

INTERVIEW
Lt. Gen.(r) Asad Durrani

June 2014

SOUTHASIA

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The **Good**, The **Bad** and The **Ugly**

ISI's successes are too many to count. But does the recent furor over the agency suggest that it should rethink, review and change its methods?



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4-6 September 2014, Expo Centre Lahore
2nd International Printing, Labeling,
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4-6 September 2014, Expo Centre Lahore
3rd International Food, Beverages &
Hospitality Trade Fair
Website: www.foodtech.com.pk
E-mail: info@foodtech.com.pk



4-6 September 2014, Expo Centre Lahore
11th Edition of the International Food, Beverage
& Packaging Technology Trade Fair
Website: www.foodtech.com.pk
E-mail: info@foodtech.com.pk



November 2014
4th International Multi-Modal Transportation,
Logistics Conference
Website: www.intertranspakistan.com
E-mail: info@intertranspakistan.com



10-12 March 2015
Pak-China Friendship Centre, Islamabad
11th International Safety & Security
Exhibition & Conference
Website: www.safesecurepakistan.com
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POGEE

May 2015

13th International Exhibition for the Energy Industry
Website: www.pogee.com.pk
E-mail: info@pogee.com.pk



2015, Expo Centre Lahore
12th Edition of the International Machinery
Exhibition of Garment & Textile Technology
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Leader to Statesman

When Narendra Modi was shaking hands with Nawaz Sharif, just before taking oath as India's 15th Prime Minister, he must have thought of the great historic opportunity he had to bring South Asia out of the box. He was host that day to all those heads of state and government of South Asian nations who were present to participate in his oath-taking. It seems though that Modi used the opportunity simply to further his own agenda. The very next day, when he met the Pakistani prime minister again, his emphasis was more on the terrorism that is alleged to originate in Pakistan and less on the various other irritants that have impacted relations between India and Pakistan – issues such as Kashmir, Siachin, Sir Creek, distribution of river waters, the visa regime, India-Pakistan trade, etc. Perhaps it would have been more in the fitness of things had Modi left terrorism and the other issues for talks at a later date and simply concentrated on knowing his guest better. But that is the difference between a leader and a statesman.

Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) won a historic mandate in the country's general election when it emerged with 282 out of 543 parliamentary seats. These were more than enough for the BJP to form a government without having to enter a coalition with other parties. Aged 63, Narendra Modi is the son of a tea-seller. He was a full-time activist of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a right-wing party and rose to the position of Chief Minister of Gujarat state twice. It was during his years as the Gujarat chief minister that Modi was accused of orchestrating communal riots in his state in which more than 1000 people are alleged to have been killed. During his chief ministership, Modi brought prosperity to Gujarat and shaped his future vision for India. His planned economic reforms will now come into play because he and his team strongly believe that India needs radical change. It is in this vein that Modi has floated the idea of building "a hundred new cities," of extending a high-speed rail network across the subcontinent and undertaking the herculean task of cleaning the Ganges River. Though he is reportedly inspired by China's model of high-growth and top-down development, it is also true the country he now leads is much more messy – and democratic – than China.

The hope is that the spirit of amity and friendship with which South Asian leaders were invited to the Indian premier's oath-taking ceremony will be carried forward in the country's future dealings with the other regional states. As the most populous and largest geographical entity in the entire equation, India should now stop acting as a bully. It needs to become a benign leader, a regional power that recognizes the independent rights of other South Asian states and is willing to provide the sort of leadership that is expected of such a large country. In this context, it is also expected that SAARC, an organization which has more or less been in limbo for many years now, will be kick started into a dynamic body, taking due cognizance of its laid down objectives and serving the region in a more vibrant manner.

In fact, in order to give greater viability to SAARC, it is important that India amicably settles its disputes with other South Asian nations, especially Pakistan, and gives a chance to the people of the region to progress and grow in the same manner as people in other regions. With his new style of governance and with his proclivity for change, Narendra Modi is one Indian leader who can create this opportunity. All that he needs to do is free himself from the traditional inhibitions that have dogged the path of his predecessors and look at the future of South Asia with a new perspective. Now that he is in the driving seat, Modi faces the challenge of living up to the aspirations of his countrymen in particular and of South Asians in general – a challenge that he must deliver on by transforming from a leader to a statesman.



Syed Jawaid Iqbal

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Cricket all the way!

SouthAsia's cover story on cricket was definitely a treat for the lovers of the game as it covered almost every aspect of the sport. Being a cricket fan since my childhood, I could not wait to read the articles and here's what I have to say about it.



Javed Ansari encapsulated cricket's past, present and future in a concise way, Sohaib Alvi added a little bit of drama to the topic with his article, Saad Amanullah raised the pertinent issue of favoritism while S. G. Jilane's article offered interesting tidbits about the history of cricket in South Asia. Chishty Mujahid's interview was very educative and informative.

However, I think the addition of one aspect of the game would have completed the picture: the various scandals of cricketers that emerged from time to time. From drug issues to lavish lifestyles to relationships with film stars, cricketers of South Asia have always been in the news for one reason or another. Some Pakistani cricketers became famous for their affairs with Indian actresses while others were notorious for their 'off-the-ground' activities. I'm sure it would have made an interesting read. That said, all the articles were good and I hope to read such quality stuff in the coming issues too.

Nandita D. Gupta
Bangalore, India

Before it's too late

The sickening episode of the kidnapping of over 250 schoolgirls in Nigeria should act as a wake-up call for the leaders of the Muslim world. Boko Haram, a rabidly extremist Nigerian

outfit that is against western education among other things, demanded the release of its prisoners in exchange for the kidnapped girls. The outfit also forced the non-Muslims among them to convert to Islam. The Boko Haram's prisoner-exchange demand reminded me of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan which made similar demands to the government of Pakistan. There are reports that over a dozen Taliban prisoners were set free to please the Taliban and prove to them that the government was indeed sincere about talking to the TTP.

The Nigerian episode is a sad reminder of the direction the Muslim world as a whole might be taking. It is the path that leads towards rigidity, intolerance and violence. What is more unfortunate is that no steps are apparently being taken to control extremism. Instead, what we see across the Muslim world is a dangerous and growing tilt towards radicalization of thought. I wonder if we realize the consequences of this tendency and how it will harm us far more than it will harm others.



Samina Rehman
Karachi, Pakistan

Bring in trains

The article on the railway network in Afghanistan (or the absence of it) was an interesting read. Afghanistan is one of the few countries in the world that don't have a railways infrastructure. However, in Afghanistan's case, the situation is more deplorable since it is a landlocked country. But it is the people of Afghanistan, especially the rulers, who are to blame for this situation. Various Afghan leaders have often opposed the construction of a railway line, fearing that foreign powers could use it to threaten the country's independence. In fact, Afghanistan's

former king Amir Abdul Rehman once described the British-built line to Chaman as "a knife pushed into my vitals".

But now times are changing. The Afghans must realize that if they have to survive and progress, they need railway lines in the country. The absence of railway lines only worsens the transportation of goods and people in the country which has a poor road network. Fears such as foreign powers using the railways to carry out their nefarious activities are baseless since foreign powers have attacked the country and occupied it for decades – all in the absence of railway lines. So I think it is time the Afghans must realize what is good for them. It is hoped that the new government will take seriously the challenge of setting up a railway network across the country.

Yamin Azmat
Kabul, Afghanistan

Too little, too late

There are many dimensions of the Crimean crisis. We can surmise that it may be an indication of Russia's yearning to assert its status as a world superpower in the long run, but I think the crisis basically aggravated because of the lack of will on the part of world leaders to take a timely and prompt action. When the crisis started, there were signs of what was about to happen. Russia's expansionist designs were clear as day. But the world leaders failed to grasp the seriousness of the issue at hand. They banked on mere rhetoric to do the job of preventing Russia from interfering in the internal matters of Ukraine. What was required of them was a firm and timely action to stop Russia.

They failed to do that and everyone



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Media wars

What we have been seeing in the wake of the attack on Hamid Mir has taken an ugly turn. What started off as a war of accusations between media channels has now assumed a sectarian tint. Accusations of blasphemy are hurled left, right and centre without pondering for a moment what the consequences of such an irresponsible behavior can be. Pakistan's biggest media group is the main target with all other channels standing against it. It presents a sorry picture but sadly the rot started at the media channel itself. Take any negative trend in the media and you are likely to trace

its origin to Geo. It faces blasphemy charges today and is playing the victim.

Have we forgotten how its journalist accused the late PPP MNA Fouzia Wahab of blasphemy when the poor lady didn't say anything that could have been construed as blasphemy? Can we forget a particularly venomous article written by a journalist of the group inciting blasphemy charges against Wahab? She was lucky that no case was registered against her although some people tried their best to do it. Now that Geo is having a taste of its own medicine, can it be hoped that once it's out of this mess - and I'm sure it will come out strong and unscathed like it did in the past - it will have learnt some lessons? No matter what its rivals may say, it is Pakistan's biggest and most popular media group. It is hoped that it will act maturely, especially in the matters of religion and national security.

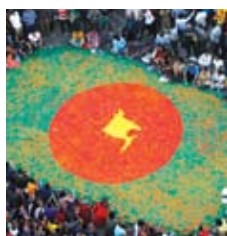
**Faryal Humayun
Karachi, Pakistan**

knows what followed. While the secession of Crimea from Ukraine has given a boost to Russia, the episode has damaged the U.S. the most in terms of its credibility and capacity to maintain its status as a world leader. Late as they may be, it is hoped that the sanctions against Russia would prevent it from undertaking a similar path in the future.

**Salman Nabi
Washington, U.S.**

Anything but revenge

This refers to the article 'The Politics of Revenge'. While it may be very easy for some writers to call it 'politics' of revenge, the reality, particularly for the people of Bangladesh, is far from it. The sufferings they went through are innumerable and all because they wanted their basic rights and freedoms. The ban on the Jamaat-e-Islami is completely justified considering the role it played in the 1971 War of Independence. Moreover, its existence threatens the secular national fiber of the country as the party holds and propagates radical views. We have seen the role its sister organization, the Jamaat-e-Islami of Pakistan, has played in promoting extremist ideologies there. Can we forget the comment of Munawar Hasan, the former Ameer of the JI Pakistan, who termed Hakimullah Mehsud, the chief of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Taliban, a martyr



(*shaheed*)?

The government and the nation of Bangladesh want to ban the JI because they don't want such radical ideas to take root in the Bangladeshi society. It's not about revenge. It's about tolerance, coexistence and respecting the other person's views.

**Motiur Rahman
Dhaka, Bangladesh**

Political stagnation

While the article 'Whither progress?' basically focused on the Nepali Congress and its leader, Prime Minister Sushil Koirala, the situation in the other major political party of Nepal, the United Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), is not hunky-dory either. In fact, the party that led the revolutionary movement, and was considered an emblem of people's rights, is now divided into various factions, each going its own way. Instead of working together with other political parties to achieve its goal of the betterment and welfare of the Nepalese people, the party is wasting all its energy and resources in infighting.

What happened at the UCPN-M annual convention was simply shameful. While Pushpa Kamal Dahal was re-elected as the party chairperson, a senior leader, Baburam Bhattarai walked out of the convention midway because of differences with Dahal. The fact that Dahal was made the party's chairman for the 23rd consecutive year does not say much about the way the party is functioning. Doesn't it have other able leaders? Despite my support for the UCPN-M,

I am forced to say that it has become stagnant mainly because of the lack of change in the faces that rule its upper echelons.

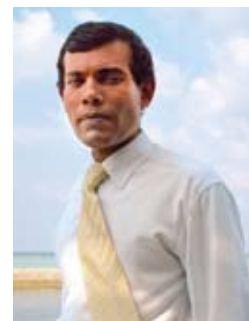
**Sumir Pandey
Kathmandu, Nepal**

The real threat

I agree with most of what Asna Ali has written in her article 'Fall of the MDP'. However, I want to add a point to the reasons she gave for Mohamed Nasheed's downfall. It was the kind of money spent by his rivals in their election campaigns. Nasheed is among the few sane voices that we are left with in the Maldives. Had he been allowed to rule the country, he'd have definitely put it on the road to progress. His efforts to raise awareness of climate change and its dire consequences for the archipelago were known to all.

Do we hear about this issue anymore? There is hardly any mention of it. Instead, what we hear about all the time is the aid received from a 'brother' Islamic country to build mosques on every island, news about raids on parties and arrest of people on the allegations of unlawful activities. These are issues that should bother us the least. Most important is the risk posed to the Maldives by environmental degradation. Does anyone care?

**Mohamed Hafeez
Male', Maldives**





"I hope that BJP's decisive victory would augur well for Indo-Pak relationship."

Nawaz Sharif
Prime Minister of Pakistan



"I am delighted to see a great friend of Bangladesh leading an extremely friendly country, India, in the coming days. I hope that you would find my country your second home and first destination for your official visit abroad."

Sheikh Haseena
Prime Minister of Bangladesh



"Every Bhutanese grows up with a very strong belief in the relationship between cause and effect. There is the influence of the monastery on the one hand and the influence of our monarchs on the other. They are role models."

Tshering Tobgay
Prime Minister of Bhutan



"We are congratulating Narendra Modi for his historic victory in the election. We hope that India will uphold its tradition of keeping religious harmony among the people under the leadership of Modi."

Makbul Ahamad
Bangladeshi Politician



"The accomplishment of the Pakistani street children football team will be an inspiration for all children of Pakistan."

Alfredo Leoni
Brazil's Ambassador to Pakistan



"When more than 200 young girls are being held in barbaric conditions with the prospect of being sold into slavery, there are no questions to be asked, only actions to be taken."

Francois Hollande
President of France



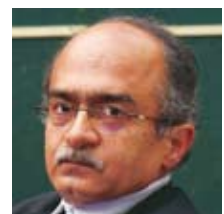
"For rural areas, farmers, dalits (low castes), weak and the pained, this government is for them. To meet their aspirations and hopes, this is our responsibility because our weakest, poorest have sent us here."

Narendra Modi
Prime Minister of India



"We have noted that drugs are being brought into the country in large quantities, drug trafficking networks are being re-activated and those arrested for such offences slither out of the criminal justice system easily."

Mohamed Nasheed
MDP President



"It shows that the propaganda blitzkrieg and advertisements have clearly worked for BJP."

Prashant Bhushan
AAP Leader



"This time, the federation, and not the constitution, is at stake. If any attempt is made to change the present setup to a presidential, Amirul Momineen or dictatorial form of government, the country's survival will be difficult."

Raza Rabbani
PPP Leader



"Hamid Karzai will be an influential figure after the elections and I don't think that's necessarily a bad thing. I think that the new president will respect him."

James Dobbins
U.S. Special Representative for Pakistan and Afghanistan



"What a solid mandate given by the people. It proves again that the only constant is change. Now to move forward with strong and active faith, India."

Shahrukh Khan
Indian Actor

PAKISTAN | Islamabad

Small Budget

The defense budget of Pakistan is the lowest in the region despite the country's location in the red zone in terms of growing threats to its security. This was revealed by the Ministry of Defense in a briefing to the Senate Defense Committee. At US\$5.7

billion approximately, Pakistan's defense allocation is the lowest in the region as compared to the rising defense budget of India at US\$37.256 billion, China \$115 billion, and Turkey \$19.1 billion. Out of the total budget, the Pakistan Army gets



48 percent while 20 percent goes to the Pakistan Air force and the Navy gets only 10 percent. **S**

PAKISTAN | Lahore

Musical Chairs

Musical chairs of sorts continued to be played between

Najam Sethi and Zaka Ashraf, who took turns to hold the post of chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board. Najam Sethi was restored as the head of the Pakistan Cricket Board after the Supreme Court suspended the decision to reinstate Zaka Ashraf as the PCB chairperson. Earlier, the Islamabad High Court had reinstated Ashraf as the chairperson of the body.

For the sixth time since May 2013,

the PCB saw the reinstatement of a chairperson after he was sent packing on legal grounds. Ashraf was reinstated for the second time after being removed as the PCB chairperson twice while Sethi is now at the top spot for the third time.

Zaka was suspended in May 2013 by the IHC after it ruled that his selection process was dubious. However, after a complicated legal process, he was reinstated by the same court on January 15, 2014, before Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif dismissed him again on February 10, bringing Sethi back in the saddle. **S**



PAKISTAN | Multan

More Mangoes

Thanks to tough new European regulations, Pakistani mango growers may take a slice out of India's export market. Last year, Pakistan exported around 100,000 tonnes of mangoes for \$48.6 million against India's 56,000 tonnes for \$44.6 million. But a European Union ban on India's prized Alphonso variety has presented Pakistan with a chance to widen the gap.

The embargo was imposed after many shipments were found to contain fruit flies and also affected four types of vegetable. According to an official, Pakistan has a potential to export 40 percent of the total production of mangoes while an exporter, who sends his fruit to Scandinavia, said that he hoped to increase his shipments four-fold this year. **S**



INDIA | Hyderabad

Fire Hazards



According to an official inspection, 101,522 schools and colleges in both Telangana and Seemandhra regions were found lacking in fire-safety norms, while the second-

largest category was of business offices (78,258) in both regions. Also, 30,039 and 26,086 small-scale industries and wholesale shops, respectively, were also declared hazardous among all categories of buildings identified by the inspecting

officials. Of the 1,534 cinema houses and 30 multiplexes inspected, only a dismal 11 and five, respectively, had

obtained NOCs.

According to rules, all commercial and residential buildings above

15 metres and 18 metres in height must obtain an NOC from the fire department before construction. **S**

INDIA | New Delhi

'I'm a Voter'



The popular feature 'I'm a Voter' offered by Facebook was available for voters in India as the world's largest democracy set about choosing their new prime minister. Over 4 million Indian voters used the 'I'm a Voter' button during the country's parliamentary elections, Facebook said. The feature was introduced when Americans voted to renew President

Barack Obama's lease on the White House in November 2012. More than 9 million citizens took to Facebook to click the "I'm a Voter" button, showing their online friends that they had cast a ballot.

For Facebook, this is another effort to integrate its services into the everyday life of people around the globe as it seeks to increase its number of users, particularly in emerging markets. The social media site now plans to offer versions of the feature around the world. **S**

INDIA | Mumbai

New Space

The latest addition to Mumbai's Bandra-Kurla Complex is the pharmaceutical giant Pfizer which has leased 90,000 sq ft office space at the Wadhwa Group's commercial tower, The Capital. Pfizer will shift its headquarters from Jogeshwari, which was next to a cowshed. The Capital already houses such pharmaceutical

companies as Roche (Swiss) and Takeda Pharmaceuticals (Japanese).

It is learnt that the National Payments Corporation of India is also at an advanced stage of setting up its India HQ at BKC. A large foreign bank is also planning to shift there from Nariman Point. The BKC has close to 25 lakh sq ft of commercial space lying

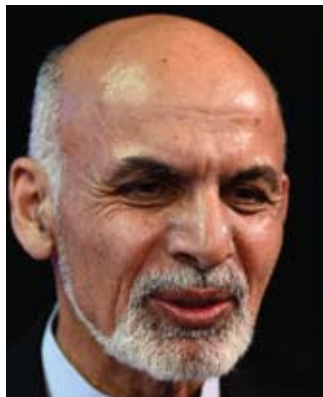


vacant or under construction, which has led to the new supply and demand situation. **S**

AFGHANISTAN | Kabul

Second Round

Preparations are on for the runoff elections in Afghanistan while the Independent Election Commission of Afghanistan has announced the final vote result for the presidential elections. President Hamid Karzai called on all Afghans to participate in the elections with the same enthusiasm with



which voted in the first round.

Karzai also called on all government officials to remain neutral and avoid using government facilities in favor of or against any specific candidate. The second round of elections will be held on June 14 between Abdullah Abdullah and Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai. **S**

Beyond Pasta

Italy will spend \$300 million on development projects during the year in Afghanistan's Herat province. According to officials, the money will be spent on big and small development projects, including the 160 kilometers road and expansion

of the Herat airport. Construction of the Herat-Cashti Sharif road would facilitate supplies of essential materials to the Salma power dam. Italy will also donate heavy machines to the Afghan government for better extraction of marble. **S**



Winds of Change



The Bangladesh Power Development Board will build the country's first wind turbine power plant at Cox's Bazar. The project will be jointly undertaken by the BPDB and USDKGEL, a joint venture company. Under the agreement, a 60-MW capacity turbine will be installed at Cox's Bazar on a build-own-operate

(BOO) basis for a term of 18 years. The electricity will cost 12 US cents per kwh while the estimated cost of the project is around USD 120 million, of which USD 100 million is foreign investment.

Bangladesh has a vast (around 710 km long) windy coast, especially in the Cox's Bazar, Patuakhali (southern coast), Mongla and Sundarban areas. The wind in these areas is compatible for running turbines to produce wind energy. **S**

Cine Connection

Colombo hosted the SAARC Film Festival for the fourth consecutive year. The festival lasted for 5 days and included screening of films from SAARC member countries and a workshop with well-known directors.

The SAARC Film Festival marks an event unique to the region, as it is

an interactive forum for the people of SAARC countries where they can savor each other's culture through the medium of cinema. It has also been noticed that the films screened during the festival are not merely a tool of entertainment, but rather one of cultural awareness as well as something that would convey an



inherent message indigenous to a particular member country. **S**

Mountain Closed



The Everest climbing season for 2014 has practically come to an end due to a combination of factors including the devastating avalanche that killed 16 climbers on the Khumbu Icefall. Following the accident, large

commercial expeditions and their hired workers for high altitude started leaving the Everest Base Camp. A mountaineer who tracks activity on the Everest declared the mountain 'functionally closed' for the season.

Large expeditions were allowed by the government to collaborate in chartering helicopters to retrieve

supplies already stored at Camps 1 and 2. Supplies are being allowed to be stored under locked mesh coverings on

the Western Cwm until the next season. The Nepal government, for its part, says that the mountain is still open but most

Sherpas at the Base Camp declared that the avalanche was a bad omen and decided not to go further up. **S**

NEPAL | Parbat

Business Leader

A Nepalese Dalit woman, Kesha Kumari Damini was recognized by the Norwegian Business for Peace Foundation for her initiative to lead a network of more than 60,000 micro entrepreneurs in Nepal. Kesha Kumari, who runs the Manisha Tailoring and Training Centre in Parbat district, started with a capital of Rs.4,000 with which she bought a sewing machine to run

her tailoring business. Her customer base grew over time.

