guard Mumtaz Qadri who gunned him

down, but also among the supposedly better educated ones comprising the lawyer community, who joined in rejoicing at Qadri's valorous feat. The second showed how freely Americans can kill Pakistanis in their own home.

In March, Minister for Minorities Shahbaz Bhatti was killed. And on May 2, the Pakistan army was utterly humiliated when US Special Forces literally "invaded" and "occupied" the country briefly to kill Osama bin Laden.

Finally in November, US troops killed 24 Pakistani soldiers at the Salala checkpoint without cause, for which America declined even to offer an official apology, trying to gloss it over as the result of mutual mistakes. Meanwhile, US senator Paul Rand threat-

ened to cut off all financial assistance to Pakistan if it did not unconditionally release Dr. Shakeel Afridi, who is serving a sentence for imprisonment awarded by a Pakistani court. Rand wants Afridi released because through a fake anti-polio program in Abbottabad, he had assisted the CIA to locate bin Laden.

When the US refused to offer a formal apology on the Salala incident, Pakistan retaliated by closing the transport of NATO supplies across its territory. As a consequence, Pak-US relations nose-dived as never before.

America went on applying more heat to force a reopening of the NATO supplies. It withheld dues it owed to Pakistan for its services in the anti-terror war. Threats of total suspension of

US aid from the Capitol Hill became routine.

Even Barack Obama weighed in by humiliating President Zardari at the Chicago Summit on Afghanistan in May this year, though the latter was an invited guest. At the same time, Defence Secretary Leon Panetta cried from Kabul that America was losing its patience with Pakistan over the “Haqqani network.”

At home, Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani became a martyr to his loyalty for President Zardari. He refused to obey the Supreme Court’s order to write to the Swiss court to reopen the money laundering case against Zardari, was convicted for contempt of the court and lost not only his office but even his Shura membership.

Shia massacre has gone on unabated. People disappear and their mutilated bodies are found a few days later in Balochistan. The Supreme Court has been doing its best to secure justice to the persecuted people but its efforts remain hindered by the apathy of the executive branch. And from Afghanistan, Mullah Fazlullah recently made incursions into Dir, beheading a number of Pakistani troops they captured.

However, relations with the USA are going to be the top issue for Pakistan in the coming year. Some hope has been rekindled with Hillary Clinton offering a tongue-in-cheek apology for the Salala incident and Pakistan at once reopening the NATO supply route. With that the Pentagon has also offered to release 1.1 billion dollars for Pakistan’s wages in America’s anti-terror war that it had been withholding as punishment for the closure of NATO supplies. In consequence there is jubilation in the highest quarters.

But the most vital issue will be the elimination of the Haqqani network. As the deadline for the drawdown

of US troops nears, US impatience for Pakistan to act decisively will increase. Nonetheless, how the latter responds to the demand remains unpredictable.

Pakistan’s relations with India had seemed to be warming up in 2011 with the prime ministers of the two countries meeting several times at international events and President Zardari’s private visit to India last April.

“The most vital issue will be the elimination of the Haqqani network. As the deadline for the drawdown of US troops nears, US impatience for Pakistan to act decisively will increase. Nonetheless, how the latter responds to the demand remains unpredictable.”

Meanwhile, India’s Supreme Court released Pakistani microbiologist Khalil Chishti from Indian prison on bail. And Pakistan responded by releasing Indian national, Surjeet Singh.

But the sudden deportation of Sayed Zabiuddin Ansari alias Abu Jundal by Saudi Arabia to India seems to have brought the neighbors back to square one. Jundal, alleged to have been present at a control room in Karachi from where he directed the Mumbai massacre, has implicated the ISI and Pakistan army officials in the affair. Overshadowed by this development, the foreign secretaries’ meeting became a damp squib.

Among domestic issues, corruption and economic woes, the insurgency and disappearances in Balochistan, shia killings, TTP militancy and the protests being organized by the Pakistan Defence Council and other opposition parties against the resumption of NATO supplies are the

major problems to be tackled.

No less menacing is the question about the prime minister writing the letter to the Swiss Court. Raja Pervez Ashraf, has declared unequivocally that he would follow his predecessor’s line. But if he does, he may also attract the same action from the Supreme Court that would lead to another crisis of sorts.

Meanwhile, in order to pre-empt

any contempt action against Ashraf, if he refuses to write the letter, the cabinet approved a bill to amend the contempt of court ordinance, by exempting the president, governors and ministers from the purview of contempt.

The Chief Justice reacted to the move by declaring that the Supreme Court can quash any law that encroaches upon the constitutionally guaranteed basic rights of the people. This is a clear message to the government. How it responds remains to be seen.

Pakistan needs a serious heart-searching and a total rethink particularly on its foreign policy. 64 years of hatred and conflict with India have availed it nothing. So why not change the therapy, giving love and peace a chance? **S**

S. G. Jilane is a senior political analyst and former editor of SouthAsia Magazine.

Pak-U.S. relations were not so complicated a few decades ago.

Recently however, the process of degeneration, deterioration, stagnation and antagonism has dealt a hard blow to the already fragile bond that existed between the two "allies." Following the U.S led attack on the Salala checkpost on November 24, 2011, Pakistan promptly blocked NATO supplies to Afghanistan for eight months, until an apology was rendered. Supply routes were restored on July 4, 2012 when Islamabad claimed that Washington had duly apologized for the Salala incident. Pakistan also claimed that all future drone attacks would be carried out with the consultation of Islamabad and the issue of restoring the payment from the coalition support fund would also be sorted out soon.

With election year looming, the Pakistani government has comfortably claimed that the most unfortunate phase in Pak-U.S. relations is over and relations between the two countries, who also happen to be allies in war against terror, will normalize. Cautious optimism expressed by the U.S. Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton and other American officials on the "perceived" breakthrough in Pak-U.S. relations may be a reality but what is more important here is to contemplate whether "complications" in Pak-U.S. relations, which have previously frozen ties at the economic, political and strategic levels, have been addressed.

Till late 2009, when the Obama administration had planned its foreign policy agenda, with regard to the Af-Pak policy, Pak-U.S. relations were lukewarm, sometimes almost cooperative. However, the violation of the sovereignty of Pakistan due to periodic drone attacks launched under CIA operations in Afghanistan and the high level of anti-Americanism permeating different segments of Pakistani society, were serious concerns on both sides. Even then, Pak-U.S. ties at the state

and military level, remained stable.

The year 2011 however, plunged the tumultuous relationship into a state not seen before. The arrest of CIA official Raymond Davis in Lahore on charges of killing two people in a busy locality of that city; his release under mysterious circumstances; "Operation Geronimo" which killed Osama bin Laden in the garrison city of Ab-

the situation, the two sides made a serious effort to alleviate tensions in July this year so that the proposed plan for a military withdrawal of U.S./NATO/ISAF forces from Afghanistan in 2014 could occur under stable and secure circumstances.

However, the incidents of 2011 have left a bad taste in many Pakistani mouths. Public sentiment in the

The Day After

In the wake of the devastating incidents of 2011, the Pakistan-US relationship now needs a strong injection of stability, trust and respect in order to survive.

By Dr. Moonis Ahmar

botabad and the attack on the Salala checkpost near the Pak-Afghan border which killed 24 Pakistani soldiers and officers, augmented the level of complications in Pak-U.S. relations.

With the dawn of the year 2012, tension, anger, antagonism, mistrust and suspicion overshadowed goodwill, normalcy and stability in Pak-U.S. relations. Realizing the gravity of

US too, shows blatant signs of anti-Pakistan rhetoric, impatience and mistrust. Nothing else has so negatively impacted people-to-people interaction and influenced mindsets. These complications can no longer be eradicated merely by official statements or by making cosmetic measures.

At least three major steps must be taken by Pakistan and the United

States to repair the damage caused and restore ties to a workable level.

First, Pakistan must undertake a cohesive exercise to reanalyze and decide how it wants to maintain its relations with the United States on the basis of sovereign equality. It is easy to assert that Pakistan will not tolerate any U.S. violation of its sovereignty but do the military and state actors

trickle down and improve the socio-economic status of the masses. The same is true of the U.S. military supplies to Pakistan which fail to address real security issues and only benefit the topic hierarchy of the military.

Second, Pak-U.S. relations will desperately require a strong measure of transparency and documentation. If Raymond Davis was operating in Pakistan, was it the result of some formal agreement between the U.S., the Pakistan government or the CIA? Is there any agreement at the official level which permits U.S. drone attacks on the tribal areas of Pakistan or are such attacks carried out with the verbal connivance of Islamabad? The absence of any written agreement between Pakistan and the United States which outlines the role, responsibilities and modalities on issues of critical nature like the drone attacks, CIA operations and NATO supplies must not be allowed. Apart from transparency, this exercise will also inject a strong level of accountability and deliverance desperately required from the Pakistan government. Even Pakistan's decision to re-open NATO supplies for Afghanistan has occurred without any written agreement.

Third, as long as the parameters of Pak-U.S. relations are based on external security dynamics, one cannot expect stability and a sense of responsibility in their ties. Public opinion in Pakistan that the American motive is merely to use their country for war in Afghanistan is a major source of complication in Pak-U.S. relations. Unequal and asymmetrical relations between Pakistan and the United States are nothing new and can well be described as a relationship between a "master and a subordinate."

Pakistan and the United States urgently need to establish goodwill, trust and sovereign equality in their relations. U.S. economic assistance to Pakistan since 1950s has failed to

trickle down and improve the socio-economic status of the masses. The same is true of the U.S. military supplies to Pakistan which fail to address real security issues and only benefit the topic hierarchy of the military.

Unlike the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, when things were not so complicated in Pak-U.S. relations, since the 1980s, one can observe not only a deepening of anti-Americanism in Pakistan but also indifference on the part of the United States on issues which tend to deepen the level of mistrust between the two countries.

The domestic situation in Pakistan has worsened because of a severe economic crisis, absence of the rule of law, energy and water crisis. The image of Pakistan as a stable and functional democracy with accountability to its people is lacking at the international level, which acts as a further deterrent for Pakistan to secure international support in order to deal with terrorism, militancy and extremism. Like other major powers of the world, the United States also knows the fault lines of the Pakistani state and society and because of hostility and antagonism prevailing in different segments of the population, is not interested in provide a helping hand to save Pakistan from further degeneration.

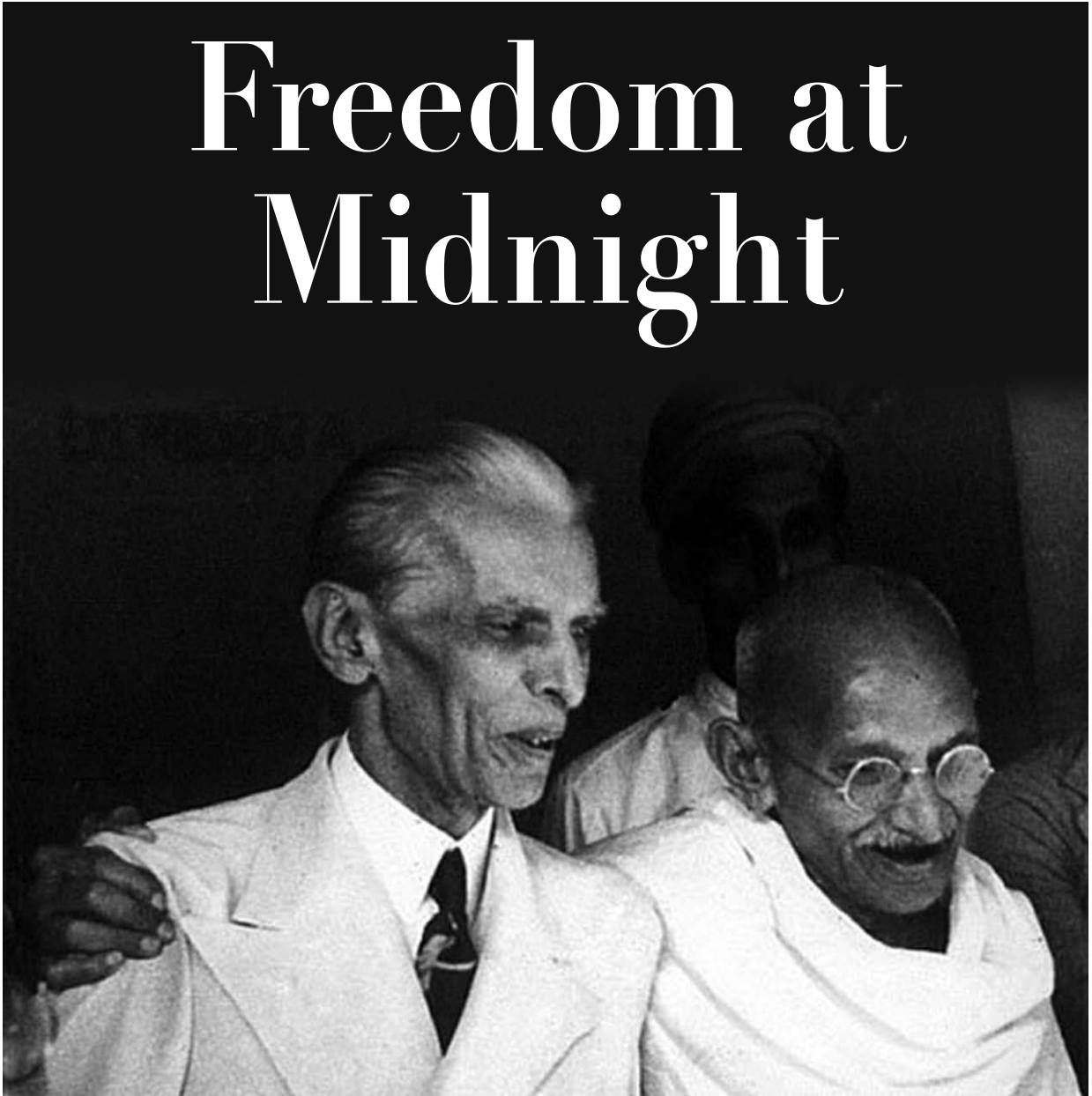
There is no short-term solution to deal with the complexities and complications currently plaguing the relationship but there is certainly a way out to deal with the predicament that overshadows their ties. Only when the two sides realize the complexities and complications in an unbiased manner and pledge to resolve such matters by pursuing a pragmatic approach, will there emerge any ounce of stability in an otherwise tumultuous relationship. ■

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possess the capability to prevent such an action launched by CIA or by the U.S. military? Ironically, just two days after the resumption of NATO supplies, CIA operated U.S. spy planes carried out two drone attacks in Datatkhel area in North Waziristan, killing 24 people. Since 2004, more than 2,500 people have been killed in drone attacks. Drone attacks are a blatant vio-

Freedom at Midnight



A great body of literature provides accounts on the independence of the subcontinent, but India and Pakistan have had to face two very different fates.

