

**INTERNATIONAL**  
**Breaking Promises**

# SOUTHASIA

July 2012

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*The Regional Business & Economic Review*

## **INSIDE:**

### **PAKISTAN**

Glorified Power

### **INDIA**

Battling Years of Violence

### **AFGHANISTAN**

Playing the Media Card

### **BANGLADESH**

Pipe Dream



# Masters, Not Friends

**Nepal, Bangladesh and the Maldives rarely feature in the grander scheme and Pakistan and Afghanistan are chronic headaches; only India represents some hope. Can the US afford to ride its ego and sideline South Asia this once in an election year?**



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# Rocky Road to Renewed Friendship

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton telephoned her Pakistani counterpart, Foreign Minister Hina Rabbani Khar and the much sought after apology came through, though not in the form the Pakistanis wished. Islamabad had long demanded that Washington 'apologize' for the deadly air raid by US forces killing 24 Pakistani soldiers at the Salala checkpost on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. This was Pakistan's precondition to the reopening of the Nato/Isaf supply lines that were closed in angry reaction to the attack. However, the US Secretary of State did not use the word 'apologize' as such but simply stated: "We are sorry for the losses suffered by the Pakistani military. We are committed to working closely with Pakistan and Afghanistan to prevent this from ever happening again."

The Pakistani nation did not seem in any mood to accept Hillary Clinton's words as a proper apology and there was an immediate outcry from public quarters as well as opposition leaders to the effect that merely saying sorry was not enough and that the apology should have been more categorical. However, it was heartening to see that better counsels prevailed both at the civilian and military level and, instead of taking the stalemate any further, the Pakistani authorities acted positively and restored the supply routes. This allowed the Nato/Isaf container traffic, held up for some seven months, to resume movement on the roads leading from the Karachi port to the border crossing points at Chaman and Torkham and on to destinations in Afghanistan. Opposition parties and religious elements severely criticized the government for its decision to reopen the supply routes and anti-American sentiment in Pakistan continued to run high. A survey in June had already showed that 74 percent of respondents in Pakistan considered the US an enemy, while this was 69 percent in 2011 and 64 percent three years ago.

The Nato/Isaf supply routes are now considered even more vital as the US is preparing to pull out its combat troops from Afghanistan by 2014. During the seven months of route closure following the Salala incident, the US had to use expensive and lengthy alternate routes through the former Soviet Union with the cost running into an additional US \$100 million per month. The Pakistan government's decision to reopen NATO supply routes was welcomed by various nations such as China, which said it fully stood by Pakistan on its stance on NATO supplies and the question of sovereignty and territorial integrity, and that it would extend all possible diplomatic support on the issue of war on terrorism. United Kingdom Foreign Secretary William Hague said that reopening of the Ground Lines of Communication (GLOC) into Afghanistan was important for Britain and NATO's operations in Afghanistan. A communiqué of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs said the decision would enable the members of Isaf to move ahead with the process of transition in Afghanistan.

The resumption of Nato supplies through Pakistan has been termed as a good opportunity for both the US and Pakistan to rebuild bilateral ties though it must be clearly understood that a long and rocky road lies ahead. There are several roadblocks on the way to improved relations, such as stopping of recurring American drone strikes in Pakistan territory and removing the impression that Pakistan is supporting certain Taliban elements. The US could begin by adopting a more realistic approach this time and place more confidence in Pakistan in terms of security cooperation, proactively solving various niggling issues and giving this key South Asian nation a more strategic status rather than continuing to benefit from its transactional advantage.



Syed Jawaid Iqbal

## Trademark “Aunty” Style

Your cover story on Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton’s whirlwind tour of South Asia was very timely and extensively presented. Clinton is just another face of America that swoops into the region, with its harsh rhetoric and unreasonable demands. More than often, analysts and officials are not cognizant of the domestic sensitivities and political forces at play. With a boisterous attitude and inadequate knowledge, US demands often tend to ruffle feathers rather than



form productive and informed partnerships.

Secretary Clinton managed to boil some water in Bangladesh when she explicitly stated her support for Dr. Muhammad Yunus and demanded that the government reinstate him as Managing Director of Grameen Bank. She further travelled to India and conveniently ordered that the country should stop all imports of crude oil from Iran, immediately.

What America fails to realize is that it needs South Asia as much as the region needs the US. The days of tacit imperialism are over. While South Asia may have to face outstanding problems of corruption, poverty and terrorism, it cannot how-

ever be treated with disrespect and as a second-class citizen. A growing Indian economy makes the country indispensable and of significant importance. While the US constantly whines about establishing partnerships based on mutual respect, perhaps it is time to put the money where its mouth is.

Arundhati Guvaskar  
New Delhi, India

2. Secretary Clinton’s recent visit to South Asia, complete with harsh rhetoric, unreasonable demands and practiced arrogance, was hardly a surprise. This is not the first time a leader from a Western nation has swooped into the region, placed its terms and conditions, and without any qualms, promptly left.

It is time for South Asia to earn the respect it so desperately craves. The prime reason why developed nations are able to “bully” our region is because we allow them to do so. Instead of pointing fingers and complaining about what has been, it is time to get our house in order. Serious issues cripple this region and while it may be impossible to solve them in this generation, what is imperative is to have a resolve to at least try. Until we are unable to illustrate that we are indeed concerned about our future and committed to changing it, we will not be able to earn respect in the international community.

A US overbearing attitude is simply unacceptable but will continue till we allow it to do so. The fact that all South Asian countries are facing the same problem of being victimized to US arrogance is an opportunity to unite and progress. It is appalling that we cower behind a nation that continues to give orders, not requests. We live in a world of global partnerships and that is precisely what this relationship must be.

Aaliya Javed  
Islamabad, Pakistan

## Better Safe Than Sorry

The recent change in US ambassadors in both Afghanistan and Pakistan does not bode well for US leadership in the region. Needless to say, the US does not enjoy transparent and positive relations with either country and if there is one thing it needs, it is enhanced diplomacy. In such a scenario, the transition in senior level positions can only add to the instability already present in the region. The US needs two ambassadors who are ready to make a long-term commitment and come equipped with an enhanced understanding of the many challenges facing both individual countries. The US is directly involved in rebuilding Afghanistan and planning a comprehensive yet responsible exit strategy. It is imperative that the new US Ambassador to Afghanistan have experience in military strategy and state building. Pakistan on the other hand, poses a complicated diplomatic challenge. While the US may not have an explicit military footprint in the country, an immediate need to create trust, transparency and respect in a partnership is essential. It is in essence, a much greater challenge and will require an expert in diplomacy to alleviate the current disconnect that exists.

The US must take serious measures now in order to avoid a greater problem once it withdraws from Afghanistan.

Kamal Khan  
Kabul, Afghanistan

## Time to Grow Up

Iran is going to face some tough sanctions shortly and it remains to be seen how strongly this will impact its oil industry. Iran is currently one of the few countries in the world that is a big exporter of crude oil and with the US and EU mounting pressure on its key importers, Iran’s oil industry may be in for a big hit.





"[US apology] is something which should have been forthcoming the day this incident happened and what a partnership not only demands, but requires."  
**Hina Rabbani Khar**  
*Foreign Minister of Pakistan*



"Our relations with China are a priority in India's foreign policy and we believe that India-China relations will be one of the most important bilateral relationships in the 21st century."  
**S. M. Krishna**  
*External Affairs Minister of India*



"This is unacceptable and cannot be tolerated. NATO cannot justify any airstrike which causes harm to the lives and property of civilians."  
**Hamid Karzai**  
*President of Afghanistan*



"We are reaching the limits of our patience. It is extremely important for Pakistan to take action to prevent (giving) the Haqqanis safe havens."  
**Leon Panetta**  
*Defense Secretary of the United States*



"I'm not talking about the forced settlements. I'm talking about the freedom for a Sri Lankan to live anywhere in this country."  
**Gotabhaya Rajapaksa**  
*Defense Secretary of Sri Lanka*



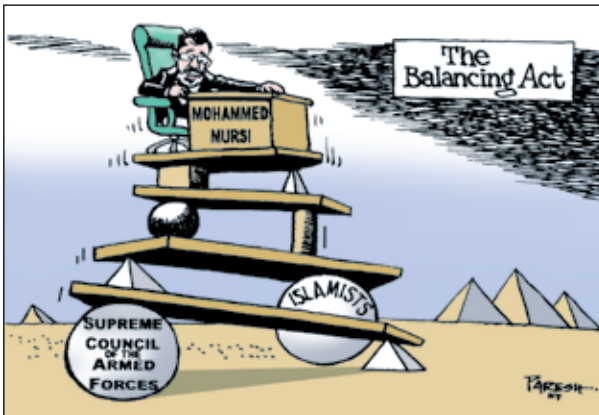
"The government is running the country very well. But some people just can't accept it."  
**Sheikh Hasina**  
*Prime Minister of Bangladesh*



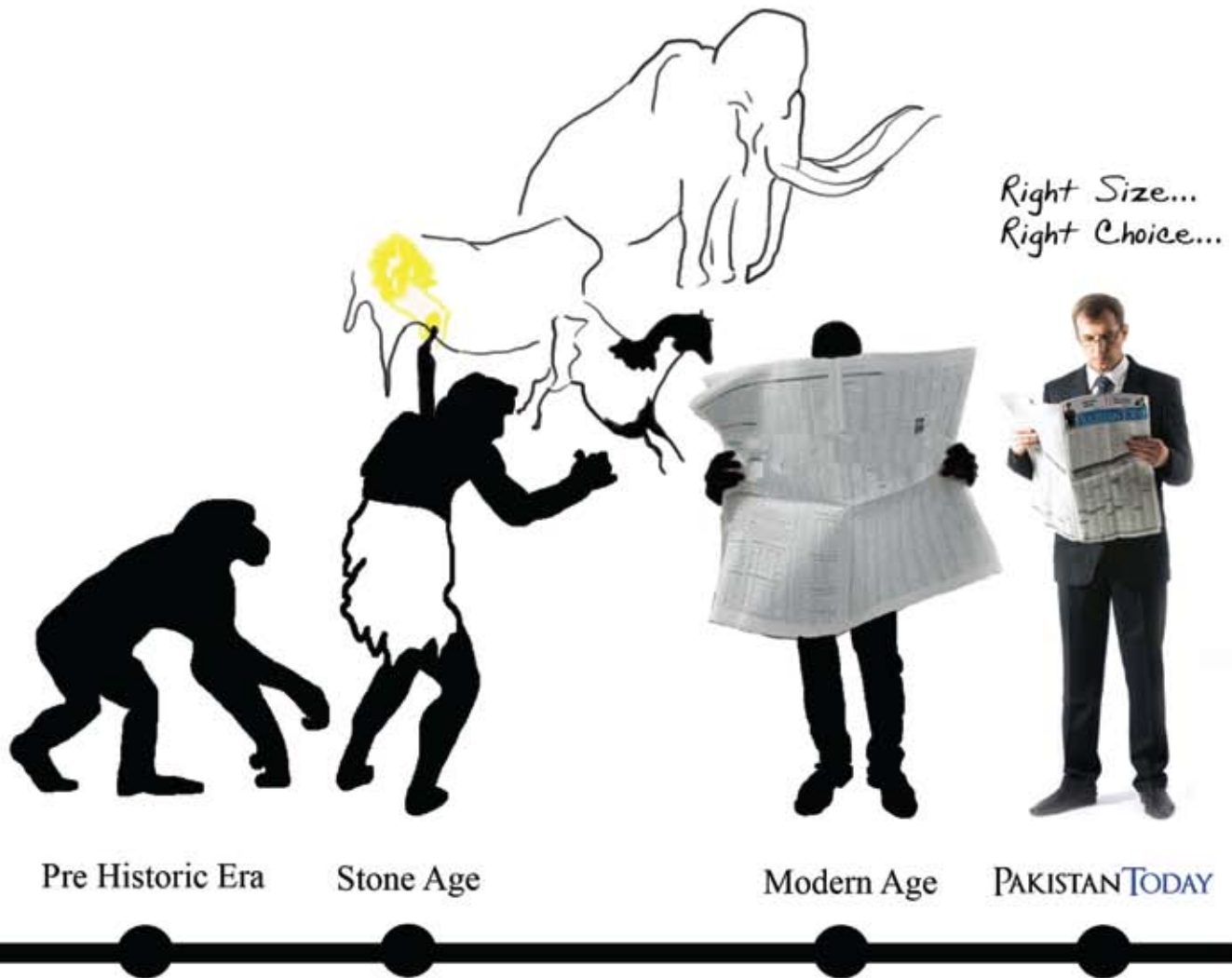
"First he blamed Waheed for the coup, then said it was my father, then D.M Mulya (the Indian High Commissioner in Male). The more [Nasheed] spoke, the more enemies he made here."  
**Dunya Maumoon**  
*Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of the Maldives*



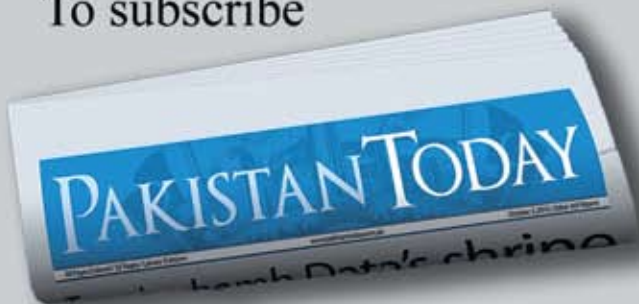
"I am ready to sit for talks, but there should not be any precondition. I am ready to make sacrifice."  
**Baburam Bhattarai**  
*Prime Minister of Nepal*



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PAKISTAN

# Between Guns and Books

Having received somewhat of an apology from the US, Pakistan has since resumed the NATO supply routes. It is imperative that Pakistan expedite the process that has remained stagnant for over seven months following the NATO killing of 24 innocent Pakistani soldiers at the Salala checkpoint. While much focus is being given to the resumption of fuel and military supplies, Pakistan must ensure that all supplies including medicines, clothing and books, are transported to Afghanistan on an urgent basis.

International attention has unfortunately been fixated on the blocking of fuel and arms supplies for NATO troops. However, 4.4 million Afghan textbooks have been stranded at the Karachi port for eight months. These books, printed in Dubai, were to be delivered to Afghan

schoolchildren who started a new school term in April. Pakistan claims that it is not allowed to check NATO containers and hence cannot differentiate between books and ammunition. Officials at the Karachi Port Trust argued that had such supplies been delivered through private companies or the Afghan Transit Trade facility, the book consignments would not have been held up. Since all NATO supplies were blocked, Pakistan was unable to make informed exceptions.

Now that the routes have been reopened, the Pakistani government must



make a conscientious effort to start transporting textbooks that are the rightful property of the children of Afghanistan and not the merchants of Pakistan. The delivery of development goods must not get lost under the transportation of military supplies. **S**

AFGHANISTAN

# Enhancing Alliances



India has shown a strong interest in enhancing private investments in Afghanistan and in effect, strengthening its partnership with the war ravaged nation. Inaugurating the recent "Delhi Investment Summit on Afghanistan," External

Affairs Minister, S M Krishna said "Let the grey suits of company executives take the place of olive green or desert brown fatigues of soldiers; and CEOs, the place of Generals." Acknowledging that Afghanistan was a special case in terms of development and state building, Krishna promoted the idea of foreign investment and domestic private sector development to solve the instability that may follow post NATO withdrawal in 2014. India is seeking a larger role in Afghanistan, once international forces leave, and is expected to invest in the Afghan economy in an effort to remain engaged with the nation.

A serious investor concern raised at the Summit, attended by represen-

tatives from 33 different countries was that of security. Afghan Foreign Minister, Zalmay Rassoul claimed the majority of areas in Afghanistan were secure and an investment focus in the country will boost stability and not just the security of Afghanistan but that also of its neighbors. Development, security and technical assistance is not enough to address the woes that Afghanistan faces after 11 years of war. However, heightened financial and investment attention in Afghanistan is bound to bring accountability, a monetary international spotlight and confidence in the economy which will undoubtedly push the country towards greater self-reliance and inter-dependence. **S**

# Freedom at Last

Indian Home Secretary, R.K.Singh has vehemently denied that recently released Indian Prisoner Surjeet Singh, 69 was working as an Indian spy in Pakistan. Singh was arrested by authorities in Pakistan in 1981 and was sentenced to death in 1989 after being convicted by a Pakistani court on spying charges. However, this was later commuted to a life term.

Having recently been freed after languishing in prison for 31 years, Singh returned to India where speaking to the media he claimed, that he was sent to Pakistan to spy under the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), India's espionage agency that delivered his payroll. However, immedi-

ately countering this statement, Home Secretary, R.K.Singh (no relation to Surjeet Singh) slammed Singh's comments as false claiming that "We do not accept this. It is completely wrong. We deny it because we do not do this kind of thing. Neither do we do spying, nor do we send spies." In April 2011, Gopal Das, another long-serving Indian prisoner, was released after serving 23 years in a Pakistani jail because of similar charges of espionage. Upon his release, Das admitted publicly to the media that he



was an Indian spy and lashed out at Indian authorities for abandoning him during his years in jail. **S**

# Hit Again

Bangladesh, a country no stranger to natural disasters, has once again become victim to a massive



landslide and consequent flooding which has already cost the lives of

about 100 people, leaving 250,000 stranded. Heavy monsoon rains have always been a severe handicap to the delta nation of 160 million people. Despite suffering heavily from rains and flooding, the Bangladeshi government has not taken any concrete measures to address the problems and continues to suffer huge losses every year. Volunteers had made use of loudspeakers to warn people of the danger of landslides but floods inundating villages

broke down communication lines. The army, police and fire brigades

have been involved in rescue efforts but more rain is expected which will cause all efforts to halt, bringing with it additional havoc.

The monsoon rain has flooded villages, severely damaged crops and put a strain on an already fledgling economy. Though it is too early to predict the intensity of the damage to the agricultural industry, the rains are bound to cause a dent in Bangladesh's key exports. Authorities have already started distributing food, drinking water and medicine to the survivors. "The government has allocated about 750 tonnes of rice and 6.6 million taka (\$80,500) for the affected people," Atiqur Rahman, a senior disaster ministry official, has claimed. **S**

NEPAL

# Fighting Pressure

Despite the deteriorating political situation in Nepal, Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai has refused to step down amidst growing political pressure and an internationally tarnished image. The Nepalese government, unable to achieve consensus on drafting a new constitution was dissolved with the Parliament, leaving the country with no stable form of government or law and order. Dr. Bhattarai has stated that the only solution left is to call for fresh elections on November 22. However, his statement has been challenged by the liberal elites, political parties and the general public who challenge his position as Prime Minister and term his decision as 'unconstitutional' and 'undemo-

cratic.' Without a parliament, they claim, Bhattarai no longer remains in a position to issue orders.

The Prime Minister who recently returned to Kathmandu after attending a three day UN Summit in Brazil had to face student protestors representing the opposition Nepali Congress, waving black flags and demanding he step down. Nepali Congress leader, Arjun Narsingh, has insinuated that Bhattarai's remarks reek of authoritarianism. CPN-UML Chairman, Jhala Nath Khanal has stated that "At a time when he should be working for political consensus, PM Bhattarai is throwing childish tantrums." With opposition parties lashing out at him, Bhattarai is

still holding strong maintaining that he will not succumb to the fancies of



political parties but will only respect a constitutionally acceptable election outcome. **S**

MALDIVIVES

# Gearing up to Return

Ousted Maldivian President Mohamed Nasheed has secured the Maldivian Democratic Party's nomina-



tion to be its presidential candidate in the next elections. Nasheed has raised an international outcry demanding that elections be held sooner than later in order to avoid opening an opportunity for Islamists to dominate the political landscape. Nasheed claims that he was ousted in a coup led by 300 soldiers backed by Islamic radicals and local businessmen, fueled by former dictator, Gayoom.