Kesha Kumari was noted for her success in mobilizing small entrepreneurs, mainly women, to become self-employed and overcome discrimination. She is now the chairperson of the National Micro-entrepreneurs Federation of Nepal which helps members with marketing



their products and lobbying for policy changes in Kathmandu to recognize micro-enterprises. Two-thirds of its 60,000 members are women and a quarter of them are Dalit. **S**

MALDIVES | Male'

Extremist Network

The Maldivian Democratic Party has claimed that extremist ideology is fast spreading within the country's military and police forces. It alleged in a statement that most of the militants travelling from the Maldives to foreign countries "in the name of jihad" are members of the Maldives National Defence Force (MNDF) and Maldives Police Services (MPS).

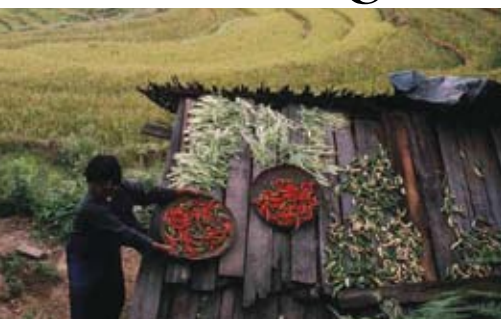
There have been concerns

regarding funds of unknown nature being transferred to foreign parties through Maldivian banks. The U.S. State Department also released a report claiming that the Maldivian authorities had the knowledge of funds for terrorism being raised in the country. The Ministry of Defence and National Security, however, has responded strongly to the accusations, describing them as "baseless and untrue". **S**



BHUTAN | Thimphu

Going Organic



Bhutan may well be on its way to becoming the first country in the world to go wholly organic in its food production as its authorities are committed to rid the country of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. The people of Bhutan are hopeful about achieving the goal and are looking for practical natural solutions to the pest and diseases problems that still affect a few crops. Some experts in Bhutan have criticized

the authorities for being overly optimistic, given the farmers' increasing reliance on chemical fertilizers.

However, those who do not agree with this position insist that the trend is in the opposite direction. Farmers, they believe, get quite excited when they use chemical fertilizers for the first time because it reduces their work to a great extent. But over time they see the negative consequences of chemical fertilizers and are likely to stop using it. In Bhutan, around 70 percent of the produce is already grown without chemicals. **S**

The Inter Service Intelligence (ISI) is the premier intelligence agency of Pakistan and clearly the first line of defense since it acts as the eyes and ears of the nation. Its primary function is to collect and collate both foreign and domestic intelligence using human and technological resources. Another of its important functions is to provide threat assessment to the military and the government. Being a trilateral service, it also coordinates intelligence between the army, the air

force and the navy. A British officer Major General R Cawthome founded the ISI soon after partition in 1948. At the time of partition there were few Muslim officers on higher ranks and even the first C-in-C of the Pakistan Army was a Britisher – General Frank Messervy.

Initially, the ISI was a relatively small unit, but over the years it has grown into a large organization and since the late 1980s, a lieutenant general (or equivalent) heads it. It is

now supposed to have a strength of about 10,000 officers and staff.

On the internal war on terror, the ISI, like all other security institutions, is on a learning curve. Like the rest of the security and intelligence organizations worldwide, the ISI generally takes a short-term view but overlooks long-term interests. But we have to understand that the ISI in principle is not a policy-making body but merely an instrument for carrying out the decisions taken by the government. It

The ISI Under Fire

By Talat Masood

It is understandable that intelligence agencies cannot be open but there are areas in which they could be more transparent.



is a different matter that it wields far greater power than similar intelligence agencies in more mature democracies because of the imbalance in civil-military relations and prolonged military rules in Pakistan.

Both military and civilian governments have used the ISI for expedient political purposes. In fact, it was Zulfikar Ali Bhutto who officially gave the ISI a political role to oversee the activities of politicians. This was a radical departure from the well-established principle of not involving intelligence agencies in politics. Later, it was alleged that General Aslam Beg as COAS, with the help of the ISI, created a political alliance against the PPP-led government of Benazir Bhutto and succeeded in toppling it. During times of direct military rule, the role of the ISI in influencing politicians and keeping an eye on them has been even greater. It is only after the leaders of the two major parties – the PML (N) and the PPP – agreed through the Charter of Democracy that they will not use security institutions for undermining each other, that the ISI and other intelligence agencies relatively distanced themselves from direct political manipulation. However, if the civilian government fails to make policy or falters on governance due to its incompetence, then of course the army fills the vacuum either through the ISI or directly.

The exaggerated role of the ISI in Pakistan's internal and external affairs owes much to the geopolitical and geo-strategic environment that Pakistan has been trying to leverage ever since its inception. The hostility with India and the simmering dispute of Kashmir resulting in two wars, in 1948 and 1965, and the unfortunate insurgency in the former East Pakistan that eventually led to its separation gave the ISI a significant role and importance in shaping events in Pakistan.

It was, however, the Afghan jihad against the occupation of the erstwhile communist Soviet Union that truly multiplied its responsibilities and gave it a profile beyond borders as a major regional actor. Working closely with the CIA and intimately involved in mobilizing Afghan militant groups against the communist regime

in Afghanistan, provided it great experience as well as power that it would not have normally exercised.

In addition to performing its core functions of intelligence and counter intelligence, the ISI was also assigned a political role that later became highly controversial. During the Afghan jihad, its area of activity expanded far beyond its borders, right up to Afghanistan and to parts of Central Asia. This duty was over and above the ISI's normal professional responsibilities of focusing on India, Afghanistan and the Iranian border. These events on the one hand increased its influence and power in the country and on the other made it the prime target of Pakistan-bashing by its neighboring countries and the West.

In recent times too, the ISI has three major fronts to keep a vigilant eye on. The India-Pakistan relations remain in a state of flux; the volatility on the LoC and the constant Indian accusations of cross-border infiltration give the ISI an important role. Similarly, on the western border, as the bulk of U.S. and NATO forces start to withdraw, Pakistan needs to keep itself well-informed of the unfolding situation. The ISI also acts as a communication link to the Taliban and other Afghan militant groups based in Pakistan. The internal challenge is no less. It has to keep a close track of the TTP and other militant, sectarian and ethnic groups that are attacking the state. As government control in areas in North Waziristan and certain other parts of FATA is either minimal or non-existent, it increases the burden of responsibility on the ISI.

The ISI is a convenient scapegoat for the U.S. for their failures. The Afghans have also used it as a whipping boy to cover their grave inadequacies. The ISI also takes the blame for the policy differences that exist between Pakistan and the U.S. and for supporting the Afghan Taliban as well as the Haqqani network – although to support or tolerate these groups is a policy decision of the military and civilian leadership and the ISI acts primarily as the implementer of this policy.

The reputation of the ISI suffered badly because of the Mumbai bombing incident and later when it was discovered that Osama bin Laden

had been hiding in Pakistan for nearly seven years, close to the Military Academy in Kakul. Its involvement at times in domestic politics remains another sore point.

It is also true that the international news media and foreign governments have been deliberately exaggerating the ISI's influence to serve their own ends. This is a Machiavellian and nihilistic approach to cover their failings or to put pressure on Pakistan. A glaring false myth about the ISI is that it created the Taliban. Nothing can be farther from the truth. The Taliban were born inside Afghanistan and were an indigenous creation due to indigenous social, political and cultural factors. They were a local phenomenon and represented one distinct face of Afghanistan. No doubt the Taliban movement got a boost from the support they received in the 1990s during the late Benazir's government from the then Minister of Interior, Major General Babar. But to attribute this development to the ISI would be a distortion of history. However, the ISI remains the interface between the Pakistani security establishment and the Taliban leadership.

The most effective way of improving the ISI's image is by making the organization more transparent and accountable. The parliament has no committee to monitor the activities of intelligence agencies. One does not fully understand that it is not in the nature of intelligence agencies to be open but there are areas in which they could be more transparent. For instance, they can publish information on the insurgency situation in FATA and Balochistan and the threat posed by militants in Karachi without compromising in any way on the country's security. Like other democracies, we could also establish intelligence committees in the Senate and National Assembly to oversee ISI's performance. Most of the hearings could be in secret, but a certain level of oversight is necessary at the cabinet and parliamentary levels in the larger interest of the country and the organization. ■

Talat Masood is a retired Lieutenant General of the Pakistan Army Corps of Engineers. He writes on national security issues.



“I had been facing threats from both state and non-state actors, but some developments in the recent past convinced me to inform my colleagues about the elements who could most likely try to kill me.”

Hamid Mir



“This row between Geo and the ISI is really a subplot to the main army-government face-off. They are not handling it well because they are attacking the ISI on the wrong issue for which there is no evidence.”

Ayaz Amir



“There has been no accusation against the ISI. We love Pakistan's media, and we have faith in Pakistan's security institutions.”

Pervez Rashid



“Traitor is one who abrogates the constitution and sells state secrets to other nations. He is the one who commits treason. Freedom of expression is no treason.”

Khawaja Saad Rafique



“It's unprecedented – the first time you have the ISI facing off with a media channel in such a manner.”

Jugnu Mohsin



“Whether or not Gen Zaheer or any member of the ISI is involved in this cowardly attack, Hamid Mir's earlier warning that if an attempt was made on his life the DG ISI and a few others would be responsible has made the institution of the ISI the focus of criticism.”

Ansar Abbasi



“My party will firmly and sternly oppose any agenda against the armed forces, be it from the government or anyone else.”

Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi



“The ISI’s political involvement, whenever it resorts to that, brings some very temporary gains.”

Lt. General (R) Asad Durrani talks to Arsla Jawaid in this exclusive interview.

What is the genesis of the ISI and why is it called Pakistan’s first line of defense against the enemy?

Intelligence is generally the first line of defense against an external threat. It is the ISI’s first and foremost duty to make an assessment and give advanced warning to other institutions. Theoretically, there may be very many other things that it may have to also assess, such as internal threat and strength. However, the ISI’s main job is to make an assessment of the foreign threat and give warning.

With a democratic government in power, rumors tend to circulate regarding an uneasy relationship between the civilian government and the military. Could you comment on that?

Throughout the history of this country, there has been a problem between the military and civilian government. One can go back and say that the military has always played a role in this part of the world. The fact is that since independence, the military came to the fore given the Indian problem and the Kashmir problem. Of course, the civilian structure was not in place to take charge of the situation and lacked the ability to create robust structures. So they started relying upon the military.

The military was expanding because of a very early relationship with the U.S., which essentially became a military relationship. The military discovered that it had powerful supporters in Washington and other capitals around the world. That gave the institution the status that it enjoys today. Regardless of what one says, on the strategic books, the ISI is not a military organization. It is a national organization but it did become staffed by the military. So the answer lies in the history of Pakistan in which the military played a strong role, because of which the ISI too played a role.

The ISI is supposed to draw its operatives from all the three wings of the Armed Forces. Why is it identified with the Army alone and why does it always have an army general as its chief?

The Army constitutes the largest percentage, around 70-80%, of the Pakistan Armed Forces. Some others are from Air Force and Navy. In my time it was 10%. Because the Army constitutes a large percentage that is why an Army general is also the head of the ISI. That is the Army’s argument. But the actual reason is just that the Army commands an extraordinary status in the country, in the hierarchy, and in the polity. That’s just the way

the country is. He may not be number one in terms of protocol, but he is of prime importance because of the Army’s role, and what he could do and has to do.

What are your thoughts on General Musharraf’s trial and how do you see it playing out?

The ISI plays no role in military coups. It just happens to be more or less part of the military when it takes over. It does not play any role in the taking over. Later on, the military rulers rely more on the ISI, even for the internal work. It does them no good. It does the ISI no good. But they do that and the ISI gets involved in those operations and those matters where actually it has neither any business nor is it any good at doing. The ISI’s political involvement, whenever it resorts to that, brings some very temporary gains because it is not cut out to be a part of that.

As for Musharraf, there are two things which will determine the course. First is the legal process. I think it will get so complex that one will be looking for a way to get out of it unless you manipulate the judiciary. Second, despite all the good advice given to the government, one will be trying to see if it can be wrapped up. It is quite possible that some people may be obsessed with going through it for personal reasons. That is possible. Ultimately, whatever

may happen they must find a political, not legal solution.

The media and the Afghan government have often accused the Pakistan government or the ISI of assisting the Taliban to gain power in Afghanistan or to counter an Indian threat in the country in order to maintain 'strategic depth'. Can you provide a background to this?

The ISI acquired its extraordinary status because of the Afghan war. It was the instrument from the Pakistani side that became responsible for logistically and operationally organizing the Afghan resistance. Because of that it acquired a lot of capabilities.

The support of the Taliban has never been because of India. The Afghans will not fight on our behalf. The Afghans, when they are free and masters of their own destiny, look after Pakistan because of the stake that they have in this country. Where else do they go when they are trying to flee a war? They buy property here and they do their business here. Pakistan was also once the main window of Afghan survival. Now, with Karachi hosting the largest urban Pashtun population in the world, they have stakes there.

During the '65 and '71 wars, they ensured peace on our western borders and asked us to take all our security forces to the East. So that is the reason for Pakistan trying to ultimately achieve a situation where the Afghans are free from dominance. That in a nutshell is the policy. Now, how it is portrayed and if covert help is being given to the Afghan resistance, is different. They will remain at our borders and we are not going to make enemies of these people.

The ISI has also come into the limelight recently due to its standoff with the media. What were the reasons that led Geo to name the ISI DG as being behind the shooting on Hamid Mir?

I am not following that. I do think that the media had so much power and money that they were creating more confusion, poisoning people's minds and may also have started believing they could get away with anything. Ultimately, it is better that this can be fought out and addressed within the media. The ISI can take a backseat. Relax.

Lt. General Asad Durrani is a retired three star general of the Pakistan Army. He has previously served as the Director General of the Military Intelligence (MI) and as Director General of the country's powerful Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). Following his retirement, General Durrani served as Pakistan's Ambassador to Germany (1994-97) and later as Pakistan's Ambassador to Saudi Arabia (2000-02).

What are your thoughts on the overall Pakistani strategy of conducting peace talks with the Taliban, despite the fact that these talks were hardly negotiated from a position of strength?

'Negotiating from strength' is one of the broadest concepts I have ever come across. How do you achieve this? By military means or by any other way? In 2002, the Taliban told the Afghan regime that they were prepared to talk. The regime said 'Who are you? You don't count.' Their position was never weak around that time. So they did not talk. Now what happens when that is reversed? Essentially, it is a combination of military operations and persuasion. Call it political dialogue but it always happens behind closed doors. It's a combination of everything that leads to some stage where one could say 'the time now is right.' The Taliban insurgents have been sufficiently weakened, pacified or are suffering from problems within, that reaching a deal might be possible.

But with the Federal government and the Taliban insurgency, it will take a long time. If this government thought that going open on the strategy of 'talking' would help, I don't think it will happen that way. Some

military operation or some clandestine operation must be underway. There must be a political reason for this unless of course they want to convey this message to those people who are advocating negotiations, to tell them 'look we tried.'

I do not know what is the wisdom behind it; if it is political or security. Actually how it happens is how you determine what is the right time to strike a deal. It will not happen overnight. Negotiating is a continuous process.

How do you see Afghanistan post-2014 and Pakistan's role in the region as well as with the U.S?

I believe Pakistan has positioned itself well to play a strong role. When future scenarios are so uncertain, you have to keep your options open. And this was possible not because of the army or the ISI but because of a combined civil-military policy that evolved under the previous government and probably continues under the present government. We have more stakes than anyone else in the region. We've had time to prepare in the last 5 to ten years and we've worked hard. We are poised to help or facilitate major Afghan factions to reach a consensus because that is the only way Afghanistan becomes vibrant and stable. That has been Pakistan's policy ever since I have known it.

Over the last three years, Pakistan has reached out to all Afghan factions and regional neighbors to express a desire to work together. Whatever the Afghans come up with, will be acceptable to all of us. That is the policy.

In terms of the U.S., I am sure we are working to get their complete departure from the area. I have a problem with those who think that a complete departure will be detrimental to Afghanistan. I believe that as long as they stay here and if there is a military presence as outlined in the BSA, some Afghans will keep targeting it. If it is benign, in the sense that it is financial support, then of course that would be constructive. We position ourselves because we don't know what will happen. If President Karzai signs the BSA, one can be quite sure that if the military or money comes in, the war continues. He has always known that but over the last two years he has been playing this card a little more openly. **S**

The Coal Merchants

Parliamentary oversight mechanisms are needed to make the intelligence agencies accountable to a credible watchdog.

By Shahzad Chaudhry

There is a pretty poignant proverb in Urdu that says *“Koelay ke karobar mein haath tau kaalay hotay hi hein.”* I am not sure if there is a similar and compatible saying in English, but loosely translated, it means when you deal in coal you are bound to get your hands blackened. Intelligence is one such business – a dirty business. In some ways, it can be compared to clearing sewerage lines. Someone must descend into manholes and clear the clogs so that the trash routinely clears out to keep the system clean and running.

No nation can work without a sound intelligence system. Even if a nation does not have aggressive designs, it will, at least, have defensive considerations against perceived threats from another nation. Another might just want to keep itself safe from internal threats. With a rather grim history of both its birth and conflicts, Pakistan has been in a most unenviable position because of external threats to its territorial and societal security. Added to it have been threats that have grown from within and caused it to look inwards for security.

Two parallel movements in Pakistan's early years are notable in how a newly independent nation reverberated with internal convulsions. The very first signs of an internal disturbance came with the famous Rawalpindi Conspiracy case of 1951. Some military officers, in collusion with some well-known names from the Communist Party of Pakistan, attempted to overthrow a government

which was perceived to be heading into the U.S.' orbit. This was perhaps the first attempt at a revolutionary change of the political and social order by replacing the apparently capitalist leanings with a communist preference. Clearly, such communist influences were around to form a conspiracy which was detected and foiled by the intelligence agencies to secure a fledgling nation.

The next such occasion was even deadlier. Bengali nationalism had increased during the 1965 war when East Pakistanis felt marginalized and vulnerable with the bulk of the Pakistani forces deployed in defending the western half. Perhaps the event and its consequence was a catalyst to something that was already brewing. Sheikh Mujibur Rehman, the head of the nationalist Awami League, was already known to be in contact with external influences and had paid a surreptitious visit to Tripura in 1964, working along nationalist lines seeking complete autonomy if not a breakaway from Pakistan – not yet at least.

That the matter was foolishly handled at the political and military level by Rawalpindi can only be an enormous understatement. Leaders of the Awami League were captured and tried for a conspiracy that forced a virtual shutdown of East Pakistan. The trial was called off under pressure which signaled a clear moral victory for the nationalists' stance. The persisting breakdown of law and order followed, bringing down Ayub Khan's government in 1969. Such domination

of the nationalist sentiment instigated an insurrection that is largely recognized now as the handiwork of Indian intelligence that colluded with Mujibur Rehman's Awami League. The collusion gave birth to the Mukti Bahini, finally opening the way for the Indian forces to intervene militarily. In the world of intelligence, there hasn't been a greater success in modern times. Some years later, Indian intelligence repeated the exercise in Sri Lanka by fostering a prolonged Tamil insurgency but failed to emulate their success against Pakistan.

Pakistan's current travails of a full-blown insurgency in FATA and another in Balochistan, with its national cohesion under serious stress, may be sourced partly as a consequence of fallacious policies and partly to external influences that continue to destabilize the country in an effort to weaken its potential as a nation. In a competitive regional environment, aggressive insurrection through surreptitious means is the established norm. Each nation in the region has always been known to possess strong and active national intelligence outfits. Proxy conflicts are a fact of life.

India accuses Pakistan's intelligence agencies of interfering in Kashmir while Afghanistan holds Pakistan responsible for its own long years of duress as a nation embroiled in a debilitating war of terror. But Pakistan also has long-standing complaints against Indian intelligence for its role in supporting an insurgency in Balochistan as well as against Afghan and Indian intelligence

together, for their joint role in fostering and sustaining insurgency in FATA.

Add to it the recent revelations of how both Saudi Arabia and Iran might be engaged in parts of Pakistan in an ongoing sectarian war and it forms a full spectrum of threats that are arrayed against Pakistan. The conventional dictates of intelligence support to military operations are over and above this. Given Afghanistan's precarious situation, the need for effective and diverse intelligence capacity on Pakistan's western borders becomes an even bigger existential imperative.

The Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) is a military organization entrusted with most of the tasks mentioned above. Since Kashmir remains a bone of contention between India and Pakistan – with both nations having fought almost four wars over it – and water now an added impetus to the importance of Kashmir, as most rivers originate from there – it will be ISI's prime focus to read Indian designs. In such a situation, if there is a need for defensive measures, the ISI will ensure that their institution provides them.

Mostly, offensive intelligence must marry with political and the military maneuvers, and the overall national objective. An intelligence outfit will, thus, not only have the capacity for defense, it must also have the capacity to orchestrate an offensive designed to weaken the enemy's defensive capacity. This remains ISI's primary function and focus, similar to that of many other intelligence organizations in the world. The CIA is credited with launching the Operation Olympic Games to interfere electronically with Iran's efforts at nuclear enrichment; the Chinese are alleged to use their intelligence to either disrupt or steal information from many American technology development companies. Anything that such premium intelligence organizations undertake will feed into national objectives with dividends that add to the national cause.

Why then this hoopla over the recent episodes of a prominent journalist being shot at and the channel for whom he works laying the blame at the door of the ISI? Why is the ISI so easily the target of anything that goes wrong in India or Afghanistan? Why is it that the ISI remains a targeted organization for anyone who means to



weaken Pakistan's defensive potential?

In a nation where the form and nature of threats is multifarious, where a nation seems to be on the verge of implosion because of multiple faultlines, where external agents of instability seem to be pervasive and where the military and its agencies are perceived to be the final impediment in dissembling Pakistan, such pressure is routinely exercised by agents of destabilization within and without to strategically disarm Pakistan.