By S. M. Hali

The independence of Pakistan and India has been fairly well chronicled, both with accuracy and biases. For instance, the renowned book 'Freedom at

Midnight' (1975) authored by Larry Collins and Dominique La Pierre, famous historians/writers, for a major part, revolves around the incidents that took place from

the time Lord Mountbatten reluctantly accepted his posting as the last Governor General of India up until Mahatma Gandhi's assassination. It records the end of

the British Raj -- the end of the Empire on the subcontinent -- the handing over of the "Jewel in the Crown" and the embodiment of the freedom movement, which started long years before Mohandas Gandhi.

Told in a series of vignettes, the book jumps back and forth throughout the long account of Britain's adventure and involvement in India. The authors have heavily leaned on narratives of Lord Mountbatten: the last Indian Viceroy and a close friend of Jawaharlal Nehru, Jinnah's nemesis and according to the Beaumont Papers, the man who swayed Cyril Radcliff in shifting the final Pak-India boundary to India's advantage by reassigning Gurdaspur to it, thereby providing ground access to Kashmir. In 1947, Christopher Beaumont was a private secretary to the senior British judge, Sir Cyril Radcliffe, chairman of the Indo-Pakistan Boundary Commission; the Beaumont Papers were made public in 1992.

'Midnight's Children' is another volume on Pak-India Independence, authored by Salman Rushdie (of Satanic Verses fame), which also deals with India's transition from British colonialism to independence, leading to the partition of 1947. Narrated in Rushdie's inimitable style, the story is told through a mythical character Saleem Sinai, born at the stroke of midnight August 14/15 1947, i.e. sharing birthdays with Pakistan and India. The novel, which was awarded both the Booker Prize and the James Tait Black Memorial Prize in 1981, is now being turned into a movie by Deepa Mehta, is set in the context of actual historical events interspersed with historical fiction.

Irrespective of narratives, six and a half decades later, even a neutral observer can take cognizance of the deep divide that led to the creation of both states. Jinnah envisaged a separate homeland for Muslims, based on bonhomie and camaraderie, which would lead both nations to achieve their potential while India aspired for freedom from British slavery. Regrettably, born of the same womb, separated at birth, India and Pakistan have clashed on numerous occasions since independence

and have been on the threshold of war many times. Ever since the two acquired nuclear weapons, the world has held its breath lest the duo get embroiled in a conflict, which may turn into a holocaust. The irony is that despite sharing a language, culture and history, the two have been locked over military-security concerns for decades, much to the detriment of their populace, since the billions of dollars expended on arms and weapons could have alternate uses like development of infrastructure, education, health and other basic amenities.

The very basis of independence has been contested by various writers and thinkers. Mahatma Gandhi opposed the creation of Pakistan, which is chronicled by D.G. Tendulkar. In his book, 'Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi' quoting from his argument presented after the adoption of the Lahore Resolution, "The 'two-nation' theory is an untruth. The vast majority of Muslims in India are converts to Islam or are descendants of converts. They did not become a separate nation, as soon as they became converts...."

We, the students of Pakistan's history like to believe that Jinnah had the prescience to foresee the predicament of Muslims in undivided India thus he renewed his efforts for independence for the Muslims of the subcontinent, although in his epoch making speech to the Constituent Assembly on 11 August 1947, Jinnah declared that people of all religious creeds and faith were welcome to inhabit Pakistan. Yet, partition riots on both sides of the divide took a heavy toll of lives.

Jaswant Singh, former BJP politician and author of 'Jinnah - India, Partition, Independence,' now reveals that Congress leaders Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel "conceded" Pakistan to Jinnah with the British acting as an ever helpful midwife. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, a Muslim leader of the Congress, in April 1946, during an interview to renowned journalist Shorish Kashmiri, had predicted that religious conflict would tear apart Pakistan and its eastern half would

carve out its own future. He even said that Pakistan's incompetent rulers might pave the way for military rule. He opined that Muslims of the Indian subcontinent are a minority but to maintain their collective strength and safeguarding their rights, they should not divide India.

Unfortunately, most of his predictions came true. The Muslims in India remain downtrodden but the plight of Pakistan is no better. In 1971, East Pakistan was wrestled free with Indian support and it became Bangladesh. Military rule has plagued Pakistan for most of its existence, while corruption, bad governance, ethnic and sectarian strife have wreaked havoc within the country.

India's strength has been its adherence to the principles of democracy and a string of rulers, who have guided its economy towards a path of relative prosperity. India's teeming millions still starve but it presents the dazzling opportunity for a vast market to the international community, after earning their respect and being recognized as a nuclear power; it vies for a permanent seat in the UN Security Council which will further enhance its stature. Pakistan on the other hand, having been deprived of the able guidance of both Jinnah and Liaquat Ali Khan in its infancy, has been led by mere pygmies, whose lack of vision has hampered its growth and today it is looked upon as a harbinger of terrorism and as being on the brink of failure.

Pakistan can still come out of the quagmire it is steeped in by focusing on the growth of its economy and indulging in trade and commerce with its neighbors on an equal footing. The progress of ASEAN, SCO and EU should serve as examples for emulation where neighbors share the strengths and opportunities of each other, sinking differences and bringing prosperity to all. **S**

Group Captain © Sultan M. Hali, now a practicing journalist, has contributed over 2000 articles, produced 125 documentaries and hosts a TV talk show. He is currently based in Islamabad.

No Love Lost

India and Pakistan have had a tumultuous history but peace in the region can only be achieved by learning from past mistakes and a genuine commitment to mutual cooperation.

By Munir Ishrat Rahmani

The wise men of pre-independence Indian politics, leading the movement for self-rule in the 20th century could hardly visualize in correct perspective the consequences of India gaining freedom from British rule. The demand for a separate homeland by the Indian Muslims on the basis of the 'two-nation theory' was being raised but its implications had not been accurately assessed by the Muslim League, the Indian National Congress or any of the communities. The experience of co-existing as peaceful neighbors - India and Pakistan (if and when implemented) - would have been a novel test for the political leadership of the subcontinent. Judging by the prevailing political environment and the heritage before and during the freedom movement, the chances of a peaceful era in the South Asian subcontinent after the creation of Pakistan could only be considered remote, at best. The social and political concepts dominating the ideology of the two communities did not auger well for good neighborly relations after independence but the extent of bitterness and the magnitude

of hatred against each other could not have been anticipated as the subsequent unfortunate events proved.

Ever since the day Pakistan was created relations between the two major states of the subcontinent have remained quite unfriendly ranging from lukewarm to inimical due to a number of unresolved vexing issues like Jammu & Kashmir, distribution of water of rivers flowing from the Indian side, disputed areas such as the Rann of Kutch, Siachen Glacier, etc. Pakistan showed remarkable restraint by not taking advantage of India's weak position in 1962 when it was engaged in war against China. India, however, did not leave the opportunity of damaging Pakistan when the East Pakistan crisis offered it a chance in 1971. The legacy of animosity continued. India rejoiced at the creation of Bangladesh and disintegration of Pakistan. Most in India thought that the concept of 'Two Nations' was defeated and it was proved that the partition of India was ill-conceived, forgetting the fact that another Muslim majority area formed a separate Muslim state - Bangladesh - and the action of the partition of In-

dia was not reversed.

There have been occasions when some possibility of better relations surfaced like a silver-lining with a dark cloud but somehow every time an ugly incident or an adverse development took place that reversed the process of peace in the region. 'Hawks' and 'Doves' on both sides play their role enthusiastically to influence the situation and orchestrate hues between despair and hope. A debate is omnipresent in India: "Is a strong and stable Pakistan in India's best interest?" Educated youth with secular thinking, leftists, liberals and some parts of the establishment agree with this and support people to people contact to reduce tensions between India and Pakistan as well as consider hostile rhetoric against Pakistan harmful for peace in the region. However, India's armed forces, security establishment and ultra-rightist groups do not share this view and dogmatically believe that "a weakened Pakistan would do no harm to India and is in India's best interest." They quote the Kargil operation and the attack on Mumbai in November 2008 in support of their apprehension. Interestingly, a three-member committee of interlocutors headed by journalist, Dileep Padgoankar was tasked with ascertaining the views of the people on resolving the Kashmir tangle. The team recommended in its 180-page report to Home Minister, P. Chidambaram in October 2011 that a constitutional committee should review all central laws relating to Jammu & Kashmir to make permanent article 370 of the Indian constitution that grants special status to the state. However, nothing significant was achieved through this exercise.

The business community on either side of the border is keen to see trade between the two countries flourish like regular trade between any of the European countries. Back-channel efforts have developed intensely to-

wards this goal and tangible progress appears to have been made. These efforts have been supplemented by the good work of human rights activists who try to bring the people from both sides closer through cultural exchanges. However, these efforts are opposed by many religious or ultra-rightist groups, some sections of the civil establishment and most of the uniformed elements of both countries. Pakistan government's gesture of announcing the status of 'Most Favored Nation' to India was received with mixed feelings in the country. It got flak from the 'Hawks' but the 'Doves' praised it. Some experts find free trade with India damaging for the development of the Pakistani economy while some view it in a more global context and consider it a positive step towards an opening for Pakistan's exports in the Indian markets.

The unfortunate incident in Siachen this April forced many on both sides of the border to re-assess the need for holding on to the glacier at a high cost of human lives and money. The Siachen Glacier situated at an average altitude of about 17,700 feet above sea level in the Karakoram Range has been disputed territory for almost three decades between India and Pakistan. The un-demarcated area lay uncontested till 1984 when the Indian Army launched an operation in April that year to establish a claim on it. Pakistan troops rushed to evict the Indians but could not achieve complete success due to the difficult terrain and logistics. Of the three important passes in the area, two are under Indian control while the third one is with Pakistan, which overlooks and controls India's access to Leh district. Since April 1984 both sides have tried to dislodge rival troops from the glacier but failed to succeed.

In April this year the Pakistan Army's camp in Siachen accommodating a battalion headquarters bore the brunt of an avalanche and suf-

fered heavy casualties. 166 men including the CO perished under snow. Once again the talk of withdrawing troops from Siachen was in the air as both sides have suffered no less than 4000 casualties, mostly through avalanches, frost-bites, health issues and accidents. In an environment of trust deficit, the real problem lies in the uncertain future after the withdrawal of troops from the glacier.

Delegations of defence officials from India and Pakistan met again to resolve the Siachen dispute in June 2012, which was the 13th meeting of this nature and once again failed to make any headway. Pakistan's Army chief of staff had also called for a negotiated settlement of the Siachen issue and suggested that the glacier should be demilitarised. His appeal, obviously, had no positive effect on the outcome of the talks.

The latest round of meetings between the foreign secretaries of India and Pakistan was held in the first week of July this year in New Delhi. As expected, nothing substantial emerged from these talks except a reiteration of the political will to continue the dialogue further to resolve the outstanding issues. The scheduled visit of the Indian Foreign Minister, SM Krishna to Islamabad in September 2012 was announced at a press conference addressed by the two foreign secretaries after the meeting to confirm the willingness of both countries to enter further talks.

The 'disclosures' made during the interrogation before the Indian investigation agencies by one Zabiuddin Ansari aka Abu Jundal (reportedly a member of Lashkar-e-Taiyba, extradited by Saudi Arabia) were highlighted by the Indian foreign secretary, Ranjan Mathai and pointed towards the alleged involvement of Pakistan's security officers in planning and executing the Mumbai attacks of 26th November 2008. However, Jundal's Pakistani counterpart, Jalil Abbas Ji-

lani, promptly and strongly rejected this accusation.

Among other issues, the threat of terrorism, promotion of cultural exchanges, bilateral relations in sports, Jammu & Kashmir and trade relations were discussed in the meeting. India clearly wants Pakistan to 'do more' to prevent the use of its soil for terrorist activities against its neighbors and cooperate in bringing to book the culprits involved in the attack on Mumbai in 2008. The impasse, it appears, continues which sums up the 'efforts' to resolve the outstanding issues be-

tween India and Pakistan through negotiations.

In the changing times of a new world order when the Queen of England readily shook the hand of a yesteryears' terrorist, a former Irish Republican Army commander Martin McGuinness, a message was sent out to all nations through the symbolic gesture of peace. India and Pakistan will have to learn from their past mistakes and go the extra mile to show their earnest desire of making peace to keep pace with the rest of the world. Despite the past acrimony and dislike,

both sides now have to realize that genuine cooperation and good neighborly relations are the ingredients of formula for peace in South Asia and the prosperity of their people. **S**

Munir Ishrat Rahmani is a former Colonel of the Pakistan Army. He is a graduate of the Command and Staff College, Quetta and has fought during the 1965 and 1971 Indo-Pakistan Wars. He was stationed in East Pakistan during the 1971 conflict and is the author of a forthcoming book on Indo-Pak military history.

‘Yes, We Matter...’

A country that proudly gave the first Muslim female prime minister to the world is still struggling to give women their rightful status.

