

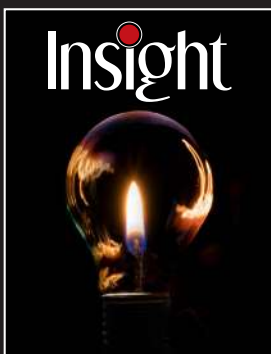
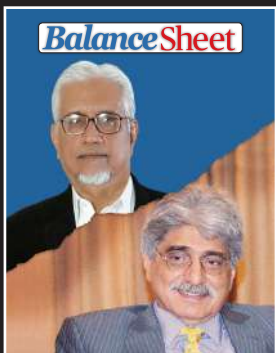
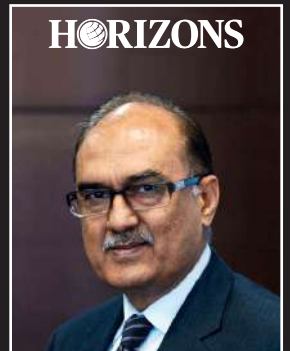
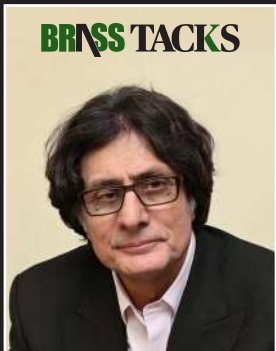
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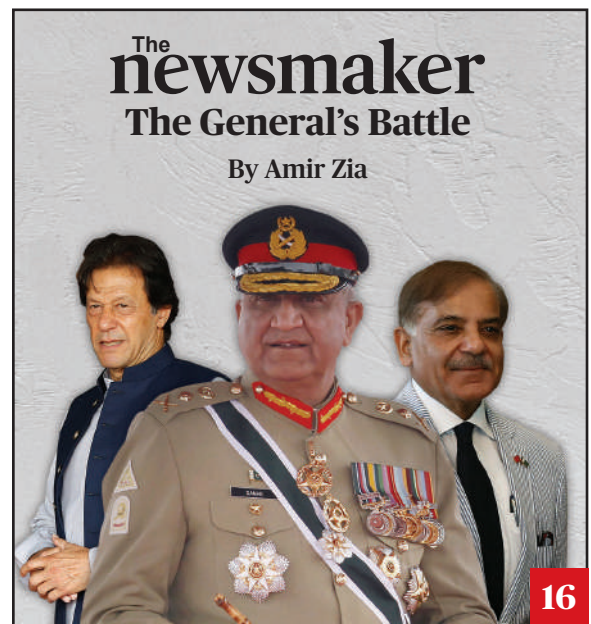
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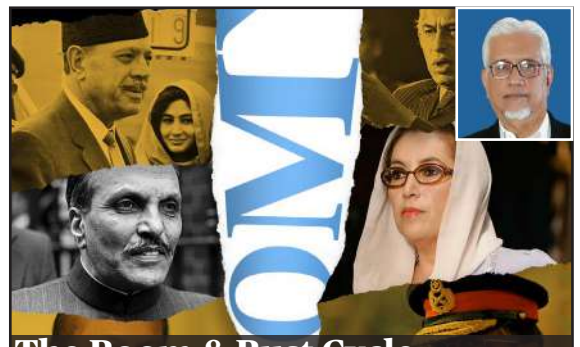
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Pakistan at 75



Basma Siddiqui
Editor, Narratives

Pakistan is 75-years-old, whether wiser or not remains a matter of perspective. The road to freedom and then sustainability has not been any short of a rollercoaster ride patched with both good and bad days.

The 75 years of independence have seen Pakistan grow against all odds, prosper and also see its fair share of defeats but we've remained steadfast and kept moving. With what was inherited as a state with an extremely fragile economy and dim chances of survival, Pakistan has come a long way leaving its mark upon the world.

Bringing together a diverse culture and merging a number of civilizations and religions, Pakistan has stood to be what it was founded for 'a state allowing its citizens to choose freely' – a nation-state.

Pakistan has played its due role in the world being a supporter of peace and dialogue and has therefore always raised its voice against aggression and oppression. Be it the forceful occupation of Palestine, or the inhumane treatment of the Kashmiris, Pakistan has never shied away from calling out the wrongdoer.