It is not to say that the ISI or any other agency has never faulted in conception or execution or in the manner of exercising its influence in the political domain of the country far beyond its conceived mission. But equally true is the fact that it was politicians who changed its scope of responsibilities and added domestic politics and other related issues of governance and politicking to its manifesto of duties. This is clearly marked by Mr. Bhutto's authorization to form a political cell in the ISI to further his own political agenda.

What began in 1976 has been far difficult to shed, though in the last few years the ISI has made a clear deviation from any such involvement and has fastidiously attempted to remain focused on only the strategic challenges. At times, high

on its newfound freedom, the media has irritated the ISI, blaming it for committing excesses. Added is another proclivity within certain sections of the media to turn the spotlight on the military and continuously force the issue of either disappearances or the entitlements that the military and its agencies may seem to enjoy. It seems that the aim is to hit at the credibility of the army as an institution and discredit it in the public – where it remains the most popular and well-supported institution.

While the media propounds the role of the fourth pillar of the state for itself, its pace is far too rapid for its own real capacity. An effort to place itself against an institution as well-organized as the ISI to gain relevance and credibility is a wrong way of establishing institutional credentials. The fact that it also hits at a nation's strength makes it an insidious play. What we need are parliamentary oversight mechanisms similar to those prevalent in the developed world to make intelligence accountable to a credible watchdog. What is currently being followed to that end through the media is flawed and dangerous. **S**

The writer is a retired Air Vice Marshal of the Pakistan Air Force and served as its Deputy Chief of Staff.

The Eye of the Storm

For the first time Pakistan's top intelligence agency has become the talk of the town

By S.G. Jilanee

It all started with an armed attack on Hamid Mir, a senior anchor of Pakistan's largest television channel, Geo News. Mir's car was attacked as he was driving home from Karachi airport. He is reported to have received six bullets but he survived. Immediately after the incident, the news channel went berserk. For several hours it aired the story, accusing the ISI and its Director General, Lt. Gen. Zaheerul Islam, squarely, for the lethal attack on Mir's life.

Mir's contention was that he had incurred ISI's wrath because of his continued coverage of the excesses, including disappearance and killing of Baloch people who oppose the government and of the missing persons' long march to Islamabad. The allegation appeared plausible as people connected the dots with the disappearance and murder of another investigative journalist, Saleem Shahzad in Rawalpindi two years ago. Whether or not the ISI engineered the attack on Mir, the staging of countrywide rallies in support of the ISI and vilification of the Jang media group that owns the offending Geo News TV channel brought the ISI into the limelight as never before. Indeed, the rallies only further reinforced the belief that ISI reportedly spawned the militant religious organizations like Jaish-e-Mohammad, Hizbul Mujahedeen, Harkatul Mujahedeen, Lashkar-e-Taiba, – the forerunner of the present Jamaat-ud-Dawa, and so forth.

Actually, the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) is Pakistan's secret service, like other countries. The U.S. has its CIA, India has its Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW), Afghanistan its KHAD, Britain its MI5, Russia its KGB, etc. However, the ISI differs from its international counterparts in that it is always headed by a three-star army general. This dichotomy irks elected rulers who want to make the institution accountable to the civil government. Attempts were made in the past to bring ISI under the interior ministry's control, but in the face of stiff opposition by the army, they were abandoned.

The ISI was established in 1948 in the aftermath of the first Pakistan-India war over Kashmir, when the need for more efficient coordination of intelligence sharing among the three branches of the country's armed forces was acutely felt. It is the largest of the three intelligence services in the country; the others being the Intelligence Bureau (IB) and the Military Intelligence (MI).

The agency with its vast network remains involved in spying and collecting intelligence for the defence and security of the state, both within the country and outside. During the occupation of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union, it worked hand-in-glove with the CIA and is said to have trained an estimated 83,000 mujahedeen from 1983 to 1987 for dispatch to Afghanistan.

ISI's three wings – internal,

external and research – function through a number of "directorates," each with its own sphere of activities. Some are engaged with operations beyond Pakistan's borders, such as assisting the Bosnians during the civil war



in Bosnia-Herzegovina. But the ISI's greatest focus outside the country remains on India and Kashmir. Its "Covert Action Division" is solely responsible for "paramilitary and covert operations as well as special activities" in Jammu-Kashmir. All the armed raiders sent into the Valley from the Pakistan side are said to be sponsored by the ISI. India accuses the ISI of sponsoring the Muslim United Liberation Tigers of Assam, the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) and even Naxalites.

Its SS Directorate monitors the terrorist group activities that operate in Pakistan against the state. And it also keeps an eye on Pakistan's diplomats abroad.

But all these activities and even its alleged clandestine association with the Haqqani network are, all, kosher for that is what a spy agency and a secret service is all about. What is questionable, though, and has justifiably drawn flak, is its direct involvement in Pakistan's politics and, worse, its

acting like a prosecutor, judge and executioner, all in one to dispatch whoever it considers anti-state and whoever crosses its path.

Pakistan Communist Party has been in the ISI crosshair from the very beginning. It was Ayub Khan who tasked the ISI with collecting

suspected of separatist activities disappear frequently and their mutilated bodies are thrown by the wayside. "Over two hundred bodies with signs of extreme torture and a shotgun wound to the head" were discovered in Balochistan during the period of July 2010 to July 2011"

It is time for the ISI to rethink, review and drastically change its methods. It must not interfere in politics. And it must cease its cloak-and-dagger activities with the citizens of Pakistan.

internal political intelligence on the Awami League in East Pakistan. Later it expanded to Balochistan during the nationalist uprising in the mid-1970s and, after Z.A. Bhutto's fall, it turned its sights on the Pakistan People's Party.

The agency has also been said to be responsible for funding the right-wing political parties during the general elections of "1965, 1977, 1985, 1988 and 1990." In fact, the 1990 elections were widely believed to have been rigged by the ISI under Lt. Gen. Hameed Gul, in favour of the Islami Jamhoori Ittehad (IJI), a rightist conglomerate of nine parties set up to defeat of the Pakistan Peoples' Party in the general elections.

The ISI was alleged to be involved in the Mehran Bank scandal (Mehrangate) in which "top ISI and Army brass were allegedly given large sums of money by Yunus Habib (the owner of Mehran Bank)" for its clandestine activities.

Among its more questionable alleged activities are the killing of Saleem Shahzad, which is why the attack on Hamid Mir made waves.

Besides these stray incidents, a mass grave was recently unearthed in Balochistan's Khuzdar area, with bodies mutilated and showing signs of torture. The Baloch people

for which the Human Rights Watch pointed the finger at the ISI.

The Supreme Court is seized of the issue of missing persons. The long march by relatives of missing persons to Islamabad, the relentless campaign by Hamid Mir and the attempt to kill him brought the ISI into the limelight as never before.

These tactics are counter-productive. They failed in East Pakistan. They are destined to fail in Balochistan in the same way. The proper thing to do would be to apprehend the "culprits" and bring them before the law. Killing them indiscriminately might attract the charge of genocide as it did in former East Pakistan. Events in Balochistan are already attracting international notice. U.S. Congressman Rohrabacher, for instance, has extended his support to Baloch separatists and agitated the issue in the Congress.

It is time for the ISI to rethink, review and drastically change its methods. It must not interfere in politics. And it must cease its cloak-and-dagger activities with the citizens of Pakistan. It is said to be like the CIA, so, like the CIA, it must be accountable and be ready to face criticism instead of reportedly assassinating its critics. ■

The writer is a senior political analyst and former editor of SouthAsia Magazine.





Uncommon Soldiers

The ISI continues to diligently serve as Pakistan's first line of defence, much to the displeasure of many countries.

By S. M. Hali

The Directorate for Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) is the premier intelligence service of Pakistan and is operationally responsible for providing critical national security and intelligence assessment to the government. The armed forces of Pakistan faced baptism under fire as they were plunged into war with India over Kashmir in 1947-48. The fledgling nation not only lacked the wherewithal of military hardware but also the critical requisite intelligence to support and coordinate its operations. The two new intelligence agencies which were established soon after creation of Pakistan, the Intelligence Bureau and the Military Intelligence,

failed to meet the expectations of intelligence-sharing during the Kashmir conflict. This paved the way for the establishment of the ISI, which was the brainchild of British Army officer, Major General Robert Cawthome, then Deputy Chief of Staff of the Pakistan Army.

The ISI was founded on a solid footing to collect, collate and disseminate operational intelligence to the three services but, unfortunately, the military government of General Ayub Khan also tasked the ISI with monitoring of opposition politicians and sustaining military rule in Pakistan. Subsequent rulers continued to seek a political role for the ISI. During

1965, the ISI failed to provide early warning to the government regarding India's assault on Lahore and Sialkot. Subsequently, the ISI was reorganized to fulfill its operational role more diligently but it also continued its pursuit of collecting information on politicians. During the 1971 Pakistan-India War, the ISI was again found wanting, failing to pre-warn the government of the Indian aggression that led to the severance of Pakistan's eastern wing and 93,000 of Pakistanis being taken POW. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto reduced his reliance on the ISI after taking up the mantle of power and paid the price when his handpicked Army Chief, General Zia-ul-Haq



toppled his government through a coup d'état.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 provided the ISI its calling. Aligning itself with the U.S. to check the Soviet onslaught, the ISI played a central role along with the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in organizing the Afghan resistance. Afghans and other volunteers from a number of Muslim countries including Pakistan and the Arab world were organized and trained in the art of guerrilla warfare. They were inculcated with the spirit of Jihad and launched into Afghanistan to indulge in hit-and-run operations, which ultimately routed the Soviets, forcing them to retreat. During this period, the ISI was the main conduit for the recruitment of the Mujahedin and distribution of funds and arms and ammunition, including Kalashnikovs, Stinger shoulder-mounted surface-to-air missiles and anti-tank munitions. Indeed, the ISI made important friends with the Afghan Mujahedin and the Al-Qaeda, which took its roots then, having been established by Osama bin Laden (OBL) to combat the Soviets.

After the withdrawal of the Soviet forces from Afghanistan, the U.S. and CIA also withdrew, patting themselves

on the back for having vanquished the Soviets. Armed with sophisticated weapons and their pockets laden with U.S. dollars, the Afghan war lords and even the Arab jihadists were in no mood to lay down their arms and return to plowing their fields. Unfortunately, the power vacuum created in Afghanistan led to a decade-long internecine war. Some Arab jihadists returned to their homeland but quite a few stayed behind, along with the Uzbeks and Chechens, who had burnt their boats. Having tasted blood, they wanted to continue fighting. Pakistan, which had borne the brunt of the Soviet invasion, was to face the after-effects of more chaos, mayhem and bloodshed.

It was again the ISI, Pakistan's first line of defence that used its goodwill with the Afghans to stem the rot. The Taliban were launched, who gained control of a major part of Afghanistan and although their rule was marred by authoritarianism and orthodox decrees, relative peace prevailed. The Taliban provided sanctuary to the Al-Qaeda but had to pay dearly for their hospitality when their guests, who had their own agenda, attacked western targets. The 1993 World Trade Center bombing, the August 1998, bombings of the U.S. embassies in Nairobi and Dar-es-Salam and the October 2000 brazen broadside against a U.S. warship, the USS Cole, were precursors to the 9/11 dastardly episode. It reflected badly on both the CIA and ISI that they failed to catch wind of the assault.

Post 9/11, the ISI and CIA again became bedfellows. The ISI tried to reason with the Taliban to give up OBL, the head of Al-Qaeda, who had claimed responsibility for the attack and taken refuge in Afghanistan. Taliban reluctance to hand over OBL brought the might of the international forces and led them to attack Afghanistan. Pakistan did not have any option but to ditch the Taliban and cast its lot with the international forces. It goes to the credit of the ISI that its intelligence-sharing with the CIA resulted in the apprehension of hundreds of Al-Qaeda operatives, including Ramzi Yousef, Khalid Sheikh Muhammad (the so-called mastermind of the 9/11 attacks), Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi, Sheikh Omar Saeed, Abu Zubaydah, Ramzi bin al-Shibh, Abu Faraj Farj al-Liby and numerous others.

Regrettably, when the Taliban regrouped after their initial defeat at the hands of the international forces, a trust deficit developed between the ISI and CIA. The US government accused the ISI of playing a double game, supporting the US as well as backing the Taliban. This couldn't have been farther from the truth since the guns of Al-Qaeda and Taliban were also turned on Pakistan and, in the last decade, more than 50,000 Pakistanis were killed in terrorist attacks. The Raymond Davis fiasco, the covert but successful elimination of OBL by U.S. Navy SEALs on May 1, 2011 and the attack on Salalah – a Pakistani checkpoint at the Afghan border – brought Pak-U.S. relations to their lowest ebb. CIA chief Leon Panetta even accused the ISI of being either incompetent as it remained oblivious to OBL's presence in Abbottabad for over five years or being complicit in providing him a safe haven. The government of Pakistan appointed the Abbottabad Commission to investigate the affair. After inquisition, the Commission absolved the ISI of complicity but found it culpable of negligence.

The fact is that the ISI has suffered setbacks as well as enjoyed crowning glory but the U.S. and India are wary of it and accuse the premium agency of many wrongs. They paint it in a bad light to demoralize its force and reduce the confidence of the Pakistani nation in its first line of defense. In a report by the Defence Academy, a British Ministry of Defense think tank, brazen accusations were hurled at the ISI in 2006, calling for its dismantling. Authors like Steve Coll, in his book *Ghost Wars, a history of the CIA and al-Qaeda in Afghanistan since 1979*, claims of links between the ISI, the Taliban, OBL, and other Islamic militants operating from Afghanistan. The fact is that all intelligence agencies maintain links with terror groups but this does not necessarily mean that they support them. The ISI has performed remarkably under hostile conditions and is an asset for Pakistan. It has been brought under the National Intelligence Directorate under the reformed National Counter-Terrorism Authority and is poised to serve the nation more diligently. ■

The writer is a practising journalist. He contributes to the print media and produces documentaries.

The Game of ISI-bashing

Instead of being given high visibility, the ISI should be left alone to perform its role away from public glare.

By Muhammad Ali Ehsan

Is ISI a first-rate spy agency? Grudgingly, even its worst critics and opponents admit its professionalism and tall standing in the league of leading spy agencies of the world. From its suit-wearing executives in air-conditioned rooms to the thousands of field operatives involved in the dirty business of covert warfare, the ISI works under a single mission statement that reads 'Take the war to the enemy'. Take the ISI out of the equation and the national defense against ever-evolving threats would be blinded and crippled.

So, no matter how distasteful to some, the vital activity of information and intelligence-gathering that the ISI performs is essential for Pakistan's security. It anticipates surprises for the country and feeds it with information of the intentions, capabilities and activities of the enemy without which Pakistani politicians and generals would hardly be able to take decisions to keep the country safe and secure. Surely, only the enemy of the state would like to see the ISI's role diminished and its power altered forever.

Why then is this important and

vital national institution being lately accused, rebuked and scorned? Do the ISI-bashers have an external agenda? Or is it the domestic 'rise of the rest phenomenon' that is encouraging these 'other players' and institutions to challenge the all-powerful and most dreaded institution in the country? At stake here is the real and imminent threat to the national security of Pakistan. Can the Pakistani nation and the various pillars of the state that represent it afford to circumvent the ISR (intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance) capability of the ISI that



helps develop the 'real picture', based on which the country sets its national security agendas? Circumventing the results of the ISI's analyses and its suggested standing on some of the issues is not a good option. It can actually lead the country into making some very bad political and military judgments, the consequences of which can be devastating in the long run.

One example of such political decision-making was the directive by the government of Pakistan to the Pakistan Embassy in Washington to issue visas without the usual vetting by the interior ministry and the ISI. Reportedly, hundreds of visas were issued starting October 2010 and up to February 2011. By late 2010, the relations between the CIA and the ISI had already gone sour. A civil lawsuit was filed in New York against the then ISI Chief, Ahmad Shuja Pasha, implicating him in the 2008 Mumbai blasts. The ISI reciprocated by blowing away the cover of CIA's station chief in Islamabad who was immediately pulled out of Pakistan by the U.S. At the heart of the matter were diametrical positions taken by the army and the government on the level of American involvement in the internal affairs of Pakistan.

Many a Raymond Davis was allowed to move into Pakistan in the short period of four to five months. When Raymond Davis shot Muhammad Fahim and Faizan Haider in Lahore, he represented the CIA's 'unattributable force' that made its way inside Pakistan without the formal vetting of their credentials by the ISI. President Asif Zardari's government was under pressure to recognize Raymond Davis as a diplomat but one man with a conscience came in the way. Former Foreign Minister, Shah Mahmood Qureshi was asked to certify Raymond Davis' diplomatic immunity but he refused to do so, saying 'the request did not match the official record.'

The foreign minister went on to declare that there were 851 Americans with diplomatic immunity in Pakistan at that time but 297 of them were not working in any diplomatic capacity. Maybe if the government of the time had not circumvented the ISI in issuing the visas to the Americans and thus not allowed the CIA to enlarge its footprint and intelligence-gathering capacity of undercover agents in Pakistan, there may not probably have been those

two incidents that made a mockery of Pakistan's sovereignty – the Raymond Davis episode and the Abbottabad operation by U.S. Navy Seals to kill Osama Bin Ladin.

All countries conduct intelligence and espionage operations. The ones that draw maximum benefits in line with their national aspirations and goals are also the ones that allow their intelligence agencies maximum secrecy, little accountability and total flexibility.

The basic challenge that confronts the Pakistani civilian leadership today is how to overcome its present 'ISI accusation syndrome' which primarily stems from some incidents of unattractive and bad behavior of the agency in the past. Then there is the challenge of how to run a secret intelligence agency in an open democracy. How to rely on its methods of lying and deceit to extend national interest? How to allow the agency to keep the secret detention centers, where detainees could be held and interrogated, away, in the words of Jeremy Scahill, 'from the prying eyes of human rights and civil liberties organizations or anything that even vaguely resembles a justice system?'

In the first year in office, writes Jeremy Scahill in 'Dirty Wars: The world is a battlefield', President Obama would hold regular hour-long meetings to discuss intelligence and security threats. He writes that these early meetings had a 'tutorial' character in which 'the President was still being introduced to the new capabilities'.

Can the civilian leadership in Pakistan also trust the ISI with the 'role of a tutor'? Can it agree with the broader assessments and recommendations of the premier intelligence agency rather than narrowly focusing on how to counter the potential of exploitation and abuse surrounding the nature of its work?

Shouldn't the country's leadership want intelligence more than justice under the current unfavorable environment in which it fights a borderless war against a stateless enemy? Should the state not be focusing more on improving the capabilities of the institution that monitors suspected insurgents 24/7/365 across the length and breadth of the country? These are some pertinent questions the answers to which will shape the relationship between the ISI and the civilian leadership that seeks

to exercise greater authority and more control over the ISI.

For the relationship to evolve positively it must be understood that there was a pre-9/11 ISI and there is a post-9/11 ISI. There was an ISI that functioned, for the most part of its existence, under military rule.

There is the ISI today that is seeking to find its way as democracy has taken root and the civilian leadership has begun to exert and exercise more control. It is important that the current leadership in the country makes a clear distinction between the two kinds of ISIs. Running training camps for the religious (freedom) fighters, funding and coordinating their activities, planning and executing covert operations across both the western and eastern fronts, diverting the course of national elections, distributing funds amongst politicians and buying their loyalties are some of the actions for which the pre-9/11 ISI was charged. These may not be the attributes on the basis of which the Pakistani leadership should judge the post-9/11 ISI.

The post-9/11 ISI fights the war on terror in which there is a lot that needs to be done quietly using the tactics, sources, assets and methods available only to this intelligence agencies. Calling and propagating such tactics and methods as illegal, undemocratic and dangerous will neither help hunt down the terrorists that plot attacks against the state nor will it take the fight to them. Stalking and exploring targets in some of the dangerous battlefield zones, all intelligence agencies, including the ISI, act as the vanguard in the fight against terror. The intelligence and information they collect for their civilian and military bosses ensures that the required preparations are in place to carry out both preemptive as well as retaliatory strikes against the terrorists and their hideouts.

There is no room to trumpet the failures of the agency that is the most vital organ for Pakistan's national security. Its successes and the unsung heroes who achieved them are many but unlike its failures, which are loudly trumpeted, they only receive mute recognition to ensure secrecy and state security. ■

The writer is a retired lieutenant colonel of the Pakistan Army. He is currently pursuing a Ph.D in civil-military relations.



A Balancing Act

Pakistan is in a unique position to build bridges between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

By S.G. Jilane

Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's two-day official visit to Tehran was well-timed since ties between the two countries have suffered some shocks in recent months. First, the multi-billion dollar pipeline remains in the doldrums

leading Iran to question Pakistan's sincerity towards the project. Another jolt was inflicted by the abduction of five Iranian border guards allegedly by militants from Pakistan in February. The situation became so grave that Iran threatened to send its own forces

across the border into Balochistan in a bid to recover the soldiers. Damage control was, therefore, the need of the moment.

"I am here to open a new page in Pak-Iran relationship," said Nawaz Sharif after his meeting with Iranian

President Hasan Rouhani. And, as proof, he pointed to his finance, petroleum and interior teams that accompanied him with the aim to resolve all the matters that were creating obstacles in the completion of the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project which, the two leaders agreed, was beneficial for the people of both countries.

Pakistan and Iran signed eight agreements and MoUs aimed at promoting bilateral trade and expanding it to \$5 billion annually, extradition of criminals and establishing of a joint border commission in order to thwart "enemy conspiracies in the garb of petty criminal activities on the borders."

Another agreement was signed on the extradition of prisoners by the two countries. The agreement was endorsed by Iran's Justice Minister Mostafa Pourmohammadi and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's Senior Adviser for National Security and Foreign Affairs, Sartaj Aziz.

One of Nawaz Sharif's main achievements was to obtain a waiver from the Iranian government of the condition in the Pakistan-Iran gas pipeline agreement that binds Islamabad to pay a monthly penalty of \$200 million in case of delay in the construction of the pipeline by December 31, 2014.

Sharif was stating the obvious when he said: "Pakistan-Iran relations are bound by historical and religious linkages," or when he reassured his Iranian hosts that Pakistan would not allow its friendship with other countries in the Gulf States "to come in the way of the development of friendly relations with Iran."