By Amna Ehtesham Khaishgi

Google ‘Pakistani Women’ and you will immediately stumble upon countless horrifying stories. Despite the phenomenon of woman empowerment catching imaginations across the globe and a web of NGOs spending millions to promote women rights, Pakistani women have become an unfortunate symbol of abuse and exploitation. Sixty-five years after independence, the Pakistani state still lacks a cohesive system that accords its women respectful and responsible treatment. Even sixty-five years later, women have failed to amalgamate into mainstream society, as they should have.

They say things are changing in Paki-

stan. They claim change is visible on the roads of Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad. Perhaps they are right. Today, more women are going to work in offices or are joining universities rather than aimlessly strolling through bazaars and shopping centers like lost souls. But are these the indicators of change in society?

Pakistani women constitute almost half the population in the country. No doubt, these are impressive numbers when looked at as a consumer counter. But the life of a woman goes beyond the race of productivity and consumerism. The real question is whether the worth of a woman has found meaning in our society. If it is

unfair to label Pakistani women as fragile victims in a country; lists like “100 Women of Pakistan Who Matter”, published by Newsweek magazine also do not represent an accurate picture of the country.

Let’s take this list of 100 most powerful women of Pakistan, who, as the magazine claims, have changed the face of the country. Most of them are foreign qualified and have been raised in a modern urban society, largely disconnected from the average Pakistani woman and increasingly oblivious of their woes. While these may be the most successful women in Pakistan, they are certainly not the only ones who matter!



So who really matters when it comes to the image of Pakistani women? Is it those who attain global recognition and give a new face to the country or those who remain unknown yet become heroes in their own right? Glance through any public bus in Karachi and dozens of women of all age groups can be seen stuffed in a small cubicle, going to work or university. Each woman has a mission to achieve. These ordinary women may not have individual success stories worth taking to the foreign press but they are critical lifelines to their families. A large number of them have been at the receiving end of exploitation at some stage in their life. But they refuse to give up. Continuously pushed to the ground, they rise again, often failing to even realize that they are being mistreated and abused by society. They accept their circumstances and struggle to survive and lead a happy life, without much support. These women are the unsung heroes of Pakistan, bigger than any front page headline. Unfortunately, the world fails to take notice of such women, unless their sacrifices overlap the interests of those who “matter.”

On the other hand are the Pakistani

women who have achieved their dreams, made a mark on the global stage and in turn have become symbols of national pride. But they are not ambassadors in the true sense. The most disturbing factor behind such achievements is that they stand in isolation, providing only a one-sided picture of the country. While the world may cheer their success, these women only represent the marginalized elite, remain disconnected from their own society and the women of their own soil. The world may consider them influential but, unfortunately, they have little influence in their home country, especially among women.

A dual disconnect prevails on both sides: one between the silent strugglers and the world and another between achievers and the grassroots. It is the responsibility of those in influential positions to bring to light the plight of the ordinary yet brave women of Pakistan.

It would be unwise to ignore the miseries the average Pakistani woman faces every day. It is imperative that a support system be established for such women that empowers them and provides a safety

net. While they may face problems, these women will also learn how to tackle them.

Likewise, success and fame should not be an urban elite phenomenon. A picture perfect and successful Pakistani woman must move beyond glamorous attire and foreign influence. Making a conscious effort to assimilate into society, the new woman of Pakistan must be tough and ready to bypass the comfort zone that the ‘most influential women’ enjoy.

Stories of Pakistani women making a difference remain confined to the inside pages of newspapers. However, Pakistan has no dearth of stories of bravery and wisdom. Some make headlines while most go unnoticed. There is an urgent need to reverse this trend and bring to the forefront the women who really matter to the nation and not just those who stand alone on the world stage. ■

Amna Ehtesham Khaishgi is a Dubai-based journalist. She has a decade-long experience in diverse spheres of journalism and also works as a documentary filmmaker.

Structurally, Pakistan's economy faces some basic outstanding problems. The most pressing concerns include high levels of illiteracy and corruption, a narrow and shallow tax base, insufficient savings, a lack of investment and absence of transparency. Adding to this, of course, are the crippling problems of unemployment and a deepening energy crisis, besides other socio-economic issues.

The need to address these concerns has never been more urgent and the solution will undoubtedly require some short-term, medium-term and long-term approaches. Short-term steps will provide immediate relief to the people with little adverse impact on structural economic issues. However, a two-pronged strategy is needed. The onus should be on the need for laying a strong foundation for measures that can be undertaken in the future. But such a strategy cannot be designed or implemented if the government is not willing to pay a political price. With election year looming, little groundbreaking measures can be expected from a government desperately seeking re-election.

Controlling inflation in the short term and job creation in the medium term is critical for the survival of Pakistan. Inflation cannot be controlled if the government continues to borrow excessively from the central bank, which in plainer words means printing money. While printing money cannot be stopped, the volumes can and must be controlled. If the government monitors its borrowing from the banks, it will create some space for private sector borrowing. This particular move will boost private sector investment, thus creating more jobs in the economy.

While this might reduce the availability of finances for the federal government, borrowing more from non-bank sources including the National Saving Scheme, is a viable option. Similarly, a revamping of loss-making state-owned enterprises including PIA, Pakistan Steel Mills and Railways is imperative. If this is done sincerely and effectively, the results will emerge within months and ease pressure off the fiscal account. However, this requires a

serious commitment on the part of the government.

The scheme for whitening of ill-gotten wealth should be continued regardless of political criticism. But at the same time, stock exchanges through which this scheme is being implemented must ensure that after the 2014 deadline each and every transaction at bourses will be monitored for taxation purposes and no further extensions will be allowed. Dollar-denominated savings schemes can be introduced for overseas Pakistanis, allowing them amnesty from taxation for some time. This move will not only decrease the fiscal deficit but the current account deficit will also show some decline.

A decline in fiscal deficit would be helpful in keeping inflation under check. On the other hand, even a slight improvement in the current account deficit will ease the present pressure off the rupee-dollar parity, reduce imported inflation and bring down the cost of external debt servicing thus creating more fiscal space.

But a far broader strategy is required to ensure a gradual decline in the current account deficit and to improve the balance of payments. The proposal to allow overseas Pakistanis to participate in national elections must be weighed in the backdrop of the growing importance of home remittances in our economy. After sorting out the dual nationality issue the involvement of some seven to eight million overseas Pakistanis in national politics would not only boost remittances but would also attract foreign direct investment from amongst the companies, thousands of them own and are running abroad.

The external sector of the Pakistani economy has suffered in part because of the global economic situation and more importantly because it has effectively become a war economy. The economic cost of the ten-year war on terror amounts to about \$70 billion. In such a scenario, moves to correct the external sector's imbalances require (a) a fundamental change in Pakistan's foreign policy and (b) launching of an external sector initiative (ESI) on war-footings.



Pakistan's foreign policy must be revised in light of the economic woes it currently faces. It is imperative that the government undertake a cohesive study and chalk out a broad framework with the US on how to conduct anti-terrorism activities under a win-win situation. A normalization of diplomatic ties with the US and the reopening of the NATO supply lines will hopefully clear the chocked lines of foreign exchange inflows in the short term — both in terms of the release of blocked US funds as well as in Pakistan's ability to seek short-term financial support from multilateral lending agencies.

However, the country needs to work simultaneously on ESI to reduce its dependence on politically counterproductive but economically feasible inflows of foreign exchange. Under the ESI, initiatives should



The Time is

Now

Pakistan's economy needs some urgent revitalizing, accompanied by a serious commitment to stability and economic prosperity.

By Mohiuddin Aazim

be taken in all sub-sectors of the external economy with particular emphasis on exports, remittances, and foreign direct and portfolio investment. Pakistan Remittances Initiative (PRI) has already helped in increasing the volumes of remittances to \$13 billion plus or more than 50 per cent of our exports. Similar initiatives towards creating ease of exports and foreign direct and portfolio investment can result in larger inflows of foreign exchange. The core of the ESI in terms of exports and for-

eign investment should be (a) to earn under the current global economic scenario while not losing sight of traditional markets and (b) to facilitate the process of this earning under an umbrella comprising all stake-holders.

On-going export market diversification may be further facilitated and foreign investors should be attracted from the countries whose economies are doing well. China, India, Russia, Bangladesh and Middle Eastern and Central Asian coun-

tries should be encouraged exclusively to invest in Pakistan but investors from across the globe should be facilitated as well. A trade and investment relationship with India should not be viewed as an impediment to the furthering of national security policies but rather as a window of opportunity and cooperation. **S**

Mohiuddin Aazim is a Karachi-based political and economic analyst who writes for national and regional publications.



Gift or a Curse

The youth of Pakistan is a force full of vitality and enthusiasm. However, if consistently distanced and belittled, it could lose its energy and become a liability rather than an asset.

By Syed Ali Abbas Zaidi

*The ways of the world have changed;
The tune is new, instruments have
changed;
Free your mind from mental slavery;
Make the young, masters of the old.*
— Alama Iqbal

Today, every 40th person in this world is a Pakistani. Some 68% of the country's population is below the age of 25, making youth an important factor in an increasingly fragile society. In fact, Pakistan's youth alone could constitute the world's 12th largest country.

Such statistics signify the importance of young people in Pakistan; a valuable yet troublesome bulge that will indeed continue to be visible well into the mid 2020s.

The youth is often considered to be an optimistic constituent, with dreams

and guided by fervor and hope. However, in Pakistan, while the numbers are high, negativity prevails. One need not go far as this trend has permeated local news channels, dominates newspaper headlines and features prominently in conversations at the mass level on any local, regional or national issue.

Education is hard to attain for most of them, health facilities are scarce and economic and social justice is simply not available for the majority. Inflation is slowly squeezing the lower and middle classes, electricity has become a luxury commodity, CNG and petrol pumps are often not operational and hunger and poverty cripple an already desperate and discontented society. In the midst of all of this, the ugly head of corruption rears itself.

Adding salt to the wound is the all-powerful threat of extremism, which is rapidly permeating an unstable economy and shaky society. Extremism is evident in recurring incidences of religious, ethnic and social intolerance. Terrorism has left more than 40,000 dead in the last decade and the Pakistani society still struggles to challenge the radical narrative, in word and spirit.

Despite the thousands of challenges Pakistan faces, this dominant section of the population, namely youth, can serve as a trump card for the future success of the country since more than 105 million people, nearly two-thirds of the entire population, comprises youth.

This section of society can become a game-changer for Pakistan and the entire region. However, if their voice is ignored and their issues not addressed, it will not be long before their despondency turns into sheer hopelessness and transforms into a mass revolt. While much hope can be placed in the youth of Pakistan, they are still nothing more than a wild card. Depending on the conditions, this huge cohort of young

people can prove to be a challenge as well, either leading to conflict and violence or opening the window to new opportunities

It is critical to remember though, that the existing youth bulge grew up in troubling times and is living in even more testing circumstances. The elders of their society were not able to broaden their world-view, empower the young with the mental faculty to look for errors within and consequently be a part of the solution, rather than becoming a part of the problem.

Every mistake made was instantly blamed on a foreign conspiracy, cementing the 'victim' mentality. The consequent identity crisis was never subjected to an intellectual and vibrant discourse to pave the way for an ideological coherence. The youth is essentially a victim of societal trend that undermines young talent, ignores its voice in national discourse and fails to understand that in their individual and collective lives, they might not want the kind of future their elders may want them to have. Never being able to cultivate a role in their communities, the youth has never had the opportunity to hone its leadership potential and become the future stakeholders in Pakistan.

Battling this clash of generations, the youth of the country, equipped with technological advancements, is ready to break free and work towards a more prosperous and evolving society. Traveling across Pakistan and working for the Pakistan Youth Alliance has unveiled for this writer the struggle that Pakistani youth are (unknowingly) engaged in. This perhaps is the first step towards Pakistan's empowered youth involved in the decision-making process of its communities, cities, provinces and, subsequently, the country.

In many ways, the youth of Pakistan is in a desperate search for ways to im-

prove the lives of 190 million people and find common ground between different segments of Pakistani society. The youth today is more vocal, critical and aware of its circumstances such as debating false nationalism or questioning the role of intelligence agencies. The youth has risen as an important player in Pakistan and has played a pivotal role in the democratic history of Pakistan. Swarming on to streets the youth today debates rigid theological interpretations and politicization of religion, illustrating pluralistic tendencies in the masses.

Scores of youth-centric organizations have sprung up and most major political parties have vibrant youth wings that in 2010 and 2011, bravely battled adverse weather conditions to deliver relief to victims of floods.

The diversity that Pakistan boasts of from Karachi to Khyber, the resilience that the Pakistani nation illustrates and the untested sea of youth potential that Pakistan asserts, makes one a strong believer in a 'better' future of Pakistan.

But this cannot be done in isolation. The older generation needs to broaden opportunities for the young to develop the human capital through knowledge and advice. By giving the youth an active role in the collective lives of neighborhoods, communities and the society at large, all generations can work together towards a more prosperous Pakistan.

It is up to the current stakeholders of Pakistan and the Pakistani system whether it wants to engage with and consider this youth bulge a 'gift' or turn its back on an opportunity that may transform into a 'curse', ready to rear its ugly head sooner than later. **S**

Syed Ali Abbas Zaidi is the founder of the Pakistan Youth Alliance, CEC at Khudi Pakistan and community lead at Hosh Media.

Bet on Yourself

It is time to abandon apathy and adopt a proactive attitude, thus betting on yourself to do something for Pakistan.

By Arsla Jawaid

Pakistan and the need to break free from this is urgent.

Individual positive development is the key to a more stable and prosperous society. Let's Think Pakistan (LTP) is one such initiative that draws on the power of the individual to become an agent of positive development. LTP is hosted exclusively by The Moderates – a private sector think tank dedicated to strengthening tolerance, inter-faith harmony and democracy in Pakistan.

By bringing together all concerned individuals to ask what they can do for Pakistan and consciously make a pledge to fulfill it, LTP aims to inspire a movement of individual positive development. Every pledge made, no matter how big or small, is critical for the future of Pakistan and is included on the Ideas canvas with the hope that it will be followed through, thus working towards a more responsible and prosperous Pakistan. Based on the simple idea - if you can think it, you can make it happen - the LTP campaign hopes to create a movement of thinking individuals actively committed to bringing incremental change in a society that is betting on them.