Nasheed stood unopposed but the party requires that he secure at least 10 percent of the votes from a 48,000 strong membership in order to secure his position. Organizer Ibrahim Waheed announced that after having counted only half the votes, Nasheed

had already received 22,375 votes in his favor with 210 rejecting him.

The EU, the US and even neighboring India have called for early elections, perhaps buying into Nasheed's worrying prediction of an Islamist threat. However, President Waheed has adamantly stated that the earliest elections will be held next July, keeping in accordance with the country's constitution. The 54 member Commonwealth has also expressed grave disappointment with the Maldivian political parties inability and disinterest in reaching a political consensus that could potentially pave the way for early polls, stability and better governance. **S**

# Embracing Nanotechnology

Sri Lanka has recently launched construction on its first ever nanotechnology park expected to be constructed on a 50 acre plot in Pitipana, Homagama allocated by the government. The park will be constructed in three phases with the bulk of the investment coming from the Government as well as private sector companies that have a stake in the project. The park was initiated by the Ministry of Technology and Research with the National Science Foundation and five private sector partners also collaborating. The Sri Lanka Institute of Nano Technology (SLINTEC) will build, operate and manage the Nanotechnology Centre of Excellence (NCE), which will form the epicenter of the park.

Apart from developing the NCE, the SLINTEC will also oversee the broader development of the park with assistance from all stakeholders.

The Park will host a series of high tech labs with the latest equipment managed and operated by a skilled team of scientists. It will focus on research and development and will provide facilities for corporate research and business development. Leading global experts will serve as visiting fellows at the NCE. They will also act as consultants to businesses and organizations residing within the park thus broadening the scope for cooperation, innovation



and creative development.

The second phase will focus on attracting potential Foreign Direct Investment from multinational corporations. The third phase will be about expansion of advanced technology industries, institutes and centralised services. The fourth phase will look to provide housing and recreation facilities for the community of the park and education facilities related to the NCE. **S**

# Forging Partnerships

Bhutanese Prime Minister, Jigmi Thinley recently met with his Chinese counterpart, Wen Jaibao on the sidelines of the United Nations Rio +20 Summit, marking their first ever meeting and reflecting an easing in Sino-Indian ties. Bhutan enjoys close military, political and cultural ties with India but suffers a tense relationship with China, exemplified through 19 rounds of talks over border disputes. Bhutanese and Chinese analysts claim that Bhutan would not have warmed up to China without India's permission, which could hint at a new approach in India's diplomacy in a region where it has been wary of Chinese influence.



Bhutan currently enjoys diplomatic relations with all major South Asian countries and is looking to broaden its international presence and strengthen foreign partnerships. During the meeting, Prime Minister Thinley said that

Bhutan "wishes to forge formal diplomatic ties with China as soon as possible." In response to the warm comments from Bhutan, Chinese Prime Minister, Wen Jaibao stressed "China is willing... to establish formal relations with Bhutan, resolve the border issue between the two nations at an early date, strengthen exchanges in all areas and advance Sino-Bhutanese relations to a new stage." Numerous outstanding issues plague the Bhutan-China partnership with the border dispute being a prime source of contention. However, the recent meeting and India's tacit support serve as the perfect setting to form new partnerships. **S**



# Losing Interest?

**Interest in an engaged presence in South Asia is rapidly waning in the wake of the coming American elections. It remains to be seen whether the strategy will be beneficial for both sides in the long run.**

By Robert M. Hathaway

Foreign policy rarely figures prominently in American elections. The upcoming November presidential and congressional contests demonstrate the continued pertinence of this hoary political maxim. Still buffeted by an anemic recovery from the 2008 financial meltdown, few US voters will give much thought to foreign policy as they enter the polling booths. And fewer still will consider how South Asia will be affected by their choices, let alone how the region will in turn influence the leaders elected this November.

Nonetheless, even if absent from the minds of most US voters, South Asia continues to loom large in the thinking of official Washington. Afghanistan offers today's dilemma. India represents tomor-

row's promise (though not a surefire bet). Pakistan, today and tomorrow, remains the joker, the headache, potentially the stuff of nightmares.

For a war that has become the longest in America's history, it is striking how little the fighting in Afghanistan features in the political campaigning this year. Americans are tired of the war and increasingly inclined to believe that nothing good can come of extending the US presence there. Even the most flag-waving Republicans are reluctant to go too far in arguing that this war must be won, no matter what the cost.

At last May's NATO summit in Chicago, it was decided that Afghan forces would assume the lead security role in three-quarters of the country this year, and

throughout the remainder of Afghanistan by mid-2013. Western (primarily US and British) combat troops will thereafter play a support role until their final withdrawal in December 2014. It remains to be seen whether Western publics will tolerate even this drawdown schedule. How the expenses of the Afghan security forces are to be covered post-2014 is an even greater mystery, notwithstanding the Chicago pledges of multi-billion dollar assistance through 2024. Afghan president Hamid Karzai is regarded as hopeless. For the majority of Americans, Afghanistan and the US enterprise there, seems like a house of cards, poised to collapse once NATO decamps.

India, on the other hand, might be a happier story. In assessing US-India ties, one must never lose sight of how far that

relationship has developed over the past 15 years. Yet today, many Americans feel the partnership is adrift, even though the Obama administration continues publicly to put on a happy face. Scars from the tough fight over the US-India civilian nuclear agreement a few years ago have not fully healed and many Americans believe they made great concessions to New Delhi that India has yet to reciprocate, either by the purchase of nuclear energy plants or in defense sales. Disagreements over Iran have also rankled, especially in the US Congress.

For the Obama administration, Afghanistan provides an opportunity for India to demonstrate the value of its growing international profile. The US is keen to have New Delhi assume a greater role in Afghanistan, applauding the signing of an Indian-Afghan strategic partnership agreement last year, and enthusiastically backing the recent creation of a US-India-Afghanistan trilateral dialogue process. If New Delhi can help maintain stability in Afghanistan once Western powers leave, those in Washington who have placed faith in a rising India actively embracing broader global responsibilities, will feel themselves vindicated.

Washington also seeks a greater Indian presence in East Asia, as an adjunct to Washington's own "pivot," or as the Obama administration prefers, "rebalance" toward Asia. The administration document unveiling its new strategic approach toward Asia celebrates the establishment of a "long-term strategic partnership" with India in order that New Delhi might serve as a "regional economic anchor and provider of security in the broader Indian Ocean region." Mere rhetoric? Not when one considers that none of Washington's other major Asian partners are even mentioned in this document – namely a sentence about Japan, Korea, Australia, or Indonesia. As Secretary of State Hillary Clinton wrote not long ago, "the United States is making a strategic bet on India's future."

If Afghanistan serves to bring India and the US together, it has just the opposite ef-

fect on Pakistan-US ties. Virtually every element in the long litany of Pakistani and US grievances has roots in Afghanistan. Pakistanis blame the American invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 for most of the ills that plague their country today. Americans view Pakistan as culpable in the deaths of US soldiers in Afghanistan and intent on fomenting further instability in its western neighbor. US encouragement of New Delhi taking on greater responsibilities in Afghanistan causes intense heartburn in Islamabad.

In truth, relations between Islamabad and Washington have never recovered from the triple whammy of 2011: the killing of two Pakistani intelligence agents by CIA contractor Raymond Davis; the discovery that Osama bin Laden enjoyed a quiet life in Abbottabad; and the November US air strikes that killed 24 Pakistani soldiers at Salala. Today, the relationship is mired in arguments over US drones, the disruption of NATO supply convoys traversing Pakistani territory, and Islamabad's demand for an American apology for the Salala tragedy. Skillful diplomacy will in time probably find ways around all three issues but the damage to the relationship will endure.

In 2009, the US Congress adopted the Kerry-Lugar-Berman (KLB) Act, committing the United States to provide Pakistan with \$1.5 billion in annual economic assistance. In passing KLB, Congress wagered that by investing in Pakistan's political and economic development, the US could play a small but meaningful role in the creation of a prosperous, stable, tolerant, and inclusive nation.

Today, Congress is furiously backpedaling on its pledges. The revelation that bin Laden had been hiding in plain sight in Pakistan has led some to reassess the assumption that the countries share a common counterterrorism agenda. Others resent Pakistan's unwillingness to undertake tough economic reforms as a step toward helping itself. Still others wonder why the US should assist a country where virulent anti-Americanism is pervasive.

The argument that America's first

responsibilities lie at home has been strengthened by US economic distress, a stubborn jobless rate, and a profusion of American domestic needs. To a Congress frantically looking for ways to slash spending, US economic assistance to Pakistan offers an easy target.

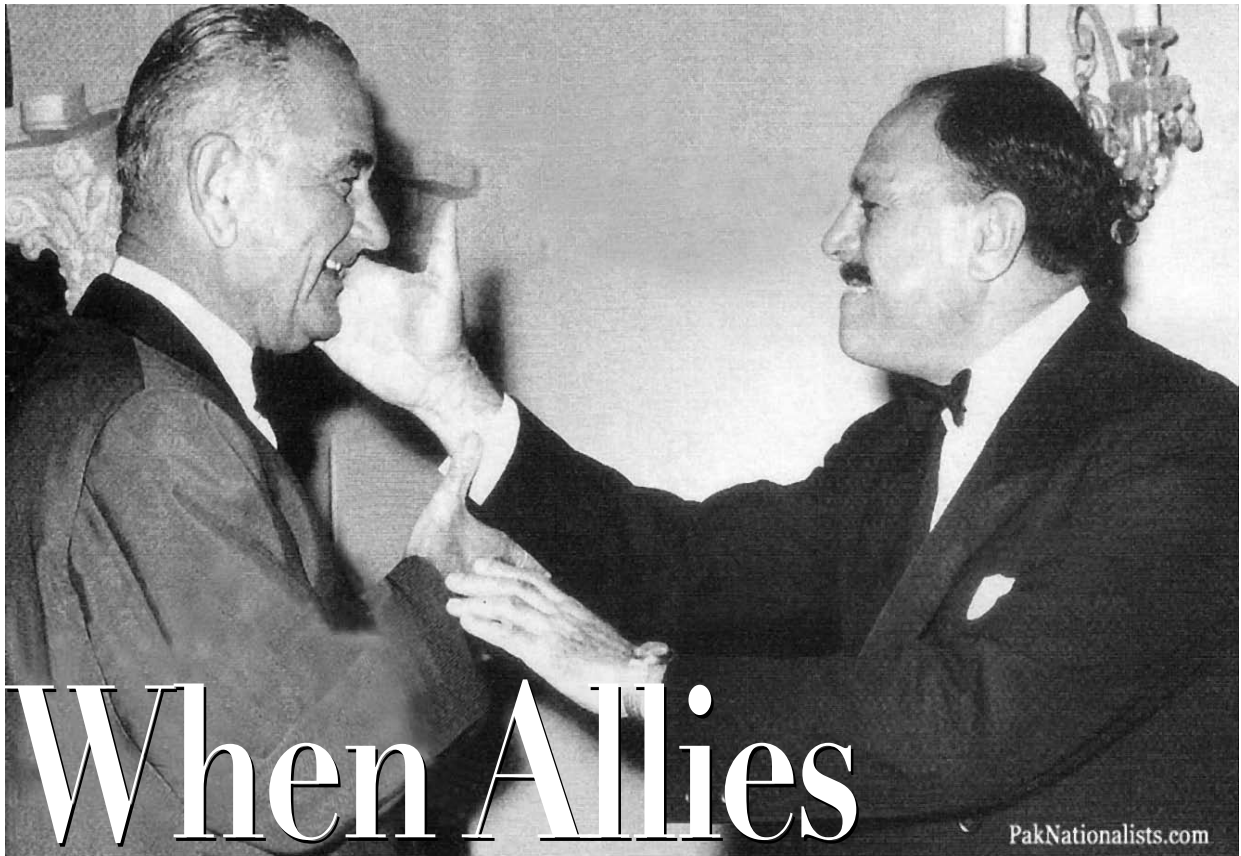
The other countries of the region seldom rise to White House attention, although Hillary Clinton's recent visit to Bangladesh demonstrates the mild interest that Washington has in that country. At least partially because Pakistan's future seems so fraught, US officials are keen to see that Bangladesh, the regions' other large Muslim-majority country, succeeds. They are increasingly frustrated by the inability of Bangladesh's two political matriarchs to rise above personal vendetta.

Indeed, constitutional and political impasse in Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives all pose disconcerting questions about the future of political liberalism in South Asia. Even Indian politics displays a sclerosis that worries its American friends. Throughout the region, polarization, confrontation, corruption, and downright thuggery threaten to undermine the belief that representative democracy can meet legitimate aspirations of the citizenry. Sri Lanka's inability to capitalize on its resounding defeat of the LTTE and fashion a political system of reconciliation, reintegration, and accountability further discourages Washington's South Asia watchers.

Foreign policy professionals, including those in the Obama administration, continue to believe that the US must remain engaged in the region. But the American public is increasingly resistant to that argument and even more to the idea of expending American lives and tax dollars there.

Whoever occupies the White House next year, one of his most important but difficult tasks will be to convince Americans why they should care about South Asia and its 1.6 billion citizens. ■

*Robert M. Hathaway directs the Asia Program at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, D.C.*



# When Allies

# Fall Apart

**Pakistan is shell-shocked today at US fury. Except for the brief ZAB interregnum, it was always proud of being America's most allied ally.**

By S.G. Jilane

“An attachment of a small or weak toward a great and powerful nation dooms the former to be the satellite of the latter. It is folly in one nation to look for disinterested favors from another...it must pay with a portion of its independence for whatever it may accept under that

character,” said George Washington in his farewell address.

There can be no truer assessment. But how many among Pakistani intellectuals, diplomats, politicians and generals ever heard of it or thought on these lines? Had they, then Ayub Khan should not have whined, “Friends

not Masters” while at the same time jumping on to the SEATO and CENTO bandwagons and allowing the US to use Pakistani territory to fly surveillance missions into the Soviet Union.

America never treated Pakistan as a friend. There can be no friendship between a beggar and an alms-giver;

between a mouse and an elephant. Yet, Pakistan's rulers went into a delusional mode to fancy that simply because Pakistan was a sovereign state and a member of the UN it was also "equal" to the US in status. This was a blunder. And a blunder, says the famous French diplomat Talleyrand is "something worse than a crime." Therefore, Pakistan has been receiving the punishment.

The initial mistake was for the new Pakistan state to canvass America's assistance, both pecuniary and military, without fully studying American character. At the time though, Gore Vidal had not written his famous book, "Perpetual war for perpetual peace" to show how America has always resorted to wars in the name of peace. It was also long before Martin Luther King Jr. said that the US government is "the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today." Nonetheless even in 1947 enough historical evidence was available of American arrogance and perfidy such as its war with Spain. On the basis of mere suspicion that the USS Maine had been blown up and sunk by the Spaniards, America issued an ultimatum and, before the ultimatum had expired, attacked.

The Pakistan-USA engagement turned out to be a relationship between Faustus and Mephistopheles. The latter would give all the good things of life, but at his price. And once hitched there was no way Faustus could throw away the yoke. Pakistan's lotus eaters therefore received the bounties and smugly went on dreaming about their country's "geo-strategic" value and other blah, blah.

Even at the best of times, the relationship was uneasy. Each side found the other trying to shortchange. Pakistan, being helpless, could only kvetch and whine. It cried and cried for trade instead of aid. The pathetic wails received strong support even from the New York Times.

But the US administration remained unmoved. The reason was

simple. Aid would keep Pakistan perpetually dependent on America. Trade would enable it to stand on its own two legs. Take the example of the USSR. It gave Pakistan the steel mill. But the latter was not bound, so it joined the US in its proxy war against the Soviet Union.

For its part, however, Washington would squeeze Islamabad with endless demands to "do more" regardless of the fact that it might break the latter's back. To enforce its will, it would stop the aid and impose sanctions like Pressler and Symington Amendments.

The trouble arose due to the difference in the interpretation of the term, "most allied ally." The US interpreted it to mean absolute loyalty. Pakistan, on the other hand fancied it could retain the initiative to take decisions on its domestic and foreign policies independently.

What America did for Pakistan was broadcast worldwide. American lawmakers and its media hammer away nauseatingly at the billions their country has given to Pakistan. Even in Pakistan, a sizeable section of high-winded columnists, politicians and editorial writers recount the bounties America has showered over an ungrateful people. None ever recounts what services Pakistan has rendered in return.

However, despite occasional spats relations were fairly smooth until Raymond Davis went on a killing spree in Lahore last year. That was when US-Pak relations took a nosedive.

The downward spiral has continued with other more serious incidents. First it was the dramatic raid by US Special Forces and wanton murder of Osama bin Laden that humiliated Pakistan army. This was followed by a far more brutal attack on the Pakistan army's border check post at Salala that killed 24 troops like sitting ducks.

That single incident exposed the American character in all its raw nakedness. As is usual with them, first they denied any wrongdoing. Even

when they held an inquiry it was hogwash. The purpose was to put the major part of the blame on Pakistan. They had no qualms over the brutal killing of the troops of an ally whose assistance in their war they seek. An arrogant Obama scornfully dismissed an apology demanded by Pakistan that would have allowed it some face-saving. All he would condescend to do was offer his regrets as if it were a minor accident.

Pakistan reacted with stopping the transit of supplies for US-NATO in Afghanistan across its territory. In the beginning, Americans dismissed the notion that the blockade would have any adverse effect and touted the alternative route through Russia and Central Asia as more viable, though costlier. But when reality began to bite, they took a U-turn and began applying heat on Pakistan to reopen the route.

Meanwhile, arrogant as ever, Obama insulted President Zardari at the Chicago summit even though the latter was an invited guest.

America also remains obsessed with the perceived link between its nemesis, the Haqqani network, and Pakistan's intelligence. And the rhetoric on the Capitol Hill that has become ever so much more strident after the conviction of Shakeel Afridi, fuels further bitterness.

Happily, though, Washington seems to have woken up. Madame Clinton telephoned to eagerly awaiting Madam Khar offering an apology for the Salala incident and viola! like "Open Sesame" the NATO supplies have since resumed. In return, America has released 1.1 billion dollars of Pakistan's wages for services rendered.

However, if the US is really sincere about any long term engagement with Pakistan, then it will have to treat Pakistan not as a mercenary. **S**

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

# Strengthening Partnerships

The world's oldest and largest democracies may have been slow in coming together as partners. However, towards the end of 20th century, the realisation dawned that they are "natural allies" with shared common values of democracy, pluralism, tolerance, openness, and respect for fundamental freedoms and human rights. The civilian nuclear agreement pushed aggressively by the Bush and Manmohan Singh administrations, was the greatest milestone in the Indo-U.S. strategic alliance. During his



Secretary Leon Panetta, Commerce Secretary John Bryson, Health Secretary Kathleen Sebelius and Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner. The Indo-U.S. Strategic Dialogue, now in its third year, is an ongoing process that has resulted in an improved trade association and greater exchanges of views on geopolitical and economic situations in Asia and the world.

The conviction now runs is that the shared ideals of democracy and freedom not only strongly connect the two nations together but also provide a basis for

**The Indo-US partnership is heading towards a long-term commitment and a golden era of engagement.**

By Semu Bhatt

official visit to India in November 2010, President Obama highlighted the importance of this bilateral relationship by describing it as one of the defining global partnerships of the 21st Century for the United States. He also announced that the

United States would lend its support to India's bid for a permanent non-veto seat in the United Nations Security Council.

The first half of 2012 has witnessed five US cabinet officials visiting India – Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Defence

securing global security and sustainability. The conviction is also about Indo-U.S. ties not being one of strategic expediency but rather one of a long-term nature. This is because of the convergence of core values and interests: respect of democracy, strate-

gic interest in Asia, commitment to global security and economic opportunities.

Given that the promotion of democracy around the world is the most cherished foreign policy objective of the US and since democracy has thrived in India despite its diversity, collaboration in the global promotion of democracy has become one of the most defining features of an Indo-US alliance. India is a founding member of the US Democracy Promotion – a Community of Democracies. The 2010 Obama-Singh summit further strengthened the commitment to support open government and democratic values in the world.