The linkages with Iran are not only historical and religious, but also cultural. In the seventeenth century, Iran gave sanctuary to Emperor Humayun when he fled to Iran after his defeat by Sher Shah, and later assisted him in regaining his throne. Persian was the court language of India under the Moguls up to the nineteenth century. Besides, Iran and Pakistan share a common border. They can therefore also play a useful role in Afghanistan's stability after the withdrawal of foreign troops from there at the end of the current year.

By comparison, Pakistan's friendship with the United States

and Saudi Arabia is recent. And, incidentally, both are anti-Iran. That was why Iran's supreme spiritual leader, Ali Khamenei cautioned Nawaz Sharif, saying, "There are hands at work that intend to cause differences between the two friendly and intimate nations through different methods, including stirring insecurity at the lengthy common borders. We shouldn't allow the big opportunity existing for the expansion of the relations between the two countries to be lost."

Khamenei went on to say that, "The U.S. is among the countries who are attempting to create rift between Iran and Pakistan." Without naming names, he also warned about "some other governments as well that are doing the same and advised that "we should not be trapped by such states." This was an obvious reference to Saudi Arabia, whose king was mentioned in the

and had to be put down with the help of Saudi and Bahraini troops.

After the Islamic revolution in Iran under Imam Khomeini, the Arab states literally feared that Iran would export its revolution to the Arab countries. However, that did not happen. But suspicion lingers. Therefore, they would welcome any move that reassures them about Iran's bona fides. In fact, goodwill between Iran and the Arab countries, including the Gulf States and Saudi Arabia, is necessary for peace in the region.

Therefore, Nawaz Sharif, owing to his personal ties with the House of Saud, enjoys a unique position to assist both Iran and Saudi Arabia in removing distrust and forging better relations between the two countries. No wonder that Sartaj Aziz told the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee in his briefing that the prime minister's Tehran visit was a bid to maintain a

Nawaz Sharif, owing to his personal ties with the House of Saud, enjoys a unique position to assist both Iran and Saudi Arabia in removing distrust and forging better relations between the two countries.

Wikileaks cables to have called Iran a snake whose head must be crushed.

But Saudi Arabia has showered immense bounties on Pakistan over the years; the latest being the free gift of a whopping \$1.5 billion. It has come to Pakistan's assistance financially at some dire moments and, on occasions, even mediated between conflicting parties to promote political stability in Pakistan, such as bailing out Nawaz Sharif when he was overthrown and convicted for preventing the plane carrying Gen. Pervez Musharraf to land in Pakistan. Riyadh had then taken the entire Sharif family as its guests.

Saudi Arabia has not aired its reaction to Nawaz Sharif's Iran visit. However, it may not be averse to the move. There is a sizeable number of Shias in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf States. They draw inspiration from Iran. In Bahrain some time ago, they rose in violent protest against the government

balance between Pakistan's ties with Iran and Saudi Arabia.

The attempt would certainly amount to a balancing act of a very high caliber. It would be an acid test of statesmanship for Mian Nawaz Sharif that would require him to play his diplomatic cards most dexterously. It would also call for the best from his advisory team. There would be many obstacles. Opposition from the United States to any progress on the Pak-Iran gas pipeline would be the foremost.

How he fares in this exercise of walking the tight-rope remains to be seen. But one thing is certain. If he succeeds, Nawaz Sharif would be shedding the stigma of a non-performer and make a place for himself in Pakistan's history. ■

The writer is a senior political analyst and former editor of SouthAsia Magazine.

When Captain Jawaid Saleem stepped off a Pakistan Navy ship in Dubai, on the first leg of his journey to freedom from the captivity of Somali pirates, he knew he was one of those few lucky individuals on the ship who had been let off against a huge ransom. His cargo ship, the Malaysian-owned M.V. Albedo had been captured in the early morning hours of November 26, 2010, some 900 nautical miles east of Mogadishu as it made its way from Kenya, sailing in the north-easterly direction towards the Strait of Hormuz, and then to the Port of Jebel Ali in Dubai. On August 1, 2012, seven Pakistani crew members of M.V. Albedo were released after almost 2 years in captivity of the pirates.

The history of piracy off the coast of Somalia has continued to threaten international shipping since the second phase of the Somali Civil War in the early 21st century. It reached its peak in 2012. From 2005 onwards, several international organizations such as the International Maritime Organization and the World Food Programme, have said that the rise in incidents of piracy in this part of the world had been impeding the delivery of much needed

shipments sent to various organizations. Piracy off the coast of Somalia has also appreciably increased shipping expenses, negatively affecting global trade. According to Oceans Beyond Piracy (OBP) and the German Institute for Economic Research (DIW), some kind of an industry of profiteers has also developed around the piracy activity. As such, industry has also profited from piracy as insurance companies have applied a higher premium on cargo passing through these shipping lanes.

Delving into the reasons as to why piracy took hold in this part of the world, it came to light that perhaps the illegal fishing trade was responsible for this. Added to this was the dumping of toxic waste in Somali waters by foreign vessels. This affected the ability of local fishermen to earn a living from fishing. The upshot was that local Somali fishermen formed armed groups to prevent the ships from coming in their waters. Since the fisherman used to be armed, they soon resorted to hijacking the cargo vessels and eked out an income from the ransom money. The practice became so lucrative that by 2009, many local coastal communities backed piracy as a form of defending

the country's territorial waters. Somehow, the pirates thought they were protecting their fishing grounds and this was their way of compensation for their stolen marine resources.

The growth of piracy on the Somali coast is also attributed to the fact that as a result of the civil war in Somalia, it had not been possible to develop an effective national coast guard. Somalia has hardly had any armed forces. It was this gap that was filled by local fishermen who formed organized piracy groups and hijacked ships passing along the Somalian coast. However, the pirates subsequently discovered the big money involved in hijacking ships and from thereon, financial gain became the primary motive for the pirates and their supporters, some of whom were based as far afield as Europe. It is also said that information about shipping activity in the area was passed on to them from Mombasa in Kenya.

The situation became rather alarming when the incidence of piracy around the Horn of Africa began to grow to dangerous numbers and its impact was felt seriously on the transport of ship cargo, containers, chemicals and oil. It was then that the

The Profits of Piracy

Piracy has been a source of easy money on the coast of East Africa. Here is a look at how it has affected shipping trade in the region.

By J. Enver



CTF (Combined Task Force) 151 was established on 12 January 2009, with a specific piracy mission-based mandate, under the authority of various UN resolutions. The task force mainly dealt with maritime security and counter terrorism around the Gulf of Aden and the Somali Basin.

The measures carried out by the task force included conducting an active 24 hour lookout, removal of access ladders, reporting apprehensive actions to proper authorities, use of deck lighting, razor wire, netting, fire hoses, electrical fencing and surveillance and detection equipment, defending the lowest points of access, engaging in evasive maneuvering, speed through pirate attacks and joining group transits. CTF-151 had naval ships, helicopters and maritime patrol aircraft at its disposal from over 20 participating nations to make sure that all the trading through its area of responsibility went smoothly and without interference from the pirates.

The Task Force included Australia, the Republic of Korea, Pakistan, Singapore, Thailand, Turkey, the U.K. and the U.S. Among South Asian countries, Pakistan was the most active member of the Task Force which was commanded by Pakistan Naval officers for a number of terms.

According to a study released in 2011, the sea transportation industry shouldered 80 percent of Somali piracy's impact on the global economy while the remaining 20 percent was the expense that each country's government made towards making anti-piracy efforts. The study said that the total cost that Somali piracy had caused the shipping trade was somewhere in the region of USD 7 billion. Some 9 factors were taken into consideration in determining this figure. These included ransom money paid to pirates, piracy insurance, the cost of security equipment and guards, re-routing of ships, the cost of increased speeds, the cost of labor, the cost of prosecutions and imprisonment, the cost of military operations and the cost of counter-piracy organizations.

According to the report, there was no successful pirate attack on a vessel travelling at 18 knots or faster. It was therefore recommended that vessels should travel at a minimum of 18 knots through the hazard area, As a matter of course, this increased speed was an added cost to vessels given that they were moving at higher speeds than



their most 'economically optimum' speeds.

The report estimated that the cost of the military operations was in two forms - the administrative budgets of the task force and the operating costs of each contributing state. Nations contributed to the missions through naval vessels (surface combat vessels and auxiliary ships), maritime patrol/reconnaissance aircraft, vessel protection detachment teams and military staff assigned to operational headquarters or onboard ships and aircraft.

Even with the world's navies rushing to protect shipping passing along East Africa, the sheer size of the ocean and the huge numbers of ships involved means warships are rarely in the right place at the right time. The mood in Mombasa, where so many ship owners and seafarers are based, has been bleak. Ship owners say it is time for the world to mobilize an army and invade Somalia.

The United Nations has passed a resolution allowing such an invasion, but the United States has put the brakes on participating in any such operation. Perhaps they are hesitant because of

their last experience of sending troops to Somalia. In 1993, 18 Americans were killed during a commando raid to capture a few, low-ranking warlords. And yet, it's becoming more and more clear that without major, international intervention, piracy will continue to grow in the region. With the benefits far outweighing the risks, it looks like pirates have no incentive to stop pillaging.

The biggest victims of Somali piracy are the Somalis themselves. Nearly 4 million people (half the population of Somalia) depend on food donations to survive. But pirate attacks on food ships have made it difficult for the United Nations to keep sending provisions. "If you don't have an escort, you cannot move food there," says a U.N. official. But since naval deployments are expensive, warships might not be available forever. This could mean death by starvation for millions of Somalis, all due to a few thousand opportunistic pirates. **S**

The writer is a journalist based in Karachi. He writes on national and international issues.

One of the questions thrown up by the decisive victory of Narendra Modi-led Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) in Indian elections is how the new government would get along with its neighbors, especially, 'arch-rivals' Pakistan? An answer to this question entails looking at not only New Delhi's position in South Asia but also its global ambitions.

South Asia is clearly dominated by India. It's the region's top territorial and military power, and the foremost economy and trading nation. India accounts for 74 percent of South Asia's population, 75 percent of its GDP, 79 percent of its cross-border trade and 81 percent of FDI inflows. In addition, India is the most stable (to many, the only stable) democracy in the region and, together with Pakistan, it is a nuclear state.

Some neighboring countries are also very much dependent on India, economically or militarily. Take Bhutan and Nepal, both landlocked and least developed nations, sharing land borders with India and China.

The 1950 Treaty of Peace and



Love Thy Neighbors

With Narendra Modi firmly in the driving seat, India's South Asian neighbors watch his every move with great anticipation.

By Hussain H. Zaidi

Friendship between India and Nepal provides for free movement of people and goods between the two countries. This means that the Nepalese can work and own property in India and that exports from Nepal are given preferential treatment in Indian markets, of course on reciprocal basis. India is also Nepal's largest trading partner accounting for more than half of Nepal's global exports as well as imports.

India has exercised a lot of influence on Bhutan's foreign and trade policies as its largest trading partner, accounting for 88 percent of its exports and 56 percent of its imports. New Delhi is also Thimphu's capital source of bilateral economic assistance. India provides

transit facility for Bhutan's foreign trade and has made substantial investments in power projects in the country.

It is one thing to be a regional power; it is quite another to be a regional leader. India has enjoyed the status of a South Asian power but does it have the credentials of a regional leader? For the latter, a country needs to command the trust and respect of its smaller neighbors and not their fear. However, most other South Asian nations feel that India is out to bully them, especially when they have had bilateral disputes (territorial, sharing of river waters, etc.) with the latter. These countries look to New Delhi's growing military expenditure with grave suspicion. This has on the one

hand prevented India from assuming leadership in the region, much to the former's disappointment, and on the other made its neighbors look outside for help and mediation.

On its part, New Delhi's ambitions go beyond being a regional power to become a major world power. And given its economic size and military muscle, it is widely seen as being well on course to acquiring that status. Globally, the country is ranked fourth in terms of conventional military strength and seventh in terms of territorial power. For half a decade, New Delhi has also been the world's largest importer of arms.

Ever since it shunned socialism and embraced a free market economy in



the early 1990s, India's economy has grown substantially. It is the world's second largest market behind China and the ninth largest economy.

Between 2004 and 2011, India's economic output grew on average at more than eight percent a year, making it one of the globe's fastest growing economies. The growth rate came down to 5 percent in 2013. India is ranked 18th and ninth, respectively, in terms of exports and imports globally.

This rosy economic picture has its seamy side as well. India remains mired in poverty and backwardness. More than 69 percent of the population (842 million) earns less than \$2 a day (2010 data reported by the World Bank) while per capita income is barely above \$1400.

Two important indicators of economic performance are the Global Competitiveness Index (GCI) and the Human Development Index (HDI). On both, Indian ranking is low: fifty-sixth out of 142 countries on GCI and 136th out of 186 on HDI. India is also well short on energy and thus vulnerable to any global supply shock, which may upset its growth momentum. This shows that India, notwithstanding some of its economic exploits, has still a long

way to go before it is promoted from a regional to a world power.

The challenge for the new government in New Delhi will be twofold: to make India assume leadership in South Asia and to accelerate the country's quest for achieving a world power status. In order to conjecture how effectively will India be able to grapple with this twin challenge, the credentials of Modi and the BJP need to be taken into account. Both are exponents of 'Hindutva' and therefore divisive. Though exonerated by the courts, the Modi-led BJP state government is widely seen to be behind the massacre of Muslims in 2002 Gujarat communal rights. Therefore, Modi's capability to lead a billion-plus multiethnic, 'secular' India has frequently been put under question. By electing Modi to power, the majority of Indian voters have affirmed that he is capable of leading India. All the same, a significant minority may continue to harbor suspicions as to his credentials.

By the same token, India's South Asian neighbors may suspect that the new premier will adopt a policy of aggrandizement towards them, thus accentuating their mistrust of the 'big brother.'

It will not be fair to attribute Modi's victory only to his Hindu nationalism credentials. If Modi is a Hindu nationalist, he has also the reputation of being very sound in managing the economy. A major element of his electoral campaign was the promise of reviving the economy and millions of Indians believe that he will be as good as his word. Whatever may be his political outlook, he is a neo-liberal when it comes to promoting business. That is why he enjoys the support of mega Indian businesses as well as that of multinational companies working in the country.

The economic factor will therefore make Modi seek normal, if not good, relations with the country's neighbors. At present, by its standards, India has a very low level of economic engagement with other South Asian nations. For instance, out of India's \$ 289.56 billion exports, only \$13.26 billion worth are sold in South Asia, while out of the country's \$489 billion imports, only \$2.21 billion worth are bought from the region. Accordingly, South Asia accounts for only 4.5 percent of India's global exports and 1.91 percent of the country's global imports. For sure, Modi would like to achieve a significant increase in these figures knowing well that greater economic engagement in South Asia will boost India's influence in the region. And if New Delhi gets the most favored nation (MFN) status from Islamabad, it will be a big achievement on the part of the new government. For that, the Modi government will need to build, at the very least, cordial relations with its western neighbor, which incidentally also has a business-friendly government at the moment keen to normalize economic relations with India. The emerging Afghan situation will also have significant implications for Indo-Pak ties.

Though formally not a part of South Asia, China is not only a great power itself but a neighboring country as well. Both India and China have a history of mistrust. However, both know well that a military stand-off will put brakes on their economic ambitions. Therefore, they have put political disputes behind them and agree that enhanced economic cooperation should be the basis of their relations. With Modi at the helm, the trend in bilateral relations is likely to continue. ■

The writer is a freelance contributor.

At the Crossroads

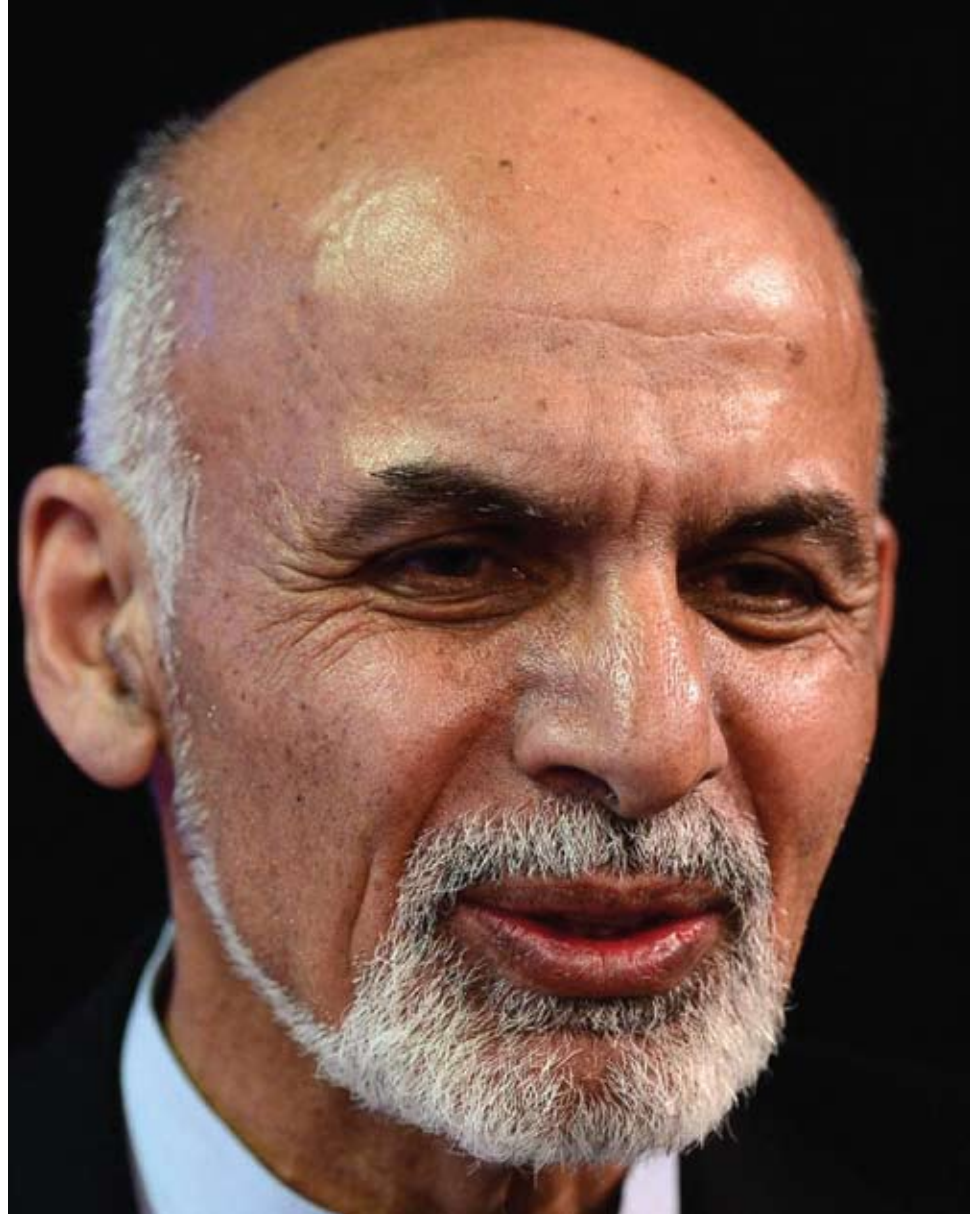
As the Afghan nation goes to the polls for the second round, it is feared that the voting patterns will be more ethnic than issue-based.

By Ajmal Shams

The endgame of the Afghan presidential elections is getting closer with the announcement of the final result that placed Dr. Abdullah Abdullah and Dr. Ashraf Ghani face-to-face in a run-off to be held in mid-June. Out of the eight presidential hopefuls, none managed to secure the required vote count of more than 50 percent to reach victory in the first round. The initial euphoria regarding the high turnout was somehow overshadowed by the uncertainty surrounding the political transition and the allegations of election fraud by rival sides.

As per the final results, Dr. Abdullah finished first with 45 percent votes followed by Dr. Ghani with around 32 percent votes. The Constitution of Afghanistan requires that if none of the candidates receives more than fifty percent votes in the initial round of the elections, the top two candidates in the race have to face a run-off. The multiplicity of contenders divided the vote bank, thus blocking an outright victory in the first round for all. A deep insight into the dynamics of Afghan politics shows that too many candidates caused more harm to the vote bank of Dr. Ghani than to that of Dr. Abdullah's. Except for Dr. Abdullah, all other candidates picked up votes from constituencies which were thought to be Dr. Ghani's strongholds.