With one of the best armies in the world and being the only Muslim state to hold nuclear power, Pakistan holds great regional importance and has time and again played its due role in maintaining peace and tranquility in the world.

Though Pakistan has continued to make progress, nonetheless slow and gradual, the only factor that has held it back is the lack of great and strong leadership. Since its independence, Pakistan has struggled to find leadership that would work relentlessly to at least bring the country at par with its neighbor who attained freedom only a few hours apart but today stands as the world's largest economy. A market not just to find one of the world's best professionals but also a market that every country in the world wants to penetrate and be a part of.

Following the first four decades of progress, Pakistan has continued to regress in the last 35 years making no substantial gains and slowly losing its worth. The four pillars of state—judiciary, executive, legislative and the media—continue to decay with no reforms and no intentions of building and making the institutes stronger. Government entities including the Steel Mills and the national flag carrier remain a shadow of its former glorious past. Corruption and terrorism slowly weakening Pakistan from within making it lose the track for which it set out 75 years ago.

Despite its great potential, Pakistan today struggles to just stay afloat. It struggles to stay united under a leadership that stands divided and uncertain. Today, more than ever we look towards a leadership that needs to guide the nation to unity, discipline and strength. To make sure that we do not stay stagnant, that we do not regress, that we move forward, we move towards the goals we had set for ourselves in the better days, we move towards glory, we continue the journey that this nation worked and strived for.

With what was inherited as a state with an extremely fragile economy and dim chances of survival, Pakistan has come a long way leaving its mark upon the world.

ZEROING IN



The Narratives' editorial team takes a look at three stories that made the headlines...

Our Weakness on Kashmir

Pakistan's lip-service to the cause now appears more and more hollow, and aimed at placating the home crowd rather than putting any genuine pressure on India

Pakistan observed August 5 as 'Youm-e-Istehsal' to mark the completion of the third year of New Delhi's atrocious move that stripped Occupied Jammu and Kashmir of its nominal autonomous status and made this Muslim-majority region part of the Indian union territory.

Pakistani officials issued the usual clichéd statements condemning New Delhi as protests were staged in various parts of the country to express solidarity with our Kashmiri brethren.

But unfortunately, Pakistan's lip-service to the cause now appears more and more hollow, and aimed at placating the home crowd rather than putting any genuine pressure on India. Even Indians know that the members of Pakistan's ruling elite in their hearts and minds have given up on Kashmir. Period. What remains are some half-hearted symbolic gestures, which Indians and their Western allies believe would also wane with the passage of time. And as the time flies by, India would be able to bring demographic changes to transform Kashmir's Muslim-majority into a minority and push its Hindutva agenda there.

While Pakistan appears to suffer from inertia on Kashmir - once described as the jugular vein of the country - India is making concerted efforts to resolve this problem in its favour by hook or by crook. While Islamabad appears without a plan and feebly reacting to the decisive moves made by India, New Delhi has a lethal strategy, which may appear too villainous to us, but it is serving the interests of the Indian state.

To start with, since August 5, 2019 when the extremist Hindu government of India revoked the nominal autonomous status of Occupied Jammu and Kashmir, the Indian regime intensified atrocities in the occupied region as a short- to medi-



um-term measure to crush the will of the Kashmiri people. State sanctioned extra-judicial killings, torture, rape and arrests of freedom loving Kashmiris remain rampant as Muslim localities are being placed under curfew stretching for days and weeks.

So far Kashmiris are holding on to their dream of ending Indian occupation against all the odds, but given Pakistan's inaction and the world apathy, it appears only a matter of time that India would be able largely achieve its goals. Even if some resistance continues to persist, according to the Indian calculations, it would be at manageable levels. And to ensure this, tens of thousands of fresh troops poured in the occupied region even before India unilaterally repealed the Constitutional guarantees given to Kashmiris, adding to more than 500,000 already there.

This military might is ensuring that New Delhi's plans to scrap Kashmir's Muslim-identity and uniqueness of this region sail through with as little resistance as possible. As Israel deprived Palestinians of their lands, India is also applying similar tactics in Kashmir. Under a controversial scheme more than 500,000 Indian settlers have already been given domiciles of Kashmir and given lands and other facilities to develop their settlement similar to Israeli settlements in Palestine. In the coming years, the number of Indian settlers is all set to grow as Kashmiris are forced to vacate their lands, homes and livelihood in an organised manner.