Similarly, the two nations share common challenges and opportunities in Asia. The Obama administration's vision for a more economically integrated and politically stable South and Central Asia envisages India as a linchpin. India looks to the West and Central Asia for its energy needs and as vast markets for its products. Incidentally, India's only military airbase overseas is in Tajikistan, and India is now seriously looking at reengaging with Central Asia.

India has heavily invested in the socio-economic reconstruction of Afghanistan and has a high stake in the war-torn nation's long-term future. Pakistan's stability and safety of its nukes in the wake of rising extremism are also matters of grave concern, both for India and the US. A noteworthy development in recent times is that the Indo-U.S. dialogue is no longer hyphenated with Pakistan. Unlike the past, when terrorism directed towards India was linked to the Kashmir issue, Washington now clearly condemns terror emanating from Pakistani territory.

With wars in Afghanistan and Iraq winding down, the Asia-Pacific area, significant from the point of view of strategy and shipping, is the new pivot in US foreign policy. This is largely contributed to concerns over Beijing's increasingly aggressive claims over the South China

Sea, but is no less driven by the fact that it is the world's most economically dynamic region. India's Look East policy and America's quest for power in the Pacific converge; so does their apprehension of China's rise and their support to freedom of passage in the South China Sea. Still, it is erroneous to argue that India's strategic importance in American efforts is limited to counterbalancing Beijing. In fact, the US is pressing for a trilateral dialogue involving China to increase cooperation in areas of mutual interest, as the current geopolitical reorientation excludes the possibility of the Indo-US, Indo-China and US-China ties as being zero sum games.

Indian and American interests also converge on maintaining effective maritime security to ensure free navigation in the Indian Ocean and surrounding waterways. Both nations have incurred heavy human and economic losses due to terrorism, have a stake in curbing the unabated growth of Islamic militancy in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and are actively involved in counter terrorism activities. Both countries are committed to global security, including cyber security and countering the weapons of mass destruction. No wonder then that defence cooperation is the strongest sector in this relationship. This includes joint training and military exercises, commercial transactions, facilitating technology access to developing India's indigenous capabilities.

India's economic potential is a substantial draw for the United States. From a mere \$3 billion in 1995, American exports to India are likely to reach the \$100 billion mark this year. U.S. foreign direct investment into India stands at \$30 billion. The two nations have made considerable progress towards finalising the "Bilateral Investment Treaty" aimed at fostering investment opportunities. The thriving areas of cooperation include science and technology, homeland security, automobiles, software, healthcare and agriculture. The 2.2 million strong Indian-American community is one

of the most affluent and highly educated immigrant groups and helps cement bilateral ties further. People-to-people contact is also enhanced by over 100,000 Indian students travelling to the U.S. for higher education every year.

However, India is not an easy partner to deal with. New Delhi fervently guards its foreign policy independence, is driven by its own self-interests, and has shown its unwillingness to toe the U.S. line in cases of Iran, Burma and Libya. India's decision on not giving the 'Medium Multi-Role Combat Aircraft' deal to the US has severely disappointed the latter. The American administration also feels frustrated with the coalition politics of India that has caused policy paralysis and stalled implementation of the nuclear deal and economic reforms. Thus far, the two nations have handled their divergence on various issues with maturity, with Washington expressing respect for India's strategic autonomy. The multiple dimensions and this rare bipartisan approach indicate that the American administration is betting on India for long term and strongly anticipates its greater role on the world stage.

India has traditionally abhorred leaning towards one power centre. Its diplomatic prudence would be put to test in the coming future in balancing its fast-growing relation with Washington and its ties with friends like Russia, Iran, Brazil and even China. Wary of the U.S. move to the Pacific and its growing partnership with India, China recently asserted the significance of Sino-Indian ties. At a time when power is shifting to Asia, India has emerged as the partner of choice for many. It remains to be seen how smartly India acts, what it manages to achieve and what it relinquishes in the process. ■

*Semu Bhatt is a Mumbai-based independent political analyst specializing in security and governance issues. She is co-author of Cost of Conflict between India and Pakistan and Cost of Conflict in Sri Lanka.*

# The Future of US-South Asia Relations

1. What major challenges is the US likely to face in the South Asian region in the coming year?

2. With the election year in full swing in the US, how importantly will issues concerning South Asia feature on the foreign policy agenda and would it be in the interest of the United States to remain engaged in this region?

## Tarun Khanna:

Director, South Asia Initiative, Harvard University  
Jorge Paulo Lemann Professor, Harvard Business School



1. The biggest challenge is stabilizing the US Pakistan relations, in both countries' mutual interest.

2. The big issue in the US is the weak state of the economy. Add to that the delicate situation in the Eurozone. I don't think South Asia features centrally in this conversation, other than through stabilizing the relationship with Pakistan.

## Aparna Pande:

Director, Initiative on the Future of India and South Asia,  
Hudson Institute



1. The key challenges facing the US will be how to leave behind a stable and relatively peaceful Afghanistan in the context of American military drawdown and tense relations with Pakistan, a country that has an enormous stake in the future of Afghanistan.

2. In the context of a rising China and an American pivot or rebalance in the Asia-Pacific, the

United States would benefit from continued engagement in South Asia.

## Dr. S. I. Keethaponcalan

Department Chair, Conflict Analysis and Dispute Resolution,  
Salisbury University



The ambassador designate to Sri Lanka, Michele Sison, testifying before the Foreign Relations Committee stated that she is ready to lead the American efforts to support Sri Lanka in terms of reconciliation, democracy, and economic growth, especially in the north and east. It is therefore clear that unless there is a regime change in the U.S in November

this year, the American agenda in Sri Lanka will revolve around human rights issues. The focus on human rights has already created tension between the two states and has distanced Sri Lanka from the U.S. This is because Sri Lanka currently has a government that prefers close ties with China and has embedded elements of anti-western sentiments. The U.S however realizes the strategic significance of Sri Lanka. The challenge therefore, would be to keep Sri Lanka within the U.S ambit of influence and achieving stated objectives of human rights and good governance.

## Dr. Daniel Markey

Senior Fellow for India, Pakistan and South Asia,  
Council on Foreign Relations

1. The central challenge facing the US in the coming year will be similar to the one that has faced Washington



for the past decade: how to manage the war in Afghanistan. The primary shift will come with the fact that Washington is on an irreversible path to military drawdown. The question is how the Obama or Romney administration will manage that withdrawal in the face of other regional interests. Washington will want to address remaining security concerns in Afghanistan

and Pakistan (terrorism and nuclear stability, above all) while building a long-term strategic relationship with India that will be useful in responding to the rising power and wealth of Asia, especially China. Navigating these difficult waters will be further complicated by the poor state of relations between Islamabad and Washington.

2. South Asia, especially Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India, will demand engagement from Washington over the next six months even if top Obama administration officials might prefer to focus on their upcoming elections or other global concerns. The priority will, however, be a narrow one: to avoid another crisis, particularly one that would threaten the Obama administration's claim to have a viable exit strategy in Afghanistan and to have decimated al-Qaeda. Beyond that, expectations will be low - I wouldn't expect any new initiatives until early 2013.

## Tasneem Noorani

*Former Federal Secretary of Interior, Government of Pakistan*



The US is caught in a tight time frame where it has to pull out of Afghanistan and still look good in an election year. Having to find a scapegoat, Pakistan should expect rough treatment in the form of international pressure, a continuous blame game, increased drone attacks, etc. Considering that the Army is not as powerful as it was during Musharraf's regime and with elections just around

the corner, makes it difficult for political governments to take unpopular decisions and comply tamely to the US. That is the main challenge that lies ahead for both US and Pakistan.

## Yasmin Saikia

*Hardt-Nickachos Chair in Peace Studies, Professor of History, Arizona State University*



The major challenge for the US in South Asia is to understand the current problems – social, cultural, religious, economic and political, particularly in Pakistan, and carefully address these issues because trust deficit is the biggest problem right now. The relationship between India and the US is improving but it is very fragile. The US relationship with Pakistan, on the other hand, is

regressing. Against this backdrop is China, which is a crucial factor for the US to consider. How the US will manage this as well as advance its own interest in South Asia will be worth noting this year.

## Sayed Kamaluddin

*Editor, Weekly Holiday, Dhaka*



The United States has a tremendous capacity to create problems for itself and its allies. The latest US foreign policy initiatives – both announced and unannounced – as outlined by Secretary of Defence, Leon Panetta at the Shangri-La Dialogue recently in Singapore, will develop a spirit of cooperation and competition in South Asia; but what remained

unsaid is that it also contained the seeds for a regional conflict. Panetta was essentially fleshing out President Obama's earlier manifesto.

However, if US initiatives are judged in their historical perspective, any new initiative tends to unleash willy-nilly, new forces, which in this case would invariably involve South Asia. If one tries to ponder in the light of the famous Middle East-based commentator-journalist, Robert Fisk's remarkable testament titled "The Great War for Civilisation", one cannot help but is only left with uncanny feelings about the unfolding nature of political development in the region.

**A**s part of the hastily organized endgame in Afghanistan, the United States and its NATO allies are inching to end the combat missions by handing over security responsibilities to the Afghan forces by mid-2013 and withdrawing all combat troops from the country by the end of 2014.

Therefore, the US forces that will remain in Afghanistan as part of the US-Afghanistan Strategic Partnership Agreement will move into a 'support role' for the Afghan government and

increased focus on security strategy depletes attention from political arrangements, which include peace talks with the Taliban and bringing together various factions to achieve a broader political consensus.

Since President Hamid Karzai will complete his second term in office in 2014, and would not be able to stand for a third term under the Afghan Constitution, finding a new leader acceptable to all Afghans, particularly in the post withdrawal scenario, seems to be another difficult, if not impossible, job

Apart from a Taliban threat, powerful warlords, whose support bases and weapon depots are still intact thanks to the strategy of appeasement on part of President Hamid Karzai and the international community would be another detriment to durable and political stability in the country.

Many of the warlords who are part of the Afghan parliament with some holding key positions in the cabinet, have been sticking to their jobs despite being accused of human rights violations and will continue to stay

# T-minus Two Years

**The US and NATO forces may have a schedule ready for start of withdrawal but a political strategy is still lacking.**

**By Daud Khattak**

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the 350,000 Afghan security forces, which will be trimmed to 250,000 mainly because of the international community's reluctance to continue support for the Afghan security forces for an indefinite period.

With 2,800 NATO soldiers dead and nearly one trillion US dollars spent over the past 12 years, lasting peace in Afghanistan is still however, elusive and the slightest hope even for the status quo seems to be a distant cry in a post withdrawal Afghanistan.

The reasons are quite clear. An in-

in a country wracked by violence and serious ethnic divisions.

Over the past 12 years, international forces with the help of their high-tech war machinery, managed to push out and keep away the battle-hardened Taliban from urban centers. One cannot say for sure that the student army would not stage a comeback at least by taking over some remote districts in the east and south and even some areas in the western zone once foreign troops leave the country.

in the power corridor even after the withdrawal.

On his part, President Karzai walked a tight rope during his previous and current term in office despite the presence and support, whatever was available, of the international community. It will be a trickier job for the new leader who will be stepping into Karzai's shoes following the 2014 presidential elections.

A slightest tilt or over overstepping on part of the new leader will be deemed offensive enough to stir ethnic

differences pressed by the stick and carrot approach of President Karzai and his international supporters over the past 12 years.

Tackling of widespread corruption, good governance, better financial management and rights for Afghan women are other key issues that will come into question once foreign forces leave the country and hand over responsibility to the Afghan political and military leadership.

The key factors for stability are winning over the people's trust and

national allies have a comprehensive understanding of all this and it was no other than President Barack Obama who admitted that the US is not going to stay in Afghanistan forever and take the Afghan government and society to perfection. "This is a process, and it's sometimes a messy process," admitted the US president.

Imagining Afghanistan to be a fully peaceful state after 2014 or even in the few years ahead is equivalent to looking away or closing one's eyes while the danger is standing in front.

foreign presence in Afghanistan. This provides enough ground for the United States to be content with, or at least to justify a 2014 withdrawal.

The argument is quite reasonable and acceptable for the public at home in the United States and NATO countries, but there are equal chances of reversal in case the Afghan leadership fails to handle the handing over with utmost care.

Any instability, whether from weaker border control, the Taliban taking over or ethnic trouble brewing, would once again provide remnants of al-Qaeda, who still enjoy safe havens and access to young recruits in the tribal areas of Pakistan, to relocate to Afghanistan and establish bases in areas where the government lacks control and the local population is hard pressed by the Taliban.

The presence of 10,000 to 15,000 US troops, who plan to stay behind as part of a long term Strategic Partnership Agreement with Afghanistan, provides reason to hope. But they are not supposed to go into the remote parts of the country to conduct operations and their presence, in any way, is not going to guarantee a fully secured Afghanistan.

There is a dire need for plan B to tackle any future threat from al-Qaeda coupled with the return of the Taliban. Since the NATO allies, fed up with the 12-year war in Afghanistan, are not going to return in case things get out of control after a 2014 withdrawal, a plan B is needed to meet any eventuality. But it is more a question of time now as many analysts see the glass "half full" instead of "half empty". ■

*Daud Khattak is Acting Director at Mashaal Radio, RFE/RL Prague, Czech Republic. As a senior journalist, he has covered the Taliban movement in Pakistan and Afghanistan. He writes for the Christian Science Monitor and Sunday Times.*

changing the public opinion. However, over the years, the common Afghans have viewed their government as being inherently corrupt, serving as a puppet and handicapped by an inefficient leadership. They are justified mainly because the dividends of a 12-year-long 'peace' are yet to trickle down to those living in villages and remote parts of the country. Resultantly, this has forced the people's opinion to shift to the opponents of the government.

The United States and its inter-

national allies are satisfied with the weakening, if not elimination, of al-Qaeda in Afghanistan.

As for the group's presence in Pakistan, the US leadership has openly expressed their intentions of going after the terrorist network by using the drone technology to secure US national interests at home and abroad.

The Taliban, on the other hand, in recent years have never supported, at least publicly, the al-Qaeda agenda and their leadership even disapproved



**T**he American Business Council is the largest single-country business chamber in Pakistan whose core mission is to help protect and promote the interests of US investors in the country. The Council focuses its energies on encouraging new investments from US-based companies in Pakistan by providing advice on the challenges and opportunities for business in this market. The ABC works towards introducing and inculcating best practices amongst its member companies and strives to establish a level playing field in order to promote the development of commerce between Pakistan and the US.

through a network of agents, distributors, contractors, etc.

An Executive Committee comprising 10 members, who are elected annually, heads the ABC. The President and Vice President are elected from amongst the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee is further supported by a number of sub-committees, headed by an expert in that specific field. Each subcommittee, in turn, operates within its own terms of reference, which defines its scope and area of focus. The current sub-committees include Finance & Taxation, Industry & Trade, Membership & Administration, Security, Media, PR & Pro-

activities for the benefit of its members. Foremost amongst these is the annually held ABC Economic Summit. This large-scale event draws over 400 invitees, including corporate executives, government officials, politicians, economists, social development experts, educationists, etc. The objective of the summit is to hold a debate on the major pressing issues affecting our members, with experts invited to shed light on various aspects and possible solutions. Last year's Summit titled "Unlocking True Potential: Boasting Pakistan's Private Sector", hosted eminent speakers such as Mr. Shaukat Tareen (senior banker and ex-

# Serving as a Guide

**The American Business Council serves as the single most important body addressing US business interests in Pakistan.**

**By Saad Amanullah Khan**

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Established in 1984, the ABC currently has 63 members of which the majority are Fortune 500 companies. These companies operate in various sectors including health-care, financial services, information technology, chemicals and fertilizers, energy, FMCG, food and beverage and oil and gas, amongst others. ABC members have cumulative revenues of over US\$3.7 billion, with an investment of roughly US\$0.7 billion. The contribution to the national exchequer last year, through direct/indirect taxes, was US\$700 million and total exports were roughly \$250 million. ABC member companies directly employ over 63,500 people, with 250,000 dependents, and indirectly employ approximately 1 million people

grams, Intellectual Property Rights, Information Technology, Pharma & AgriChem, CSR and US Relations. Sub-committees are critical to the work conducted by the ABC. For example, the Finance & Taxation sub-committee works on studying major government policy directives on relevant matters concerning members of the ABC, identifying and developing a position paper on major issues relating to the field, developing ABC proposals for the Federal Budget and meeting with relevant stakeholders, including senior members of the Finance Ministry, the FBR, etc.

In addition to the on-going strategic contributions of the sub-committees, the ABC also hosts a number of events and

Finance Minister), Mr. Nadeem Naqvi (MD, Karachi Stock Exchange), Mr. Shabber Zaidi (Partner Fergusons) and Mr. Saleem Mandviwala (Chairman, Board of Investment).

Being the only US chamber to be duly recognized by the Director General Trade Organization (DGTO), ABC's key objectives remain to serve the interests of US based companies in Pakistan. Through rigorous lobbying and with the support of the US mission, ABC has spearheaded the rectifying of several anomalies in the taxation structure and influenced trading policies towards more open market practices. Some of the big wins have been eliminating excise duty, an additional 10% tax on most items on top of customs duty and general

sales tax. In the most recent Budget, excise duty was completely eliminated from daily used items hence helping in reducing prices of key products.

Another recent achievement, which the ABC has singlehandedly championed, was the introduction of a "Tax Payer Card." The ABC has consistently proposed that the Government initiate policies that will differentiate the 'tax payer' from 'non-tax payer.' To support this idea, the ABC suggested the introduction of a "Tax Payer Card" which became a part of the Budget proposal shared by the Finance Minister in Parliament earlier this year. Less than 2% of the

thropic organizations. Members are invited to meet and engage with a selected organization and learn more about it through a presentation and Q&A. Since January this year, the ABC has already introduced Teach for Pakistan, The Kidney Center, UNICEF and Make-a-Wish Foundation and has a number of other introductory meetings in the pipeline. This spreads the knowledge of incredible social development taking place in various sectors in Pakistan and assists ABC member companies to enhance their CSR efforts and activities.

The ABC also works closely with the US mission in Pakistan. The committee

Ashura bombings in Karachi in 2009. At our request, the US Ambassador committed USAID funding of up to Rs. 1 billion to help the business victims of the tragedy, for which the ABC facilitated identification and distribution.

The ABC is affiliated with the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI), is a member of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce (USCC), Washington D.C., and the Asia-Pacific Council of American Chambers of Commerce (AP-CAC). The ABC is an affiliate member of the U.S.-Pakistan Business Council, Washington, which is a component of the US Cham-



## The American Business Council of Pakistan

population currently pays direct personal income taxes. Therefore, the documentation and widening of the tax net is a key challenge for Pakistan's sustainability.

The ABC is committed to playing an active role and engaging with the Government in various capacities, including the Ministries of Finance and Commerce, the IPOP, FBR, Bol and other relevant government bodies. The Council consistently meets with senior officials on behalf of its member's causes and suggests the best practices and solutions to ensure a constructive on-going dialogue.

Other value-added activities carried out by the ABC are programs such as introducing its members to NGOs and philan-

meets regularly with the US Embassy teams in Islamabad as well as the US Consulate in Karachi. They interact with the Commercial section, Economic Affairs, USAID, and Treasury sections to share proposals and request assistance in lobbying and in expediting resolutions. ABC also hosts visiting US missions, Senators, Congressmen/women, as well as media groups visiting Pakistan. The Council apprises them of ground realities and assists in answering any questions and concerns regarding business in Pakistan.

An example of one of the most successful interactions was with USAID over the Bolton Market Emergency Response Program, launched in the wake of the

ber of Commerce, with whom it engages on a continuous and regular basis.