Now that a run-off election is



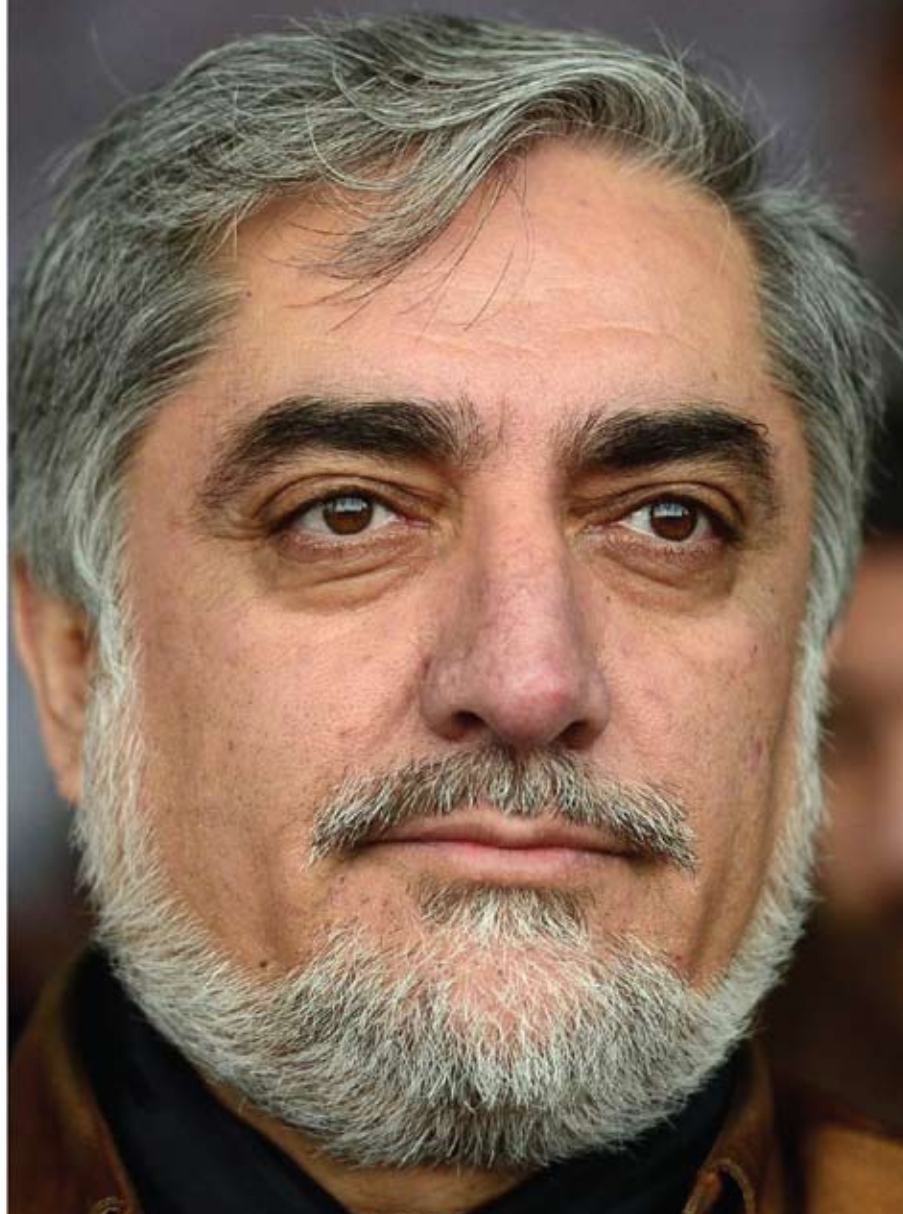
around the corner, both Abdullah and Ghani have stepped up efforts to co-opt the drop-out candidates, especially those having a modest percentage of votes. As of now, Dr. Zalmay Rassoul and Gul Agha Sherzai, the former governor of Nangarhar, have joined Abdullah's team. However, this does not mean that they will bring with them their entire vote bank too as most of their key supporters have already given up their respective teams in favor of Dr. Ghani. Yet, the real votes are in the hands of the Afghan people who seem to have little allegiance to their presumed leaders.

Afghanistan stands at a crossroads during this election. Unfortunately, the evolution of Afghan politics over the past several decades has somehow polarized the nation along ethnic and linguistic lines. As the Afghans go to the polls for the second round, it is feared that the voting patterns will

be more ethnic than issue-based. The Pashtuns are more inclined to vote for Ghani while the Tajik minority will stand behind Abdullah. Similarly, the Uzbeks will vote for Ghani while the Hazaras might be divided between Abdullah and Ghani because their leaders are present in both parties.

Although such voting behavior is not a good omen for national unity, the last 30 years of wars and conflicts have polarized the Afghan society along ethnic lines and this is now the reality of Afghan power politics. One aspect which is encouraging though is the apparent neutrality of President Karzai himself. Support from his government machinery is divided between Abdullah and Ghani.

In spite of sporadic irregularities and misconduct, both the Independent Election Commission (IEC) and the Complaints Commission (CC) seem to have done a good job in a difficult



country like Afghanistan where the security environment and the difficult geographical terrain were a daunting challenge. For a young democracy that is still on its way to stability, the performance of the relevant state agencies is commendable, especially the national security forces that kept the Election Day relatively calm and secure.

Abdullah and Ghani possess two very different profiles. One feature common between both is the desire for change. Yet, the nature of change planned by both leaders is debatable. The two leaders have very different visions for the political future of Afghanistan. While Abdullah insists on empowering those who had taken an active part in the jihad against the Soviet Union and later against the Taliban, Dr. Ghani stands for a more inclusive government that will coalesce all political forces in the

country, eventually paving the way for national unity.

While it is true that Dr. Abdullah has had a long-standing career in Afghan politics, his association with the Tajik-based Jamiat-i-Islami and his mainly pro-Tajik acts as a former foreign minister have tarnished his image among Pashtuns, the largest ethnic group in the country. Dr. Ghani, on the other hand, is more of a statesman and has worldwide reputation for his international work on state building. His efforts towards the reconstruction of Afghanistan, especially his services in attracting funding for war-ravaged Afghanistan, have given him a national image. Some reasons for his lower ranking in the elections were his lack of financial resources, weak organization of his campaign team and division of his vote bank among too many contenders.

Dr. Ghani and his team has already

shown high confidence and initiated renewed efforts to give a surprise in the second round by getting the required majority. Dr. Abdullah has his own assertions of outright victory in the run-off due to his psychological edge of the highest vote-taker. It looks like Dr. Abdullah's higher percentage of votes will have a motivating effect on Ghani's supporters, most of whom were passive supporters during the first round and did not bother to go to polling stations.

Abdullah and Ghani also differ on fundamental issues facing the country, including the peace process with the Taliban and the form of government they will inherit from Karzai. Whereas Abdullah insists on a parliamentary form of government and federalism, Dr. Ghani is more in favor of a unitary state with a presidential form of government due to the political complexity of Afghanistan while delegating more powers to the provinces instead of outright federalism. Also, Ghani, who is an economist, has a vision for regional economic integration that could ultimately help in diffusing tensions among Afghanistan and its neighbors. On the other hand, Abdullah and his team do not seem to have a similar economic vision for the region, although politically they are more organized.

The main concern during the upcoming run-off elections will be the voting pattern that is feared to be highly polarized along ethnic lines. In addition, the acceptance of the results by the losing candidate is another daunting challenge. It might be pre-mature to say who the winner of the run-off election will be, but it is certain that the upcoming political transition in Afghanistan is not without its challenges. In such a situation, rising to the occasion to ensure a peaceful transfer of power is not only the responsibility of the incumbent government and the contenders in the run-off elections, but also of the entire Afghan nation that will go to the polls with dignity and courage and is expected to exhibit a similar spirit once the results are announced. ■

The writer is the president of the Afghanistan Social Democratic Party (Afghan Millat Party) and is based in Kabul, Afghanistan.

When Sheikh Hasina went on a four-day visit to Russia in January 2013, it was seen as a significant step towards improving bilateral relations between the two countries and also towards securing favorable deals to strengthen Bangladesh's defense potential. Closing the deals of purchase of different types of military hardware was on the cards and when it was announced that Bangladesh was going to purchase defense equipment worth \$1 billion, it did not come as a surprise to many. It was the biggest ever arms deal negotiated by Bangladesh and caused quite a few ripples in the region.

Relations between Bangladesh and Russia are decades old and have always been friendly. The role of the former USSR in supporting the Awami League's independence movement in 1971 is well known. It vetoed three times the resolutions of the Security Council to help India in the creation of Bangladesh. During the post-1971 period, the Soviet Union helped the new country in getting stabilized after the war damages. It has been a trusted ally of Bangladesh since then.

Russia supplied the modern MiG-21 along with other sophisticated military equipment to the nascent Bangladesh Air Force. This friendship blossomed whenever the Awami League came into power. The relationship between Russia and Bangladesh began reinvigorating when the Awami League formed the government in 2009. Soon after that Russia began helping Bangladesh with developing nuclear technology and in nuclear exploration.

Before the signing of the arms deal, Russia had signed a MoU for helping Bangladesh in building nuclear power plants to fulfill its energy needs. To overcome the shortage of electricity, Bangladesh started building two new nuclear power plants of 1,000 megawatts each with Russian help. Funding for the plants and the provision of fuel was the responsibility of Russia. It was expected that it won't be long before Bangladesh signed an arms deal with its trusted ally as a sequel to the nuclear power plants deal. It did not take very long for the two countries to announce that Bangladesh intended to purchase \$1 billion worth of modern military equipment from Russia for its 'defense needs'.

Initially, the amount involved for the purchase of military equipment was \$850 million but it was later increased

on the request of the Bangladesh government. The terms and conditions for paying back the loan were kept very lenient. The credit of \$1 billion was to be utilized between 2013 and 2017 on a 'decent rate of interest – 4.5 percent'. The loan was to be repaid after 2018 in 18 years. The equipment to be procured for the army included anti-tank missiles, armored vehicles, grenade launchers, air defense system and latest radars. The Bangladesh Air Force got four types of armament as

When Bangladesh forged the arms deal with Russia, the opposition leaders and some observers criticized it, questioning the priority for such an arms build-up at a stage when there was no apparent threat to the country's borders and when other sectors of the economy needed more attention. Leaders of the Bangladesh National Party went to the extent of saying that the build-up was actually a move by the Awami League-led government to show its muscle to intimidate

Wrong Shopping List

The arms build-up by Bangladesh is inexplicable since there is no apparent threat to the country's security and other sectors of the economy need more attention.

By Munir Ishrat Rahmani

well as Mi-17 transport helicopters. In addition, it also went for the conversion of fighter jets.

In spite of having closed such a profitable deal with Russia only last year, the statement of Sheikh Hasina that 'Bangladesh must have the ability of counter-attack if its independence and sovereignty was attacked by anyone' and its efforts to seek arms aid from the U.S. came as a surprise. Why does Sheikh Hasina wish to sail in two boats? Does Bangladesh really feel threatened by its neighbors? Historically, Bangladesh has had extremely friendly relations with its western neighbor and benefactor, India.

the opposition. The government's spokespersons, on the other hand, tried to justify the 'grand purchase' by giving their reasons for entering into the historic deal in the interest of the country.

One of the reasons given to justify the huge arms deal with Russia was the need to modernize the armed forces and make them worthy of participation in the United Nations' Peacekeeping Force since it required the contingents to be equipped with the latest and the best weapons and equipment. Bangladesh's Peacekeeping contingent was deployed in many countries and was a good source of earning for the

country. This explanation still holds good. However, it seems strange that Russia could not fully cater the 'shopping list' of Bangladesh, forcing the latter to turn to the U.S. for the same reason!

The developments on the eastern borders were certainly a source of concern for the Awami League government. The regime ruling in Myanmar had demonstrated its anti-Muslim designs and the persecution of the Muslim population in that country

one could think of hostilities starting with India.

The desire of the Bangladeshi government that the country's armed forces should have the latest military equipment and technology to compete with other South Asian countries is understandable. But the arms drive looks more like an effort to satisfy one's ego than preparing to meet a potential threat from across the borders. There is also the feeling in certain quarters that such expensive arms purchases could

If the entire scenario is viewed in the larger perspective then the developments in Russia-Bangladesh relations seem to be in favor of both countries as Russia must be feeling uncomfortable with the growing relationship between India and the U.S. Secondly, Russia had always wanted to avail the facility of the Bay of Bengal through Bangladesh and opportunities like the current arms deal could facilitate accomplishment of that desire.



had earned global condemnation. Though not seen as a major threat by many analysts to call for such a huge arms-building exercise by Bangladesh, the concern was put forward as another excuse for the build-up.

This rationale could still be accepted as a matter of concern for Bangladesh, particularly in view of the mass exodus of Rohingyas Muslims from Myanmar, but there was still no indication of any expansionist designs by the Myanmar government. However, border clashes were reported on the western borders despite friendly relations with India. However, with Sheikh Hasina in charge of policy matters in Bangladesh, no

mean kickbacks for some people.

A cogent reason could be that Sheikh Hasina wanted to further strengthen relations with both Russia and the U.S. – to be counted as a trusted ally of the Russian Federation as well as of the U.S. There had been some concerns and comments from certain quarters that she was focusing too much on India and that Bangladesh's policies could be compromised if it took too much dictation from its stronger neighbor. The improvement in relations with both Russia and the U.S. could allow Bangladesh to pursue a balanced approach to national policies.

The U.S., on the other hand, must be observing over the years Russia's overindulgence in the South Asian region. To stop further encroachment in terms of influence, the U.S. might consider wooing Sheikh Hasina and increase its influence in Bangladesh, thus denying any advantage to either Russia or China. In a nutshell, the regional situation is quite interesting and worth watching in the coming months. ■

The writer is a retired colonel of the Pakistan Army and writes on current affairs and social issues.

And Now the Minorities

Hate crimes against the minority Muslims and Christians are growing in Sri Lanka. Could the government have another dilemma on its hands?

By R. Hariharan

Ever since Sri Lanka wiped out the dreaded Tamil terrorist group, the LTTE, in May 2009, protesters opposite the Sri Lanka High Commission in London are not an unusual sight. But those who gathered there last month were not the usual Tamil-Eelam supporters, shouting hoarse for action against Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa for alleged war crimes against the Tamils.

They were Sri Lankan Muslim expatriates demanding strict action to stop the unending attacks by the Sinhala Buddhist fringe groups on Muslims and, to a lesser extent, Christians. The

target of Buddhist chauvinists included Muslim cultural and religious places such as mosques and madrassahs. Even socio-cultural practices like wearing of *burqa* and selling of *halal* meat did not escape their adverse attention. Churches have also come under such attacks. Even a few Hindu temples have been demolished in the Tamil-majority areas.

The spill over of protests beyond the shores of Sri Lanka shows the growing sense of desperation in the Muslim community in Sri Lanka as the state has seemingly failed to take stringent action to curb the activists. Buddhist

chauvinist organizations involved in the anti-Muslim campaign include the Bodu Bala Sena (BBS), the Sinhala Ravaya and the Ravana Balaya – all led by Buddhist monks. The BBS – the strongest among them – was founded by Buddhist monk Galagoda Aththe Gnanasara, known for his vicious anti-Muslim statements.

Political parties such as the Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU) and the Sinhala Marxist outfit, the National Freedom Front (NFF), which are partners of the ruling UPFA coalition, have encouraged the activities of these fringe groups. Even the president's



brother and Defence Secretary, Gotabaya Rajapaksa, has shown a soft corner for the BBS ideology.

This is surprising as the Muslim community in Sri Lanka is small – barely two million strong – just 10 percent of the island's population. Most of them speak Tamil and, like Sri Lankan Tamils, have links with their brethren across the Palk Strait in Tamil Nadu. In spite of their limitations, they have been great survivors – both politically and socially – during the difficult years of the LTTE-led insurgency. They managed to survive politically by using the antagonism between the two major national parties – the United National Party (UNP) and the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP).

Muslims were active supporters of the military campaigns against the LTTE. They were usefully employed by the military intelligence to gather information about the terrorists. As a result, they invited the wrath of the LTTE which hounded out a large number of Muslims from their homes in the northern province on hardly a day's notice.

According to a report submitted to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navaneetham Pillay, by the Sri Lankan Muslim Congress (SLMC), there were about 231 attacks against Muslims in 2013. Christians were also targeted in 61 such cases during the year. Ironically, Sri Lanka's Minister of Justice, Rauf Hakeem, who is also a leader of the SLMC, handed over the report to Pillay which came in handy for Pillay to strengthen her case against Sri Lanka on its failure to implement the UN Human Rights Commission (UNHRC) resolution. This provoked the wrath of President Rajapaksa against the SLMC leader with no improvement in the situation.

Sinhala Buddhist activism started in the wake of the Kandyan rebellion by Sinhala chieftains which was ruthlessly crushed by the colonial forces in 1817-18. Anagarika Dharmapala (1864-1933), a Buddhist lay preacher, marshalled the latent anti-British sentiments and campaigned for the revival and reassertion of the Sinhala Buddhist identity. He was against the conversion of Buddhists by Christians and Muslims.

From time to time, this phenomenon had morphed into anti-minority campaigns. In June 1915, 35

Muslims were killed and 198 injured in hate attacks by Sinhalese in the central, western and north-western provinces. As many as 86 mosques were damaged and 4,075 shops looted. Seventeen churches were also burnt down.

But with the rise of liberal politics, such extremist sentiment had cooled down. However, it did not die down. Even as late as 2002 and 2004, the places of worship of both Muslims and Christian were the targets of hate attacks. But what is intriguing is the failure of the Rajapaksa government to curb them, particularly when Sri Lanka was being pilloried in the UNHRC for its poor human rights record.

The only tangible action from President Rajapaksa came after a BBS mob, led by monks, invaded the office of the Minister of Industry and Commerce, Rishad Bathiudeen, shouting slogans against him for relocating the internally displaced Muslims within the Wilpattu forest land. Fortunately, the minister was not in office at that time. Bathiudeen, leader of the All Ceylon Makkal Congress (ACMC), has been a loyal supporter of President Rajapaksa. The raid was the final straw for him as he openly criticized the police for inaction.

The president has now created a special police unit under the Ministry of Buddha Sasana to deal with such anti-religious activities. Apparently, the government is reluctant to treat religious hate crimes under normal criminal laws. This has caused a lot of suspicion in the minds of not only minorities but civil society and other political parties as well about the government's intentions. Almost the entire opposition, the leftist political parties and even the JHU have criticized the government's move.

It is a moot point how non-Buddhists can expect justice for their grievances against Buddhist zealots from the Ministry of Buddha Sasana whose aim is the "protection, propagation and expansion of Theravada Buddhism".

In an article, criticizing the creation of the special police unit, Bishop Duleep de Chickera wrote, "The government's reluctance to achieve this very aim through the existing and adequately mandated and deployed force is puzzling." The Bishop said it was "for reasonable people to believe

that the authorities are unable to bring the situation under control. This inaction must consequently point to some electoral expectation and soon, if not already, the people will realize that if some are allowed to be harassed for electoral gain today, others will similarly be allowed to be harassed for electoral gain, tomorrow."

In a recent interview, the Minister for National Languages and Social Integration, Vasudeva Nanayakara was even more direct. He said that the BBS was "enjoying support from a high-ranking state official. That is why its members are behaving in such a manner. Even the police are lenient towards them owing to this. There is someone impeding the police from carrying out investigations against the BBS."

If this is correct, who is the leader at the top encouraging these activists?

There is a political context to such suspicions. The ruling coalition is having internal problems, giving rise to the speculation that the president may call for early elections. So the possibility of minorities being the fall guys to garner conservative southern Sinhala support for Rajapaksa is there. Such possibilities get stronger as the activist attacks are centred mostly in Hambantota district, the home turf of the Rajapaksas.

If this is true, it would be a very short-sighted move as it could disrupt peace and harmony among various communities living in the country.

On May 19, Sri Lanka celebrated the fifth anniversary of the well-merited victory over the LTTE separatists after fighting them for two and a half decades. But the hope of the minorities that the hard-earned victory would bring in permanent peace still appears to be belied by the rise of Sinhala chauvinist attacks against minorities.

With two nations – India and Pakistan – having large Muslim populations in the close vicinity of Sri Lanka, it can lead to serious international repercussions. It is hoped that better sense will prevail among the power interests behind this dangerous game. ■

The writer is a retired colonel of the Indian Army. He served as the Head of Intelligence of the Indian Peace Keeping Force in Sri Lanka from 1987 to 1990.

Redefining Strategy

The post-election rhetoric of the UCPN (M) has led many to conclude that the party is finally accepting its diminished status in Nepal's politics.

By Asna Ali

Before its first steps towards democracy, Nepal went through a bloody period of civil war that lasted a decade and cost thousands of lives. The social and economic landscape of this small landlocked country was severely affected. Its dwindling popularity with tourists could have spelled doom for the economy if it were not for the remittances sent by Nepalese immigrants who had moved abroad due to the conflict.

The civil war had been initiated by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) to abolish the monarchy and feudalism. Apart from intermittent periods of ceasefire to hold negotiations, it went on until 2006. During this time, the CPN (M) led by Pushpa Kamal Dahal, commonly known as Prachanda, established its strongholds in rural areas of Nepal, taking control where the government's presence was weak. Since the majority of the Nepalese lived in rural areas, this firmly positioned the CPN (M) as one of the most important forces in Nepal, one that claimed to be the people's representative.

The civil war finally ended when



a Comprehensive Peace Accord was signed between the government and the CPN (M) in which most of the rebels' demands, including the abolishment of the monarchy, were met. Plans were made to rehabilitate and reintegrate the Maoist army as well as those displaced by the war.

The end of the civil war was supposed to be the first step towards developing a stable democratic system of government in Nepal with a Constituent Assembly tasked with drafting the country's constitution. To this end, elections were held in 2008. The CPN (M), which by that time had laid down arms to become an important political force, swept to victory. The turnout was an impressive 60 percent and despite some violent episodes, the elections were largely peaceful. The CPN (M) formed the government, riding on the wave of widespread public support and high hopes.

The first session held by the newly formed Constituent Assembly formally abolished the monarchy in the country by declaring Nepal a federal democratic republic. There were many promises of change but the complex political realities caught up with the Maoists soon. For the new representatives, it was a case of making the rules as they went along since they were headed into previously uncharted waters as far as governance was concerned.

Despite endless meetings and deadline extensions, the CPN (M) simply could not get the other parties, the Nepal Congress and the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist), to agree with its idea of what the 'New Nepal' should look like. The idea of setting provincial boundaries along ethnic lines was vehemently opposed. The issues surrounding ethnicity and what it entails in terms of political alliance and representation were much more complicated than the CPN (M), which has officially been known as the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) since 2009 after joining forces with the Communist Party of Nepal (Unity Centre-Masal), had anticipated. By 2012, after four years of dialogue, there was no option left but to dissolve the Constituent Assembly and call for re-election.

The dissolution took place in

May 2012 amidst violent protests held by various ethnic groups outside the parliament. Nepal's democratic process was plagued by further delays and it was not until November 19, 2013, that elections were finally held.

The results were surprising for the UCPN (M). From being the majority party in the first Constituent Assembly, it was reduced to being the third. The party managed to secure only 26 directly elected seats out of a possible 240. The turnout – 78.34 percent – was even more impressive than in 2008. The Nepali public emphatically made it clear that the Maoists were no longer the popular force they once used to be.

This has been hard to accept for the UCPN (M) leadership. Even Prachanda lost to a Nepali Congress candidate by a large margin even though he managed to secure a seat from another constituency. Soon after the elections, the party cried foul over the results. Allegations of rigging and fraud were flung around. However, due to the mounting pressure to accept the results and not disrupt the democratic process, the party had to retract its threats of pulling out of the Constituent Assembly. Support for the winning party, the Nepali Congress was announced and a joint parliamentary investigative body was formed to probe into the election process.

Since the elections, it has been concluded both by an assessment held by the party and by external analysts that the UCPN (M)'s defeat had less to do with rigging and more to do with its stance on various issues as well as internal disagreements.