The campaign therefore furthers the idea of a 'committed pledge' - one that the individual is certain he or she will be able to fulfill given their socio-economic status or geographical limitation.

Till date, the pledges range from the big (#52 "I will author easy to read/understand literature in all local languages informing women of their rights as a wife and as a legal heir") to the small (#5 "I will clean my neighborhood!"). All ideas are diverse in both conception and the location they have been pledged from. Pledges have been made not only from Pakistan but also from the Unites States, Canada, India,

United Kingdom, Australia and even from Cameroon and the Republic of Korea!

The team at LTP believes that one needn't be a CEO or a politician to make a difference. Grassroots change will emerge when each individual makes a committed pledge to his country and feels the responsibility to fulfill it. The campaign aims to be much more than just an expression of national good feeling. Instead, it asks for a concrete positive pledge that strengthens the society and nation.

Apart from working from within, the campaign acknowledges that in order to survive, Pakistan needs to work and engage with the global community on a respectful and equal footing. By showcasing a canvas of positive pledges made by the people of Pakistan, LTP hopes to counter negativity and work constructively towards improving the nation's international image and self-esteem. Each pledge is imperative to the country's future and each pledge maker is important.

Reaching out to the international community as well, LTP invites non-Pakistanis to also make a pledge to show their support with their Pakistani counterparts and discover the real Pakistan before forming opinions solely based on media perceptions.

Though only in its infant stage, Let's Think Pakistan hopes to broaden and invite more people to join a movement of committed individuals who are tired of complaining about the state of affairs and are ready to bet on themselves and change their destiny. **S**

Arsla Jawaid is Assistant Editor at SouthAsia Magazine. She is also Director and Executive Producer of Let's Think Pakistan (www.letsthinkpakistan.com).

As Pakistan plunges deeper and deeper into socio-economic crisis, hope and optimism become a fantasy. Political and strategic developments continue to disintegrate Pakistan's image in the global community while issues at home remain unresolved and chronic.

In such circumstances, it is easy, almost convenient, to blame the lion's share of problems on the current state of government without realizing that perhaps real change in a society does not come from the top but rather from the grassroots. Apathy and a fatalistic attitude have swept over



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Change at the Top

The Indian presidential elections have created a powerful re-shuffle in the country's monotonous political setup.

By Sundararajan Murari

Senior Congress leader and former Finance Minister, Pranab Mukherjee has recently become the 14th President of India, trouncing his rival and former Lok Sabha Speaker, Pruno Sangma in an election that has led to a division of political parties, left, right and centre.

Mukherjee secured 70 percent of the ten lakh votes of the electoral

college, comprising members of the Parliament and State legislatures. The main Opposition, BJP and its National Democratic Alliance member, Akali Dal, as well as regional parties like the AIADMK and the Biju Janata Dal, backed Sangma mainly because they did not want to give Congress a walkover.

On the other hand, Mukherjee

had the support of the constituents of the ruling United Progressive Alliance (UPA-II), including the reluctant Trinamool Congress chief and West Bengal Chief Minister, Mamata Banerjee as well as that of Mulayam Singh (Samajwadi Party of Uttar Pradesh) and the Bahuguna Samaj Party of the Dalits. Both the Samajwadi Party and the Bahuguna Samaj Party have been giving outside support to the UPA-II government. As a bonus, Mukherjee got support from the Janata Dal (United) and Shiv Sena, both constituents of the NDA. He also split the left front with the CPM and the Forward Bloc while the CPI and the Revolutionary Social Party decided to abstain. Additionally, the Telugu Desam and the Telangana Praja Samiti also abstained.

Although Mukherjee scored a major victory, the Congress Centre was immediately plunged into yet another crisis caused by the resignation of two trusted and senior Ministers, Sharad Pawar and Praful Patel. In light of recent developments, Prime Minister Singh and Congress president Sonia Gandhi sorely miss Mukherjee who had gained a reputation as a seasoned trouble-shooter, aiding a party uncomfortable with working in a coalition yet powerfully surviving against all odds for the past eight years.

Pawar has voiced discontent over the appointment of Defense Minister, A. K. Antony as the Number 2 in the Cabinet. Pawar who, because of seniority, used to sit next to Mukherjee in all Cabinet meetings, boycotted the meeting held on the eve of the presidential election. He also met with Prime Minister Singh and UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi and complained about the Congress taking decisions on policy matters without consulting allies.

Pawar has remained Congress' trusted ally for eight years, yet the

Congress has taken his support for granted while bending over backwards to accommodate allies like the unreliable TMC and the scam-tainted DMK, thus distorting the Government's image.

With hardly two years left to go for the Parliamentary elections, the Congress will have to get its act together or else allies will abandon the sinking ship. However, the Congress seems to be struggling, what with Manmohan Singh dubbed an under-achiever by Time magazine, Sonia Gandhi ailing and allies pulling in different direction. In desperation, the Congress has called on Rahul Gandhi, projected as crown prince, to take on more responsibility in the party and the government. However, his record of accomplishments does not inspire confidence but the Congress hopes he will infuse young blood into an ageing party.

Inside reports claim that it will be nearly impossible for the Congress to secure a third term and that it may at best get 100 seats in the 500-plus Parliament. It is a small consolation for Sonia Gandhi that the same survey has also predicted that the BJP may only get around 80 seats. In such a scenario, it would be easier for Gandhi to appoint a pliable President, thus clearing the decks for Rahul. Predictably, Rahul announced his decision to play a more active role after the presidential election was over.

Ironically, Mukherjee was not Sonia's first choice. He objected to Rajiv Gandhi being made Prime Minister in the wake of Indira Gandhi's assassination in 1984. Since then his loyalty to the Gandhi family was suspect. When Manmohan Singh secured a second term in 2009, Mukherjee realized his time was up. He made it known to supporters across the party line that

he would not even contest the next election and was instead eyeing the presidency.

In the midst of all this, Trinamool Congress leader Mamata Banerjee made outlandish suggestions that Prime Minister Manmohan Singh be fielded and A P J Abdul Kalam be asked

L K Advani prevailed upon the party to go along with the AIADMK, a potential ally in 2014, and back Sangma.

Finding that the numbers were stacked against him, Sangma pulled out all stops, questioning even the nomination of Mukherjee on the ground that at that time he was holding

In desperation, the Congress has called on Rahul Gandhi, projected as crown prince, to take on more responsibility in the party and the government. However, his record of accomplishments does not inspire confidence but the Congress hopes he will infuse young blood into an ageing party.

to run for a second term, this time as a UPA nominee. She threatened that the UPA would choose former Lok Sabha Speaker, Somnath Chatterjee or former Speaker, Sangma, instead. Kalam, who was President during the BJP-led NDA Government from 1999 to 2005, politely declined as did Somnath Chatterjee.

With her prospective candidates declining the offer, Mamata reluctantly decided to support Mukherjee just days before the election, calling it "a painful decision." She turned against Mukherjee after he refused to bail her out when she requested him to reschedule a debt of Rs. 1 lakh that she had inherited from the previous Left Front Government. Mukherjee as Finance Minister refused.

The BJP waited for the Congress to reach out in order to work out a consensus. After much delay, when the Congress went ahead and announced its candidate, it found itself in a quandary. With its preferred candidate Kalam refusing to contest, senior leader

an office of profit, at the Indian Statistical Institute in Calcutta. He alleged that Mukherjee's resignation was submitted after he filed his nomination and the resignation letter was signed by someone else on his behalf.

But once the election was over, Sangma has had to fight his own battle as all parties are busy preparing for the next election. Breaking ranks with his fellow Nationalist Congress Party leader, Sharad Pawar in joining the presidential race, Sangma lost his position. His daughter, Agatha, a Minister in the UPA Government, was allowed to stay on because she did not campaign for him. Though Sangma may have fought a good fight, he now stands a lone ranger. **S**

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The New Big Four

Afghanistan will become a serious challenge in the years to come. However, if approached with a serious commitment, Iran, China, India and Pakistan could serve as parts of a viable stabilizing force.

By Sunny Peter

As US troops in Afghanistan begin their pullout drill, countries in the region are lining up to fill the impending vacuum. Notwithstanding oft-repeated concerns for stability and security, a power struggle is gaining momentum. As in any foreign policy decision making, national interest will be the most crucial factor impacting the Afghanistan agenda of regional powers. Since falling out with the US, President Hamid Karzai too has been fanatically looking out to make new friends. It is a growing realisation in Kabul that long-term ben-

efits for Afghanistan can only be accrued through a regional mechanism. Apart from ensuring that he retains power amid widespread allegations of corruption and nepotism, President Karzai has worked on a three-fold agenda: protect Afghanistan's territorial integrity, pursue peace with the Taliban, and leverage the country's natural resources to achieve economic development.

However, by a strange coincidence of history, Afghanistan's destiny is in a complex bind, severely impacted by regional power dynamics.

If security and stability are a prerequisite for peace and economic development, ensuring it in the Af-Pak region is a key national interest for all regional actors. Ironically, much of the region's contradictions arise from this commonality in objective. A key challenge that Afghanistan faces is to find a regional mechanism that will enable it to stave off over-dependence on the west. President Karzai travels from capital to capital, meeting heads of states soliciting a common ground to delineate the future of Afghanistan. An effort to achieve this objective among

mutually contradictory regional actors is as elusive as a desert mirage.

Debating the possibility of forging an Iran-China-India-Pakistan alliance to stabilise and secure the Af-Pak region is bound to draw disdain. At best, it can only be brushed aside as wishful thinking. Imaginative, as it may sound, it is not completely without reason. If national interest is what drives nations into bed with enemies, all the four countries have strategic interests in the region.

Notwithstanding its culpability, Pakistan has suffered the brunt of decades of instability in Afghanistan. Sharing a 582 mile border on its east, Iran has a major stake in bringing stability back to Afghanistan. Its relations with the west reaching the lowest ebb, Iran would be more than happy to create a mechanism, which will ensure that western powers stay out of the region. Beyond immediate neighbors, India and China have a two-fold strategic interest in Afghanistan. Security is a key concern as both India and China continue to be harassed by the tentacles of global terrorism operating from safe havens in the Af-Pak region. The second more strategic concern is economic. Driven by a mounting appetite for natural resources, both India and China have laid claim to a major role in the stabilisation of Afghanistan, post US withdrawal. India like China has poured aid into Afghanistan and has invested in its mineral and infrastructure sector, committing billions of dollars to develop iron ore deposits, as well as build a steel plant and other infrastructure.

Interestingly, strategic national interests of regional actors do not necessarily conflict with each other but are mutually complementary. For instance, India's Afghanistan policy is to a great

extent influenced by China's motives rather than Pakistan's actions. Thus, the crucial dimension of regional insecurity arises not from the legitimate perusal of national interest but due to the obscurantist agenda of regional actors. India's effort is to achieve politico-economic dominance in the region as leverage against China which on the other hand seeks to sustain and secure natural resources to fuel its economic growth further. Pakistan's objective is to attain strategic depth in Afghanistan as a means to keep India isolated from the wider neighborhood. Iran also wary of extremism looks to eliminate the western threat from its eastern flank.

However, the most significant struggle that threatens peace and stability in the region is between India and Pakistan. This sibling discord has the potential to provoke a nuclear conflagration. It has also been a major factor aiding and abetting the build-up of a regional terror network. However, notwithstanding their politico-territorial conflicts, India and Pakistan share a common socio-cultural tradition; a past that is closely intertwined with the history of Afghanistan. Iran and China are part of a larger whole.

This foursome alliance comprising Iran-China-India-Pakistan is thus the most feasible regional framework that can foster peace and stability in the Af-Pak region. The strength of this alliance arises from the awareness of their deep entrenched contradictions and the impending commonality of their national interests. Decades of conflict has left the war-ravaged population of Afghanistan in poverty and illiteracy. Extremism, a major security concern in the region, thus finds its roots in the lack of economic opportunity.

Arguing from a standpoint of a

regional mechanism to secure Afghanistan's future, there is a pleasant convergence of views among regional actors. China, India, Iran, the northern neighbourhood of Central Asian Republics and Russia share interests and threat perceptions about Afghanistan. The urgent need to ensure mutually complementary economic growth, combat religious extremism and disable the drug trade are areas that have been identified as key concerns shared by regional powers. Achieving these objective calls for the need to ensure political stability and security in Afghanistan and the wider Af-Pak region. Pakistan on the other seems lost in a quagmire of its internal dynamics ridden by state and non-state actors, which at times has been close to dismantling legitimate political authority. Stability and security in Afghanistan will consequently also help Pakistan stabilize its own politico-economic structure.

It is of course, unwise to sidestep the geo-political sore points that mar inter-state relations in the larger Indian sub-continent. Agreeably the challenges are multifarious and complex. Fostering a regional mechanism to secure the future of Afghanistan and ensure peace and stability in the Af-Pak region is easier said than achieved. Although western scholars and analysts have derided the idea of regional cooperation in the region as "lofty" declarations, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) could provide an ideal platform offering substantial meeting ground in national interests to spur regional powers into action. ■

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More than often, infrastructure projects in South Asia meet their demise in the throes of corruption, sometimes even before the project has materialized. The menace of corruption has taken its toll on the developing world in more ways than one. The Padma Bridge Project in Bangladesh is the most recent deal to bite the dust amidst allegations of corruption in the operations and execution of the project.

In late June this year, the World

(Islamic Development Bank).

As per regular procedure, the WB launched an investigation against SNC-Lavalin, of which it informed the Bangladeshi officials last August, postponing loan disbursement for the project. The Bank claimed to have found irregularities in the appointment of a consultant and the selection of construction firms for the project, submitting a formal report to the Bengali Finance Minister in this regard, who agreed to blacklist SNC Lavalin

to guide lenders about the progress of the investigation.