The American Business Council carries out regular surveys to obtain a clear picture of the sentiments and forecasts of its members as they pertain to economic growth, security, the performance of government agencies or any specific situation for which their opinion may be required. ABC publishes these surveys and shares them broadly in media, amongst its members and with relevant stakeholders, in order to help mold government policies pertaining to these concerns and the wider private sector. **S**

*Saad Amanullah Khan is the 28th President of the American Business Council.*

# Shifting Strategies

The United States has historically sought a long-standing engagement with South Asia. However, even though the region is replete with resources and opportunities, unique regional politics and instability present somewhat of a challenge.

By Tahera Sajid



**T**he eight countries of South Asia: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, vary greatly in size and social makeup. Together they host a quarter of the world's population, with India hosting almost 75% of that proportion. India's GDP contribution is about 76% of the regional total. The region is rich in natural resources and human labor. However, mismanagement and intra-regional conflicts result in poor development and distribution. With the largest concentration of the world's poor, most South Asian countries also lag behind in important social development indicators.

For long, South Asia has been a recipient of US attention, focused more on India and Pakistan due to their relative size and position in the region, both geographically and politically. Traditionally, Pakistan has allied itself with the US and India has done the same with Russia. Also relevant to the South Asian politics are Afghanistan and China, both of whom have had a considerable influence on the region's politics and defense issues in the current environment.

Understandably, the US has supported any engagement based on its own interests in the region, but interests are well served only when local concerns are taken into consideration. The US can only expect to achieve its short term and long-term goals of regional cooperation by addressing the concerns of the local governments as well as populations.

Back in the 80s, the Russian invasion engaged the United States with South Asian politics for almost a decade. Along with Pakistan, the US supported Afghan resistance through training and funding of local and foreign fighters who ultimately defeated the Russians. Right after the goal was achieved, however,

Pakistan faced sanctions as a punishment for its nuclear ambitions. That followed the US tilt towards India for its growing international market appeal, until the attacks of 9/11 in New York. Pakistan consequently chose to side with the US in the War on Terror unfolding in Afghanistan. This cooperation brought financial aid, but also the spillover of chaos from

that can continue to bring opportunities to serve the interests of regional security linked to global safety – which is their shared long-term goal.

The United States is also seeking an enhanced strategic partnership with India due to many factors, including U.S. and India's shared uneasiness with China's growing military and economic power,

**This, however, fuels Pakistan's security concerns with a stronger Indian footprint on its western border. The historic distrust between the neighbors is bound to cause conflict, and the US needs to recognize that valid concern and deal with it realistically.**

the war-torn neighbor. That, combined with its inept governance, has crippled Pakistan's economy, destroyed its social fabric and caused institutional collapse at multiple levels.

The allies have since learned that their modes of communication and cooperation have not worked out and have instead created misunderstandings and friction. The US accuses Pakistan of 'not doing enough', while Pakistan objects to not getting due credit for its sacrifices and contributions. The Pakistani government has urged the US and NATO for introspection on its dealings with Pakistan in its own long-term interest. Pakistan fears that the chaos left behind after the major withdrawal in 2014 cannot be contained by the remaining 25,000 US troops, and the Afghan army may not survive its high desertion rate. Both countries need to establish transparent military and civilian cooperation to promote mutual understanding and trust

and India's potential market for American business. Leon Panetta on a recent trip to India also said that the US would, "welcome India playing a more active role in Afghanistan, a more active political and economic role." This, however, fuels Pakistan's security concerns with a stronger Indian footprint on its western border. The historic distrust between the neighbors is bound to cause conflict, and the US needs to recognize that valid concern and deal with it realistically.

Pakistan and India have fought two conventional wars in 1965 and 1971. In 1984, India conceived plans to attack Pakistan's nuclear capability and both countries once again came to the brink of war. In 1986, India's incursion into Siachen created a new conflict and later in 1999 the Kargil debacle connected to the Kashmir issue introduced another serious dimension to the existing conflict.

The China factor is an important di-

mension to consider for the US in South Asia as it influences political and defense shifts in the region. India's nuclear security perception is influenced by the much propagated 'China threat.' The smaller countries of the region understand India's ambition for achieving the status of a regional power and becoming a strong global player. However, China seems to be a hurdle for India with its own ambitions of power, and longstanding support for Pakistan.

The United States preferential treatment of India on the nuclear issue is frustrating for Pakistan, which receives sanctions for its own nuclear ambitions but India's pursuit of the same is not discouraged as much. The balance of power in the region is important to maintain before resolution of conflicts can be established. The United States must

first acknowledge the legitimate security threat perception of Pakistan before it can help both countries with technical and advisory assistance to strengthen their nuclear security. A strong economically stable region is a global benefit.

US engagement in South Asia would be incomplete without developing a positive relationship with China. The US is increasingly wary of China's growing ability to use economic threats – since China is not interested in fighting wars that would affect its economic climb in any way – but understands that diplomacy works best between strong nations. The US defense secretary, Leon Panetta said recently, "We also both understand that there really is no other alternative but for both of us to engage and to improve our communications and to improve our (military-to-military) relation-

ships," and "That's the kind of mature relationship that we ultimately have to have with China."

In short, it is clear that the United States aims to be involved in the South Asian region in the long term to achieve its various objectives ranging from global economy to security. In order to achieve these objectives, the US will have to be transparent about its own ambitions, its future role in Afghanistan, its position on Pakistan and India's nuclear programs and their mutual relations, and its relationship with China. Peace and security boosting global stability cannot be accomplished without transparency. **S**

*Tahera Sajid is a freelance journalist who lives in Massachusetts, USA. She is a community builder and an active advocate for interfaith relations.*

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**D**r. Shakeel Afridi's detention and his punishment for 33 years in prison have raised a storm in the United States. To retaliate, a bill has been tabled in the Congress to cut \$33 million out of US aid to Pakistan at the rate of one million dollars for each year of the doctor's term in the jug.

Sen. Paul Rand has asked for a total suspension of all aid. Some others are denouncing Pakistan as an enemy. Even President Obama insulted President Zardari at the Chicago charade by deliberately dropping Pakistan's name from his thanksgiving list with regard to support for his "war of necessity" in Afghanistan. He brazenly ignored that the Pakistan army has lost

ing of the office he holds. But those who know American character can understand.

For example, France gave the US the Statue of Liberty. It assisted the US materially in its War of Independence. French Gen. Lafayette led US forces in

Even now, just because France's new president, Francois Hollande is firm in his election promise to withdraw his troops from Afghanistan this year and would not toe their line, the Americans are so incensed that they have launched an obscene website



# Patriot or

**In the American perception, Shakeel Afridi was a noble patriot but in Pakistan's estimation he was a traitor working for an alien agency spying in Pakistan.**

# Traitor?

By S.G. Jilanee

more men than the US army, in an eleven-year long war, simply to please America. And he remains brazenly unapologetic over the wanton murder of 24 Pakistani troops by American soldiers at the Salala check post last November.

Zardari was a duly invited guest. He did not gate crash. In no civilized society is a guest humiliated. Obama's conduct was therefore most unbecom-

ing battle against the English troops. And yet, when France refused to support America in its invasion of Iraq that was based on a pack of brazen lies, the Americans began to call the French "cheese-eating surrender monkeys." Even their lawmakers got so mad that in the Capitol Hill cafeteria, French fries were renamed "Freedom Fries" and French goods were removed from shelves in stores.

against France.

Nonetheless, there is sizeable support for America's viewpoint in Pakistan, especially among the liberal elements, including newspaper columnists, lawyers and human rights champions such as former president of the Supreme Court Bar Association, Asma Jahangir.

Shakeel Afridi has been tried and sentenced under the Frontier Crimes

Regulations (FCR), not for treason, because that offence is beyond the jurisdiction of the Political Agent. He has been tried and punished for his alleged association with Mangal Bagh, commander of an outlawed militant outfit, Lashkar-i-Islam.

The liberals are in conniption mode because Afridi was tried under FCR, which denied him due process. But they never objected to such trials in other cases because that is the prevalent law in the area. On the other hand, they seem quite comfortable with Obama denying due process to Osama bin Laden. Bin Laden was unarmed when the US Special Forces troops broke into his room. He offered no resistance. He could have easily been captured alive. Yet, they brutally shot him at point blank range on Obama's orders.

As for Afridi's case, there are numerous questions awaiting answers. For example, how did the CIA contact him initially and recruit him as their agent? Who was the go-between that introduced him to the CIA? And who else did he bring into the CIA's fold?

Talking to Dawn, about the vaccination campaign, Shakeel Afridi's brother claims that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's deputy secretary of health and the district health officer had allowed Afridi to carry out the campaign and local authorities had provided 20 employees of the health department to assist Afridi. But there have been no comments from the KP government as of yet.

There is no restriction on Pakistani nationals working in foreign missions. However, Afridi was working on a secret plan of an alien spy agency. He knew that the polio vaccination program was a fake. He also knew that the CIA was hiding it from Pakistani authorities but instead of asking questions about the real purpose behind the secrecy, Afridi colluded with the

CIA, compromising the interests of his country. Accordingly, the state has indicted him for high treason.

Meanwhile, Afridi's American patrons can draw comfort from the knowledge that their protégé will receive "due process" in his trial for treason. Besides, even the sentence under the FCR is under appeal, where the punishment can be reduced or overturned under arm twisting from Washington, as Robert Fisk speculates.

According to Americans and their Pakistani supporters the doctor was serving "higher national interest" by

boggles at the possibility of similar moles planted in other more sensitive government departments and the threat it holds for Pakistan's nuclear assets, in light of America's well known position to capture them.

Ultimately, America may have its way. Pakistan's opinion makers are already squirming at the threat of the suspension of American alms on which the country survives. Besides Afridi's release, the US is also recommending retreat from the defiant position Islamabad has adopted on other issues, which they call grandstanding.

As for Afridi's case, there are numerous questions awaiting answers. For example, how did the CIA contact him initially and recruit him as their agent? Who was the go-between that introduced him to the CIA? And who else did he bring into the CIA's fold?

assisting the CIA to locate Bin Laden, because the latter was as much Pakistan's enemy number one as he was America's. In their view, Pakistan should be grateful to him and treat him as a national hero, the same way as Rohrabacher and Rand are doing by offering him US citizenship. They are therefore flummoxed when Pakistan treats him as traitor, instead.

However, the story begins rather than ends with Afridi. It opens a new vista about where and how far the CIA has spread its tentacles, for Afridi may not be the first or the last CIA agent. There may be more. We know that the CIA has made inroads even in the media. In January last year, it held a dinner and dance party for the anchors of some popular TV channels. The mind

The inventory includes withdrawing the demand for an apology from the White House for the wanton murder of Pakistani troops last year and re-opening the NATO supply route through Pakistan on America's terms.

For the present though things do not seem to be going their way. After six weeks of fruitless talks, Washington has at least partially withdrawn its team negotiating the restoration of the NATO supply route. Meanwhile defense secretary, Leon Panetta has further muddied the waters with his broadsides at Pakistan from New Delhi and Kabul. ■

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



# Glorified Power

**The higher judiciary in Pakistan has finally risen to re-assert its power, ready to take on any challenge thrown its way.**

**By Anees Jillani**

**Y**ou may like or dislike Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry but you cannot ignore him. Until recently, power in Pakistan flowed from the GHQ and the ISI headquarters. The Chief Justice has, however, proven that the institution he is heading is not far behind.

In just four hearings, the Court decided the fate of former PM Gilani who was sent packing within hours. Suddenly, Gilani's babbling about the interpretation of article 248 of the Constitution, dealing with the initiation of criminal or other proceedings against the President, came to a halt.

President Zardari is often regarded as a master player who can out-manuever his competitors, particularly the Sharif brothers. Malik Riaz Hus-

sain of Bahria Town, one of the richest if not the richest person in Pakistan, is a force to reckon with. His rags to riches story within a short period of simply 20 years with just a Matric certificate in hand, has shown our children that education is not necessary in order to be successful. The combination of Zardari and Riaz was seen as a formidable alliance against the Chief Justice; and the rumors about Arslan Iftikhar's foreign trips and acquisitions were regarded by many as finally cornering his father.

However, the Chief Justice overturned the pressure simply by initiating a suo motu action regarding allegations of business dealings between Malik Riaz and his own son for attempting to influence the judicial

process; an unprecedented move in a country where politicians go to any lengths to protect their sons from prosecution.

The suo motu case was initiated on June 6, 2012 in response to a series of talk shows aired on the electronic media in the period between June 3 and June 6. These talk shows contained insinuations alluding to dealings between the son of the Chief Justice and Malik Riaz. Two leading hosts, Hamid Mir and Kamran Khan, in whose programs the allegations surfaced were called to the Court to record their statements. Kamran Khan informed the Court that an anonymous phone call in May claimed that Dr Iftikhar was allegedly using his position to extract money from wealthy

people whose cases are pending before the Supreme Court, including that of Malik Riaz Hussain

Malik Riaz apparently initiated the rumors by sharing documentation showing Dr Iftikhar's summer vacation trips to London over the past three years, including tenancy agreements for five star accommodations in Central London and Monte Carlo and receipts/ invoices showing payments made from the accounts/ credit cards controlled by him or his family members.

As it happens with many elite in this country, Malik Riaz was under medical treatment in London at the time of the commencement of the proceedings and his son Ali conveniently left for Dubai. Upon repeated directions, they finally appeared in the Court on June 12 and filed a statement along with a set of documents.

Interestingly, Malik Riaz unabashedly admitted of bribing or attempting to bribe high functionaries of the State or other influential persons. He admitted in a TV interview that he puts wheels to his files in government offices. However, the intriguing aspect to his dealings with Dr Iftikhar is that despite doling out huge sums of money starting from 2009, Riaz rarely received any return for the same in the form of favorable verdicts from the Court; incidentally making the Chief Justice's case stronger.

In any event, the Court on June 14 disposed of the case by relying on the prophetic saying that the one who gives bribes as well as the one who takes bribes are both doomed to hell fire. The Attorney General was directed to set the machinery of the State in motion so that all those who may have committed any illegal acts, including Malik Riaz, Dr. Arsalan Iftikhar, and

Riaz' son-in-law Salman Ali Khan, be brought to book with the full force and rigor of the law. The Court noted that such exchange of bribes with the attempt, even a failed one, to influence the course of justice, is illegal and punishable under various laws.

It may be pointed out that the documentation furnished by Malik Riaz in the Court related to only 4.5% of the total money allegedly spent on behalf of Malik Riaz. The total alleged amount spent as illegal gratification is around Rs. 342.5 million, in the form of facilitation during foreign trips and by way of cash transfers, which comprise the largest chunk of the alleged bribes: Rs. 327 million.

As if out of the blue, an off the record recording of Mubashir Lucman and Mehr Bokhari's interview with Malik Riaz on Dunya TV did enough to kill the Dr Arslan Iftikhar story. The rest was done by Malik Riaz himself by addressing a press conference at the Marriott after his appearance in the Court on June 12. He was issued a contempt of court notice the very next day and barred from making any further remarks about the judiciary.

If it was the intention of the ruling party to exert pressure on the Chief Justice and the Supreme Court by gradually releasing material to the media against Dr Arslan Iftikhar, it apparently has failed at least for the moment. This could not deter the Chief Justice from ruling against the Prime Minister who was held guilty of contempt of court by a seven-member bench of the Supreme Court, for failing to comply with the orders given in the NRO case. The Court disqualified the PM from being a member of the Parliament in terms of Article 63(1) (g) of the Constitution, on and from the date of pronouncement of the judg-

ment dated April 26, 2012 with all consequences. Gilani ceased to be the Prime Minister effective the same date and the Election Commission was ordered to issue a notification of his disqualification from being a member of the National Assembly.

Is all of the above good for Pakistan? I would say that it is good in the long run for a number of reasons. To quote Justice Khilji Arif Hussain in the Dr Arslan suo motu case, "the judges are ... in the public domain, all persons exercising State functions are in the eyes of the people. Although family members of public functionaries are, properly speaking, not performing State functions, the alleged facts of this case highlight the necessity of extreme caution and discretion in their private and public dealings and conduct." Regardless of the fate of Dr Arslan Iftikhar, the proceedings of the case will help in not only the superior court judges but also their family members being careful in their public dealings.

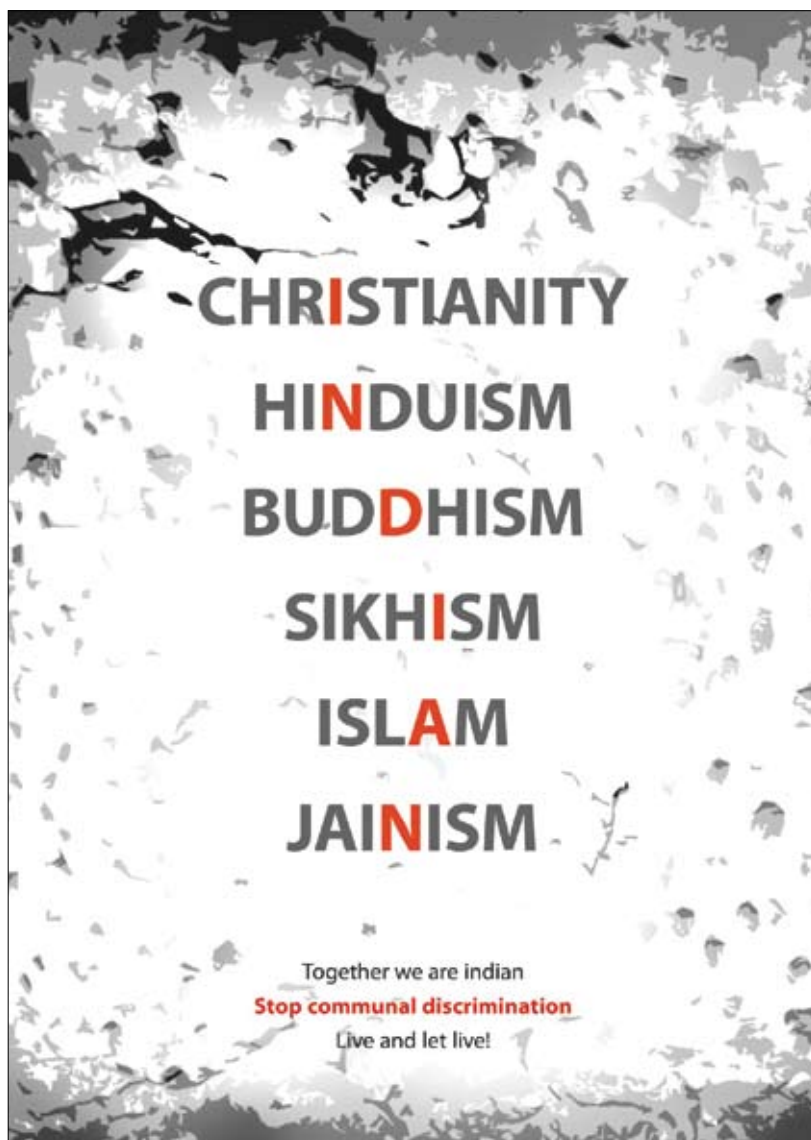
Similarly, impartially speaking, the task of interpretation of laws is not the job of the executive including the Law Ministry; it is the function of the courts. One may disagree with it, but it attains finality once decided by the Supreme Court. The Prime Minister and his coterie of advisors who tried to make a joke out of this whole exercise, eventually had to pay the price. The lesson hopefully is learnt and all concerned would now know as to where the lines are drawn and should not be crossed. ■

*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.*

# Battling Years of Violence

**Communal violence in India is only worsening and while there are numerous solutions, signs indicate a desire for change in the status quo.**

By David Griffiths



As India underwent the second Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of its human rights record by UN member states in May, it was no great surprise to see a number of states using their 90-second speaking slots to raise the issue of communal (sectarian) violence. Although communal violence has been a tragic feature of the socio-political landscape in India for longer than anyone cares to remember, several factors converged to raise its profile during the four-year period leading up to the second UPR. Among them was the worldwide attention paid to communal violence in Orissa in 2008, the visit and subsequent report by the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief in the same year, and the intensified policy focus on promoting freedom of religion or belief in a number of North American and European countries.