The UCPN (M)'s post-election rhetoric regarding the importance of intra-party cooperation has led many to conclude that the party is finally accepting its diminished status in Nepal's changing political climate. While it was the Maoists who brought to the fore the cause of ethnic equality, now the ethnic power centers are increasingly finding their voice and deciding to represent their own interests in political dialogue. The Madhesis, who have typically been discriminated against in the past, now have a strong political showing through various political parties. Similarly, the Janajati community is also finding its

voice in the democratic process.

The emergence of new players has rocked the already unsteady boat of Nepalese politics but the UCPN (M)'s problems don't end there. Despite all the progress that has been made since the end of the civil war, the fact remains that the government formed after the 2008 elections failed to agree on a constitution for the country and could not take decisions on several key issues related to governance.

The party has also fractured over the years because of disputes over its stance on various matters. In 2004, the Terai Peoples Liberation Front was formed by a small group that split from the CPN (M). Another faction split up in 2009. In 2012, a group of hardliners left the party to form the CPN (M). This group has threatened that it will resort to violence if its demands are not met.

Apart from being seen as having moved away from its core ideology, the UCPN (M) is also criticized for having flip-flopped on its positions a number of times. The inability to promulgate a constitution did not help matters either. A gradual drift towards capitalism is also viewed negatively by its supporters.

Furthermore, though party leader Prachanda is still in control, he is being increasingly challenged by senior party members. There is grumbling that the party is run undemocratically. Prachanda's ideological stance has also been met with criticism internally and that too weakens the UCPN (M)'s position in front of voters.

It is difficult to determine whether the UCPN (M) will ever be able to regain its position of strength given the drastic changes taking place on Nepal's political stage. As the democratic process continues to be embraced, more and more parties are determined to gain a foothold.

At this juncture, the UCPN (M) cannot afford to disrupt the political process in any way since that would only reduce its popularity further. The party must regroup and rethink the way in which it understands the mindset of the voting public if it does not wish to be marginalized further. ■

The writer is a business graduate. She has interest in political and social issues.

Daunting Challenges

Bhutan faces a number of teething problems as it transitions from a monarchy to a democracy.

By Huzaima Bukhari & Dr. Ikramul Haq

Since general elections in July 2013, Bhutan is facing an acceleration in cultural, religious, linguistic conflicts coupled with sharp political polarization. The electoral divisions are normal in any democracy, in which competing political parties offer their programs, giving people a choice to select the one they find better or more viable. But in countries, like Bhutan, political polarization take bizarre turns, leading to chaos and perpetual instability. This happens when the political leadership fails to agree on any national agenda. Bhutan, a small and vulnerable country, is facing political discord and divisions for the many months now.

Before Zhabdrung Nawang Namgyal (1594-1651) unified Bhutan, it consisted of competing warlords and religious sects in different valleys, all vulnerable to civil wars and foreign interventions. Under Zhabdrung, Bhutan became a strong regional player enhancing its territory well into Bengal and Assam. Bhutan also successfully held off and defeated invasions from bigger neighbors. Unfortunately, after this era, the country once again became politically divided with isolated valleys ruled by different warlords. This led to foreign intervention as the British took advantage of the situation and annexed it. The rise of the Monarchy in 1907 saw an end to hundreds of years of divisions, civil commotions and subjugation of the British in 1910. There was once again political unity accompanied by stability and prosperity under the monarchy.

In March 2008, the first elections were held in which the Bhutan Harmony Party won 44 out of the 47 seats. In November 2008, when Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck was crowned, India started alleging links between Assamese separatists and Bhutan's dissident Druk National Congress. This and other issues

persisted till the second elections in July 2013 that were won by the opposition People's Democratic Party (PDP) which got 32 seats against Druk Phuensum Tshogpa Party's 15 seats.

In the wake of elections, Premier Tshering Tobgay was criticized for receiving the Indian Ambassador, V.P. Haran, along with the entire

Cabinet on the very first working day of the government. The meeting was addressed by the Indian Ambassador. Earlier New Delhi forced Pavan K. Varma, to resign "due to his failure to prevent Bhutan developing relations with China".

Political commentators in Bhutan alleged that India was looking to



fuel people's discontent against the government. Delhi favored the PDP in winning the election, defeating the ruling Peace and Prosperity Party. Many resent what they see as India's "overlordship" over the Kingdom's affairs. Writing in his blog, political analyst Wangcha Sangley wondered: "Why do Indian media and politicians want to castrate Bhutan for the most harmless relationship effort with China?" Liu Zongyi, a scholar of strategic affairs at the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies (SIIS), a well-known think-tank, was of the view that New Delhi influenced the outcome of the 2013 election. He said: "it manifested Delhi's anxiety over China's recent overtures to Bhutan. India won't allow Bhutan to freely engage in diplomacy with China and solve the border issue."

There is resentment inside Bhutan that democracy is not bringing


sovereignty as the leadership is hand in hand with New Delhi that treats the small, landlocked Himalayan neighboring states of Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan in the same manner as the British imperialists. The Indian ruling class has always regarded the sovereignty of these countries as subordinate to what it considers its strategic interests. This was very clearly stated by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru who said in the 1950s that "from time immemorial, the Himalayas have provided us with a magnificent frontier... We cannot let that barrier to be penetrated because it is the principal barrier to India."

Not only the pro-India and anti-India divisions are perpetuating in the wake of 2013 elections, there are disagreements over many other issues, from growth strategy to press freedom, from the refugee problem to ethnic disturbances. In an open letter to the

premier, president of Druk National Congress (Democratic) said: "Your party has a heavy responsibility to patch up the worsened relationship as well as maintaining the sanctity of our country's sovereignty forever cherished since time immemorial." Analysts say that there is nothing normal about perpetual divisions. The divisions are getting deeper and have impacted a lot more people, from the elite of Bhutanese society to government functionaries to ordinary citizens, than in 2008.

Little has improved on the human rights scene. Article 7(4) of the 2008 Constitution of Bhutan ensures that every Bhutanese citizen shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. Article 7(15) adds that all persons are equal before the law and are entitled to equal and effective protection of the law and shall not be discriminated against on grounds of race, sex, language, religion, politics or other status. In reality, only Buddhists and Hindus are allowed to form organizations to function legally in the country. The Religious Organizations Act of 2007, the only legislation that provides for the formation of religious groups, says that its main intent is to "benefit the religious institutions and protect the spiritual heritage of Bhutan", which is Mahayana Buddhism. This belies democratic norms and human rights guaranteed in the Constitution.

There is, however, optimism in Bhutan that the youth is committed to further the political process and overcome the difficulties faced by the country.

Bhutan, fighting political, ethnic, cultural and linguistic differences in its nascent democratisation process, is lucky to have a wise and visionary monarchy that besides unifying the country has helped its journey from a feudal to a democratic state. People say that now that the monarchy has entrusted the people with political power, it is the responsibility of the political leadership to use it in a mature manner to build a strong nation and move ahead and stop squabbling like petty warlords of the past pulling a nation apart for limited and narrow objectives. 

The writers, partners in law firm Huzaima & Ikram (Taxand Pakistan), are adjunct faculty members at the Lahore University of Management Sciences.



Iceland Today

Iceland is located in the Atlantic Ocean, near the Arctic Circle, between Greenland and Norway. Contrary to what the name suggests “ice” only covers about 10% of the land. Active volcanoes, bright green valleys, glacier-cut creeks, black sand beaches and roaring rivers are the most distinctive features of the Icelandic landscape. Icelanders are a progressive, modern society that continuously ranks at the top of measurement for quality of life, such as the United Nations Human Development Index. Iceland’s economy is one of the most productive in the world, per-capita. Iceland is annually declared as one of greenest countries on the planet, due in large part to its vast renewable energy resources. A strong literary tradition still thrives in modern Iceland and people in the country publish more books per capita than in any other country in the world. Iceland boasts a vibrant music scene, a flourishing film industry and Icelandic design is coming of age.

Foreign policy and relations

A global advocate for liberalization of international trade, Iceland takes a clear position on a nature-friendly, pollution-free and climate change sensitized approach of doing business. Iceland collaborates on principles of respect for human rights and peaceful resolution of disputes.

Economic and free trade agreements highlight Iceland’s economic security-oriented relations with the world. Its bilateral free trade agreements have resulted in enhanced relations with the USA, Mexico and, more recently, with China. Iceland’s green economy expertise in renewable energy, hydro and geothermal power furthers economic, security and development relations with Asian countries, including China and India. Iceland also partners



with three sub-Saharan countries: Malawi, Mozambique and Uganda in fisheries, education and health.

Economy

Iceland's clean energy, its marine resources, strong infrastructure and well-educated workforce, provide a firm basis to overcome the economic difficulties and implement necessary reforms. The GDP in 2011 was recorded at USD 13.98 billion: 59% exports, 51% imports. A per capita GDP of USD 43,800 was recorded in the same year.

Iceland's privatization drive has allowed the government to focus on the key enabling areas of renewable



energy dependent industries, food production and other industries. A large number of overseas investors have located businesses and established new plants in Iceland. The country offers a very attractive package for new investment, including reduced 20% taxation and long-term energy contracts for cost-effective clean energy.

Tourism

'Think Reykjavik – Think family time' sets the tone for tourism in Iceland. In 2013, nearly a million tourists visited Iceland which has quickly become the tourism destination of preference for family and eco-tourists. A fine blend of modernism and nature, the capital city of Reykjavik presents a postcard depiction of tourist attractions. The acceptance of Schengen Visa has also made Iceland a must stopover for European tourists. The family friendly natural hot springs, views of the magical northern lights, a breathtaking landscape and adventurous inlands are compelling attractions.



energy, health, education and social welfare. The export base is relatively narrow and largely based on such natural resources as fisheries, energy-intensive industries and tourism. These industries are predominantly occupied by small and medium-sized businesses.

Industry

Iceland is amongst global leaders in sectors like geothermal energy, fisheries, and IT/Gaming supported by an educated population and low corporate tax rate. Iceland offers a wide variety of business opportunities in data centers,

energy dependent industries, food production and other industries. A large number of overseas investors have located businesses and established new plants in Iceland. The country offers a very attractive package for new investment, including reduced 20% taxation and long-term energy contracts for cost-effective clean energy.

Social Welfare

Icelanders enjoy comprehensive educational, health and social security coverage from the state. Education is free and there is no tuition fee. Almost all Icelanders attend the state-run quality





Iceland and South Asia – a great potential for cooperation

The people of Iceland are the friendliest in the world, according to a report by the World Economic Forum. Yet most Pakistanis do not know of their 37 years of friendly ties with Iceland. The Honorary Consul General of the Republic of Iceland in Pakistan, Saad Mahmood, talks to SouthAsia Magazine on the longstanding relations between the two peoples.

Your Excellency, how does it feel to represent the Icelandic people in Pakistan?

I am honored to represent Iceland in Pakistan. In 1977, my father Mr. K. Mahmoodullah became the first Honorary Consul General of Iceland to Pakistan. It has been over 37 years now that our family has proudly represented the people of Iceland in Pakistan.

Does Iceland have significant trade with the South Asian region?

Iceland and India have multiple agreements and MoUs for promotion of trade relations. These agreements range from double tax avoidance to cooperation in renewable energy, science and technology, fisheries development and cultural exchange. Iceland's exports to India in 2011 were recorded at \$4.6 million, comprising primarily of pharmaceuticals, metal products and mechanical appliances. India's exports to Iceland were at \$43.7 million, consisting primarily of organic chemicals, manufactured goods and transport equipment.

What important projects is Iceland pursuing in the South Asia and how are they impacting the local economy?

Pakistan's neighbor India has Icelandic companies engaged in renewal energy projects, science and technology cooperation and fisheries development. Icelandic companies have business interests in pharmaceutical, plastics, turbines, IT and renewable energy concerns operating in India. These ventures are benefiting the local economy in creation of jobs, transfer of technology and skills and achieving economic self-reliance in the long run.

Iceland can help Pakistan in addressing its energy deficit and revolutionize its fisheries sector.

Would you like to give us an overview of the economy of Iceland?

The Forbes magazine ranked Iceland as the 15th best country for business in the world, just behind the USA. As per the annual statistics of 2013 the unemployment rate is stable at 5.4%, the annual average growth rate of Gross National Income is at 2.2% whereas the GNI has grown by 11% and the GDP has grown by 3.3%. This makes Iceland one of the world's more stably growing economies and the Icelandic people as one of the most vibrant market for investors.

What is the reason for the robustness and sustainability of the economy of Iceland? What lessons are there for the international community?

The President of Iceland, Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson in his speech at the Meeting of OECD Ambassadors in Paris in early 2013 introduced the term 'Clean Energy Economy' in his speech signifies the radical transformation of Iceland's energy system which now produces 100% of Iceland's electricity and almost 100% of house heating through hydro and geothermal. But the effects are far beyond than just heating houses and producing electricity. Far less costly than the other European countries, this clean energy has helped the economy to attract huge foreign industrial investments across high-tech industries, IT companies, data storage centres, aluminium smelters and other thriving enterprises. The lesson to share with the international community lies



Saad Mahmood, Honorary Consul General of the Republic of Iceland in Pakistan

in sharing Iceland's expertise in utilizing renewable energy like hydro and geothermal which are highly relevant to the South Asian twin economies.

Despite the cold weather of Iceland, is the tourism sector growing rapidly?

Yes the tourism sector or may I say eco-tourism is rapidly growing in Iceland. In 2013 nearly a million tourists visited Iceland. It may interest holders of Schengen Visa to know that they can enter Iceland without any further requirements. Due to the clean energy policy of Iceland, tourism initially attracted European neighbors to Reykjavik on holidays or even long weekends. Now pretty much the entire Europe and North America is on the regular visitors list. The message is in the balance that Iceland has been able to maintain between economic growth and its natural habitat. The largely exclusive attractions that Iceland offers are its natural hot springs, the magical northern lights phenomenon, breathtaking landscapes and a very lively sea life safari.

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A court in Egypt has sentenced 683 people to death, including Muslim Brotherhood leader Mohammad Badie, on charges of attack on a police station. Earlier in March, another 529 Muslim Brotherhood supporters were sentenced to death in the same courtroom. Only about 200 from amongst the over 1200 persons sentenced to death so far are in custody while the remaining are at large. The average hearing time for each trial was about eight minutes, prompting one cartoonist to caricature the farce as dispensing capital punishment on an 'industrial scale'. The trial proceedings have now been referred to the Grand

judiciary against becoming a tool of repression in the hands of its rulers but the warning is unlikely to be heeded.

Egyptian officials insist that the measures taken are necessary to bring some semblance of stability and order to the country though quite the opposite is true. Egypt is used to decades of authoritarian rule but there is near national consensus that the country has never been as volatile before. This is a sad reflection on the miscarriage of justice and political repression and a measure of the new depths to which Egypt has plummeted.

The death sentences come at a time when the United Nations

the momentum of the global public opinion in favor of its suspension. It is expected that very soon, the UN will push for the ultimate abolition of the death penalty after generating sufficient worldwide support for the move. It is no small irony that the UN resolutions are sponsored by Italy, which has been home to the dreaded mafia for over a century.

At the heart of the present unrest in Egypt is the drafting of the new constitution. The constitution passed by former President Morsi in 2012, as well as the current one pushed by Field Marshal Abdel Fattah al-

After the Jasmine Revolution



Dispensing summary capital punishment to 1200 people in a matter of a few weeks has made Egypt a laughing stock of the world.

By Taj M. Khattak

Mufti, the country's top Islamic jurisprudence authority, for approval or rejection. Given the prevalent political environment, this is expected to be a mere formality. The trials have sent shock waves in human rights organizations throughout the world. The Amnesty International has cautioned Egypt's

General Assembly is calling for the suspension (not abolishing) of the death sentence by its member states. The resolutions passed by the UN in 2007 and 2010 in this regard are non-binding but more member states voted in favor of the resolution in 2010 than they did in 2007. The vote reflects

Sisi in January, have both come under intense criticism for their content and the process adopted for their passage. Constitutional experts believe that although the language in the two documents has gradually strengthened individual rights of the Egyptian people and upheld the rule of law, there are glaring similarities when it comes to insufficient transparency, circumscribed collaboration and exclusivity in its drafting by the two regimes.

For example, under Morsi, the secular political forces and Copts were included in the drafting process,

dominated by the Muslim Brotherhood and its Salafi allies, but they were ignored later. This strengthened a widespread perception that their inclusion was only a smokescreen to give an impression of inclusivity to legitimize an otherwise pre-determined objective.

Barely a year after the passage of Morsi's constitution, and its rejection by influential political stakeholders, the second constitution was put to vote in January this year by the military junta. This met the same fate as it too was seen as non-inclusive by a different set of



political actors. Both regimes claimed to have followed legitimate constitution-drafting procedures but both were equally guilty of violent crackdowns on protestors and of marginalization of dissidents.

Egypt is no stranger to the Muslim Brotherhood. Its role has been quite significant in the evolution of the Egyptian civil society as well as the country's governance models since 1928. After an assassination attempt on his life in 1954, President Nasser was the first to order a crackdown on its cadre. This continued till 1966

during which many of the movement's leaders were executed and thousands of supporters jailed.

In the 1980s, the late President Anwar Sadat jailed a large number of Islamists, prominent leftists and liberals called Nasserites – an action which was seen by most people as the catalyst leading to his assassination. Former President Hosni Mubarak's strong-arm tactics against the Brotherhood spawned a deadly militancy for nearly three decades which, during the period 1992-98 alone, took over 1500 lives.

But the on-going use of force against protesters, quite often with not even a remote link to the Muslim Brotherhood, is unprecedented in Egyptian history. So far more than 2500 demonstrators have already died in the last nine months and there is not much hope of peace and normalcy returning anytime soon due to short sighted policies of the military regime.

Despite a whiff of the 'Arab Spring' in 2011, which toppled Hosni Mubarak and brought hopes of ending decades of dictatorship, the scarlet thread running through the recent political landscape in Egypt is that of an intolerant authoritarianism embedded in zero-sum psyche. Harsh military trials of thousands of civilians to mute dissent, ominous declarations by the rulers to place themselves above the law and mass arrests of political dissidents from both the religious right and the secular left continue to be the order of the day just as it was in Mubarak's days.

The 2011 revolution should have brought home an important lesson that the authoritarian mode of politics is not sustainable in the long run, but apparently it did not happen. Morsi made a grave tactical error when he placed himself above judicial scrutiny through a constitutional declaration long enough to hold a public vote. This won him a tactical victory when the constitution was passed in a low turnout referendum but eventually cost him political power and he is now under trial. The path adopted by the current rulers seems to be no different. What is conveniently forgotten, however, is that

there will be a tomorrow – something both Mubarak and Morsi have learnt to their great disappointment.

The narrative put forward by the present regime to justify its repressive actions to quell the terrorist threat, presumably from elements affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood, is unconvincing, though some members of the international community like Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Israel and Russia have embraced it fully albeit for their own narrow considerations. Many in the European Union, however, are deeply skeptical about the events in Egypt. The U.S., after expressing initial concerns, has seemingly accepted Field Marshal Sisi as the country's next ruler since that benefits Israel's security.

Whoever holds the reins of power in Egypt needs to recognize that legitimacy of law is central to any long-term and sustainable political stability in the country. Egypt needs a change of strategy where its citizens are more invested in the government's economic success and political stability, and not in a continued cycle of repression. Without it, the country will remain mired in unending violence where economic prosperity, well being of its citizens and a realization of their dreams for a better tomorrow will remain elusive.

Meanwhile, ordinary Egyptians find temporary comic relief in the satirical TV shows of Bassem Youssef, a former cardiologist who has risen to fame in the last three years because of his sharp wit and humor. His popular show keeps getting off and on air due to censorship. In one of his recent programs, he promised to continue his show, declaring, 'We won't fear anyone.' Just then as the unmistakable profile of Sisi appears with background laughter, he quips, "It's better we don't say anything about him – that's not fear, that is respect." But when the reality of the long shadow dawns after June's presidential elections, very few are likely to laugh. **S**

The writer is a retired vice admiral of the Pakistan Navy and former Vice Chief of the Naval Staff.



‘Poverty is one of the major reasons behind our social degradation.’

Kubair A. Shirazee, co-founder of the social initiative, Peace Through Prosperity, speaks to Javeria Shakil in this exclusive interview.

What is Peace Through Prosperity (PTP)?

Peace Through Prosperity is a social venture, that provides and promotes an entrepreneurial approach to poverty alleviation at the bottom most rung of the enterprise ladder.

We work with entrepreneurs of circumstances (micro-entrepreneurs) helping them develop skills, behaviors and gain knowledge that will enable them to rise above the poverty line, make more money, create wealth, jobs and reduce the frictions that exist in society because of poverty and the problems associated with it.

How did PTP start?

Some five years ago we began researching reasons for the sharp increase in extremism, radicalization, criminality, the general rise of the ‘right’, gang wars, etc. What started off as a curious peak into the proverbial rabbit hole in 2009 led to our Mini-MBA program for street-based entrepreneurs of circumstances towards the end of 2012.

The underlying premise of our approach is that people living on or below the poverty line in the developing world suffer from not only poverty but lack of access to justice, opportunities, lack of social mobility, lack of their own ability to influence positive change while society extends them little dignity, if any. We can address these issue by the creation of opportunities, jobs and wealth in society.

How was the idea of a mini-MBA program for cobblers conceived? What are its basic features?

Back in 2008 when I was running

my own business, I needed to upskill myself to be better equipped to grow my enterprise. However, most popular programs, including executive MBA programs, didn’t offer the tailor-made approach I needed. Then I found a program at Cranfield University’s School of Management called the Business Growth Program which is essentially a mini-MBA for business-owner managers; the main part of the program runs for 11 weeks. During the program, you create a business plan tailored to your business and learn the tools that you would need to better manage and grow your business. It was short, focused, worked well with my schedule as an entrepreneur and made a difference to my business.

When we started the exploration phase for PTP’s programs, we concluded that the micro-entrepreneurs lacked skills and know-how, not ambition, determination or willingness to put in the hours. The majority do not know who their target audience is, how to reach them, what customer retention can do for their business, how to build on their strengths and more. They are totally engrossed in working ‘in’ their business with little time to step back and work ‘on’ their business. So we designed our own program – the Mini-MBA – and selected street cobblers to field test our approach, curriculum and its direct and indirect impact.