The first proposal was not implemented by Bangladeshi officials. The Finance Minister issued a prompt statement following the WB decision to cancel funding, stating that, "the problem with these proposals was that we were forced to admit the corruption allegations before they were substantiated."

As for the second proposal, the ACC was already investigating into the

Plagued by Corruption

The World Bank has recently cancelled funding for the Padma Bridge project in Bangladesh amidst allegations of corruption, thus jeopardizing the country's most ambitious project to date.

By Sijal Fawad

Bank cancelled funding for the Padma Multipurpose Bridge Project on grounds of 'high-level' corruption among Bangladeshi government officials, private individuals involved with the project, and the executives of SNC-Lavalin: a Canadian company that won the bid for supervision consultancy during construction of the bridge.

This would have been the largest bridge in the country, involving a total construction cost of \$2.9 billion. Bangladesh's GDP growth was expected to increase by 1.2 percent on completion of the project.

In April 2011, the World Bank agreed to provide \$1.2 billion credit for the project, making it the largest contributor amongst all development partners (DPs). Other DPs involved in the project included JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency), ADB (Asian Development Bank) and IDB

from the bidding process. The matter was later taken up by the Anti-Corruption Commission of Bangladesh (ACC) for investigation.

Continuing with the Canadian investigation at their end, the WB found two officials of SNC-Lavalin guilty of corruption, with one of them claiming to have offered commission to some key Bangladeshi officials, including bureaucrats and politicians, in exchange for getting the company selected for the job.

The WB demanded the government to take three measures in light of their findings. First, to send all suspected government officials on leave until the completion of the investigation. Second, to appoint a special team within the ACC to look into the matter and, third, to share all investigative information with a designated panel of the WB, created specifically

matter. But with respect to the third, there was some hesitation as the ACC is an independent body, not answerable to any foreign agency. Yet, the organization agreed to share information and receive advice not just from the WB but from all development partners involved in the Padma Bridge project.

The Bank, however, was not content with the government's response and in a statement issued on June 29, made a special mention that "In light of the inadequate response by the Government of Bangladesh, the World Bank has decided to cancel its \$1.2 billion IDA credit in support of the Padma Multipurpose Bridge project, effective immediately."

For Bangladesh, the Bank's decision leaves a rather sorry mark, affecting the country's image and perception amongst international institutions.

Following the WB decision, the ADB also withdrew funding from the project a few days later, jeopardizing the implementation of the project.

The allegations leveled by the World Bank cannot be confirmed until the ACC's investigative report is published. In support of the Bank, it must be stated that a department titled, 'Integrity Vice Presidency' found elements of corruption in seven other projects in Bangladesh, of which six

CRCC (Chinese Railway Construction Company) for the bidding process in March 2011. But CRCC's local partner, Venture International, submitted fraudulent documents to bid for the project. The CRCC initially oblivious of the incident, later severed its partnership with the company. According to the Bangladeshi Finance Minister, World Bank's continuous insistence on hiring CRCC, without examining the case, led to delays of about three

media have been critical of the corrupt practices prevalent amongst government officials, most believe that the Bank's stance was too drastic. "As a new-comer to the world of openness and accountability... (the Bank) seems to have recently adopted a policy of chopping off the head because of a perceived headache," said Iftekharuzzaman, Executive Director, TIB, in a press release issued by the institution.



belonged to the roads and highways sector. Consequently, the Bank annulled funding for any project in this sector – a move that was also replicated by DFID (Department for International Development) for the same reasons.

However, no core evidence has been presented by the World Bank and no definite report has been issued by any investigative body either. Even Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) has declared the Bank's decision as 'deeply regrettable, embarrassing and disappointing.'

In defense of Bangladesh, the WB had imposed stringent conditions during the course of financing this project, most of which the government abided by. Furthermore, the Bank repeatedly pressed the government to prequalify

months in implementing the project.

The Bangladeshi PM also terminated the contract of the Project Director, appointed a new secretary, and brought some cabinet changes in the Bridges Division of the Ministry of Communication. These steps were informally requested by the WB when the SNC-Lavalin (who the government had agreed to blacklist) allegations had surfaced. Yet the Bank was not satisfied.

The Bangladeshi government is not willing to take the blame for corruption charges, which have yet to be substantiated by sound evidence. "How could corruption take place when the World Bank did not disburse any money?" Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina lamented.

While many in the Bangladeshi

Others believe that only such extreme measures by foreign institutions can curb down the menace of corruption that continues to plague developing countries like Bangladesh.

Regardless of whether the Bank took the right step, or how true the allegations are, the loss to the people of Bangladesh is immense. Even if traces of corruption exist, international lenders are increasingly wary about the situation. Perhaps this is a wakeup call for Bangladesh to tackle corruption more rigidly as opposed to its stance in the past. **S**

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SRI LANKA



Searching for Stability

The defeat of the LTTE was a means to an end for the Sri Lankan state. The real hurdle is to resettle and rehabilitate the victims of the conflict. So far, Sri Lanka seems to be having a tough time.

By Rizwan Zeb

Not very long ago, the LTTE was arguably the most feared and sophisticated terrorist organization in the world. If a terrorist group were actually powerful and resourceful enough to acquire and successfully use a nuclear device, it would be the LTTE, in keeping with its large support base, international and regional connections and resources. The group virtually held Sri Lanka hostage for decades. The death of the LTTE leadership and eventual elimination of the organization was a landmark success for the Sri Lankan state. However, that was just the tip of the iceberg.

After every ethnopolitical conflict, comes a tougher challenge of rebuilding and the rehabilitation of a large segment of the affected population. Ireland is perhaps one of the best examples of a successful reintegration and rehabilitation program. The Sri Lankan government, though quick in announcing its commitment to resettle its citizens, took a long three years to even start the process. Northern Sri Lanka continues to suffer from a myriad of problems that include heavily militarization and a plethora of social and economic problems.

Northern Sri Lanka comprises of the cities of Jaffna and Vanni, which have many administrative sub-units. According to the Sri Lankan government's figure, the area houses a population of around 9,97,754 and comprises almost 20 percent of the total geographic area of Sri Lanka.

Lack of basic facilities, almost non-existent economic opportunities and a worsening law and order situation continues to divide this struggling South Asian state. While Northern Sri Lanka was direly unstable during the LTTE-Sri Lanka government conflict, during the last phase of the conflict the situation worsened. According to various estimates, almost 300,000 people were internally displaced.

Most of them were detained in various camps established by the Sri Lankan army, under unhygienic and trying conditions.

According to media reports, almost 70 percent of the displaced people have returned to their areas but most have to struggle to regain their property, which is now owned by the army. Another important issue is the issue of war widows. Conservative estimates show least 40,000 war widows in the area who not only require support and opportunities so that they can feed their families but also psychological assistance. Furthermore, the area is heavily mined and although a major effort by various organizations including the Sri Lankan army is under way, it might take years before this part of Sri Lanka can become mine free.

An increasingly troubling concern, reported in the media, is that many young people from the region feel that they are being monitored and filmed by undercover security personnel. Rising crime in the region stands as a stark contrast to the heavy military presence in the area, which has prompted many to question the true intentions of the government. Residents allege that crimes are committed by paramilitary forces or by those who enjoy their backing.

According to a recent report, the Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP), a pro-government paramilitary group is responsible for most of the crimes in the area. A number of LTTE fighters or sympathizers, who were arrested, have been resettled in this area and are regularly subjected to intimidation and threats. The fate of the families of those who died fighting or were detained, remains uncertain.

However, the biggest issue is the sense of victory felt within the Sinhalese community. The sentiment is not completely unjustified as the LTTE, representing the Tamil community

wreaked havoc in the country for so long and targeted the Sinhalese for decades. Yet this sense of victory is the biggest hurdle in the post-conflict reconstruction and integration of Sri Lanka. Sinhalese road signs in Tamil majority areas might be insignificant for the center but have a huge impact on the local population. While it is no surprise that the South celebrates the anniversary of the victory against LTTE, the way this victory has been manifested in the north continues to polarize the country. Reports that the northerners are not even allowed to remember their loved ones is a matter of concern as well as reports that the Sri Lankan army has established the headquarter of its 51st division on a LTTE memorial cum burial ground in Jaffna is disturbing. The army, on the pretext of making new roads has erased a number of graveyards and other such memorials. At the same time, a number of victory memorials have been built using Buddhist symbols throughout the Northern Province.

In the midst of this is the Sri Lankan army, which continues to reassert its power and makes no qualms about reminding the northern population, of who is in control.

Sri Lanka as state has a long way to go before it can become a fully functional and integrated nation state. For this to happen, it has to tread carefully in the north. Defeating the LTTE was not an end but a means to an end. The end should be the integration of the Tamils into the national stream. Unless this happens, Sri Lanka will remain a state in search of itself. **S**

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The communist movement in Nepal has a strong tradition of factionalism and breakups. The fallouts have been so often that many were surprised why it took so long for the Unified Communist Party of Nepal – Maoist (UCPNM) to eventually break up.

“A constitution of the people cannot be drafted by quarrelling day and night with the representatives of the feudal, comprador, and capitalists,” declared Mohan Baidya, Chairman of the new party. While officially launching the Communist Party of Nepal – Maoist (CPN-M), Baidya stated, “It is wrong to restore a constituent assembly or have new elections held. A roundtable conference of major stakeholders for federalism should draft a new

constitution.”

Baidya officially launched the new party at the end of a two-day national meeting of party workers on 19 July, after adopting a 17-page political report. The document commits to “a revolution for a new people’s democracy opposed to parliamentarianism.” The party’s national congress in January is to decide whether to revive the “people’s war” or not. The UCPNM national congress is also scheduled to meet the same month.

The breaking up of the UCPNM is politically important for three reasons. While there has been a worldwide decline in the appeal for communism, there is a pre-

ponderance of communist parties in Nepal. The UCPNM emerged as the largest party in the constituent assembly elections in 2008, thanks to the disastrous failure of the political parties in institutionalizing parliamentary democracy and promote shared economic prosperity. The break up and the infighting among the three remaining factions in the UCPNM will significantly shrink its hold across the country.

Secondly, the break up makes the peace process and the drafting of a new constitution highly uncertain. It further reinforces the argument that elections for a new constituent assembly on 22 November make no sense. Baidya’s proposal for a roundtable conference remains unpopular among other stakeholders. Political parties have no choice but to sincerely build a consensus on completing the stalled integration of the Maoist combatants



A Bad Break-up

The UCPNM breakup adds further complications to an already volatile and complex political process underway in Nepal.

By Jan Sharma

in the Nepalese Army, settle the disputes on a new constitution, get it promulgated and urgently elect a parliament sometime in April.

Thirdly, the progress on a new constitution and elections are not possible in the absence of a government of national consensus. The main opposition political parties such as the Nepali Congress and the Communist Party of Nepal – Unified Marxist Leninist insist on the resignation of the Baburam Bhattarai Administration. Bhattarai, on the other hand, insists there is no point for him to resign unless there is a consensus. The break up gives reasons for Bhattarai to assert his role in the party, as he did during the just concluded seventh plenum of the party, which some party insiders say, has the silent blessing of India. If true, the deadlock gets further complicated.

As the matters stand, the uncertainties will continue. The future of the UCPNM and its relations with other political formations, including the CPN-M, will now depend on the personal equation of the party chairman, Pushpa Kamal Dahal, and Bhattarai. Questions are being raised on the leadership of Dahal, who has remained the supreme leader of the party for the last 24 years. It will be premature to say conclusively that others are making a bid for the leadership. With a faction led by Matrika Prasad Yadav (who left the party in 2009) accusing Dahal of having betrayed the revolution, and now Baidya, considered a key ideologue in the party, also gone, Dahal now directly confronts Bhattarai. The third faction, led by Narayan Kaji Shrestha, only plays second fiddle.

The never ending transition in Nepal, geo-strategically located between China in the north and India on the south, east and west, is already beginning to worry neighbors. China's Nepal policy is guided by the five

principles of peaceful coexistence or the *Panchasheel*, including non-interference in the internal affairs. However, Beijing is worried that Western interests are exploiting the uncertainties and chaos in Nepal to instigate "Free Tibet" anti-China activities. Beijing has been urging Kathmandu to strictly control the illegal migration of Tibetans by stepping up security along the Himalayan border and at the same time has been cultivating closer ties with the Nepalese Army and political parties.

Nepal's relations with India have been extensive. It has always played an important role in the political process but perhaps decisively during and after the silent yet dramatic political changes in 2006. However, New Delhi is worried that the open border is being used by criminal and terrorist elements across the border. It also suspects a possible link with the break-away CPN – M and the Maoist party in India, as is being suggested by the Indian mainstream media. Since the party has just been formed, it is difficult to comment decisively on such a link, except for ideological affinity. Its heavily anti-India rhetoric is obvious, but how this will impact Indian investments or joint venture companies remains to be seen.

Another possible concern in India is regarding the large cache of arms and ammunitions, including automatic rifles such as the AK 47 and short machine guns, possibly looted from the Nepalese Army barracks during the insurgency. During the peace process, the UCPNM handed over some of these arms but not all, saying they were washed away by flooded rivulets. The Armed Police Force have recently seized large quantities of ammunitions of rifles hidden in caves. They were apparently stolen from the cantonments by combatants loyal to the Baidya faction before the breakup

of the party. It is perhaps for this reason that UCPNM Chairman, Dahal decided to bring the cantonments, arms and the combatants under the command of the Nepalese Army on 10 March. A serious national security threat for India is that these arms could be smuggled into the country, which itself is facing the Maoist insurgency. Baidya's CPN – M does indeed have links with the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement (RIM), a global association of revolutionary communist parties based in the United States, that is said to have contributed to the break up.

Another Indian concern is the opposition of the CPN – M as well as some elements within the UCPNM, to agreements and treaties concluded between Nepal and India such as the bilateral investment promotion and protection agreement, and the harnessing of the Himalayan rivers for generation of hydroelectricity. The party is also opposed to the four-point agreement concluded between the UCPNM and the Madheshi parties in August 2011, with alleged Indian instigation. The agreement permits the entry of 10,000 Madheshis in the Nepalese Army, an act denied for the integration of the Maoist combatants. Adding fuel to fire, is the fact that the Madheshis neither fought any armed war nor have a separate army of their own, unlike the Maoists.