But there has also been specific international interest in the pioneering efforts of the Indian government to create a legislative framework which effectively tackles the contingencies of communal violence. Although sadly there are abundant examples of religious majority groups perpetrating communal violence in India's regional neighborhood, this is the only country to date which has experimented with creating a comprehensive policy

framework to deal with it. Accordingly, a “communal violence bill” has been mooted as part of a series of ambitious welfare measures. The bill has gone through the highs and lows of introduction in and withdrawal from the Rajya Sabha, outright rejection by civil society, being redrafted with their input, blasted vociferously by the opposition’s Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), resisted by state governments and, eventually abandoned by the government. The experiment is now at the brink of collapse. Yet the international community, particularly Germany, was impressed by the intentions of the bill and encouraged India to see the process through. The central question now arises: is there realistically anything left to salvage from the wreckage?

India’s statement at the UPR was characteristically defensive on communal violence, dismissing it as “sporadic” and emphasizing a decreasing trajectory across the country. Official (and very conservative) statistics collated by PRS Legislative Research, an independent research body in New Delhi, showed that 648 people were killed and 11,278 people were injured in 4,030 incidents of communal violence from 2005-2009, which many would argue is still far from negligible. However, the real human rights concern is not whether the rate of communal violence is rising or falling, but whether its victims, past and present, are consistently able to access justice.

Indeed, the state is unable even to measure the rate of communal violence unless it is confident that police consistently registers cases properly and there is abundant anecdotal evidence that they do not. Credible NGO figures suggest that in some places, the number of deaths and injuries from communal violence could easily be

double of those recorded by the state.

Communal violence remains too persistent and its nature is too complex for anyone to hope that it will simply melt away. A policy response that effectively tackles each of its various dimensions, is desperately needed.

Communal violence is not an inevitable consequence of different religious communities living in parallel but as scholar, Gyanendra Pandey has cogently argued, it is a consequence of “the construction and naturalization of particular categories of thought” about the place of different religious communities in history and in politics. Religious community blocs are construed as being engaged in a zero-sum struggle for political, social or economic influence.

Critically, however, communal violence also involves the story of a relationship between its victims and the state. Human rights defenders specializing in this issue say that the failure of the state is a recurrent feature of communal violence, leaving victims in a hugely disadvantaged position. Indeed, many say that communal violence cannot take place without state indifference or complicity. Episodes of communal violence through the years have repeatedly included the absence of preventative measures during the build-up, the indifference or collusion of public officials during the perpetration of violence, the impunity enjoyed by the perpetrators, and the lack of meaningful assistance for victims afterwards. As a consequence, victims have nowhere to turn and lose confidence in the state thus becoming unwilling to engage in the justice process. Most end up defined by their victimhood or are locked into a spiral of worsening poverty and disenfranchisement.

Civil society in India insists that any bill on communal violence should

be founded on two key principles addressing the failure of the state. Firstly, the bill should hold public officials accountable for their roles in episodes of communal violence, including not only those at a local level but also their superiors, in accordance with the doctrine of command responsibility. Secondly, it should empower victims to ensure that they are able to engage with the criminal justice system without fear and that they receive compensation for their losses which is commensurate with their needs and allows them to rebuild their lives.

Little hope remains that the bill itself will come to fruition; certainly not in the current parliamentary term. However, those key principles will form the basis for ongoing advocacy by civil society on tackling communal violence. For example, victims must be guaranteed security during drawn-out judicial processes but it is impossible in a thinly-populated rural area with scant police presence. Greater region-wide cooperation among human rights defenders across South Asia could also yield significant benefits, in terms of exploring parallels in their respective experiences of communal violence, developing ideas and sharing expertise in addressing it.

India would do well to look favorably at the recommendations made during the UPR and create an effective legislative framework which not only addresses a persistent problem within its own borders but also sets a pioneering example to other countries in the region and beyond. ■

*David Griffiths works in the NGO sector where he researches and writes extensively on human rights issues, provides training in advocacy and works with governments and international institutions to promote human rights.*



# Playing the Media Card

As Iran looks to increasing its influence in Afghanistan through the media, there is little reason to believe that it will be successful in creating a power base.

By Raza Khan

As the United States-led NATO forces and neighboring states are engaged in a power-struggle in Afghanistan, Iran has also stepped up its efforts to cultivate a power base in the war-ravaged country through its media. According to media reports, nearly one-third of Afghan media is either financially or through provision of contents, sup-

ported by Tehran.

Reportedly, Afghanistan's intelligence department, the National Directorate of Security (NDS), has publicly disclosed Iran's alleged meddling in the Afghan media, and in this regard has named weekly newspaper, *Ensaaf* and TV channels, *Tamadon* and *Noor* as having received financial support from Iran.

Indubitably, Iran has a long-cherished desire to cultivate a political constituency in Afghanistan through which it can push and pursue her interest in the country. However, it is a simplistic assessment that Iran could establish a power base through funding a handful of Afghan media outlets and in turn counter American influence. If Tehran really cherishes such a

power base it is naïve on two counts.

Firstly, if Iran with its sanctioned hit economy can create a media power base in Afghanistan then this task must be easier for the US to attain because it is far richer than Iran and has the latest media technologies at its disposal. As far as media content is concerned, Americans can easily outperform Iranians in this respect also. US media professionals are adept in producing research-based content that can have far-reaching effects on the cognitive and behavioral levels and can thus change the attitude and behavior of Afghans as desired. The US has financed and helped establish most of the leading Afghan TV channels like *Tolo* (Sunrise). American support to Afghan media, both in the form of financial sustenance and content management may have been aimed at influencing the Afghan hearts and minds.

However, it cannot be argued conclusively that Washington has tried to create a power base in Afghanistan by exploiting the media. While the US has played a large role in the Afghan media, the purpose has been to counter large-scale anti-American sentiments present within the Afghan population. The aim has been to neutralize, gradually eradicate and eventually cultivate favorable attitudes towards western values which complement the Afghan value system. Moreover, the Americans have also used the media to strengthen the process of western institution making in Afghanistan like the parliament, constitution and democracy. However, this has not happened and anti-Americanism has only increased in Afghanistan rather than decrease.

The second reason for the naivety of Iranian efforts is that after almost 90 years of research on media power and influence, experts have come to the relative conclusion that media cannot achieve change on its own. In other words media could be the agent

of change but does not materialize change. Therefore, the argument that Iran can secure a power base in Afghanistan is quite unlikely.

According to media reports, Iran spends \$100 million a year in Afghanistan, with much of it being spent on the media, civil society and religious schools. This is indeed a big amount keeping in view the present status of the Iranian economy and its highly-devalued currency. Apart from constituting a power base, such spending is plausibly meant for promoting Iranian culture in Afghanistan, specifically the Persian language. Afghanistan was once part of the ancient Persian Empire and most Afghans, including the Pashtun majority speak Dari, a dialect of Persian. It is still very difficult for Tehran to exercise influence of the scale and magnitude it has always desired for decades in Afghanistan. Unlike Iran, which is an official Shiite State, the dominant majority of Afghans are Sunnis. When the profoundly anti-Shiite, Saudi-Wahhabist Sunni doctrinal influence increases significantly, it becomes extremely difficult for Shiite Iran to have a sweeping cultural influence.

The most important contemporary development in Afghanistan has been the signing of the country's long-term strategic agreement with the US in May last year. Although the threadbare details of the agreement have yet to be made public, this would give the Americans a strong presence in the shape of military bases in Afghanistan. This agreement obviously is against the perceived national interests of regional neighbors, which for decades have vied for stronger influence in Afghanistan. The Iranian-backed Afghan media has taken to task the agreement and vehemently decried it since its signing. This is natural for the Iranians to do. Having bases in Afghanistan, the US Strategic Command can monitor the Iranian nuclear program. How-

ever, if the Iranian-backed media are vituperating the US-Afghan Strategic Agreement they have not done it over the heads of Afghans. A large section of the Afghan population including the largest resistance group, the Taliban, is against the US-Afghanistan strategic partnership. However, the Taliban have been severely opposed to Iran as well.

If the Afghan society and people could be influenced through the media, Pakistan would have taken the lead in doing so. Pakistani strategists with a profound understanding of present day Afghanistan have desisted from funding Afghan media because they know that the money invested in such a project would only go down the drain instead of attaining anything. Although Pakistan has played a negative role in Afghanistan since the early 1970s, in their hour of tribal crisis, particularly during Soviet occupation and the consequent civil war, Pakistanis have come to the aid of their Afghan brothers. This has been no more evident than from the presence of four million Afghan refugees on Pakistani soil; the highest number of refugees anywhere in the world at one time. Their presence put unbearable stress on the economy and society of Pakistan, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, where most refugees settled. Despite this, there remain large-scale anti-Pakistan sentiments in Afghanistan.

Therefore, if such tangible and concrete efforts to help Afghanistan could not work then how can a power base in Afghanistan be achieved through the soft power of media? **S**

*Raza Khan is an analyst and researcher on political economy and the Af-Pak region. He has served in several senior positions in the Pakistan government and is currently writing his doctoral thesis on religious extremism-terrorism in Pakistan and Afghanistan.*

**B**angladesh has recently approached the Asian Development Bank (ADB) for joining TAPI -- Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India -- gas pipeline project. It has conveyed to ADB that it needs gas from sources outside the country as its own reserves are dwindling despite initiatives to explore hydrocarbon in the offshore blocks of the Bay of Bengal. Dhaka also wants to join the TAPI project as a similar decade-

internal gas network. According to many experts, it is both feasible and possible, if agreed to by all parties.

At the moment, Bangladesh's total gas output is around 2,180 million cubic feet per day (mmcf) against its own requirement of more than 2,500 mmcf. The country anticipates substantial increase in demand once industries and housing units under construction are completed. This is forward thinking and sound future

Iranian and Chinese influence in the region.

Bangladesh's desire to join TAPI at this point when Afghanistan has refused to take its share makes a lot of sense. Bangladesh would be a beneficiary of a project that has long-term advantages for the entire region. It is worthwhile to note that TAPI is going to be handled by a single sponsor. This sponsor as well as Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India should



# Pipe Dream

**Bangladesh has displayed a heightened interest in joining the TAPI gas pipeline project. Needless to say, the move is greatly welcomed by the US.**

**By Huzaima Bukhari & Dr. Ikramul Haq**

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old, three-nation project involving Bangladesh, India and Myanmar is now virtually non-existent due to the source country Myanmar's apathy.

The TAPI pipeline is nearly 1680 kilometers long with a transit length of 735 kilometers in Afghanistan and about 800 kilometers in Pakistan. The 56-inch diameter pipeline is expected to cost US\$7.6 billion. The proposed pipeline will extend by another 700 kilometers if it connects Bangladesh's

planning on the part of Bangladesh. According to some analysts, Bangladesh is not in dire need of gas at the moment but this initiative is part of the new 'Silk Road Strategy' unveiled by US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, during her recent visits to Bangladesh and India, where she emphasized that Kolkata should become a hub connecting countries in the East, South and Central Asia. This strategic move, they speculate, is aimed at countering

have no reservations on Bangladesh becoming the fifth member of the agreement. The pipeline is expected to be completed by mid-2017. The price of Turkmen gas is less than Iranian gas and this is a great incentive for Bangladesh to enter into the agreement at this time.

The finalized price of Turkmen gas is 60 percent of the Brent price but comes to 70 percent at the border after inclusion of transit fee and

other incidentals. At the current level, Pakistan would be saving \$1 billion compared to the price offered by Iran. This might have induced Bangladesh to avail a cheaper source.

The United States is highly annoyed with Pakistan for not abandoning the IP project despite immense pressure from its side. Pakistan's argument is that it has to overcome an energy deficit of 2 billion cubic feet per day that is causing chronic power

pean Union, Tehran has now offered to provide all the oil Pakistan needs on a 90-day deferred payment basis and confirmed financing of \$250 million on a government-to-government basis. Additionally, Iranian commercial banks have also offered financial assistance to Pakistan, which is seeking financing of over \$500 million from Iran for the IP gas pipeline project.

In this backdrop, Bangladesh's entry into TAPI can be a move to appease

Development Board made a request to join hands. It proves beyond doubt that India and Bangladesh are now working very closely on energy projects in which the West has substantial interests as part of the strategy stressed upon by Hillary Clinton during her visit in the early part of May 2012.

Notwithstanding the zeal shown by the Bangladesh government, many independent analysts are of the view that gas from Turkmenistan would not be cost-effective for Bangladesh. Last year, the Russian oil monopoly, Gazprom made a proposal to Bangladesh to develop a cross-border gas pipeline with neighboring India and Myanmar. The deal was supposed to facilitate an integrated geographical area of gas and oil exploration. A similar proposal for a tri-nation gas pipeline through Bangladesh was raised earlier during the last BNP-led four party alliance, but the negotiations failed due to the then government's political stance and imposed conditions.

The US and its allies want all countries in South Asia to pursue TAPI as Turkmenistan gas reserves lie mainly with Western giant companies. Bangladesh's zeal to join TAPI can be seen in this geo-political perspective, besides the undisputed fact that its output is much lower than its current need and this gap is going to widen significantly in the coming days. Bangladesh is moving prudently to avoid mistakes committed by Pakistan, which is suffering because of short-sightedness, lack of long-term planning and poor vision on the energy front. **S**

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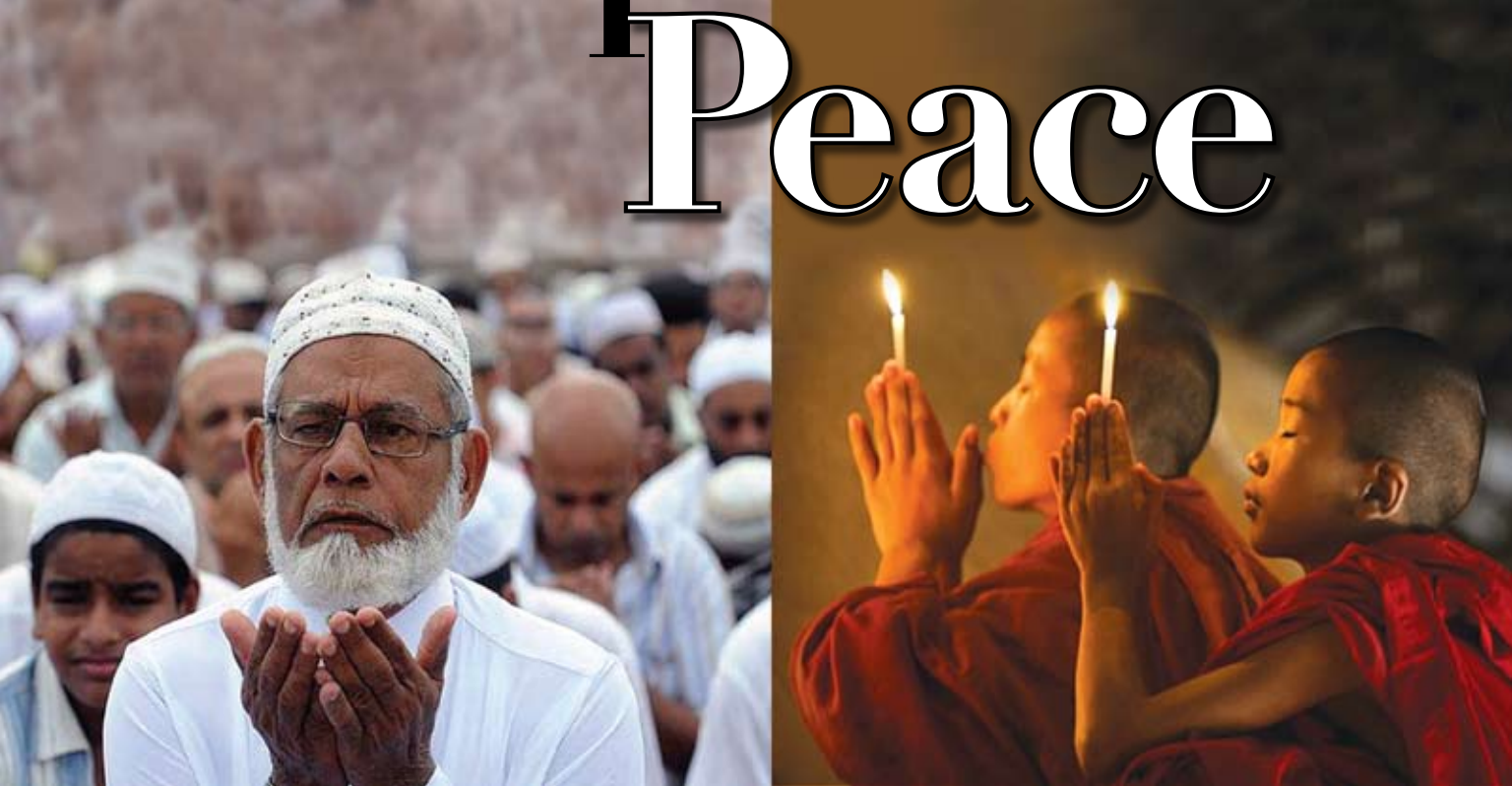
shortages of 5,000 MW, retarding the GDP by 3 percent per annum. Pakistan has, however, been facing funding issues for laying down the gas pipeline infrastructure for Iranian gas. In March, the world's largest bank, Industrial and Commercial Bank of China Limited (ICBC) after agreeing to finance Pakistan's side of the pipeline, shied away, succumbing to US pressure.

Pakistan will be subjected to a heavy penalty if it fails to import gas from Iran in 2014. Iran has already informed Pakistan that the gas infrastructure on its side is 90 percent complete. Interestingly, with a decline in the global supply of Iranian oil, following the ban imposed by the US and Euro-

the United States in its new 'Silk Road Strategy.' But predominantly, it is eager to connect with TAPI to ensure an alternate to its growing fuel demand in the coming years.

Turkmenistan has the world's fourth-largest gas reserves and energy-hungry South Asian countries are keen to tap this source in the changing global scenario where the United States strongly opposes any purchase of energy resources from the oil and gas-rich Iran. The Indian cabinet has already approved a proposal to purchase Turkish gas after assurance from the Taliban that they would not sabotage the project. Indians say that they would move ahead with the project especially after Bangladesh's Power

# Disrupted Peace



**Growing tension between the Buddhists and Muslims in Sri Lanka has set the country on a potential path to religious conflict.**

By Dinouk Colombage

Sri Lanka's Muslim community has recently been on the receiving end of assaults and intimidation by mobs led by notable Buddhist priests. Several incidents have taken place over the last year, whereby the Buddhist majority has sent a clear message to the Muslims: "You are in our land and as such must abide by our rules." Mosques and prayer halls, apparently constructed unlawfully on temple lands, are the focus of this ag-

gression.

In September last year, a crowd led by a Buddhist monk set about destroying a mosque in the holy city of Anuradhapura. The crowd accused mosque officials of building on a land close to where the ashes of King Dugemunu are believed to be buried. Though it was later accepted that the mosque was constructed on a UNESCO world heritage site, the unpunished actions of the Buddhist priests,

laid an unwelcome platform. Human rights activists around the country warned that the actions of the Buddhist monks should not go unnoticed. Unfortunately, few took notice of the event, resulting in further conflict between the two groups.

In April the situation worsened when the head priest of the Dambulla temple lead a procession, surrounding a Muslim prayer hall during Friday prayers. While police were on hand to

control the crowd, the authorities took no action to disperse the angry mob. Once the occupants of the prayer hall left, the mob vandalised the building. The Buddhist monk claimed that the prayer hall was illegally constructed while members of the Muslim community (including prominent Muslim MPs) refuted these allegations claiming that they had legal deeds to the land.

The fallout from this incident illustrated the deep cracks that exist within the coalition government in Sri Lanka. The Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC), a member of the ruling coalition, demanded that the government intervene and present a peaceful resolution to the situation. The SLMC went so far as to threaten to break away from the government if no action was taken on their behalf.