Our Mini-MBA is a five-day program, with a two-hour ‘class’ every day in which we deliver practical and immediately applicable business tools, knowledge and skills. It is followed by 12 weeks of one-on-one coaching and consulting of one hour each week at our students’ place of business. We go and sit with our micro-entrepreneur at

his thia and work with him to address his business challenges. We like to think of ourselves as the Mckinseys or Accentures for the impoverished; who can’t afford to have consultancy services although I think they need them the most. The one-on-one sessions are the key to our ability to enable our micro-entrepreneurs to transform their business. And in a true Agile fashion they are an invaluable opportunity for us to learn, adapt and evolve our program.

Since our launch in Karachi we have extended our program beyond street cobblers and have introduced our Mini-MBA for six trades: street cobblers, vegetable sellers, fruit vendors, barbers, chaat wallas and juice wallas.

Could you tell me more about this ‘true Agile fashion’?

Agile is a method where requirements and solutions evolve through collaboration between self-organizing, cross-functional teams. It promotes adaptive planning, evolutionary design and delivery, it is a time-boxed iterative approach and encourages rapid and flexible response to change. It is a conceptual framework that promotes foreseen tight iterations throughout the development cycle. It is a natural fit for the challenges we are trying to overcome and the issues we are attempting to address.

How did you decide that you will apply ‘Agile’ to a non-technical project?

By introducing models and methodologies from across different practices and industries we have managed to gain better insight into the drivers, catalysts and agents of change.

A soft systems approach has enabled us to dissect the issues better, gain better insight and Agile has enabled us to experiment and design programs that work and evolve them should they not. Its managing transformation at a formidable scale and our application of models, tools and methodologies from across different sectors is the innovation we bring to our projects. Needless to say social change is desperate for innovation.

Which city did you start from?

We rolled out our Mini-MBA program in semi-urban localities in South Punjab before moving to 'Pindi and Islamabad and later to Haripur, Dara Adam Khel in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. We surveyed and studied 444 micro-entrepreneurs and then took 113 of them through our Mini-MBA program. We experimented with the design, delivery and evaluation of our program in less complex environments before committing to our Karachi project, which we started in March 2014. To date we have surveyed and analyzed close to 400 micro-entrepreneurs across ten marginalized neighborhoods in Karachi and are going to take 250-275 of them through our Mini-MBA program from June 2014.

What results have you achieved so far?

The results we've had so far are mind-blowing and have validated our hypothesis: 113 micro-entrepreneurs who have completed our Mini-MBA program have demonstrated an average revenue growth of 50% and profitability growth of 92% over a 4-month period.

How did this happen?

From the get-go our strategy has been to teach skills, tools and techniques that will have a direct and immediate impact on the participant's business. As you'd expect from any worthy MBA program, we cover a range of topics; from hygiene, etiquettes, customer behavior, financial planning and marketing to business-growth strategies.

Our micro-entrepreneurs learned that maintaining a clean environment, engaging with their customers politely and developing relationships with their customers are easy and big wins and help them get repeat business, bigger tips and gain market share.

Not surprisingly we discovered that most micro-entrepreneurs kept

rough accounts or no accounts whatsoever. We teach them to maintain basic financial records that give them unparalleled transparency of which products or services carry the highest margins, where they are bleeding money, where to cut down on expenses etc.

We teach them how to make the most of their strengths in context to their environment, how to identify opportunities and follow different pricing strategies. For example, if Ahmed Gul is known for his organic juice stand (no added sugar or watered-down servings) and has a particular set of clientele, Ahmed Gul can charge a higher price for his products and earn higher margins on fewer glasses sold. Alternatively, Ahmed Gul could quite easily be a numbers-churner by charging less and getting more customers.

We also concentrate quite a bit on basic behavior and communication skills. For example, if someone comes up to them, they should make eye contact and have a conversation. If a customer is waiting, they should not ignore the customer, tell him/her they will be with them in a minute, and generally how to be courteous and engaging.

How is your organization different from other NGOs?

We don't consider our organization an NGO. We think of it as a social startup. None of us are from the development sector or have any experience of having worked for NGOs. What sets us apart is our methodology, our attitude towards micro-failure, our ability to learn, adapt and redeploy at pace and, most importantly, our desire to have an immediate impact. If we promise someone that we are going to change his/her life, we want that transformation to begin there and then not a week, month or a year later.

Another differentiator is how we view our own team and what we do for their development; by equipping our field team with skills and tools that are unique to the market we are not only introducing new tools for thinking at various levels in society but creating data informed knowledge workers at various levels across sectors in society. We are increasing the market worth of our employees should they decide to move on. Our entire team is SCRUM/Agile ready, how many software houses in Pakistan can claim that, let alone any NGOs.

What are your future projects?

Karachi's complexities and needs have opened up a whole new bunch of avenues for us to explore. We have recently launched our second program which is being spearheaded by our co-founder Sahar Zaidi-Shirazee. 'Kitchen Garden' is a precursor to establishing an urban farming cooperative in Karachi. It's about food security and compliments our overall poverty alleviation strategy quite well.

We provide selected households in lower-income areas with grow boxes. The eligibility criteria is that the household must be a family with kids, so the kids get to see the cycle of life, learn from it and enjoy the fruits of the family's labor. The second is that there should be more than one woman in the house because womenfolk, be they homemakers or working mothers, have more responsibilities than men do. We don't want to lump another burden on an already super-busy mum, wife or daughter. The third criterion is they should have access to sunlight, be it a small courtyard, ledge or roof where they can place the grow boxes.

We provide the households grow boxes with quick to harvest vegetables such as tomatoes, bitter melon, green chilies, cucumber and green beans. Once these folks have proven to us that they have a green thumb, we will introduce them to 'high-value niche' vegetables and help them sell those to up-market restaurants and hotels. This way, they will not only grow vegetables that they can consume, but grow quick to harvest vegetables that they can sell and use to supplement their incomes. We are currently experimenting with 50 families in Korangi that are growing vegetables in 100 grow boxes.

How can people help your social venture?

We want people to do whatever they feel comfortable with, to be as involved or as distant as they like. If blogging and social media is your thing then so be it; if you're an academic, let's research and analyze our data together; if you're a grass-roots activists, help us mobilize beneficiaries; if you're a super-busy entrepreneur yourself then we'll settle for your hard-earned cash; if you have an epic and inspirational story to share like Mr. Abdullah Chotanni, we'd love to have you over as an motivational speaker. In brief if you have the desire to contribute we will find you a means to do so that will be universally beneficial for all! **S**

Living Art

In an era where adaptations are the norm, it is very heartening to see young talent coming up with original scripts.

By Fatima Siraj

Like all genres of the performing arts, theatre is a medium through which human conditions and emotions are expressed. But unlike other art forms, the impact of theatre is immediate as the characters come to life in front of a live audience. This is why Oscar Wilde regarded it as the greatest of all art forms, calling it "the most immediate way in which a human being can share with another the sense of what it is to be a human being."

Apart from its immediacy, what sets theatre apart from other art forms

is the manner in which it brings people together. As Marsha Norman very rightfully points out, "Theater is a communal event, like church. The playwright constructs a mass to be performed for a lot of people. She writes a prayer, which is really just the longings of one's heart."

It is a highly powerful instrument, sometimes bringing together various forms of art in an act of dramatic amalgamation: literature, music, dance and acting are tied together as pertinent political, sociological and psychological themes are explored,

making theatre a necessary indicator of the creative progress of a nation.

In the subcontinent, theatre has seen many ups and down over the years. Agha Hassan Amanat Ali's play '*Indrasabha*', which was performed in 1855 in the court of the last Nawab of Oudh, is said to be the beginning of Urdu theatre. It was a great success and some of its characters such as '*Sabz Pari*' and '*Kala Deo*' remain a part of South Asian vocabulary even today.

After independence, Pakistan found its own unique theatre scene



with most performances focusing on the bloodshed and communal violence witnessed during the partition. This focus gradually shifted to a variety of subjects with playwrights exploring a wide range of themes.

Unfortunately, the theatre sector in Pakistan did not receive much support from the government. Instead, it was a victim of state censorship and strict regulations. There are at least three departments responsible for the screening and approval of plays before they can be staged. Such intensive regulation mechanism has invariably harmed the growth of theatre in the country. Moreover, conservative groups have long disapproved commercial theatre which, they claim, promotes obscenity through indecent dialogue and vulgar dances.

However, the theatre sector has witnessed a great improvement with playwrights like Anwar Maqsood writing some of the greatest plays ever staged in Pakistan. His trilogy of satirical plays, *Sawa Chauda August*, *Pawnay Chauda August* and the soon to be enacted *Sarhay Chauda August*, has been a tremendous success. Such theatre aims to bring about social change by reminding the people of their roots and what the Quaid-e-Azam had envisioned for Pakistan.

In some ways, Anwar Maqsood's plays are reminiscent of Ashfaq Ahmad's plays which also highlighted similar issues and focused on the political concerns of Pakistanis born after partition. Those plays have been performed in the major cities of Pakistan and have received standing ovation. *Pawnay Chauda August* shattered all past records of popularity and building on its success, Anwar Maqsood and his team even embarked on a world tour to entertain a global audience.

These plays strongly resonate with the youth who are increasingly looking for some inspiration to drive Pakistan towards the vision of its founding fathers. Says Zameen Salim, a business graduate: "The second edition of the 'Chauda August' trilogy was a real eye opener for both the young and old alike, instilling in them a powerful sense of patriotism. It was political satire at its best."

Although the *Chauda August* series was a huge success, it is not just



politically inspired plays that gain appreciation. Tired of the rampant violence and bloodshed, the people of Pakistan are increasingly looking towards comedy theatre for some lighthearted humor. Reproduction of yesteryear's famous dramas such as *Aangan Terha*, and musicals such as *Cinder Jutt* have provided the much needed comic relief to people. Plays like these provide the audience an opportunity to unwind and have a good laugh. According to theatre aficionado Ayesha Waseem, "Theatre in Pakistan has come a long way. The creativity, ideas and talent that can be seen is absolutely brilliant. *Aangan Terha*, for instance, was an excellent stage rendition of the famous TV show. Musicals like *Cinder Jutt* and *Grease* are also highly entertaining."

The revival of theatre has been made possible mainly due to the efforts of young, talented people, including students. These youngsters have directed plays that explore unique themes and forms. *Khamosh Kalam*, performed at the Karachi Arts Council a couple of years ago, is one such example. Directed and acted out by the students of the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture, this play used the pantomime technique to express its focal theme. The absence of dialogue is a challenge for any acting troupe but the impressive performances surpassed all expectations. In an era where adaptations are the norm, it is very heartening to see young talent coming up with original scripts.

Many schools and colleges have art societies that put up small productions in the educational institutions. Young

people who are a part of such plays are highly talented and should have more platforms to showcase their talents. Unfortunately, there is not much support for such amateur efforts. However, they continue to thrive. Independent student bodies have also taken it upon themselves to promote small scale theatre. The LUMS Drama Fest, hosted last year by the Dramatics Society of the Lahore University of Management Sciences, was one such attempt. With more than 3,000 people in attendance, the festival featured troupes from some of the leading schools and colleges of the country, providing an amazing platform to emerging talent.

The most recent testament to the revival of theatre was the International Theatre Festival hosted by NAPA in March, featuring theatre groups from India, Nepal, Germany and England. The plays brought with them an international flavor and were noted for their superb execution and technical expertise. The festival may have come to a close but the activities in the world of theatre are thriving, with a new play staged after every few weeks. Surely, the future of this genre seems bright. ■

The writer is currently pursuing a BBA degree. She focuses on marketing and social issues.

A Bridge Too Far

There is little hope for 60 percent of Mumbai's population that lives in slums.

By Zeenia Shaukat

The quest to integrate with a globalized world has led to profound changes in South Asia, mainly in India, that sees itself as the leader of the future global economic, financial and cultural order in the region. The impact of these changes on people's lives, livelihoods and social development in Mumbai are worth examining.

The 445.86 sq km city of over 17 million (Demographia World Urban Areas) is geographically a peninsula in structure, surrounded by water from three sides. Mumbai started out as a manufacturing city running on the back of a strong cotton textile industry. As automation and strikes shooed away investment from the sector in the 1970s and 1980s, the displaced workers of the textile industry moved to other informal sectors. At the same time, finance, insurance, real estate and cultural industries emerged as powerful businesses in the city.

These changes gave rise to two classes: one that was directly engaged with the city's formal sectors, i.e. the powerful elite and the middle class, and another marginalized class that included the original citizens of Mumbai, migrant workers and minority communities such as Dalits and Muslims. The latter helped run the city's machinery and provided cheap labor to the growing middle-class population.

However, this class remains deprived of the fruits of Mumbai's emergence as

a powerful actor in the global order. This segment, comprising 60 percent of Mumbai's population, is housed in large swathes of slums, working mostly in labor-intensive units, struggling for recognition, rights and access to basic services.

The simplistically presented story of Mumbai becomes far more complex if the city's recent history of organized crime, the boom in consumerism and the deeply entrenched ethnic and class fault lines are taken into account. All these have had their consequences, most profoundly evident in the tension between the aspirations for the future of the city, nurtured mainly by the business and political elite as well as the middle class. There is also the reality of Mumbai as the second-most densely populated city in the world, at 32,300 people per square kilometer Mumbai follows Dhaka which is the most densely populated city in the world at 44,000 people per square kilometer (Demographia World Urban Areas).

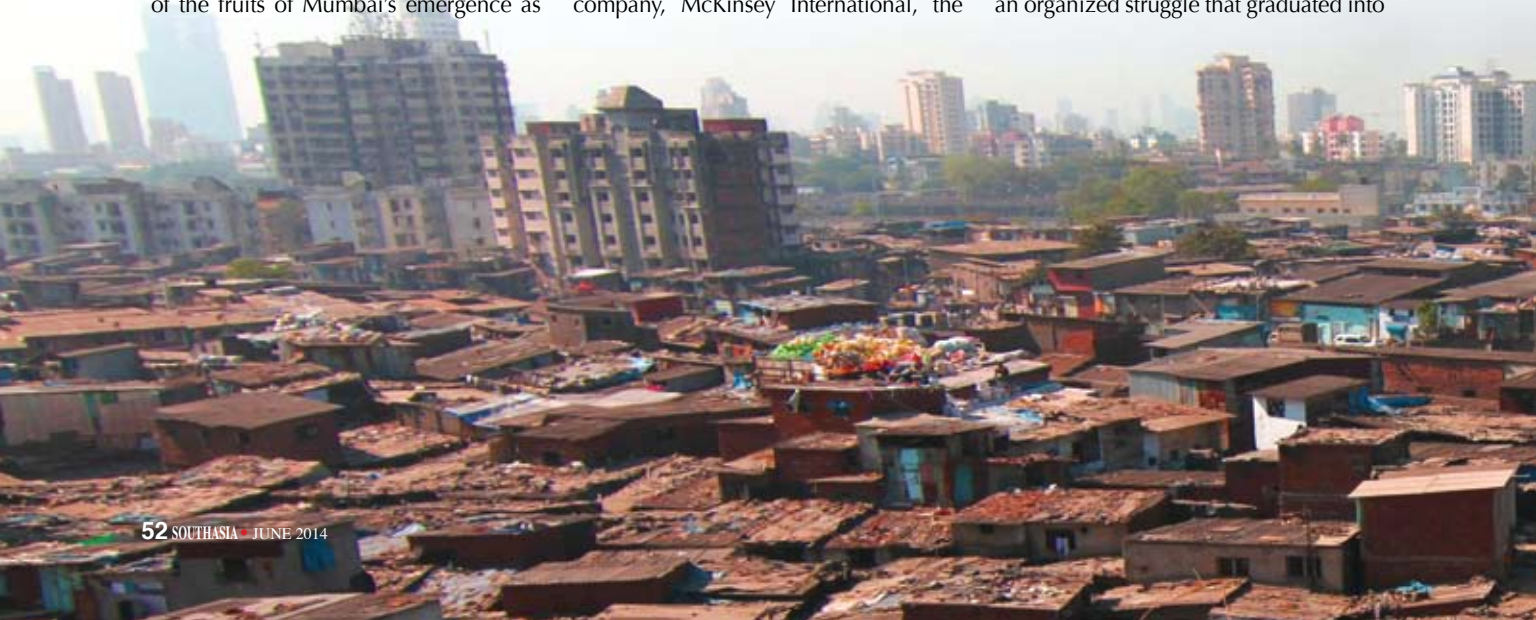
Way back in 2004, as a part of his state election rhetoric, the Congress' prime ministerial candidate, Manmohan Singh promised to "transform Mumbai in the next five years in such a manner that people would forget about Shanghai..." His government had it easy after the elections and there was the 'Vision Mumbai Plan' ready for adoption. Initiated in 2001 by a multinational company, McKinsey International, the

plan responded to the call of an NGO, Mumbai First, for evolving a roadmap for the city's development.

The NGO was incidentally backed by industrialists, builders, politicians and bureaucrats. With the premise of turning the metropolis into a livable and efficient place, the plan focused on six key areas: economic growth, transportation, housing and other infrastructure (to ensure safe water, sanitation, health facilities and reduction in pollution), financing of projects and governance.

The cost of the plan was more than just the earmarked Rs. 31, 000 crores. The social cost included sacrifice on the part of the so-called encroachers of government land or slums, who were asked to vacate the property in order to make way for the projects envisaged in the plan. As a part of the move, in early December 2004, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) was given the task of demolishing slums developed on the state land after 1995.

The slum dwellers were rehabilitated at the periphery of the city, under the Slum Rehabilitation Schemes. However, they resisted the move, insisting that they were being pushed up to 40km away from the city centre with no access to basic services of education, healthcare and employment. They demanded that they be accepted as equal citizens of the city and have housing as a basic right. The slum demolition drive gave way to an organized struggle that graduated into



a powerful movement called the 'Ghar Bachao Ghar Banao Andolan'.

The GBGBA started in around 2004 and worked for those slums that were demolished following the implementation of the Vision Mumbai Plan. The Andolan is a self-agency of slum dwellers and workers of unrecognized sectors, based on the agenda of "development with justice and equity." It demands legal recognition of the right to adequate living and conditions of livelihood in the city.

In order to advance the cause, the movement has engaged the state on multiple levels, sometimes employing creative tools and at other times, launching agitation drives, all focusing on the one-point agenda of the right to housing for the slum dwellers. It has achieved important milestones that make ideal case studies for similar movements in other parts of the world.

For instance, in 2008, the Andolan unearthed a major scam regarding the government leasing out land to influential parties at a paltry rate of 40 paisas per acre for an 80-year lease to build luxurious apartments and amenities. After launching a protest, the Andolan offered to pay 100 times more and deposited a check of Rs.2, 000 for the 50-acre land with the Urban Development Minister, who had to sheepishly accept it on behalf of the chief minister of Maharashtra.

In other instances, the GBGB Andolan vigorously used India's Right to Information (RTI) Act to expose the misappropriation of public assets to shame the government that was doling out land to the powerful elite at the expense of the poor. The RTI activist Simpreet Singh played a leading role here.

In 2008, the Andolan launched a booklet carrying a list of land scam exposes. These included the Adarsh scheme, a tower meant for the widows of soldiers who died in the Kargil war. It was

usurped by bureaucrats, politicians and defense personnel who had absolutely no role in the war. Another land scam, the Ocean of Justice, was a housing complex for High Court judges built on land originally meant for the homeless. The ugly alliance of bureaucrats, judiciary and defense personnel along with India's notoriously corrupt politicians presented new lows that the state had stooped to and the Andolan was determined to counter.

Street politics has also been an important tool deployed by the Andolan. With Mumbai's Azad Maidan being a centre point for most of its street action, the Andolan mobilized thousands of slum dwellers for conventions and protests. These agitations resulted in many powerful confrontations against the government that eventually relented to the demands made by the slum dwellers.


In January 2013, the Andolan marked the New Year by launching a relay fast and a long march for the right to dignified housing. The movement went on for ten days following a strong march by thousands to Mantralaya, the administrative headquarters of the state government of Maharashtra. The government eventually agreed to the specific demand of the slum dwellers for holding inquiries into the disputed schemes of the Slum Rehabilitation Authority and also accepted their applications for the Rajiv Awas Yojana, a government scheme on formalizing slums and facilitating access to basic amenities.

The strength of the GBGB Andolan is its people. The movement has the support of former bureaucrats, members of the judiciary, experts on urban planning and social activists. However, it draws its power from the deep involvement and commitment of the local communities. The latter do not merely contribute

to street agitation and participate in engagement with the state, whether it is about reacting over policies/laws and plans on housing or signing up for existing state schemes on shelter such as the Rajiv Awas Yojana.

They also monitor the state's performance on housing services, making use of the RTI and combining it with legal action where necessary. They have a decent website too that documents the struggle and updates latest developments in their cause. The movement's strategy to combine mass mobilization with proactive politics and use of the activists and experts associated with the Andolan to employ available constitutional and legal mechanisms to further the cause of housing for all has yielded many positive outcomes.

The three major metropolis of South Asia - Mumbai, Karachi and Dhaka - are faced with similar challenges of expanding economies and limited service delivery capacities of the state, resulting in the exclusion of the non-elite. These cities are also listed as the most populous in the world and are exposed to climate change threats due to their geographical location.

According to recent estimates, Karachi has 1.2 million households living in katchi abadis while the slums in Dhaka accommodate 3.5 million people. These make up around half of the population of these cities. With the three cities strongly connected with the global financial and production networks, the lack of political will of their respective governments to provide dignified housing and basic amenities to the majority of their populations points to the flawed foundations of their aspirations to be seen as future leaders of the world economy. 

The writer works for the Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research.



Death on the Peak

Rightly termed as the single deadliest disaster on the Everest, the death of 16 Sherpas has left their community angry and resentful.