The Indian government is rapidly squeezing space for Kashmiri Muslims in jobs as well as in trade, commercial activities and even farming. In an attempt to erase Islamic values and traditions, Muslim students are forced to recite Vande Mataram and Hindu mythology. The objective is to first dilute and then altogether scrap Muslim identity.

But Pakistan's weak and directionless Kashmir policy is the biggest setback and disappointment for the Kashmiri people. Pakistan failed to react forcefully when India changed Kashmir's special status in August 2019 under former premier Imran Khan and Army Chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa's watch.

Since then Islamabad lost whatever little focus it had on the issue because of the continued political turmoil and economic weakness. In fact, Pakistan's internal weaknesses and continued political instability, coupled by the pressure from the Western and even some Muslim countries, have altogether stopped Islamabad from taking any practical measures in support of the Kashmir's freedom movement.

Lack of commitment to the Kashmir cause by the leaders of our key political parties remains a major factor that badly damaged the Kashmir cause. There are many voices from within the past and present ruling parties which want to open trade with India and restore normal relations at the cost of Kashmir.

Many senior Pakistani officials - espe-



cially since 2014 when hardline Hindu nationalist Narendra Modi became India's prime minister -- keep repeating the mantra of holding talks with India for the resolution of all disputes at a time when there are no takers for peace in New Delhi.

These 'talks advocates' ignore two important points. First, it is India which does not want to hold talks with Pakistan as it is trying to resolve the Kashmir problem in its favour unilaterally. And second is that in the best of times when the talks were held, they failed to produce any results not just on the mega dispute of Kashmir, but even those issues which were thought resolvable or the so-called 'low-hanging fruits,' including that of Sir Creek and Siachen Glacier.

After India's unilateral move of August, 5, 2019, any talks or attempts to normalize relations with New Delhi would mean that Pakistan has accepted the new status of Kashmir; that it is part of the Indian union territory. This would

While Pakistan appears to suffer from inertia on Kashmir – once described as the jugular vein of the country – India is making concerted efforts to resolve this problem in its favour by hook or by crook.

be the greatest betrayal to the Kashmir cause.

Therefore, former premier Imran Khan's policy of no talks with India until it restores the special status of Kashmir is the bare minimum Pakistan can do for

the Kashmiris, who are already confused about Islamabad's intentions because of weak and self-contradictory signals from the top Pakistani officials.

Some Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf government ministers stabbed Kashmiris on their back when they advocated benefits of trade with India, while the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz led government went even a step further by appointing a trade minister at the Pakistan High Commission in New Delhi. This is seen as the first towards the resumption of trade ties with India.

But without resolving the core issues, trade relations are no guarantee for peace. This is the lesson of history which Pakistani decision-makers must need to revisit. In the 1960s, India was Pakistan's biggest trade partner, but this did not stop the two countries from going to a war in September 1965.

Similarly, the damaging rhetoric of let's bury the past and move forward – as once advocated by Army Chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa – only means an abject surrender on Kashmir in the current circumstances.

Pakistan needs a cohesive mid- to long-term strategy on Kashmir that should not shy away from practically helping those struggling for Kashmir's freedom along with diplomatic efforts. At the same time, Pakistan should not just keep the trade relations with India off the table, but also reconsider closing its airspace for Indian civilian aircraft. Indeed, India's economic clout and strength would make the task of fighting diplomatic battles extremely difficult for Pakistan, but without upping the ante there is little hope of keeping the issue alive.

Pakistan's decision-makers, especially the armed forces, must realize that the continuing internal political instability and weak economic fundamentals are the biggest impediments, preventing Islamabad from taking a forceful stance on Kashmir. Therefore, the on-going political circus needs a closure as soon as possible.

However, our current weaknesses does not mean that the state sacrifices its long term interests in which Kashmir remains pivotal. Islamabad should be clear that until we ourselves are not prepared to fight for the Kashmir cause, the world would remain indifferent to the plight of Kashmiris. ■



Battered

Years of neglect and lack of infrastructure cost Pakistan heavily during the torrential rains

As Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif rightly puts it “gone are the days when climate change was [just] the subject of drawing room discussions”. The effects of climate change are now ever so close affecting our day-to-day business. This year the monsoon season has brought devastation like never before, costing Pakistan both the loss of life and livelihood on an enormous scale.