The UCPNM breakup is neither the beginning nor an end. The people will decisively speak up on how negatively or positively the UCPNM as well as other political parties have performed during the political transition when they vote in November or later in April. **S**

Jan Sharma is a senior research fellow at the Center for South Asian Studies in Kathmandu. He is also the author of 'Democracy Without Roots.'



Exploiting a Power Vacuum

With elections scheduled for 2013, the Maldives faces a growing Islamist threat. But is it already too late to save the tiny island nation?

By Zan Gilani

Over the last few months, the Maldives has experienced bouts of major political instability far removed from its better known image of idyllic resorts and pristine beaches perfect for holidays and honeymoons alike. Mohamed Nasheed won the presidency in the Maldives's first multiparty elections in 2008, after decades of fighting the autocratic rule of Maumoon Abdul Gayoom often from within a jail cell. But in protests beginning in January this year, Islamists called for a jihad against Nasheed, which eventually came to a head this February when police and army officers backed the protesters and forced him to resign.

Mohammed Waheed Hassan, the current President (and Nasheed's for-

mer Vice President) is said to call his supporters the "mujahideen" (holy warriors), and in undisguised Islamist rhetoric has urged them to defend the Maldives against "the enemies of this country." Without Nasheed in office, it seems the Maldives is more likely than ever to succumb to Islamic extremism. While in power, Nasheed's progressive and moderate policy decisions were not always well received.

Although the Adhaalath (justice) Party was part of an MDP-run coalition under the ex-President, in October 2009 it heavily criticized Nasheed's statement that the death penalty and punishment of amputation should not be incorporated into the penal code. As the leader of the Adhaalath Party

put it at the time, "Islamic Shari'a is Islamic Shari'a. Things cannot be omitted from it." The party's influence was also responsible for the appointment of Dr. Abdul Majeed Abdul Bari as head of the four-year-old Ministry of Islamic Affairs. Bari incidentally was responsible for banning Israeli flights to and from the Maldives in December 2011.

The Adhaalath Party's pressure is not to be underestimated. On December 30 of last year, a statement from the president's office said: "The government has decided to close massage parlors and spas in the Maldives, following an opposition-led religious protest last week calling for their closure." The order followed concerted protests led by the opposition Ad-

haalath Party that accused the Nasheed government of compromising Islamic principles and demanded a strict adherence to Islamic law. The protests are now referred to as the 'Dec 23 revolt.'

In September 2001, religious tensions resulted in the Adhaalath Party breaking away from the coalition. Their reasons included the policy of normalizing relations with Israel, a proposal to make Islamic studies and Dhivehi (the national tongue) optional subjects in higher secondary education, concerns expressed by officials in the Nasheed government about Maldivian students who were travelling abroad for Islamic education, and regulations permitting sale of alcohol to non-Muslims on inhabited islands. The Adhaalath Party even went so far as to say that Nasheed's government was allowing Israel to "influence the country's education curriculum."

Although the Adhaalath party did not perform particularly well in the Maldives first undisputedly democratic election and won no seats in subsequent parliamentary elections, it has gained political strength in the wake of Nasheed's departure from office. As Nasheed said, "...after the coup, they have three portfolios in the cabinet, they are calling the shots in the military, and they are consolidating their position." In the newly oriented political landscape, they are the party most likely to push the Islamist agenda that is able to prosper in the absence of elections. "We have to have an election," said Nasheed in an interview while visiting the Indian capital, New Delhi. "In the absence of that, Islamic radicals are gaining strength in the Maldives."

The Islamist presence is not just a one party affair. Mohamed Jameel, the newly appointed home minister who was educated in a religious high school in Pakistan, is well known to harbor a hardline Islamist posture. Last month, his party issued a pamphlet claiming that empty bottles of

alcohol were found in the presidential offices and accused the government of planning to sell land to Israel. "Islamist organizations and Islamist media outlets have proliferated in the public sphere. Their influence in the political society and the state has increased," says Azim Zahir, a Maldivian analyst. Most tragically, on the day Nasheed resigned vandals smashed ancient Buddhist statues in the National Museum, in acts that echoed the Taliban's destruction of the giant Buddhas of Bamyan in Afghanistan in 2001.

Maldives has strategic importance as it sits in the middle of major crude oil sea routes in the Indian Ocean. But when Nasheed announced his allegedly forced resignation, both the United States and India recognized his successor without objection. Nasheed, unhappy with the perceived sudden loss of support said, "We did so much to make the Maldives more liberal. To suddenly see the United States, so quickly -- they could have held onto their horses for a few minutes and just asked me -- so quickly to have recognized the status quo, that was very sad and shocking." Shashank Joshi, an analyst at the Royal United Services Institute in London, ascribed the State Department's response to its focus on other more volatile priorities, such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, and North Korea.

India is perhaps the most concerned about the Maldives' escalating Islamist tendencies. Although the Indian government was quick to declare a vote of confidence for President Hassan, there is much support for the Maldives' larger neighbor to 'nudge' it in the right direction. Proponents of a more involved Indian foreign policy in the Maldives argue that the current "vacuum" will only help the Islamists consolidate their position.

In 1988, India launched "Operation Cactus", flying its soldiers to Male and saving then President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom from an attempted takeover from alleged mercenaries but

it is unclear whether the current situation warrants a similar response just yet. Former diplomat G. Parthasarathy, who was in the Prime Minister's Office during 'Operation Cactus' believes military intervention is not an option. He said, "This situation is different as it is an internal political upheaval unlike 1988. But before we sent in our forces, we had consulted with both Washington and Moscow. The decision wasn't taken in isolation." Parthasarathy also warned of the possibility in which fundamentalists exploit the nationalist sentiment if Indian troops enter Maldivian soil. For the time being, India is advocating a peaceful transition and restoration of stability before the elections scheduled for October 2013. This sentiment is echoed by both the Waheed government as well as the US though former President Nasheed and his supporters are pushing for an earlier election date.

The rise of Islamism in the Maldives may not have entirely negative consequences. A surge of Middle Eastern interest in the islands points to the profitability of the growing Islamic tourism market. The Maldives saw a 77.8 percent increase in tourist arrivals from the region in the first quarter of 2012 compared to the same period last year, while traditional European markets recorded steep declines.

Despite the threat of rising sea levels and global warming, the Maldivian economy is almost entirely based on tourist revenue. If ultra-conservative Islam eventually takes over the tiny island nation, the Maldives may pay the price in the form of sharply accelerated economic stagnation. The question is do any foreign players value this island retreat worthy of saving or is it already too late? **S**

Zan Gilani is currently studying at Columbia University in New York where he is majoring in political science with a focus on international relations.

Observers previously viewed Arab-Pakistani relations from one of two alternative but one-sided perspectives. It was either from the perspective of the religion shared by the two parties, providing observers with the chance to treat the situation sentimentally. Alternatively, Arab-Pakistani relations were viewed from the vantage point of strictly functional relations, depending on the economic interest whereby, every aspect of the day-to-day interactions between the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and Pakistan could be viewed through the prism of purely



A Recipe for Friendship

Will the Gulf serve as another battlefield for India and Pakistan or can the two countries cooperate in time and become the hub for GCC investment?

By Dr. Abdullwahhab Al Qassab

functional relations.

The reality is somewhat more complex. While overshadowed by questions of a common religion and the economic links, borne out by the large Pakistani expatriate community in the Gulf, the real question is: when will relations between the Gulf states and Pakistan translate into a new geostrategic reality stretching from the Arabian Peninsula to the Indian subcontinent?

India of course will be the primary other force to be considered in all of this. It will be instructive to examine here how the India-Pakistan conflict in one arena — the subcontinent — will make itself felt in the other sphere, the Gulf, where both countries have a potentially large say in affairs.

Factors that would drive Indo-Pakistani competition in the Gulf are already taking shape. The first is the

dependence of both of sub-continental powers on Gulf oil, regardless of whether the provider of that oil is Iran, Saudi Arabia or the UAE. The second factor will be the shared interest of both powers in maintaining the status and wellbeing of their sizable expatriate communities in the Gulf states. The remittances sent back by these communities are in fact an important source of foreign currency reserves for

both the countries in the sub-continent. In 2007, some sources estimate, the roughly 1.7 million Pakistani nationals living in the GCC states sent back US\$ 5.5 billion in remittances (increased to almost \$14 billion in 2012). Although the Indian expatriate community living in the same group of countries is about double the size, the considerably smaller population of Pakistan means that remittances sent back from the Gulf provide the lion's share of the remittances which contribute close to 5% of Pakistan's GDP.

The standing Indo-Pakistani rivalry will have repercussions throughout the Gulf, posing the risk of a sort of cold war, should relations between India and Pakistan worsen. There is nothing preventing the Gulf from becoming a new battleground, where the two sides compete for the GCC's hydrocarbon resources. This is the worst case scenario which could be expected for all concerned, but one for which little is being done to actively prevent. The prospect of such a rivalry is made all the more gruesome by the fact that both of these states possess nuclear weapons.

Having already witnessed and still bearing the brunt of, the 2003 invasion and destruction of Iraq -- a calamity justified on the supposed grounds of the Iraqi possession of Weapons of Mass Destruction -- Arab states are not in a position to deal with yet another layer of geostrategic tinkering based on the possession of nuclear weapons.

It was financial support from the governments of Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Kuwait -- the three most important sources of remittances to Pakistan -- that kept the economy intact after the testing of nuclear warheads in 1998. As Pakistan suffered international sanctions, this was seen as a tangible move seemingly driven by a sense of solidarity on purely religious grounds

with Pakistan. Although the world in 2012 is a very different place -- and, it's true, the same Gulf Arabs are certainly not fond of that other Muslim nuclear project -- this precedent does give an indication of what decides the priorities of Gulf states when it comes to international relations. Yet a further question that remains is the way in which these Gulf states will be able to balance their demonstrated pro-Pakistan bias and cooperation with the United States.

The American presence both in the Gulf and on Pakistan's borders provides a further arena of conflict in which the GCC states could become embroiled. It will be unlikely for those states hosting their own US military bases, to alleviate a situation whereby Pakistan is confronted with an American military presence in Afghanistan. Making matters worse is India's seeming support for Afghan authorities and American presence. Attacks by US drones on the Afghanistan-Pakistan borders and the occasional flare-ups with India mean that the arena of geostrategic interaction between the four major players -- the United States, India, Pakistan and the GCC states -- is always on a knife-edge.

This scenario highlights one of the most important features of the GCC's relations with the subcontinent: the Gulf states have good reason to remain neutral in the conflict between Pakistan and India and are not in a position to make daring gestures.

It would be nearly impossible to describe in complete detail all of the ways in which the quartet of geostrategic actors will flex their muscles in the Gulf. However, some important factors will drive the machinations. It is quite clear that the set of strategic aims being pursued by India differ quite seriously from those of Pakistan. While the former seeks to dominate the Indian Ocean and the surround-

ing neighborhood on the part of India, Pakistan must now focus more closely on self-preservation. Secondly, is the Iranian quest to dominate the Gulf region, consolidating its gains in Iraq and defending and preserving its interests in Syria and Lebanon. India is showing signs of moving along with the West's oil embargo but it remains unclear which path Pakistan will pursue. Recent agreements on the Iran-Pakistan Gas Pipeline only complicate matters further. Thirdly, the outcome of the American-Iranian conflict over Iran's nuclear option and the scope and goals of the American military presence in the Gulf will definitely impact India and Pakistan.

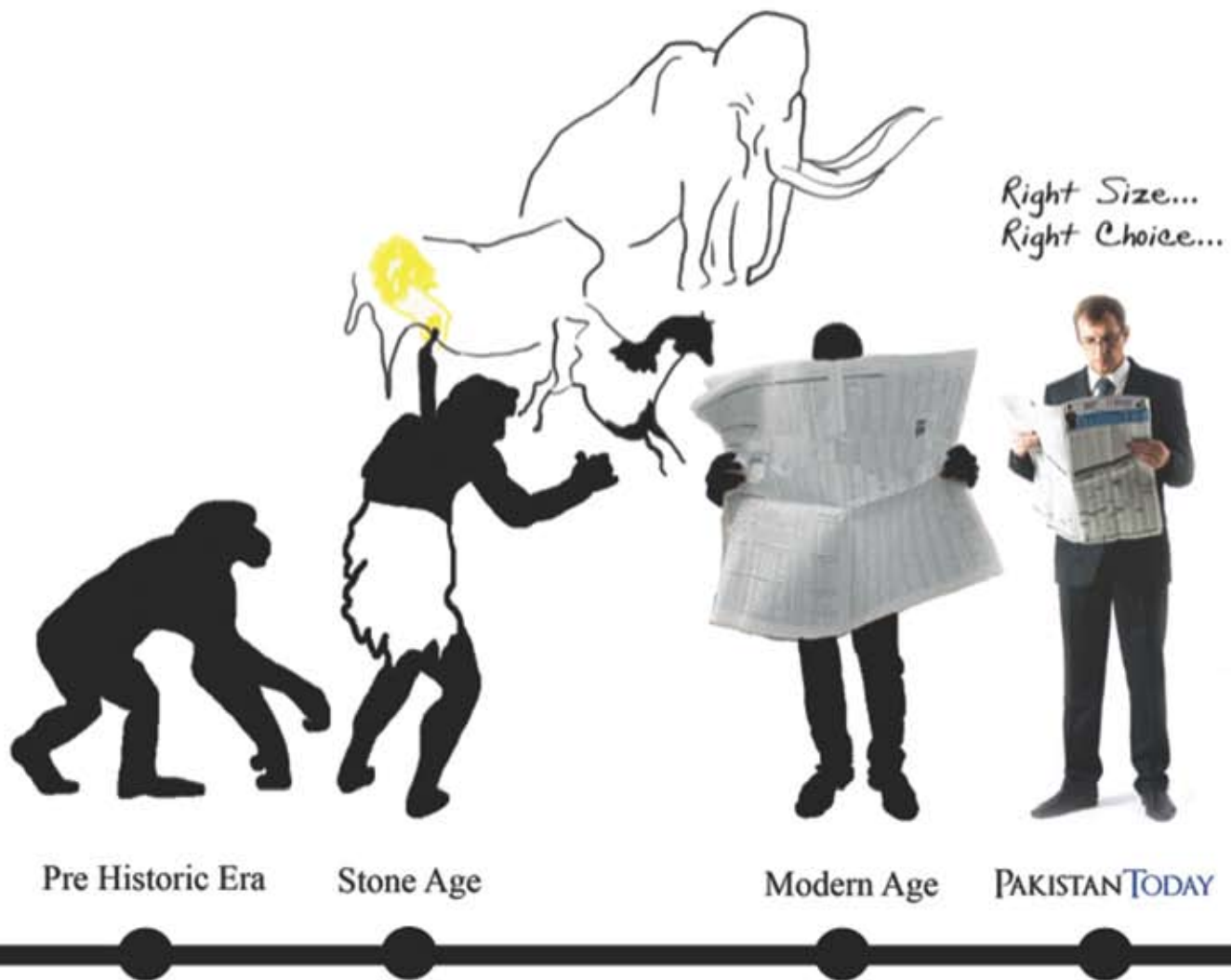
It could be said that all other factors contributing to the geostrategic landscape shared by the GCC and Pakistan will be subordinate to those described above. The behavior of the other international powers toward the region will be governed in the foreseen future by the above mentioned factors.