The government finds itself in a predicament; on the one hand is the SLMC demanding that the mosque be allowed to remain, while on the other hand the Buddhist nationalist Jathika Hela Uramaya (JHU), another member of the coalition, is advocating for the complete removal of the mosque.

The Prime Minister subsequently ordered that the Mosque be removed and rebuilt elsewhere; a decision that was promptly opposed by the SLMC.

The matter has now reached a stalemate, with the government unwilling to take a firm stance on either side. It finds itself in a precarious situation coupled with rising tensions between the two communities.

Sri Lanka's international presence within the Muslim world has grown exponentially in the recent past given its diplomatic ties with Pakistan and Bangladesh. The unwavering support of the Muslim world for Sri Lanka at the United Nations is further indication of these improving ties.

The government is now faced with a troublesome decision of having to

choose whether to side with the minority Muslims to please its international allies, or support the Buddhist majority and risk further alienation on the international stage. While throwing support with the Buddhist majority may ensure the current regime a successful re-election in three years' time, the loss of the Muslim world as an ally could very well see them not last the next three years.

When Sri Lanka faced a human rights abuse record and was subjected to a vote for the implementation of the

government to ensure the situation is resolved peacefully. While neither country presented an opinion on the incident, this is a clear indication that they are closely following the events affecting the Muslim community in Sri Lanka.

Within Sri Lanka, disgruntled Muslim citizens have also expressed their dissatisfaction with both the government and SLMC leaders. Following the incident in Dambulla, Twitter was inundated with Muslims calling for the protection of their rights. Several

**The government is now faced with a troublesome decision of having to choose whether to side with the minority Muslims to please its international allies, or support the Buddhist majority and risk further alienation on the international stage.**

US resolution, the country was defeated by a margin of nine votes. However, three of the fifteen countries to vote for Sri Lanka were Muslim nations in the South Asia region (Pakistan, Bangladesh and the Maldives). No Muslim nation voted against Sri Lanka at the UN. While their support may have ultimately been in vain, it did send a clear message to the government that "the Muslim world stands by you."


However, the government's unwillingness to end the growing religious tension in the country is a testament to its domestic insecurity. To side with the Muslim community on such issues will undoubtedly cause it to lose the support of Buddhist nationalists.

The Muslim world has in turn expressed its dissatisfaction with recent events in Sri Lanka. Iran and Pakistan have both called on the Sri Lankan

twitter users based in the Middle East, including human rights activists, also drew attention to the events unfolding in Sri Lanka with one tweet reading "Just saw the news in Sri Lanka, very sad to see the Buddhists turn on a community that has ensured them international support."

Despite domestic and international pressure exerted on the government to reach an amicable agreement, the future is looking bleak. Neither side has shown a willingness to budge. The government may soon be forced to announce its support for one side or the other, depending on where it faces the most pressure. ■

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# Nothing to Hold On To

**With a dissolved Constituent Assembly and a political crisis brewing, Nepal must quickly get its act together to prevent itself from crumbling under pressure.**

By Amit Pyakurel

Nepal has not only failed to form the country's first representative and democratic constitution before the deadline of May 28, 2012 but it has also disappointed millions of Nepalese and shattered the hopes of stability returning to the country. Nepal has long been marred by social, ethnic and economic inequalities, now coupled with political instability, corruption and conflict. The anticipated constitution

was to be the means to a sustainable peace and progress through achieving political, economic and social stability while ensuring an equal share of privileges in the country.

The international community has looked on with amazement as Nepal has undergone exemplary transformation over the past seven years. The 12-point agreement signed between the Maoist armed combatants and government in November 2005 ultimately

paved the way for a democratic movement in April 2006 that uprooted the institution of Monarchy. Eventually, what instilled new fervor and hope amongst the Nepalese people was the first election of a Constituent Assembly (CA) in 2008. Those disgruntled by years of political instability and unjust allocation of social and economic privileges expected an elected CA to usher in a new era of democracy and introduce a people oriented constitution.



However, the dissolution of the CA after an extended stay of four years, accompanied by a hefty expenditure from the state fund, dismayed the ordinary lots and provoked them to raise concerns over the honesty and capability of political players. The CA saw its demise without completing its historical role of giving the country a breakthrough constitution thus leading to another round of entrenched political crisis and national instability.

Moreover, as is a familiar phenomenon in Nepali politics, mainstream parties have dived into the blame game, holding each other responsible for the CA's demise. The Nepali Congress and CPN-UML, the two largest parties after UCPN-Maoist in the current set-up, have blamed the Maoists for sabotaging the drafting of a new

constitution. They argue that the Maoists intend to capture the state power and restructure the system as per their own communist policy. On the contrary, the Maoists assert that they have given up autocratic communist principles and have opted for an egalitarian and people-centric constitution. They, on the other hand, blame the Congress and UML of sabotaging the constitution in order to maintain the status-quo by getting cold feet at the last minute and refusing to compromise.

While the issue of the integration and rehabilitation of the Maoist combatants has been laid to rest, a more contentious matter is that of the federal restructuring of the state, on which a prolonged but unfruitful debate has already been held. As outstanding issues like the 'form of governance' and 'power of the court' remain unsolved, analysts suggest that one of the major reasons for failing to draft a constitution was the fiery debate over introducing ethno-centric federalism. Many communities have demanded an ethnic division of state provinces as the only means to address their right to an equal share of political, social and economic privileges. Others argue that it will jeopardize the ethnic harmony and invite another round of chaos and bloodshed. However, a balanced perspective runs over the analysis that the rights of all who have been underprivileged due to ethnic, social or geographic constraints should duly be recognized but without disturbing the communal harmony in the country. The foundation for this would be to allocate the federal states based on natural resources alongside economic and geographic aspects.

Now that the CA has been dissolved, Prime Minister Dr. Baburam Bhattarai has announced a fresh election, slated for November 22. However, nineteen parties, including the Nepali Congress and CPN-UML, have already called for President Ram Baran Yadav to counter the prime minister's announcement of holding fresh elections, calling it an unconstitutional and autocratic move. Many

parties have already disregarded the announcement and have vowed to boycott the election until the prime minister resigns. The prime minister and the Maoist party however, has deemed such accusations worthless insisting that, although the current government is playing the role of a caretaker due to the dissolution of the parliament, the only way forward is to hold elections.

Given the political climate and the dissolution of the parliament, it is still not completely clear whether the prime minister's announcement of the elections is legal, though the constitution does not prohibit consecutive elections if the current government becomes defunct. The only constitutionally legitimate power that could halt the prime minister's call for elections is the president, as long as he acts on his own conscience. However, the probability of the president turning down the call for elections is unlikely since the main political parties have already contended over the other alternatives such as issuing a new constitution through an ordinance or reviving the CA through a political consensus. Given the current situation, the only political resolution of the crisis, may indeed be through holding elections.

All in all, a profound political understanding among the parties, whether to hold elections in a free and fair manner or seek other commonly accepted and legitimate means of constitution building, seems to be the only option left and solution out of this current political turmoil. The dissolution of the CA and the parliament has already created a power void in the country and the prolongation of this situation will only allow anti-progressive forces to fish in the muddy waters and invite protracted confusion and chaos. ■

*Amit Pyakurel holds a M.A in Mass Communication and Journalism. With prior experience in broadcast media, he currently works as a freelance journalist in Nepal.*



# Nascent Democracy in Catch-22

**As democracy continues to be threatened in the Maldives, internal disputes dominate the political landscape peppered with human rights abuses.**

By Syed Moazzam Hashmi

**T**he year 2012 continues to be a tough one for the nascent democracy in the Maldives. The political turmoil that started in January seems to be driving deeper with all stakeholders sticking to their guns thus further complicating the international politico-strategic situation in

the Indian Ocean.

In an uncontrolled public protest, the Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP), the largest political party in the opposition, has been demanding an early election to bring former President Nasheed back in power. Nasheed was ousted in February in a bloodless

coup led by the police and military; the coup has since been described as a mutiny against the first ever democratically elected president.

Besides his personal ambition of regaining the president's office, Nasheed's demand for early elections has found limited ground, which has

failed to attract the support of major international players. Nasheed has been warning and adamantly believes that if polls are not held early, radical Islamists will exploit the opportunity to consolidate their position.

Radical Islam took roots in the Maldives during the thirty-year dictatorial regime of Maumoon Abdul Gayoom who used orthodox elements to meet his political ends and allegedly orchestrated the coup to overthrow Nasheed. The radical parties' threat might not be significant in the broader picture just yet, but it has certainly provided support against democracy and continues to echo in the murky scenario.

President Waheed, former deputy to ex-President Nasheed, has declared that the presidential election will be held in July 2013 in accordance with the Constitution. Nasheed, however, fears that if Waheed's government gets more time, the radicals will meddle with the process. The encroaching Salafi threat is now quite evident in Maldivian politics. Previously, Islamist parties had failed to win a single seat in the elections but in the post-February scenario, they secured three portfolios in the Cabinet thus fueling Nasheed's paranoia.

President Waheed's party has a bare minimum representation in the parliament, hence a backlog of legislation stagnates the House, which also drives the demand for early elections. In April it was rumored that both sides had reached an agreement over early elections but fell apart when they delved into the nitty-gritty.

The continuation of violent street protests and the retaliation of the charging police whose brutality and abuse of human rights is a matter of concern both at home and abroad, raised some eyebrows but not significant enough to convince the US to seriously intervene.

The gravity of the issue emerged when the Maldivian police tried to ac-

quire a warrant to dismantle the protest and the Criminal Court denied it due to the human rights abuse record of the police. Ironically, it was the arrest without warrant of the chief judge of the Criminal Court on January 16 that ignited the protests that ultimately cost Nasheed his job on February 7.

The US and India are on a similar wavelength when it comes to elections next year. However, the European Community and the Common-

wealth accepting Nasheed's nominee, Ahmed Saeed, for the Commission on National Inquiry (CoNI) in accordance with the commitment signed on May 15 with Sir Donald McKinnon, Special envoy of the Commonwealth secretary general. According to the communiqué of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Maldives, the government has accepted Saeed's name to demonstrate its seriousness in allowing the CoNI

The US and India are on a similar wavelength when it comes to elections next year. However, the European Community and the Commonwealth are consistently demanding early elections to end the political turmoil and wipe Maldivian streets clean of violent protests and subsequent human rights violations.

wealth are consistently demanding early elections to end the political turmoil and wipe Maldivian streets clean of violent protests and subsequent human rights violations.

Despite being at loggerheads over the domination of the Indian Ocean region, both the US and India appear to be on the same page regarding China's port enhancement project in the region, which is seen as an expansion of Chinese hegemony in the Indian Ocean. Valerie Fowler, US Charge d'affairs in Colombo also reiterated US involvement, stating that the US had been in touch with the Indian Foreign Secretary, Ranjan Mathai and its High Commissioner, D.M. Mulay in Male regarding the issue. The American envoy added that the US is working with India and other international partners to see the Maldives progress towards holding elections.

The international pressure seems to have worked its way through, resulting in President Waheed's govern-

ment to continue with the inquiry in a genuinely independent and impartial fashion.

The MDP remains focused on its demand for an early election while the 30-point wish list of the government focuses on demanding a more rational mob behavior in its protest rallies. The prolonged conflict among the power hungry antagonizing forces and subsequent demands for fair and early elections has only recently begun and from what it seems, may have a long way to go before anything concrete has been achieved. It is essential for the Maldives to allow the masses to choose who should rule them and bring the South Asian nation back on the track of democracy -- a process that remains in its infancy. ■

*Syed Moazzam Hashmi is a political and security analyst, a senior journalist and former Political Affairs Advisor to the US Consulate General in Karachi, Pakistan.*

Following the constitutional reforms of 1998, the first general elections in Bhutan were held in 2008. In 2011, two rounds of local body elections were completed and the country is now preparing for the second general elections which are scheduled for 2013.

Bhutan has undergone a major political transformation from royal rule to a constitutional monarchy. Direct royal rule ended in the country in June 1998, after which a new cabinet of ministers was created. A written constitution was duly enforced on 18 July 2008.

While Bhutan was still struggling to grasp the workings of a democrat-

from competing in the elections when the Election Commission annulled its registration. The BPUP declared itself as a party for the *nyamchung* (down-trodden). Under Article 15 (4) (b) of the constitution, membership of a political party may not be based on "region, sex, language, religion or social origin." The BPUP was accused of breaching this article. In addition, the Election Commission declared that the BPUP's charter "had no clear ideology, vision and mission, indicating the lack of leadership with capability to envision goals and objectives of the group."

The results of the March 2008 elections were surprising. The PDP se-

stituency and vacated the leadership of the party. The PDP consequently faced a serious leadership crisis. The recently party nominated candidate of the PDP, Tshering Tobgay is viewed as an emerging challenge to the ruling party and the current Prime Minister. Tobgay was elected by a secret ballot conducted under the supervision of the Election commission. He won 131 out of 134 total votes cast, thereby securing an overwhelming support from within the party.

The 2008 constitution underscored the independence of the Bhutanese judiciary and codified the role of the Supreme Court. Following the enactment of the constitution, opposition

# Giving Democracy a

**Though Bhutan has ushered in some form of democracy, politics remain limited and constrained, providing little scope for democracy to flourish.**

By Dr. Shaista Tabassum

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ic process, policymakers committed themselves to educating the Bhutanese population about parliamentary elections and processes. A mock election was held in May 2007 with fictitious political parties. Elections for the newly created National Council were held in December 2007 and January 2008, paving the way for main elections in March 2008. The first elections were contested between the two newly formed political parties – the Druk Phuensum Tshogpa (DPT) and the People's Democracy Party (PDP).

A third party, the Bhutan People United Party (BPUP) was disqualified

cured only two seats, while the DPT won almost total control of the National Assembly. Although it secured only two seats, the PDP did receive a reasonable number of votes. Election results reflected a range of concerns expressed by many ordinary Bhutanese regarding the future of their country, the nature and long-term impact of political reforms and the role of the monarchy.

This unexpected victory of the DPT ended the future of the PDP leader, Lyonpo Sangay Nedup, who although ambitious and vocal on many public issues, lost the election in his own con-

leader, Tshering Tobgay, presented a landmark case. Overturning a High Court judgment, the Supreme Court ruled that the government was not allowed to raise taxes without the approval of the parliament. The verdict marked a major step toward defining the role of the Supreme Court and a law based on defined constitutional rights and responsibilities. It also boosted Tshering's popularity.

Politics in Bhutan, however, remained restricted and offered the people little choice. Firstly, the system created bipartisan politics. Under the terms of the constitution, only two



# Chance

parties, the PDP and the DPT, could enter the National Assembly; the party with a simple majority of seats forms the government, while the second party forms the opposition. Although many parties are willing to register, the registration criteria is difficult and complicated. The election commission has restricted party registration by applying Article 15, Section 4 (b) of the constitution that states that the ECB shall register a political party if it is "broad-based with cross-national membership and support and is committed to national cohesion and stability."

Secondly, both the parties publicly agreed to work in pursuit of the monarch's policy of GNH, "Gross National Happiness" and welfare of all Bhutanese. Thirdly, the fifth king has been instrumental in emphasizing the constitutional role of the throne but the potential and real prerogatives of the

monarchy constrain the performance of democratic institutions (at least informally, if not openly).

Although publicly the two political parties appear to be supporting the monarch's policy, the PDP has become associated with development and industrialization while the DPT is viewed as being more conservative. Since issues and ideologies are not the real criteria for the candidates' elections, it is the personality and work of the parties that speak louder than words. The PDP emblem is a galloping white horse and their motto is "Serve with Humility" and "Walk the Talk." The PDP is developing its party structure along western lines and by conducting regular working group meetings to discuss the progress and working of the party. The DPT is more conservative both in structure and in approach.

Bhutan's domestic politics cannot

be seen in isolation from the regional political interests of India and China; both of whom have a direct interest in the next elections and the new government to come into power in 2013. In 2009, India concluded an important hydro-electric power agreement with Bhutan whereby it owns 51% of the share. India would certainly prefer the continuation of the same power structure. At the same time, China has also invested in minor projects trying to counter the Indian influence in Bhutan.

Whether it is domestic politics or regional involvement in the tiny country, the people of Bhutan are increasingly concerned about their future and are determined to allow the idea of democracy to flourish in Bhutan. ■

*Dr. Shaista Tabassum is the Chairperson of the Department of International Relations at the University of Karachi.*



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# Shopping for New Friends



**As Pakistan cozies up to China and Russia, it receives a warm welcome. However, making new friends will undoubtedly take some work.**

By Aarish U. Khan

The 12th meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), recently held in Beijing, was a big leap forward on the path to regional assertiveness on issues pertaining to the broader South Asian region. The need for a regional approach towards outstanding problems became more important following the reiteration of the US strategy of an “irreversible transition of full security responsibility from the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF)...for completion by the end of 2014,” during the NATO Chicago summit in May.

While Afghanistan holds an observer status in the moot, a regional approach to Afghanistan’s reconstruction and long-term stability was emphasized. “We will continue to manage our regional affairs by ourselves, guarding against shocks from turbulence outside the region, and will play a bigger role in Afghanistan’s peaceful reconstruction,” Chinese President, Hu Jintao, stated during an interview given on the sidelines of the summit. The SCO has clearly enhanced its role over time and by acknowledging its responsibility towards Afghanistan in the context of NATO’s withdrawal from the country, it has amply demonstrated that it is eyeing a bigger role for peace, stability, and prosperity in the region.

Afghanistan is not the only factor preoccupying the minds of the decision-makers in China and Russia, the two major players in SCO (other members include Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan; while India, Mongolia, Pakistan, and now Afghanistan hold observer status). Increasing concerns shown by Washington regarding the recent Philippine

claims over the Chinese Huangyan Island and America's planned naval shift towards the Pacific Ocean by 2020, are sources of anxiety for Beijing. On the other hand, Moscow has its own worries vis-à-vis NATO, such as its pursuit of ballistic missile defense (BMD) systems. Similarly, both Beijing and Moscow are neither enthused about U.S. tendency to militarily intervene in other countries to introduce a regime change nor too comfortable with its confrontational posture towards Iran.

A few days prior to the SCO summit, U.S. Secretary of Defense, Leon Panetta confirmed the shifting of the U.S. military pivot towards the Pacific during the eleventh annual Shangri La Dialogue held in Singapore under the

and international role, the SCO summit was a good opportunity for enhancing bilateral cooperation amongst members and observer states. China and Afghanistan established a strategic partnership on the sidelines of the SCO summit. The Chinese have signed agreements to develop Afghanistan's mineral resources post-2014, while the Russians have shown interest in reconstructing the Salang highway that connects Afghanistan with Central Asia. Pakistan also used the opportunity to push the Iran-Pakistan (IP) gas pipeline project during President Zardari's meeting with Iranian President, Ahmedinejad. The two leaders, who also met on the sidelines of the Summit, stressed upon the early completion of the already agreed projects

organization. It is obvious that China and Russia are interested in projecting their regional foreign policy through the SCO platform in competition, if not in confrontation, with the U.S. and NATO. Keeping in view the recent Indian tilt towards the U.S., Pakistan has a window of opportunity to realign its foreign policy towards China and Russia, which could be best achieved through full-membership and an active participation in the SCO.

Seizing the moment, President Zardari announced a proposition to hold an international conference on narcotics in Islamabad. Incidentally, narcotics production and trafficking is one of the major concerns of the SCO. More importantly, Pakistan will have to tackle the problem of religious extremism and terrorism for endearing itself to Beijing and Moscow. The SCO originated out of the 2001 Shanghai Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism. Consequently, Article 1 of the SCO charter calls on member states "to jointly counteract terrorism, separatism and extremism in all their manifestations, to fight against illicit narcotics and arms trafficking and other types of criminal activity of a transnational character, and also illegal migration."