By Samina Wahid

On April 18, sixteen Sherpas succumbed to death, killed by an avalanche near the base camp at the perilous Khumbu Icefall. The deceased mostly included guides and workers, particularly ethnic Sherpas. The men in question were hauling gear up the mountain for their foreign clients at the crack of dawn when disaster struck. Rightly termed as the single deadliest disaster on the world's highest mountain, the tragedy has left the Sherpas angry and resentful. In the days following the tragedy, the Sherpas announced that they had decided to cancel this year's mountain climbing season. Hot on the heels of this cancellation followed the inevitable labor dispute that had been simmering in the region for a while.

Sherpas comprise less than one percent of Nepal's population of 26.5 million. Many of them can be found in the mountainous regions of the country and have builds that are naturally suited for the profession. Their strengths lie in their nimbleness at high altitudes where the thin air slows down even the most hardened mountaineers; many sherpas don't even need artificial oxygen to reach the peak.

An ethnic group that is also known as a community of guides and porters, the Sherpas make a substantial amount of money. Reports show that every climbing season, the Sherpas makes thousands of dollars, a lot more than what they would make from farming. Even so, the reward isn't as great as the risks posed. Conservative estimates suggest that a Sherpa is 12 times more likely to die than a soldier in Iraq, with avalanches being the number one cause of their death.

In the wake of the recent disaster, Sherpas are adamant



about receiving fair compensation from the government. They have already refused the initial funeral award that the government gave to the families of the deceased – a mere \$400. They have also demanded that the life insurance money that the families will receive should be doubled to \$21,000, which is still a fraction of the cost a foreign climber would pay for his entire trip.

On the other hand, Sherpas also remain divided amongst themselves. While some have been insisting that they leave the mountains for religious reasons (they consider mountains to be sacred), others are determined to stay back during the climbing season so that they can make enough money to survive through the year.

As it is, the closure of the summit has led to many Sherpas struggling to make ends meet. A number of them are already saying the decision to not climb is going to be tough on everyone, including the economy that benefits from it. During the two to three month season, guides earn anywhere between \$3,000 and \$6,000 - a relatively good wage in a country where hundreds of thousands of others are forced to go overseas in search of work.

The problem is that Nepal's tourist market is becoming increasingly unsustainable and is adversely affecting the safety of Sherpas as well as the climbers. In fact, the labor uprising is more complex than the usual settler-colonial narrative. The Sherpa guides have been an organized group for a long time, with their own union and a history of labor-left militancy as part of the General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions (GEFONT).

Consequently, the Sherpas have led campaigns in the past for stringent measures that prevent tourist trash-dumping and take into account the climate change in the region to draw attention to their brutal working conditions and high rates of death and injury. An article published in *The Atlantic* on the issue points out that the Sherpas are more likely to die from avalanches than climbers because they are the ones responsible for preparing the route, carrying the gear and setting up equipment for the climb. "It's a stark reminder that there are two classes of Himalayan mountaineers – those who pay to climb and those who get paid

to support them," reads the article. Similarly, there is a huge class divide in the whole trek – after conquering the summit, the climbers go home but for the Sherpas, the region has always been home.

Meanwhile, the GEFONT Secretary, Ramesh Badal has said that workers have demanded long-term economic support for the families of the victims, guaranteed social security and awareness campaigns pertaining to climate change in the region. It must be mentioned here that conditions on the mountain have been deteriorating in recent years and it's a change that coincides with temperatures in the Himalayas rising at nearly twice the normal pace.

The Ministry of Tourism has agreed to the demands of the Sherpas but when these measures will be implemented

over a hundred Sherpas working on the mountain, pull out, then some of the smaller companies would follow suit.

The collective anger and resentment expressed by the Sherpas after the April 18 incident is unprecedented. On April 20, Tim and Becky Rippel, the owners of a guide company called Peak Freaks, which lost a Sherpa named Mingma Tenzing to a fatal case of HAPE earlier in the month, stated, in a blog post: "As we suggested in a previous post, the Sherpa guides are heating up, emotions are running wild and demands are being made to share the wealth with the Sherpa people on the table.

Now that there are more Sherpa operators today on Everest, they've come to learn how much the government of Nepal makes in

In the wake of the recent disaster, Sherpas are adamant about receiving fair compensation from the government. They have also demanded that the life insurance money that the families will receive should be doubled to \$21,000.

remains to be seen. Experts believe that the whole affair could cause the insurance limits to go up along with the wages of the Sherpas. Moreover, they say there could be some sort of equalization in their stature since many of them have received qualified guide certification as per the U.S. and European Union standards. Thus, their word means something when climbers prepare for a trek. Even so, their wages remain meager and the risks are far too great.

As the mood at the base camp remains somber, the future of this year's climbing season is in the doldrums. Many clients were away from the mountain acclimatizing on other peaks so that they could at least avoid the dangers of the Icefall. Sherpas have categorically pointed out that if Russell Brice's Himex and IMG (both companies that arrange for treks), which between them have

revenues from Everest expeditions and they are asking for a share. This is their time and under very unfortunate circumstances... In any case things are getting very complicated and there is a lot of tension here and it's growing... Peak Freaks is in support of the Sherpa people any which way it goes. They are our family, our brothers and sisters and the muscle on Everest. We follow their lead, we are guests here."

If the Nepalese government and the Sherpas do come to an understanding with respect to the new demands, the latter may eventually resume work. While most people believe that this is highly likely, for now they are grieving intensely for the companions they lost. ❏

The writer is a freelance journalist who contributes regularly to various leading publications.



Climate Change Initiative

**Bhutan is implementing the world's largest climate change project.
Does the country really need it?**

By Sarah B. Haider

Across the globe, climate change poses a serious threat to the environment as well as public health. Sadly, however, not all countries in the world are aware of its repercussions. The change in climate can affect entire communities but the people who live in impoverished conditions are the most susceptible. To tackle this pressing issue, the World Health Organization initiated an active program in which some seven countries, including Bhutan, are taking part to reduce health-related risks caused by climate change. In

fact, despite being a small country, Bhutan has planned to embark on implementing the world's largest climate change adaptation project.

Climate change can affect people's health in many ways. For instance, it can induce extreme weather conditions which can have dire consequences on people's health. Bhutan's geographical location, i.e. the mountainous ecosystem of the eastern Himalayas, makes it vulnerable to a wide range of micro-climatic conditions within its three distinct climatic zones. The temperature of the southern belt

remains even throughout the year and the zone receives considerable rainfall while the weather remains hot and humid. The central inner Himalayas have a temperate and cool climate and it receives average rainfall. Towards the northern region, there is less rainfall.

Due to climate change, however, the mean temperature has started to rise which brings forth a lot of health risks, directly and indirectly. For instance, heat waves can threaten the vulnerable population while run-offs caused by storms can disturb the sewage systems. This can affect almost



all aspects of public health.

Bhutan has been a victim of floods for a long time. It is home to approximately 2,674 glacial lakes, out of which some 24 are deemed potentially dangerous. Since the late twentieth century, a change in climate has resulted in the warming and recession of Bhutan's glaciers which are a significant renewable source of water for the rivers in the country.

A rise in temperature has led to the melting of these glaciers, resulting in frequent and intense glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs), thus repeatedly exposing the local population to diseases and health-related risks. Moreover, climate change also leads to flash floods and landslides during the monsoon season.

There are certain key health concerns associated with climate

change in Bhutan which are escalating with the passage of time. As a result of GLOFs, vector-borne diseases like dengue and malaria and water-borne diseases, contracted by either drinking or coming into direct contact with contaminated water, are a major concern. The rise in temperature has especially convoluted the control of vector-borne diseases in the country. For instance, during the flood season, the people of Bhutan are exposed to two types of malaria – *Plasmodium falciparum*, which is more severe in nature and accounts for 30-60 percent of the cases and *Plasmodium vivax* which is behind more than 50 percent of the cases. Additionally, Bhutan is facing the rising threat of dengue as well due to climate change. With the first case of dengue being reported in 2004, Bhutan currently faces this disease as an endemic. The problem particularly worsens during the monsoons.

As for water-borne diseases, they are mainly caused by the overflow of sewerage water and diseases like diarrhea have become a major threat to the local population. Owing to these factors, the government of Bhutan deemed it necessary to strengthen the capacity to identify and contain climate change related health outcomes in the country.

Funded through the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF) and administered by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) with an investment of US \$ 11,491,200, the project entitled 'Addressing the Risks of Climate-induced Disasters through Enhanced National and Local Capacity for Effective Actions (2014-2017)' will be the world's largest climate change adaptation project.

Jointly signed between the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the Gross National Happiness Commission and the National Environment Commission of Bhutan, the project aims at keeping the people and the concerned authorities well-informed about the dangers associated with climate change. Moreover, the project also intends to provide a better surveillance of the environmental changes taking place in the country so that the government can issue warnings and take preventive measures early on to minimize the damage.

One of the objectives of the project

is to train healthcare providers and equip them with the required tools to handle health issues caused due to climate change. The project identified certain areas of adaptive capacity so that those areas could be targeted to make the project effective and impactful. These include the collection of metrological and surveillance data, as Bhutan has very limited metrological data and sparsely located metrological stations.

Second, the project aims to tap more resources as there is a dearth of human and financial resources for integrating climate change risks into all levels of health activities.

Third, the project intends to mainstream climate change by incorporating the phenomenon into national programs that do not take climate change into account at present. For example, climate change awareness will be introduced in the National Vector-borne Disease Control Program (VDCP), ARI and diarrheal disease programs and water and sanitation programs.

Lastly, the project aims to create coordination by introducing a new environmental health program in the Ministry of Health to coordinate and implement climate and health initiatives.

The program will also focus on taking useful measures to minimize the risk of floods and landslides in Phuentsholing and the neighboring industrial estate of Pasakha. Subsequently, it will make the community more resilient by designing and implementing water harvesting, storage and distribution systems in some villages. Under the said initiative, it is also expected that the quality, analysis and dissemination of information regarding climate change will be improved in a timely and reliable fashion.

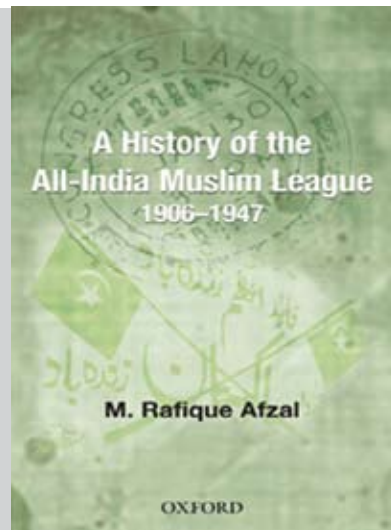
As for the outcomes of the project, Bhutan expects to increase awareness and capacity of health workers and the community to tackle climate-related health issues as early as possible. What is more, the project will assist the government in planning and sustaining its Vector-borne Disease Control Program. Whether or not Bhutan succeeds in achieving the goals set by the program remains to be seen. ■

The writer is a Karachi-based journalist.

A Page from History

Book Title: A History of the All-India Muslim League 1906–1947
Author: M. Rafique Afzal
Publisher: Oxford University Press
Pages: 781, Hardback
Price: Rs.1,595
ISBN: 9780199067350

Reviewed by Yaqoob Khan Bangash



It may come as a surprise that before the book 'A History of the All India Muslim League, 1906-1947,' there existed no narrative history of the All India Muslim League – the party which led the movement for the creation of Pakistan. One of the reasons why such an attempt was never made was the fact that the real credit for the creation of Pakistan was solely given to Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the leader of the Muslim League. In that narrative, the party only played a small role – Jinnah was considered the party and the party Jinnah. Also, as is common in Pakistan, perhaps no one tried to investigate the history of the Muslim League because such an endeavor would have exposed the weaknesses and factionalism in the party. This would have presented the League in a bad light when compared to the better organized and more popular Congress. Therefore, it is commendable that Professor Rafique Afzal took the initiative in the form of a well-researched and thorough history of the All India Muslim League from its inception to the creation of Pakistan.

The book is divided into 12 chapters and three parts. The first chapter focuses on the formation and early years of the party. In this chapter, Professor Afzal clearly notes the elitist nature of the League. He writes, "It (the party) restricted membership exclusively to the Muslim elite... by charging prohibitive registration/admission and annual fees. At the Karachi annual session, it was decided that every member should pay a non-

refundable registrations fee of Rs.50 and an annual fee of Rs.25..." Another condition was that a candidate must have an income of at least Rs.500 per month.

These stipulations clearly made the League the preserver of the interests of the upper echelon of the Muslims. The activities of the party in its early years clearly reflected this trend. Prof. Afzal also points out how hard it was to establish the provincial branches of the League since factionalism had begun to emerge right from its inception. In the chapter on the League's organizational structure, it is noticeable that the party's membership was quite mediocre in its initial few decades. By December 1927, just about 1330 people had become members of the League and even among those, only a very small fraction ever paid their dues (pg 31).

One wonders how then the League gained the status of a major political party in India when its membership base was so miniscule. It also raises the question as to why the Congress – which had a much larger membership by the 1920s – and the British Indian government even took the League seriously when it had hardly any members.

Chapter three and four cover the period leading up to the 1935 Government of India Act and primarily chart the ascendancy of Jinnah as the preeminent leader of the Muslim League. These chapters show how the Muslim League tried to work with the Congress initially through the famous Lucknow Pact of 1916 and then later,

how the Central Khilafat Committee overshadowed and almost pushed the League into oblivion. Chapter four clearly shows the extremely weak nature of the League during 1922-34, especially in 1922 when the situation became so dire that the League could not hold a session and even its council met only twice.

Once, when the council meeting was called, "only two members turned up" (pg 160). Further, the League's finances were such that "the party could not fully recover from its recurring financial crises till after 1935" (pg 160). The author also shows how the League was again split into a number of factions, including a Shafi League and a Jinnah League. He writes, "Nobody thought of organizing the League parties in the legislature till the late 1930s," (pg 164). Therefore, most Muslims set up other ad hoc parties in the legislature – a move that weakened the Muslim League even further.

Part two of the book – chapters 5 to 8 – focuses on the crucial period between 1935 and 1940 when the Muslim League completely falls apart, then reorganizes itself and begins to become a mass party with the demand for Pakistan. Even though Jinnah was back at the helm by the time of the provincial elections, Prof. Afzal notes that "his mission was practically that of an individual, the All-India Muslim League and its branches had virtually no functional organizational structure in any province," (pg 207). The result of the 1937 provincial elections clearly

exhibited the League's weakness as it won only 110 out of the nearly 500 Muslim seats (pg 219).

This failure prompted Jinnah to organize the League. He began to forge alliances with the local Muslim leaders in all provinces, convincing them to come under the League's umbrella. The so-called Jinnah-Sikandar Pact in the Punjab which ensured cooperation between the Unionists and the League was one such result. During this time, the League also searched for a 'goal' which it eventually found in the Lahore Resolution of 1940. It was the slogan of Pakistan – which was still vague – which brought disparate members of the Muslim community under the umbrella of the League during these crucial years. However, even while a large number of Muslim leaders flocked to the Muslim League during this period, local-level factionalism remained rife and threatened to wreck the party. It was the leadership of Jinnah which kept the party together.

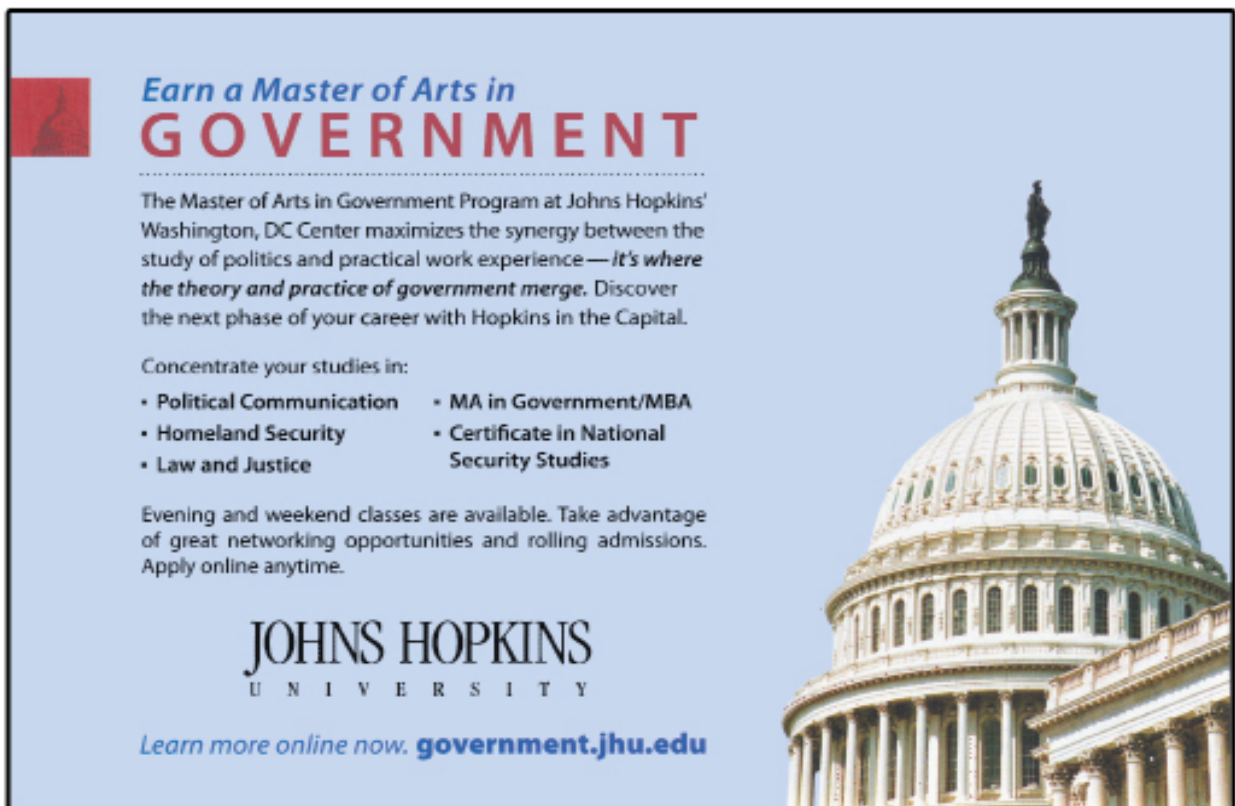
The third section of the book focuses on the period between 1940-1947. In this section, the author

meticulously charts the rise of the League as a political party. In passing, but still significantly, Professor Afzal notes the importance of the ulema who supported the League in the 1946 elections. He states: "The Muslim League formally sought the assistance of ulema and mashaik in the general elections" (pg 588). He also gives an example where "...an 80-year old man who was threatened by the zaildar to vote for a Unionist candidate refused to submit, saying that if he voted against the League, his iman (faith) would be in danger" (pg 594). This incident clearly shows how religion was now officially infused in the League's campaign and how the demand for a separate Muslim homeland, based on the notion of Muslims as a separate 'nation,' had now transformed into a demand for a religiously inspired homeland. In chapter 11, Professor Afzal argues that the main reason why Jinnah accepted the Cabinet Mission Plan was because it "conceded the substance of Pakistan" and provided "machinery for achieving a fully sovereign Muslim

state in ten years" (pg 632). The later story of the rejection of the Cabinet Mission Plan, the Direct Action Day, the interim government and the final negotiations during the viceroyalty of Lord Mountbatten are well known.

This book is a very significant and useful contribution to scholarship and will become the basic text on the Muslim League. However, its overly long narrative at times becomes its major drawback. At certain places, there is too much text with little analysis. Also, there is no reference at all to a number of very important works which relate to the Muslim League. An engagement with the arguments of other scholars would have certainly given more depth to the book. That said, the work will hopefully encourage other writers to do further research on the Muslim League as a political party and its impact on the politics in British India and post-independence India and Pakistan. **S**

The writer is the Chairperson of the Department of History, Forman Christian College, Lahore.



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VIP Culture?



VIP protocol comes with power. The joys and satisfaction of becoming a 'VIP,' through election or otherwise, is a privilege that is experienced with zest by those who consider themselves VIPs for one reason or the other. However, it happens only in Pakistan. When these very same VIPs travel to another country, they are reduced to ordinary citizens and have no qualms in behaving like common people. This is what happened when our VIPs found themselves patiently waiting for the British Prime Minister during a recent official visit to the UK.

Punjab cops demanded bribe from KPK CM

PTI Chairman Imran Khan accused Punjab police of demanding bribe from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Pervez Khattak during a visit to Lahore.

Khattak and three members of his cabinet were traveling without protocol when police stopped them and demanded bribe at an exit point in Lahore.

VIP Protocol in Pakistan

Making the public wait for them to pass securely, only exacerbates the hate sentiment which they already have against the rulers. This is also reflective of their feudalistic mindset of being surrounded by numerous gunmen at all times, paying no heed to the suffering caused by their protocol.

Egocentricity is another reason why they want to keep such VVIP protocols, besides security. Keeping opulent cars and being followed by gunmen serves to feed the narcissistic souls while people continue to live in fear and hunger.

Jl pledges to end VIP culture

Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Sirajul Haq has said that Jl wanted to bring the VIP culture in the country to a swift end, and raise the living standard of the 95 percent oppressed masses on a par with the five percent ruling elite. Sirajul Haq termed the ruling elite as the greatest threat to the country's stability, and warned that if rulers did not change their attitude, the oppressed masses could rise in revolt.

He said on one hand was a VP culture for the elite while on the other hand, there was a footpath culture as thousands of children were seen collecting rotten food on roads and garbage, while living on footpaths. None of the feudal lords or capitalists had made any sacrifice for the sake of Pakistan; it was the poor who rendered sacrifices for the country.

VIP movement bothers people

Unlike other countries, VIP movements in our country in the city streets and in highways create lots of problems for the people. Virtually the people are stranded for no faults of theirs.

In other countries it is not felt that VIPs are passing through the city streets and highways. They pass the roads quietly causing no problem on the movements of the people

and vehicles. A person is designated as VIP only because of his/her political and official position. The VIPs should not be the cause of trouble and discomfort for the people.

VIP movement creates manifold problems: a) It restricts the flow of vehicles on the busy roads of the cities; b) It stops the movement of the pedestrians even on the overpasses; c) It completely shatters the traffic signal systems; d) It hinders the movement of dying/serious patients to the hospital and causes many other problems; and e) last but not the least, it insults senior, respected citizens of the country by restricting their free movement despite their social status not being inferior to any of those VIPs. –





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