With their vast reserves of hydrocarbon wealth and ability to invest funds means that the GCC states will continue to be of vital importance to the world, for years to come.

It is hoped that Indo-Pakistani cooperation instead of entrenched in conflict will enable both countries to become a destination for the Gulf's investments. In order for this to happen, however, the most important investment will have to come from them. Both countries will have to make the political investment necessary to cooperate on this front. The Gulf is waiting to see if they can do it. ■

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Threatening Survival

Access to clean, drinkable water makes the difference between life and death in the sewage-infested slums of Bangladesh.

By Shahzeb Najam

As the sun rises over the narrow streets, a cacophony of sound heralds the new day. Armies of workers in small factories are busy

making everything from salt to bricks and balloons. Yet one glance at their weary faces and ragged clothes makes it clear that no one here earns

much money.

Welcome to Kamrangirchar, Dhaka's largest slum - a grimy product of the mass urban migration that

has transformed Bangladesh's capital into the world's fastest growing city. Here, over 400,000 people live within a space of just three-square kilometres. Once a dumping ground for the city's waste, its ramshackle huts and sewage-infested streets are home to dwellers who constitute between a quarter and a third of Dhaka's population.

While poverty and food crises are typical of developing nations, the extremity of squalor in the slums is beyond belief. Images of starving children are cliché but the psychological impact of malnutrition on children is less visible. Few realise how stunted children become when they go through life hungry, devoid of the necessities for growth and advancement. "A child's world can be influenced by a plethora of aspects that shape his or her physical, cognitive, social and emotional development and maturation," says Professor Varuni Ganepola, a psychologist at the Department of Social Sciences, Asian University for Women, Chittagong. "Children can suffer a loss of self-esteem and develop a poor self concept. Loss and deprivation can affect the way he or she develops a sense of who they are in the way that they relate to their social world," Ganepola says. Academics and policymakers alike have concluded that given adequate opportunities, the children of the slums could be a great asset to Bangladesh. However, they become liabilities faced with bleak futures when deprived of the basic human rights of food, education and healthcare.

In the slums, even giving a child a glass of water requires an act of faith. Far too many mothers have seen their young children taken

away from them by diarrhea, dysentery and other water-borne diseases. Water lies at the heart of the complex web of problems facing residents. Slums spring up overnight, usually on landfills owned by no one. Since there is no owner of record, Dhaka's municipal water company refuses to lay down pipes - leaving millions of slum dwellers without recourse to the city's water supply. Enter the black marketers. Found in almost every slum, these middlemen provide, for a price, water illegally procured from the municipal supply. The quality of their water, however, is another matter entirely. Leaky hoses, held together by duct tape and spit, snake their way through ditches filled with raw sewage. Tests have shown the presence of E. coli, a potentially deadly bacterium. The middlemen freely admit that people get sick from the water, "We can't help it because the water is contaminated with sewage."

For adults with greater immunity, tainted water is not necessarily fatal. Young children, though, with weak immune systems ravaged by malnutrition can die within a matter of hours - the result of extreme dehydration and loss of electrolytes.

Occasionally, the state will undertake clearance drives, ostensibly to reduce crime rates. But these evictions deprive slum dwellers of homes and jobs and, ironically, may make them more susceptible to participation in criminal activities. Dr Rita Afsar of the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) has conducted surveys, which show that 80% of criminals active in the city reside in middle-class areas, enjoying political backing from both incumbents and the opposition. She agrees

that some squatters are involved in drug trafficking and prostitution, but says that most are honest labourers who have contributed to the growth rates of major sections of the urban economy - construction, transport and small businesses.

There is some cause for hope. In some slums, residents have banded together with NGOs to demand their right to safe, clean potable water. Dr. Diablock Singha lobbied Dhaka's water authority to provide water links to slum dwellers. Though reluctant at first, they accepted on the condition that the NGO assumed the risk of non-payment of water bills. Dr. Singha agreed. "A win-win situation occurred", he says. The mastaans, local slum barons who specialize in ripping off the poor, charge 15 times more than municipal authorities for water. Dr. Singha knew that the residents would happily accept cheaper, cleaner water. Only the mastaans lose out. Thanks to this ingenious project, many more connections have been established.

However, every week thousands more arrive at the gates of the city. Treating merely the symptoms will not affect a cure. For Bangladesh, the answer lies in providing better services and job opportunities in rural areas to stem the tide of urban migration. Adequate housing facilities and the provision of affordable healthcare and education is exactly what is needed to transform the county's greatest liability into its greatest asset. ■

Shahzeb Najam freelances for a number of national publications and writes extensively on economic development. He is also an active blogger, based in Karachi.

Selling the Himalayas



Endowed with great natural beauty, Nepal suffers from a number of shortcomings that must be addressed before it can become a premier tourist destination.

By Manam Iqbal

Nepal, a small country cradled in the lap of the Himalayas, is diligently working to develop its tourism sector as a means to improve the living standards of its 29 million inhabitants.

Contributing more than four percent to the Gross Domestic Product,

tourism is the only sector that brings the largest amount of foreign exchange into Nepal, employs the maximum number of the urban and rural population and helps travelers get a sense of Nepal's distinct cultural values, deeply rooted traditions and picturesque scenery.

Unlike other countries that harbor a history of political turmoil, Nepal does not try to cover up its history of violence but rather exploits it to its benefit. The most intrepid adventurers traveling to this destination often trek to regions such as Thabang, the birthplace of the bloody Maoist revo-

lution where insurgents once hid during the guerilla war with the country's military.

According to the United Nations Human Development Index, Nepal is one of the world's poorest regions. One of the factors contributing to its poverty is its landlocked position, incidentally a leading reason for nine out of eleven of the globe's poorest countries. Due to its internal and external geography, Nepal does not have access to global markets and depends on its two influential neighbors, India in the south and China in the north, for transit trade.

Nepal, also called the land of mountains, has a shortage of indigenous institutions to spur modernization. Education was illegal in the country till 1951, and the first public school was established after the fall of the autocratic regime in the same year.

To trigger development, the country is focused on charting policies to strengthen its tourism sector. In recent years, a steady increase in the flow of Indian tourists has allowed the Nepal Tourism Board to set a target to increase the influx of Indian travelers to up to 1,000,000 per year. For this purpose, Nepal's Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation organized promotional road shows in the Indian cities of Guwahati, Kolkata, Bhubaneswar, Sunauli, Lucknow and other locations to promote tourism opportunities offered by Nepal. According to the Nepal Tourism Board, a 28 percent increase was recorded in the number of Indian tourist arrivals in 2011, which was later called the Nepal Tourism Year. The year 2012 has been labeled the 'Lumbini Year,' to promote the birthplace of Lord Buddha. This year, a further 35 percent increase is expected in the flow of Indian adventure-seekers.

For this increasing bulk of tourists, which includes backpackers from the west, only a few five star hotels exist

outside Pokhara and Kathmandu. Currently, work on a mammoth scale is being undertaken by the Nepalese authorities to open up hotels across the country. Despite this, international arrivals in the country remain only a quarter of those in Zimbabwe, also a landlocked country like Nepal.

In a bid to help the sector grow faster, the government is working on incentives for domestic airlines so that they may start or expand international

Currently, work on a mammoth scale is being undertaken by the Nepalese authorities to open up hotels across the country. Despite this, international arrivals in the country remain only a quarter of those in Zimbabwe, also a landlocked country like Nepal.

operations. The market share of Nepal Airlines - the country's flag carrier which brought the maximum number of inbound tourists till 2001 – shrunk to an all-time low in 2011 in terms of tourists. In 2001, the airline accounted for 28 percent of all tourist arrivals in the country and now has a mere 3.08 percent market share. The limited number of aircraft in its fleet has compelled the company to cut down on its regular flights as well. With an increasing number of international airlines entering Nepali skies and with the national airline's track record of flight delays, travel agencies say that Nepal Airlines has become the last choice for visitors. The carrier now flies to only five international destinations: Dubai, Doha, Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur and Hong Kong, down from around 14 in 2001.

On the other hand, Indian Airlines is now credited with bringing the maximum number of inbound tourists. According to the Tribhuvan International Airport, the Indian carrier

flew almost 48 percent of all tourists visiting Nepal in 2011. "Most Indian tourists come from the southern states, and Delhi. The latter tops the list because it offers a large number of flights to Nepal," said Mani Raj Lamichhane of the Nepal Tourism Board.

The majority of travelers currently visiting Nepal are from India because of its religious tourism. Starting this year, the country is embarking on a new project to promote adventure

tourism, with a special focus on the Himalayas.

In order to increase the growth of the tourism sector, the government needs to provide subsidies to airlines and thus enable the development of local airlines that could provide low-cost travel to visitors from across the border. Power shortfall is another bottleneck for growth. Second only to Brazil, Nepal is home to the largest water resources in the world, which opens many possibilities for the hydroelectricity generation. However, the situation is currently so severe that in the coldest winters when the temperatures are subzero, even five star hotels lack proper heating systems.

Formulating policies to expand tourism beyond its borders will undoubtedly help Nepal meet its targets set for the number of tourist arrivals in the country this year. **S**

Manam Iqbal is a communications graduate and holds a special interest in socio-economic issues in the region.



A Romantic Facade

Though the Maldives is a much sought-after location for honeymoons, the picturesque archipelago suffers from the highest divorce rate in the world.

By Zeresch Frederick Gill

Despite the introduction of a codified Family Law in 2001, the divorce rate in the Maldives remains unusually high. According to a report published by the OECD (Organization for Economic Coopera-

tion and Development), the divorce rate in the Maldives ranks highest in the Asia Pacific region as well as globally. According to UN assessments, the Maldivian divorce rate is 10.97 divorces per 1000 inhabitants every

year; three times higher than the average in Asia Pacific countries.

Statistics show that in 2000, 3,829 marriages and 1,928 divorces were registered in the Maldives. In order to address the growing social problem,

the country amended its Islamic law, the following year, in attempts to reduce the divorce rate. While the ratio decreased to 32% in 2002, with 11 divorces for every 1000 people, it still remained high in comparison to its neighbors. In 2005, there were 4,932 marriages and 1,757 divorces. In a country like Turkey, there were only 0.5 divorces for 1000 people while the United States registered 4 divorces per 1000 people.

The prime reason behind the Maldives' skyrocketing divorce rate lies mainly in the conventional fishing culture. Normally, men migrate to other islands in search of a better livelihood, abandoning their wives and conveniently beginning new families. One key factor contributing to the high divorce rate in the Maldives is the Islamic law, which allows a man to verbally divorce his wife. This is considered an adequate way to annul a marriage without going to court. The common practice of divorce also leads to the absence of any "social stigma" against the divorced person. Other factors include social issues, financial burdens or un-Islamic attitudes that lead to conflicts amongst couples and eventual separation.

Other factors include lack of awareness and lack of higher education in the country or arranged marriages to please parents which results in short-term nuptials. Moreover, trust, respect and loyalty are undervalued and the practice of getting married at a very young age is common throughout the country.

Women and children are undoubtedly the most affected population due to the high divorce rate. Women usually suffer more than men because of their financial dependence on their husbands. They often stay in their ex-husbands' homes until they remarry, mainly because the population has

exploded in Male, with 30,000 inhabitants per square kilometer. Today, females head nearly half of the households. About one sixth of all female-headed households face problems due to lack of income. Even in the Maldives with its high divorce rate, divorced women have limited options to improve their conditions besides remarrying. Maldivian women on an average have entered four marriages by the time they are 50. The rising

consciousness that is more powerful and is making them increasingly demanding of their rights. A divorce in Maldives now costs 400 dollars, about a sixth of the per capita income.

The new law sets 18 years as the age of marriage, unless a court grants an exception. In 1979, at the beginning of the tourist boom, half of all Maldivian women were married at 15 or less. Polygamy, while not widespread in the Maldives, is also target-

Statistics show that in 2000, 3,829 marriages and 1,928 divorces were registered in the Maldives. In order to address the growing social problem, the country amended its Islamic law, the following year, in attempts to reduce the divorce rate.

divorce rate in the Maldives directly and indirectly influences the psychological growth of children as well. It manifests itself in immature negligence and mistreatment. Measures to broadly deal with matrimonial clashes and to reduce divorces are necessary to mitigate the dispossession and hopelessness among those affected. This often results in children being deprived of the care and affection of one or both parents. Children are then left at the mercy of extended families, becoming vulnerable to child abuse, conflict and labor.