While Pakistan seeks allies other than the U.S. and NATO, its role in countering terrorism and religious extremism will serve as a key determinant in identifying Pakistan's future with the SCO. On the other hand, Pakistan could certainly secure some diplomatic mileage through SCO's combining of terrorism and extremism with separatism in the same sentence in Article 1 of its charter. ■

*Aarish U. Khan is a senior analyst at the Institute of Regional Studies.*

Keeping in view the recent Indian tilt towards the U.S., Pakistan has a window of opportunity to realign its foreign policy towards China and Russia, which could be best achieved through full-membership and an active participation in the SCO.

auspices of the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS). "Make no mistake, the United States military is bringing enhanced capabilities to this vital region," said Panetta. Not amused by U.S. bravado, the Chinese termed the shift of the bulk of U.S. navy towards the Pacific as 'untimely.' In such a backdrop, the SCO summit and its call for "strengthening communication, coordination, and cooperation in dealing with major international and regional issues," was anything but untimely.

Besides the expression of a collective aspiration for a greater regional

such as the construction of Nushki-Dalbandin road, the upgradation of the Quetta-Taftan railway track and electricity project. In a private meeting with President Jintao, President Zardari also sought Chinese cooperation in energy and infrastructure projects and discussed the need to increase the volume of bilateral trade.

Although neither India nor Pakistan was given full-membership status during the Summit, the contrasting keenness of the two countries was illustrated through the absence of the Indian head of state from the Council of Heads of Member States of the

# Breaking Promises

**France's decision to withdraw from Afghanistan earlier than the NATO timeline of 2014 has led to uneasiness within the allies and heightened unpredictability in the Great Game.**

By Lt. Gen. Talat Masood

Living up to his election promises, French President Francois Hollande recently announced that France would withdraw all its combat forces from Afghanistan by the end of this year; two years ahead of the US and NATO forces' planned withdrawal. Former President Nicolas Sarkozy, realizing the unpopularity of the war had already decided to withdraw French troops, a year in advance, by 2013. But President Hollande decided to withdraw even a year earlier, by the

end of 2012.

France is the fifth largest contributor of military forces in Afghanistan and has about 3300 troops deployed mostly near Kabul and in the province of Kapisa.

Several factors have contributed to the French decision for an early withdrawal from Afghanistan. First, there is hardly any public support for the Afghan mission in France. Apparently, three fourths of the population disapproves France's involvement in Afghan-

istan. Like the rest of Europe, France has come to realize this is not a war that is winnable by outside forces and application of military force alone. At the same time, there is frustration that even after ten years of conflict, negotiated settlement with the Taliban seems a remote possibility. Adding fuel to the fire, Taliban and other militant groups continue to launch lethal attacks even in supposedly well-secured areas.

Initially, the objectives of Western and French engagement in Afghanistan



went beyond the use of military force and adopted a broader role of democratizing and modernizing Afghanistan. Soon the US and the Western countries realized that this was not an attainable objective and were forced to drastically lower their expectations. At present, the main aim of NATO and the US is an orderly withdrawal from Afghanistan. It is in this context that France decided in favor of an early withdrawal by two years.

Moreover, a total of 83 French soldiers have been killed since 2001. Recently there has been a rise in French casualties, when four of their troops were killed just before the presidential elections. In an earlier ambush, militants killed about ten soldiers inducing a sense of urgency for an accelerated withdrawal. The primary interest of France now is to ensure that withdrawal of forces takes place in an orderly and phased manner and that security is maintained during this critical period.

Second, the French economy is going through a difficult period. Current national debt of France exceeds two trillion dollars and the rate of employment is more than 10%. Moreover, Europe as a whole is facing an economic recession and in such circumstances France's priority is to look inwards and reduce its global commitments. There is also an impression among ISAF countries that credit for any achievement in Afghanistan goes to the Americans and there is little appreciation for the services rendered by France and other major NATO partners.

Moreover, the Socialist government of President Hollande that has returned to power after a lapse of several years is expected to be less assertive in world affairs than the conservative government of Sarkozy. During Sarkozy's term as President, France in 2009, after a gap of forty-two years,

had made the decision to return to NATO military structure. It also remained in the forefront during the Libyan operation and tried to develop a special relationship with the US. But even when France was outside the NATO framework it maintained strong informal links with its allies as was evident from the role that its forces played in the Gulf War and later in Kosovo. However, as brought out by France's General Abrial, Supreme Allied Commander Transformation, NATO, in a recent interview that remaining outside the command structure of NATO meant it had no say in its decision making and faced problems of interoperability.

Ironically, the French armed forces are not happy with an early withdrawal. Having been associated with ISAF in Afghanistan during difficult times and having made a place for themselves they would like to retain influence in NATO and that comes only through continued participation and robust involvement.

Clearly, French withdrawal will have an impact on the security of the area. They are a highly professional force with a high level of combat readiness that commanded the respect and admiration of its ISAF allies. Probably the most significant contribution of the French is their expertise in high altitude warfare. As of yet, it is not clear if the specialized French Alpine battalions will also be withdrawn by the end of 2012.

There are also political ramifications in France's autonomous decision to withdraw. NATO is a military and political organization whose success lies in the solidarity and synergy of its members. It does not augur well with 28 members of NATO when individual states based on domestic considerations take unilateral decisions. Canada and Holland have already with-

drawn their forces from Afghanistan and now France. Soon Germany will be withdrawing giving an impression of "a race for exits in Afghanistan."

The US would have liked France to retain its combat mission until 2014, and failing to do so has strained relations between the two countries. Germany and Britain would have also preferred that France leave at the same time as the rest of NATO forces. Concerns of NATO members are valid, as it would upset an agreed, phased and more orderly withdrawal. The decision to withdraw by end 2014 was taken unanimously at the Lisbon summit in 2010. So, in fact, France would be renegeing on its commitment. But realizing that domestic compulsions are dictating French decisions on Afghanistan, Washington had no choice but to accept the reality. It however, expects from France and other allies to compensate their early departure by contributing financially and helping in the training of Afghan security forces.

However, the redeeming feature is that France has decided it will not participate in kinetic engagement, but will continue to contribute in training and advice to Afghan security forces on a limited scale after 2012 when its combat role ends. ■

*Talat Masood is a retired Lieutenant General of the Pakistan Army Corps of Engineers. General Masood holds a Masters in Defense and Strategic Studies and has also served as a visiting fellow at the Stimson Center in Washington, D.C. He was a consultant for the leading U.S. defense manufacturer, United Defense Limited Partnership (UDLP) for five years. He currently writes on national security and weapons proliferation and has been covering the nuclear programs of Pakistan and India.*

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# Battling Norms

**Though private and government efforts have diligently tried to create social awareness, child marriages continue to be prevalent in Bangladesh.**

By Atiya Abbas

Ever since Mohammad Yunus won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006, Bangladesh gained an international reputation for furthering human rights and strengthening female empowerment. But internal problems continue to cripple the poverty struck nation. One of the most alarming human rights abuses in Bangladesh is child marriage. Statistics revealed that 60 percent of girls become wives before their 18th birthday, meaning that Bangladesh has the highest rate of child marriages. The legal age for marriage is 18, yet many parents continue to marry off their girls when they are 16 or younger. A BBC news report found that 20 percent of girls are married even before they turn 15.

Severe gender biases that plague South Asia are the leading reasons for human rights abuses. In some nations, girls are not considered worthy to even merit birth certificates, which explain why so many cases of child marriages go unreported. Authorities have difficulties enforcing the law and traditional thinking on the part of parents convinces young girls to agree to an early marriage.

Another problem is that of dowry. For many poor families, dowry is a burden that they must start preparing for, soon after the birth of each girl-child. Cultural restrictions on women exacerbate the fact that girls have no position in the family except for being dependant on their father's support.

Mirna Ming Ming Evora of the NGO Plan International calls this "a new kind of slavery." She further adds that girls do not earn income in this culture and all her interactions with child brides has taught her one thing: that they lost their childhood too early.



Nazrul Islam, a technical officer at Plan Bangladesh says that when young girls become mothers they tend to suffer from health problems. As BBC reports, when Poppy, a twelve-year-old girl started suffering from internal injuries that left her unable to restrain her body's natural fluids like urine, she lost her baby because it was stillborn. Her husband, ten years older than her, abandoned her when he came to know about the illness. Through Poppy's disillusionment stems sad advice that young girls should not get married too early because the consequences are terrible.

Twelve-year-old Oli Ahmed is staunchly against child marriages. He has taken it upon himself to campaign to elders and explain to them why they should not marry their girls too young. He gets his motivation from the unjust treatment of a girl who was like a sister to him. She was forced into marriage and he never saw her again. Oli consequently formed a group of children under Plan International and goes door to door, talking to parents, in his slum in Dhaka. He hectors parents as to why there is no birth certificate for their daughter and then registers them immediately. Ahmed's persistence has paid off as Plan International has reported that child marriages in the area have dropped by almost 50 percent.

A BBC news report also highlighted 13-year-old, Jemi. Jemi's mother insisted that she loved her daughter and that Jemi would be disgraced if she did not get married. Crippling poverty prevented Jemi from attending school. However, protests by authorities and NGOs convinced Jemi's mother to change her decision.

Young girls face numerous difficulties in Bangladesh. One of the major causes of poverty in Bangladesh is the marriage dowry. Studies have reported that more than 35 million people in Bangladesh face acute poverty and hunger. More alarming is the fact that dowry was 200 times the daily wage

in 2008. With the daily wage reported as \$2, dowry can sometimes go up to 20,000 takas (approximately \$300). Even though giving dowry is illegal in Bangladesh, the practice continues in the rural areas. Paradoxically, the leading cause for poverty is dowry and yet rural families insist on marrying off their girls as soon as possible.

With three-quarters of the population living in abject poverty, the problem lies in the traditional and culturally backward attitudes of rural societies. Plagued by floods and cyclones, Bangladesh's urban centers now cater to sprawling populations thus giving rise to large slums and illegal settlements. It has taken the efforts of Plan International and UNICEF to help bring a turnaround in these societies. Individuals like Oli and Evora are doing their part in creating awareness and showing the locals that it is not morally correct to marry girls at such a young age. The Bangladesh chapter of Plan International holds numerous workshops and events as well as street theatre performances to create social awareness regarding child marriages.

So far such initiatives have had limited difference in society. Hasina Banu, a mother in Ghazipur had arranged for a child marriage for her elder daughter. She later made a decision not to marry her younger daughter before the age of 18. Yet such stories are the exception rather than the norm. Peacewomen.org reported in May 2012, that the situation for girls aged 16 and above still remains unchanged. Private and government initiatives have certainly decreased the rate of teenage female child marriages but their efforts remain limited amongst older adolescents. Only when this age group is also targeted will a change in the reduction of child marriages be felt as a whole. ■

*Atiya Abbas freelances for various publications and writes extensively on effects of mass media.*

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# Going Green



**Bhutan embarks on organic farming and also gets ready to dominate the export industry.**

By Sidra Rizvi

The world is witnessing a remarkable increase in natural disasters. People across the globe are slowly growing occupied with lowering their carbon footprint. From recycling to finding alternatives to fossil fuels, the world has embarked upon a journey towards a cleaner, greener tomorrow.

Playing its part in a 'going green'

mission is Bhutan, a tiny country in Asia. Largely isolated from the rest of the world, Bhutan recently revealed its intentions of going completely organic by the year 2020. Shunning the use of chemical products that are already taking a toll on the planet, Bhutan has opted to walk down the organic road, aiming to become the pioneer in organic farming. With an advantage

over its counterparts in South Asia, Bhutan has its fair share of natural terrain; from subtropical plains to forests and Himalayan mountain ranges with peaks as high as 7000m.

Bhutan has been known to shy away from the technological advancements the rest of the world enjoys. Until recently, very little information was available of this tiny country. But

today, 'the happiest nation' in Asia, as well as the 8th happiest nation of the world, is taking on some remarkable incentives that are attracting global attention.

The tiny, landlocked country clearly has many advantages that can help it in achieving its goal. As mentioned before, Bhutan has largely been isolated from the international community and has been deprived of the modern technological advancements used in agriculture. Therefore, organic farming has existed in the country by default. Additionally, due to the high expenses involved in importing chemicals and other tools, farmers in Bhutan prefer to stick to their own farming methods, passed down through generations.

With people everywhere becoming extremely health conscious, organic farming is seen as a healthy alternative. As a result, organic food has become the fastest growing segment in the international food market. Bhutan has tremendous opportunity to benefit from this niche market. The largest market for Bhutan's organic food exists in neighboring India where the population is now increasingly conscious of the food it consumes.

Inorganic food, while easier to produce has innumerable detrimental effects. The fertilizers used to increase production immediately doubles the crops, but in the end leaves the soil barren. The pesticides used to tackle insects that destroy the plants do more harm than good. Many environmentalists also believe that certain fertilizers contain chemicals, which are rumored to affect ozone depletion and global warming.

According to Kesang Tshomo, coordinator of the National Organic Program, Ministry of Agriculture Bhutan, "The motto of the organic farming is to protect the earth's resources and produce safe, healthy food." The gravity of this can be sensed from the various measures and incentives already undertaken by the government to pro-

mote organic farming. Twenty-seven farmers along with three officials were sent on a 17-day tour to Bija Vidyapeeth, Navdanya's organic seed farm in Uttaranchal, India to develop an idea of organic farming as well as study the impact of green revolution in India. The Indian government has also banned the use of agrochemicals.

In Bhutan, training for locals farmers is underway. Farmers are now being educated on how to increase yield using natural products.

While the use of fertilizers was introduced in Bhutan during the 1960s, farmers in rural areas were unable to access the goods due to their high price. They continued using their traditional means of growing crops but with poor quality and low yielding products. With proper training on how to fertilize the soil using natural products like manure, and protection against pests, the government of Bhutan hopes the local farmers will soon be able to improve both the quality and yield of their products.

The Ministry of Agriculture in Bhutan believes that the low usage of chemical inputs in farming can easily help the country go organic by the year 2020.

By the recognized definition given by the International Federation of Organic Agriculture, four basic principles identify organic farming: health, ecology, fairness and care. These principles need to be considered during the dealing, production and management, processing and trading of all organic food. Local farmers growing organic produce for Bhutan need to be educated enough to be able to grow crops that meet the requirements already set.

The organic market today comprise of three main components. The first are all products that are consumed without the need for any processing such as fruits, herbs, spices and vegetables. Second are the products, which require some form of pro-

cessing in order to be consumed such as beverages. Lastly are the products, which are not consumed directly but serve as ingredients such as medicinal products, leather, fertilizers etc.

In order to go completely organic Bhutan needs to be able to come up with products for all three markets. Yuden Dorji of the Rural Enterprise Development in the Agriculture Ministry in Bhutan thinks that the country has tremendous potential in this sector, "Bhutan has a clean image around the globe and the fact that a lot of crops are still grown naturally is an advantage."

The government of Bhutan believes that encouraging organic farming is the best way to alleviate poverty from the country. Bhutan is the only nation in the world where organic products cost as much as inorganic ones. Bhutanese people are encouraged to use as much organic food as possible.

"All Bhutanese should be able to eat as much organic food as possible as just now organic food in Bhutan is sold at the same price as conventional food," says Kesang Tshomo "The National Organic Program has developed a mark /logo that will be used by registered organic farmers. So soon we will be able to identify the products that are grown locally by our organic farmers to give assurance of purity."

Apples and oranges to neighboring countries like Bangladesh and India have been exported since 2005. After going organic, the exports from Bhutan are expected to rise phenomenally. Countries like the United States have been importing naturally grown food products to cater to the increasing domestic demand, and with Bhutan going organic, the tiny Asian country has a clear advantage to sweep all competition. **S**

*Sidra Rizvi is majoring in creative writing and book production at the University of Karachi. She freelances for various publications.*



# Blessing in

**C**oke Studio is arguably one of the largest musical extravaganzas to emerge from the subcontinent. From its inception in 2008, Coke Studio has generated rave responses among music listeners and, through its diverse menu of enthralling melodies, established itself as a force for social change. Overall, the initiative has been a blessing in disguise for Pakistan; a country that currently finds itself in a quagmire. Genocide has become the order of the day and political instability permeates all spheres of life. Under these circumstances, Coke Studio has enabled Pakistan to climb out of its predicament and negate the common misperception of being a volatile country.

Now in its fifth season, Coke Studio has placed considerable emphasis in promoting an eclectic mix of music genres. The predominantly western influences on the local music scene have now taken a backseat to enthralling folk songs and Sufi melo-

**Coke Studio has revived the music industry in Pakistan giving new meaning to musical collaboration, from western influences to traditional roots.**

By Taha Kehar

dies. Foreign music styles have been skilfully interspersed with local genres to produce a powerful fusion. The success and popularity that Coke Studio enjoyed, inspired India to capitalize on the popularity of the music series.

In 2011, MTV India and the Coca Cola Company launched the Indian version of Coke Studio, called Coke Studio@MTV. The Indian series attempted to break through the stereotypical mould of Bollywood music and promote a diverse range of genres. But since it featured only well-known musicians in order to attract viewership and significantly compromised on the quality of music, the Indian version of

the music series did not measure up to expectations.

Critics have realized the abundance of talent in the subcontinent and feel that India and Pakistan should collaborate on the music series. Both countries can draw upon their shared cultural legacy and produce a rich fusion of music. While such an initiative could potentially push forward the peace process between the countries, it has largely been viewed with skepticism.

The idea of such a musical collaboration between the countries restricts the scope of the music series. South Asia has a rich musical heritage,



# Disguise

which is in desperate need of being restored lest it is forever lost in the sands of time. By limiting itself only to India and Pakistan, the Coke Studio initiative would stand the risk of ignoring certain musical genres that are in danger of extinction. In order to preserve indigenous music from South Asia, all countries in the region should collaborate and produce a venture that is similar to Coke Studio. As a consequence, a diverse array of music would be produced and solidarity would be maintained among countries in the region.

Since Pakistan has initiated the Coke Studio project in South Asia and has managed to reel in audience from all over the world, it enjoys an edge over its Indian counterpart. Produced by Rohail Hyatt, Coke Studio has revolutionized the music scene by breathing new life into it. It has created a platform through which talented musicians have composed both new songs and memorable renditions

ly, this has encouraged musicians to hone their talent and exhibit their craft with competence. India, on the other hand, has a thriving film and music industry that has remained strong despite political upheavals. Coke Studio would be just another achievement to add to its résumé. Since both countries may decide to collaborate for very different reasons, it could negatively impact the standard of music that will be produced.

Despite this wave of skepticism, if India and Pakistan were to work together to produce the music series, it would indicate that both countries are keen on strengthening bilateral relations through creative initiatives. In recent years, both India and Pakistan have successfully collaborated to produce various artistic endeavors. While these efforts have gone largely unrecognized, they are a strong testament to how effectively both countries can put aside their history of antagonism and work towards positive change. Skep-

of old melodies. More significantly, it has provided opportunities for new talent to be discovered. Vocalists such as Bilal Khan, Meesha Shafi and the Viccaji sisters are all young prodigies who have gained popularity because of the Coke Studio initiative.

The music industry in Pakistan has suffered a massive blow after severe restrictions were imposed on the performing arts during General Zia's era. Ironical-

tics have predicted that unfavorable outcomes would develop if India and Pakistan were to jointly produce the Coke Studio series. Such conclusions have, to a great extent, been shaped by long-standing hostilities that exist between the countries.

Over the years, both countries have collaborated on various initiatives. In recent years, artistes from India and Pakistan have worked across the border on a spectrum of projects. These initiatives have not been restricted to musical ventures and the performing arts. They also encompass philanthropic activities that are geared towards maintaining the humanitarian cause. Given that these projects have been conducted successfully, it is pertinent to conclude that both countries would do justice to the music series through their combined efforts.