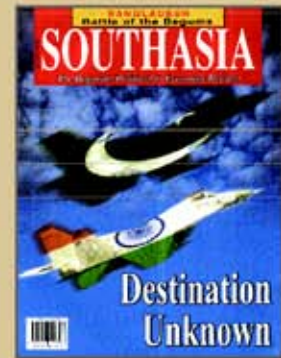
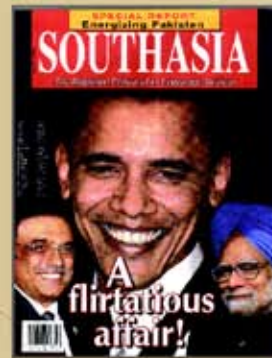
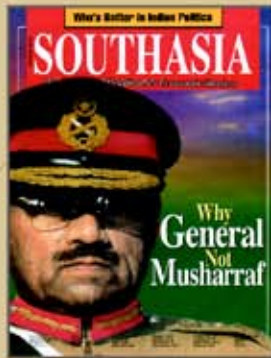
Recent changes in the laws relating to marriage and divorce have substantially reduced divorce rates, which remain relatively high. In 2001, amid the increasing prosperity generated by the tourist industry, the Maldives changed its law to allow women to seek divorces through the courts. Today, more females are graduating from overseas universities thus developing

ed by the 2001 law, which allows a court to assess a man's finances before letting him take another wife.

While the number of divorces has dropped, observers caution the figure could simply reflect the hurdles caused by the more lengthy process to leave a spouse. The law's side effects have not been studied. Therefore, it is not clear whether domestic violence is on the rise since men can no longer obtain a quick divorce. Measures to comprehensively address marital disputes and reduce divorces are essential to reduce deprivation and despair among those affected. The recently implemented Family Law is a progressive step towards strengthening family relations and gender equity. ■

Zeresch Frederick Gill holds a Masters in General History. Her interests include social issues and international and political affairs. She is currently working as a content writer.

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Tucked away in southern India, the state of Hyderabad had flourished until the government of India took it over. Due to the size of his territory, the ruler or *Nizam* was titled 'His Exalted Highness' by the British. Other princes were called "His Highness." The *Nizam* was fabulously rich. The State had its own railway and an army. The Osmania University became a center of excellence, where all disciplines were taught in Urdu.

In her autobiography, titled 'A Song of Hyderabad,' Bilquis Jehan Khan captures some of the beauties

among other things, a seven-gun salute from her maternal grandfather's Arab guards.

The author was born in an aristocratic family with connections to the *Nizam*. When she was forty days old, her grandparents took her over. Believing she was their daughter, she called them *Amma* and *Bawa Jan*, respectively. *Bawa Jan* was the *Nizam's* ADC. He also had a jagir and together the entire family lived in a palatial mansion, Nasir Manzil.

Things have changed drastically, since. Hyderabad is Andhra Pradesh now. The *Nizam* has been

Here, the salubrious ambience of the ber-liberal upper class society provided the required stimulus for Bilquis Jehan, raised in a conservative, purdah-observing milieu to morph into an outgoing socialite. There was no bismillah, therefore, for her daughter. Instead she was taught classical dancing.

With her spouse or alone, the author traveled widely, visiting the U.S., Europe and some South-East Asian countries. Her son and daughter are happily married, the latter to an American. Nasir has retired. And the couple now lives in their apart-

A Look into the Past

Title: A Song of Hyderabad
Author: Bilquis Jehan Khan
Publisher: Oxford University Press, Pakistan
(October 2010)
Pages: 308, Hardback
Price: PKR 795
ISBN: 9780195473490

of the bygone days, when *shehnai* spread its lilting music in the morning. People celebrated the two Eid festivals with much *éclat* and the *Nizam* rode an elephant at the Muharram processions.

The author describes the customs of *Bismillah*, first Ramadan fast, and the elegant marriage ceremonies in ever so fascinating detail with pictures to enliven the narrative. Even the first menstruation was an occasion to celebrate. Her own received,

designated *Rajpramukh*. Shorn of his powers, he lives abroad. Nasir Manzil has been demolished. In its place a shopping arcade has come up, because, there is no *jagir* now to support its owners.

Bilquis Jehan's marriage with Nasiruddin changed her life. Her mother-in-law was Scottish. Nasir's employment in Shell provided interaction with the British officers of the company. When he was posted to Pakistan, she migrated with him.

ment in Karachi's posh Clifton locality.

The book is anecdotes abound. Some are funny; such as a young girl climbing the school wall with the gardener's ladder to meet her Romeo. Others are sordid, like the *Nizam's* concubines smuggling their paramours into the palace and other women cuckolding their spouses. But there is no mention of any cultural activities at the Court where India's best poets and artistes had

gravitated after the demise of the Mughal rule.

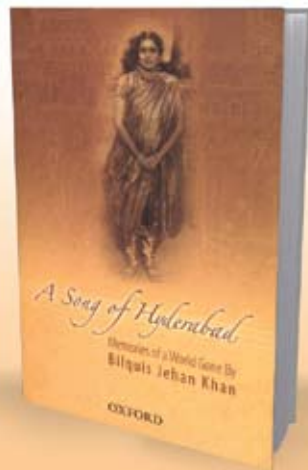
Bilquis writes with exceptional candor about *Bawajan*, having a large helping of whiskey in his bed in the morning, a judge in the U.S. trying to seduce her and her first nuptial night.

Her father was a *pir*, who, with spiritual powers, exorcised evil spirits. A mystic thread therefore runs throughout the book with anecdotes about visions, voices and dreams granting boons or foretelling the future.

Some statements raise questions, such as why were gold bars loaded

nets of Haj. Of course the “narrow-minded” meddling maulanās should not have quizzed her. But why should she be wearing make-up, when ahram was mandatory because she was flying from London with the intention of Haj? Besides, how could she travel alone when it is not permitted by the Saudi Kingdom? And how could an African male lift her in his arms so she could kiss the Hajr-e-Aswad?

Though Bilquis describes many other events in fascinating detail, she has treated Haj rather casually. Thus, the essential elements of Haj,



Reviewed by S. G. Jilane

on to trucks and left in the Nizam’s palace garden instead of being stored in a vault? What were the author’s credentials to be invited to a White House dinner at which President Kennedy indulged in small talk with her? How could she perform Haj, staying in Jeddah? Some other statements are factually incorrect; poor people in East Pakistan did not live in houseboats.

Amazingly, the author betrays a shocking ignorance of the basic te-

from tawaf through the runs between Safa and Marwa, the journey to Arafat, the night at Muzdalifa, the stoning of Satans at the Jumraat, find no mention in the two-page chapter on Haj.

Nonetheless the book is interesting as a window to the fascinating peep into the past. **S**

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Ishtiaq Ahmad's 'The Punjab Bloodied, Partitioned and Cleansed,' is a new addition to the crowded field of Partition studies. Ahmad employs official documents alongside interviews with survivors and those affected by partition to try and describe what happened, as well as why it happened. What sets this book apart from others in the genre is that it attempts to develop a theory of ethnic cleansing that would fit the

previous traumas in the shape of invasions and rebellions as well as religious schisms. The conflict between the Sikhs and Afghans, with repeated military forays and massacres, as well as the earlier conflict between the Mughals and Sikhs should have been integrated into the explanation of the Punjabi society's propensity for violence and the innate insecurity of a plains-dwelling peasantry beset on all sides by more powerful forces.

and its detailed narrative, are commendable.

With regard to the substance of 'The Punjab Bloodied, Partitioned and Cleansed,' the book is organized into three broad stages. The first stage takes the reader from the 1945-6 elections to March 1947. The second stage proceeds from March 1947 to August 1947. The third and final stage moves from August 1947 to January 1948.

The first stage focuses on the

Dissecting Partition

Title: The Punjab Bloodied, Partitioned and Cleansed
Author: Ishtiaq Ahmad
Publisher: Oxford University Press, Pakistan (February 2012)
Pages: 640, Hardback
Price: PKR 2100
ISBN: 9780199064700

tragedy that unfolded in 1947.

This theory, however, never really gets off the ground, which is unfortunate given the amount of research that has gone into the book. Ahmad fails to place his theory in the Indian history of the subcontinent. It would have helped if he had examined the Punjab's

Instead, Ahmad seeks to develop a theory of ethnic cleansing out of the sole example of the partition of the Punjab.

Regardless of how one views Ahmad's foray into theory, the substance of his book, the meticulous research that has gone into writing it, its clear and effective design,

Muslim League's attempts to destabilize the Punjab government and the start of rioting in major urban centers. The second stage focuses on British policy in the Punjab and how basic, though avoidable, mistakes at the planning stage occurred. The third stage covers the ethnic cleansing of non-Muslims

in Pakistan's Punjab and Muslims in India's Punjab.

One of the most important lessons that emerges from the narrative is that Sikh political calculations, in which large-scale expulsion of Muslims was necessary for a more viable Sikh-dominated province, as well as British haste in planning and portioning the Punjab, helped tilt the balance in favor of violence as uncertainty rose and communal antagonisms boiled over. It

interviews to generate information from memory. He does, however, use them to empathize with his subject and to bring forth the human dimension of the 1947 tragedy. This has the added benefit of preventing the narrative from becoming too dry and academic for the general reader.

As regards design, 'The Punjab Bloodied, Partitioned and Cleansed' uses plenty of sub-headings and sections within chapters.

tribution to the study of partition. While its theory and conclusions could be stronger and better developed, the main discussion is based on solid research and there is plenty of material to keep scholars interested. At nearly 600 pages, it is rich in detail and will be of use to anyone wanting to go deeper into the 1947 tragedy. These virtues, however, may deter non-specialists and students from approaching it as will its Rs. 2100 price tag, which makes it as expensive as any imported book.

Overall, Ahmad's new offering is worth reading and explains that for most people the 1947 tragedy arose out of situational constraints. These constraints were in turn partly determined by the policies of the leadership of the British, the Congress, the Muslim League, and the Sikhs. Trapped between British unwillingness to commit sufficient time and resources to the transfer of power, the competing ambitions of the Congress and Muslim League as they struggled for imperial succession, and the desperate bid by the Sikh leadership in the Punjab to emerge as a viable third force in the province, the Punjab was plunged into communal warfare with lasting consequences for all local actors. ■



Reviewed by Ilhan Niaz

is this atmosphere of uncertainty and chaos that Ahmad succeeds in bringing to life through rigorous use of documentary and non-documentary sources.

Of the sources that Ahmad employs, the interviews with survivors merit particular mention. Of course, Ahmad does not use the

It would have helped if the sections were numbered and the flow of the narrative could have been improved by using fewer such breaks. Nevertheless, the numerous partitions within the book make it easy to navigate and help enhance its reference and research value.

The book is a valuable con-

Ilhan Niaz is the author of 'The Culture of Power and Governance of Pakistan, 1947-2008' and is an Assistant Professor of History at the Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad. He is presently working on a global history of the cultures of power and governance.



By Anees Jillani

Tamil as a National Language

Tamils comprise 12 percent of Sri Lanka's 20 million inhabitants, Muslims make up 8 percent, and 74 percent are Sinhalese. Most of the Muslims are also Tamils and speak the Tamil language.

The historical tension between the Tamils and the Sinhalese has been brewing since Sri Lanka gained independence from the British in 1948. The Tamils have a historical claim to parts of the Island and are said to be living there since around 2nd century BC. They constitute a majority in the North and live in significant numbers in the East.

The strained relations have repeatedly resulted in riots since 1956. A strong sense of discrimination eventually led to the civil war from 1983 to 2009 between the Sri Lankan government forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

The first major riot started after the enactment of a Sinhala-only language law, which was perceived by the Tamils as discriminatory, fuelling longstanding ethnic tensions between the two communities. For many Tamils, language was the tipping point in their feeling of disenfranchisement, and the spark to ethnic riots in 1958, which left hundreds dead. The Sinhalese justified the law as an attempt on their part to move away from English as a national language and not to isolate Tamils.

In order to placate the feelings of alienation amongst the Tamils, Article 18 of the Sri Lanka Constitution, as amended by the 13th Amendment in 1987, recognizes Sinhala and Tamil as the official languages, and English as the link language. Despite this recognition, the Tamils lament that Sinhala is given much more prominence than Tamil, except in the north and east.

To avoid language discrimination, a law has been introduced stating that citizens have the right to services and communication in either Tamil or English in areas where Sinhala is the language of administration, with access to translators. However, the reality is different and this seldom happens.

The Tamils have to transact the official business affecting their daily lives in Sinhala, despite their unwillingness to do so. Most of the 15,000-strong police force currently posted in the north are not Tamils and thus cannot speak the language. The locals cannot speak Sinhala. As a result, there is immense miscommunication that leaves both sides with little choice but to speak to each other in English which not more than ten percent in the whole country can speak competently.

All of this may sound familiar to Pakistanis who came across similar problems in East Pakistan where the civil servants and the army from West Pakistan were posted without knowing Bengali. Their presence and failure to interact in the local language further inflamed the feelings of alienation amongst the Bengalis.

Sri Lanka is a beautiful country, with the highest rate of literacy in South Asia. One is thus distressed to find the country facing political and social problems due to ethnic and religious tensions. Even the ethnicity should hardly matter as the Tamils, despite being culturally and linguistically distinct, are genetically closely related to the other ethnic groups in the Island. They are mostly Hindus but a sizeable number are also Christians.

However, there is no reason as to why Sri Lanka cannot operate in a more pluralistic fashion. The Sri Lankan Constitution says that a "person shall be entitled to be educated through the medium of either of the national languages" but Tamil is not being promoted in the schools in the same way as Sinhala. We in Pakistan made the same mistake when it came to treating Bengali at par with Urdu and paid a heavy price for it. Sri Lanka should be careful to not make the same mistake. **S**

Anees Jillani is an advocate of the Supreme Court and a member of the Washington, DC Bar. He has been writing for various publications for more than 20 years and has authored several books.

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