Coke Studio has completely redefined the scope for eastern music. It has succeeded in bringing together the music tastes and traditions of various cultures and allowed the world to relish in music that is both esoteric and engaging. More significantly, it has enabled Pakistan to restore and reinforce its cultural identity through music. While India has made a reasonably good attempt at recreating this rich musical journey, it will need a stronger impetus to ensure that the quality and standard of music mirrors perfection. Since Pakistan has done substantially well in making Coke Studio a successful venture, it can help India in achieving the right balance between creativity and sophistication. This can only occur if both countries take the venture seriously and promote their shared cultural legacy through music. ■

*Taha Kehar is a blogger on social issues and has previously worked for a media magazine. He is currently pursuing law at the School of Oriental and African Studies.*

# Testing the Taste Buds



South Indian cuisine stands apart for more reasons than just the name!

By Fatima Siraj

Anyone who has tried a '*garam garam*' *dosa* at a wedding, complete with its flavorful, spicy chutneys, knows that its taste is unique, exotic, and second to none. And why wouldn't it be? A *masala dosa* is only one of the many types of *dosas* that are the star features of the world-renowned South Indian cuisine. Other varieties consist of paper *dosa*, sweet *dosa*, *rava* (semolina) *dosa* etc. These rolled-up crepes stuffed with spiced potato and other vegetables are an overwhelming favorite and an instant hit at restaurants. Apart from the *dosa*, South Indian cuisine is also famous for its *kebabs*, *idlis* (steamed cakes made from rice batter), *vadas* (the Indian take on a burger) and the infamous *biryani*.

When it comes to Indian cuisine

most of us are familiar only with the heavier, buttery dishes of the north — oil-rich curries, meats and breads from the tandoor oven, or that perennial Anglo-Indian favorite, chicken tikka masala. Since Indian cuisine is far from unified, South Indian cuisine stands as a sharp contrast to North Indian cuisine. Lighter, sharper, more aromatic and with greater emphasis on seafood, the cuisine from the South is more nutritional and exotic.

Known for its extremely clever use of spices, this type of cuisine originated in South Asia with the help of geographical and social influences. South India, being a coastal region, is blessed with an abundant supply of cardamom, pepper, cinnamon, cloves and nutmeg among other spices. Furthermore, its hot and humid climate

with abundant rainfall is conducive to the production of fresh fruits, vegetables, seafood and rice. This explains why rice is an essential staple food for the people of South India and why no South Indian meal is complete without rice in some form or another.

South Indian food is popular all over the world because of its distinct combination of oil, mustard seeds, curry leaves and red chilies. It especially appeals to those who enjoy spicy food as most of dishes are essentially hot and fiery. Andhra Pradesh produces fiery Andhra cuisine, which is largely vegetarian but also has a huge range of seafood in its coastal areas. Tamilnadu has *Chettinad* cuisine, perhaps the most fiery of all Indian food. From Kerala comes *Malabari* cooking with its wide variety of tasty seafood dishes.



es. Hyderabad is home of the *Nizams* and regal *Nizami* food, rich and flavorful with tastes ranging from spicy to sour to sweet feature in the cuisine. Hyderabadi food is full of nuts, dried fruits and exotic, expensive spices like Saffron.

Such richness and unique combinations make South Indian cuisine stand apart from other Indian cuisines. Its brilliant blend of colors, aroma, nutritional balance, seasonings and visual appeal make it the preferred option for those seeking a rich flavor and a traditional, cultural dining experience.

There are a number of South Indian restaurants located in numerous cities around the world. Nearly all such these restaurants serve specific foods at particular times. Usually mid-day to 3 pm is lunchtime. Lunch in a South Indian restaurant means *thali*, an all-you-can-eat serving of food that is served on a platter or on a banana leaf, containing rice with a number of diverse curries and other dishes to

complement it. A South Indian *thali* will always consist of *rasam*, a hot soup, and ample amount of *sambar* (a lentil and vegetable stew that is cooked with tamarind).

The diversity and unique combination of flavors that draw people towards South Indian cuisine can be attributed to the distinct characteristics of the four segments that make up the cuisine. South Indian Cuisine is an umbrella term used to describe the cuisines that come from the four major states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. The varying intensity of the spices used and the social backgrounds of the states serve as major distinguishing factors. While there is a generous use of chili powder in Andhra food, Karnataka cuisine is more mild and uses more of *jaggery* (whole cane sugar) and palm leaves than chili. Kerala's food is more diverse due to its large Christian and Muslim populations hence Syrian Christian dishes and *Malabari* Muslim dishes are very famous. Furthermore,

coconut is a major export of Kerala and so almost all the dishes have coconut associated with them. Lastly, Tamil cuisine brings with it a distinct combination of six tastes. These include the sweet taste of milk, butter and *ghee*, the bitter taste of gourd, turmeric and various greens, the salty taste of salt and pickles, the pungent taste of chili peppers, cloves and ginger, the astringent taste of beans, lentils and cabbage and the sour taste of lemons, yogurt and citrus fruits.

The usage of this diverse array of ingredients and the flavors associated with them, are the major reasons for the popularity of the South Indian cuisine over cuisines from Northern India. The rich spices used appeal to the palate and the authentic aromas lead to a memorable dining experience. Furthermore the food is high in nutritional value especially protein and vitamins and low in calorie content. This makes it more appealing to people who are health conscious since there is no better way to remain healthy than one that involves enjoying highly flavorful and delicious food.

Not only does the South Indian Cuisine set itself apart with its *dosas* which serve as starters and the various main dishes discussed, it also specializes in extremely rich desserts. From the rice pudding to the *gajar ka halva* and from the coconut *payasam* to the white *kheer*, South Indian desserts are cooked to perfection, making them wholesome and delicious.

With its careful emphasis on nutrition, flavor, aroma and presentation, it is therefore not surprising that South Indian Cuisine stands out as one of the richest, most authentic, most complete and most enjoyed cuisines across the globe. ■

*Fatima Siraj is currently pursuing a BBA at the Institute of Business Administration. She frequently writes on marketing and social issues.*

**T**he book, part of a series of scholarly works appearing under the Global Security Watch, is devoted to Pakistan – its security dilemmas, challenges and response.

Professor Hasnat has done a commendable job in closely examining and analyzing Pakistan's baffling peculiarities as a state torn between its self-assumed, supreme religio-ideological commitment and location next to a hostile India and an irredentist Afghanistan.

defensive Spartan syndrome against one Indian Athens even at the out-cast. Ironically, however, India's one compelling, dormant desire had been to settle scores with a Muslim/Islamic Pakistan for practically a millennium of Muslim conquests and rule of India (711-1857).

Hence the emergence of the sub-continent as one of the world's most volatile areas militarily. The conventional threat would acquire the nuclear edge in due course.

It was hardly realized that 'terri-

written by 'dependency' on foreign military aid and armaments. The serious lacuna occurring between the ever-depleting number of front-line weapons and all the fuss of the donor country/countries in respect of their quantum and quality would not only hinder the course of the war but also impact its irreversible denouement. For Pakistan, the 1965 war remains its one classical example.

Once a 'dependency' war begins, it becomes the donor's war in

# A Requiem for Pakistan

**Title:** Global Security Watch - Pakistan  
**Author:** Syed Farooq Hasnat  
**Publisher:** Praeger (May 2011)  
**Pages:** 211, Hardback  
**Price:** USD 49.95  
**ISBN:** 9780313346972

Pakistan's vision of an aggressive India, even as a mental aberration, was physically corroborated by the Kashmir war poisoning, with India-Pakistan relations at the very root. It drove Pakistan inexorably into a pathological, defensive mode focused on military security at any cost. The evolving security paradigm placed the acquisition of 'military capability' above the attainment of 'economic prosperity.' Fledgling Pakistan thus acquired an offensive

torial integrity' enshrining the 'principle of national security' could no longer be guaranteed by military forces alone as nations can 'disintegrate' from within.

The break-up of Pakistan itself at the end of a military debacle remains a deeply agonizing and definitive example of erosion from within, inviting foreign invasion.

Professor Hasnat raises the quintessential question of whether national society could be under-

terms of meeting serious, continuing shortfalls in vital equipments at the donor's own discretion. Donor countries tend to 'compound' problems by their 'infiltration' into national, political, economic, educational and other vital 'infrastructural institutions' to make security and dependency mutually incompatible.

'The crux of the problem of Pakistan's economic enslavement' lies in the empowerment of vested

interests, for example 'corrupt politicians, army generals and bureaucrats' seeking to 'perpetuate status quo' via 'peace or war according to their own perception.'

Enlarging the scope of his thesis, Prof. Hasnat debunks the concept of geopolitics based on 'land mass' as a source of power. Sir Halford Mackinder's formulation about importance of nations in world politics controlling 'great land areas, have lost their validity in the aftermath of the rapid process of decolonization in the

tegi depth' became a 'strategic liability vis-à-vis Afghanistan.' In real terms, 'strategic depth' could only be achieved through mutual trade and commerce.

The late Eqbal Ahmed described strategic depth as 'a mirage misnamed as strategic depth.' Pakistani support of the Afghan Taliban continues to cost Pakistan internally, by way of the mounting cost of the war on terror and, externally, as a supporter of the Taliban and al-Qaeda insurgents supposed to

stability, the country is edging further away from its original democratic mores. The so-called democratic dispensation in existence is little more than a mockery of democratic values in terms of people's welfare and well-being. It is democracy without demos.

From one end of the country to the other -- from KP to Balochistan -- democracy has offered horrific spectacles of targeted killings, mounting anarchy, a galloping cost of living, load shedding, and brazen involvement of the top (democratically elected leaders?) in their own affairs than a visible concern and prompt action in providing relief to the people. Balochistan stays like a tinderbox ready to explode by an odd matchstick randomly thrown.

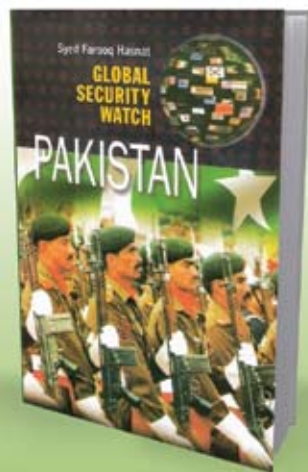
The book is a requiem for Pakistan, for all its misbegotten policies and priorities.

The author views Pakistan as a 'country in an extremely volatile geographic location and armed with nuclear weaponry, Pakistan's impact on global security cannot be taken lightly.'

Whether our nuclear-missile, arsenal has contributed towards our national security in an intentional perspective, is a question that calls for a sober assessment untainted by emotion and our singular obsession with India.

The book excels in substance, presentation and readability. The narrative flows uninterrupted by too many learned expressions and pedantic platitudes! ❏

*Brig A. R. Siddiqi is an eminent regional security expert, a defense analyst and former ISPR spokesman. He writes for various publications and often speaks on national security issues on TV.*



*Reviewed by Brig A.R. Siddiqi*

post-second World War period.' As for the Central Asia landmass, once the hub of the Anglo-Russian Great Game and the marching route of the Mongol and Tartar marauders, it is valued more for its vast oil and gas reserves (geo-economics) than for its geo-political relevance. Strong commercial ties and balanced bilateral relations, based on respect of each other's sovereignty have replaced aggressive geo-politics.

Thus, Pakistan's concept of 'stra-

be posing a threat to world peace. Pakistan has already exploded with suicide attacks, ever-mounting acts of sabotage and subversion destroying the peace and economy of the country.

The persistent and on-going militancy is fast assuming the contours of a civil war. It pulled Pakistan away from its foundational ideal to develop into a welfare, democratic state as envisaged by the Quaid.

In terms of internal peace and

A variety of literature is available on the Afghan Soviet War and Pakistan's role in the conflict and its aftermath. A large number of researchers and analysts, both local and foreign, have commented in various capacities on the turn of events that led to the Soviet invasion. Over the years, a debate has developed about how the events unfolded, what went wrong and how things could have been done differently.

This alone makes the book interesting and exceptional compared to other similar literature written by former Pakistani diplomats. Presented as a research/analysis report, augmented by a precise and cool-headed examination of the current situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the book shuns sensationalism whilst discussing one of the most convoluted crises in history.

Divided into three parts, the his-

the origins of the intellectual crisis gripping Pakistan. One of the most interesting parts of the analysis is the author's perspective on the possible guidelines for the resolution of the issue. Here the reader does not come across the usual Pakistani narrative of an existential threat emanating from India. The author instead focuses on the internal dynamics of Pakistani politics, the weaknesses of the political institutions, the role of the military elite and the subsequent

# Re-evaluating Policy

**Title:** Afghanistan and Pakistan: Conflict, Extremism, and Resistance to Modernity  
**Author:** Riaz Mohammad Khan  
**Publisher:** Oxford University Press, Pakistan (July 2011)  
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The book in review touches on all these aspects and highlights some very interesting facets. It offers a cold analysis of one of the most sensitive and volatile regions in the world with reference to extremism. The author is a former foreign secretary of Pakistan and his input is indeed a breath of fresh air on the surfeit of literature already available on the subject.

Interestingly, the author displays little prejudice for or against Pakistan and tries to introduce a neutral

approach to the topic. This alone makes the book interesting and exceptional compared to other similar literature written by former Pakistani diplomats. Presented as a research/analysis report, augmented by a precise and cool-headed examination of the current situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the book shuns sensationalism whilst discussing one of the most convoluted crises in history. Divided into three parts, the history of the country is discussed in the initial chapters. Here the Afghan nation's origin (from a loose federation held together by an uneasy alliance between tribal chieftains) to its later years, attempts of the British Empire to colonize it as well as other historical details are presented. The Afghan psyche is also highlighted. Their fiercely independent nature explains why a large part of the country resists foreign influence and interference of any kind.

The second part sheds light on

Afghan jihad as the reason for this development.

Khan states that India has indeed played its part in these developments but cannot be singled out as the sole factor of this degeneration. He specifically mentions the role played by General Zia ul Haq, the Pakistani military ruler in the 80s, in the radicalization of the Pakistani society. During this time, Pakistan was subjected to the draconian Hudood laws and gave rise to various religious organizations. The


rise of militant and radical groups also took place during this period thus inflicting long-term damage to the country's psyche and its future planning. The Americans and the Saudis in particular supported this phenomenon to counter the former USSR and its presence in Afghanistan. Subsequent policies in Kashmir and Afghanistan in the 1990s only aggravated the situation. The environment in essence then provided an ideal breeding ground for further

agement by the state also led to a gradual increase in the influence of religious organizations within the army, bureaucracy and media. A spawning network of madrassas added to the constituency of religious organizations. This expanding influence resulted in a major confusion after 9/11, when the Pakistani state had to revisit its policies regarding Afghanistan and India.

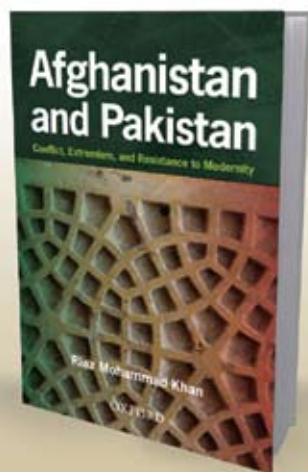
This confusion unfortunately gave further ground to the militants who

matters in any way and to try to avoid engaging in the reconciliation process until explicitly invited. Pakistan's concerns should be limited to ensure that Afghan territory is not used for any activity against peace and stability in Pakistan. It should also focus more on the development and progress of its people. These actions will be more beneficial. The role of the international community, as he sees it in the context of Pakistan, may be restricted to meaningful economic help in terms of market access, health and educational reforms. He singles out the Saudis as bearing special responsibility for the de-radicalization of the Pakistani society as he sees their charities and funds playing an important role in promoting extremism in Pakistan.

In short, Khan believes that Afghanistan will need time to consolidate its own position and solve a multitude of problems. The draw-down of US' forces will be helpful in creating an environment of reconciliation in Afghanistan. He also says that the exclusion of the Taliban from the political setup was never an option. Similarly, due to the poor economic conditions of the country, NATO's plan for raising a 250,000 strong Afghan-national army is unrealistic. He foresees a loose arrangement of quasi-autonomous regions under the influence of various tribes owing allegiance to Kabul as a short-term arrangement.

The book is highly recommended for anyone interested in getting an insight into the historical background and politics of the region. 

*Dr. Omar Farooq Khan is an ardent believer in Jinnah's ideologies for balanced nation-building.*



*Reviewed by Dr. Omar Farooq Khan*

radicalization, making the Taliban and Al-Qaeda the end products of such developments.

In the latter part, the author also focuses on the prevalent ideological confusion within Pakistan and the likely responses to it. He provides a history of the origin of militancy, starting with the student wings of the religious parties on university campuses in Pakistan. These outfits gained strength during the 80s and eventually became a serious set of forces to be reckoned with. Encour-

aged their cause of jihad as one against the oppression of the imperial west. Seizing this window of opportunity, they felt further emboldened, hiding behind the cover of Islam and referring to any action against their activities as steps taken by puppet governments against the Mujahideen at the behest of the USA.

Briefly analyzing the interests of regional countries, the author states that peace in Afghanistan is beneficial for all of them. He advises Pakistan not to interfere in Afghan



By Anees Jillani

# The Conspiracy of Silence

**T**he two-nation theory is based on the postulate that Muslims and Hindus constitute two distinct nations and the Indian Muslims thus demanded a separate homeland for themselves and eventually managed to get one within a short period of seven years after the passage of the March 1940 resolution.

If Muslims really constitute one nation, then why do we have more than 55 separate Muslim nation-states? This is a dichotomy that I leave to you to figure out. However, it is nothing short of ironic that what to talk of all these states, Pakistan refuses to accept Muslims who end up one way or the other on its soil. This includes the Afghans, the Biharis, the Bengalis and Muslims belonging to Central Asia. The predicament of the Biharis is pathetically sad. The Biharis have desired to come to Pakistan for the past four decades and the country continues to refuse them entry.

Recently, Muslims belonging to Burma's northern Rakhine State, called the Rohingyas, are being sent back by one state after another after being persecuted by the Burmese on grounds of being Muslim and ethnically different.

Dozens of Rohingyas have so far been killed and close to 50,000 are now displaced and staying in 37 camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Burma as their homes are destroyed. Aid workers say the situation remains volatile. The Rohingyas urgently require food, shelter and medical assistance.

The sectarian cum ethnic violence started after the rape and murder of a young Buddhist woman by a group of Rohingya Muslim men on May 28, followed by a counter attack on a bus on June 3, in which ten Muslims died. In an effort to quell the violence, Burmese President Thein Sein declared a state of emergency in Rakhine on June 10.

The Rakhine state is located next to Bangladesh and it is thus natural for the displaced to rush to it for safety. However, the Dhaka government is callously turning back all boats and refugees. Thailand and India do not want the refugees perhaps due to religious reasons, therefore mak-

ing the Rohingyas a stateless community. What to talk of others, Pakistan which professes to be an Islamic Republic, has not said a word about the plight of these unfortunate people and the local media also fails to give them due coverage. If Pakistan cannot provide them asylum or temporary refuge, the least that it can do is to provide these refugees some material assistance.

It goes without saying that the violence poses a threat to Burma's democratic transition and stability. It is critical that the Burmese government intensifies its efforts to defuse tension and restore security to prevent the violence from spreading further and lifts the state of emergency as soon as order is re-established.

Discrimination against the Muslim community, particularly the Rohingyas in Rakhine State, dates back centuries. Historically, they have been denied citizenship, deprived of freedom of movement as well as other fundamental rights. Under Burmese law, Rakhine's 800,000 Rohingyas are stateless and are not included in the country's official list of 135 ethnic groups. This is a gross violation of the Rohingyas' universal human rights and the international community continues to ignore their plight.

The Burmese government should be asked to initiate policing action impartially, in line with human rights standards, and with respect for the principles of legality, proportionality and non-discrimination.

Underscoring the sensitivity of the issue, some Burmese have taken to the internet to express their dissatisfaction with how the situation has been portrayed in the international media. We all should extend a hand in supporting Rohingyas in the name of humanity and ask our government to take some concrete steps to alleviate their suffering. ■

*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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