Over 700 hundred people have been killed and millions have lost their homes in the torrential rains during the various spells of monsoon rains lashing across Pakistan since early July. Balochistan being the most hit by the natural catastrophe suffers from the worst flooding situation in over three decades. A total of 18 districts of the province's 25 have been declared ‘calamity-hit’ by the Provincial Disaster Management Authority. With rising levels of water and a continued looming threat of more rain people have been forced to abandon their homes and move to safer places leaving behind a trail of destroyed crops, dead livestock and devastated infrastructure.

NDMA puts the number of houses destroyed in the rains to more than 36,469 houses – 60 percent of which were in Balochistan. Around 800 schools were affected due to the floods, 600 in Balochistan alone.

Moreover, following flash floods and the earthquake that hit Balochistan late last month, most routes linking the province to other parts of the country have either been completely submerged or the infrastructure has been destroyed hampering rescue and relief operations. Several villages remain unreachable as their linking roads and bridges have been washed away. Among several others, two important road links that the rains destroyed include the main RCD (Regional Cooperation for Development) Highway that links Karachi with Quetta, and the Makran Coastal Highway which links southern Balochistan, especially the Gwadar Port, with Karachi and rest of the



NDMA claims a whopping 302% increase in rains across the country in comparison to previous years.

country—making it extremely difficult to provide any relief to those affected.

Apart from braving the weather conditions, people in Balochistan now face a rise in cholera cases that have already claimed the lives of two children in Zhob while dozens have been affected after consuming contaminated water after almost all water resources were badly affected by floods and rainfall. Other diseases including dengue, malaria and typhoid have also seen a sharp rise in the past few weeks following the rains.

The torrential rains have superseded all previous records with the National Disaster Management Authority claiming a whopping 302% increase in rains across the country in comparison to previous years. Pakistan being in the 10 countries worst hit by weather events this figure can only be expected to increase over the years to come.

Staying afloat

The recent torrential rains have once

more brought Pakistan's financial capital to a standstill. Businesses urged to close and educational institutes shut, life in Karachi has come to a grinding halt. With the city receiving over 200mm of rain the already vulnerable infrastructure has crumpled leaving the metropolis stranded.

Entire neighbourhoods remain partially or entirely submerged in water and people are seen wading through knee-deep water while vehicles stuck in sludge remain stranded. Sinkholes have emerged on many main traffic arteries, disrupting traffic and upending the lives of millions across the city. Thoroughfares and bridges, only recovering from the previous spell of rain, remain battered. Power outages, fuel shortages adding misery to the miserable city home to almost 30 million people.

Like the World Bank stated in its report, residents and businesses of Karachi witness a city which is unable to keep pace with its physical growth, or to equitably meet the basic needs of residents and local businesses. “Water and sewage networks, for instance, meet only roughly half of the city's needs. As a result, water is available for only a few hours per day. Most sewage is discharged into the ocean untreated. More than 60 per cent of solid waste is openly dumped, with dramatic impacts on drainage and urban environment. Karachi's infrastructure is highly vulnerable to climate-related





disasters. Poor residents suffer the most from these challenges. Fragmented city management has led to ineffective institutions, with little coordination among them, leading to insufficient planning and investments, and declining public confidence”.

The lack of governance piles on to the problems of the city that almost drowns during every rain not just due to the unprecedented rain but also because of the clogged, damaged and neglected sewage and drainage systems in the city. The metropolis relies on thousands of smaller nullahs to drain rainwater and carry them to the two seasonal river—Lyari and Malir— which eventually drains the water when it falls in the Arabian Sea.

Over the years these storm water drains of Karachi have been misused with encroachment and illegal construction over them involving some of the country's biggest real estate owners. Adding to this, in the absence of sustainable housing societies, people have created informal settlements along the nullahs further constricting them. The Government of Sindh itself has used these nullahs to

The climate catastrophe is very much here and now for climate frontline states like Pakistan.

build car parking, even important state buildings including part of the Sindh High Court and MPA hostel are built over storm water drains.

Further problem arises when most of the city's waste is dumped into the nullahs instead of it being carried to the two landfill sites allocated for Karachi. The untreated solid waste chokes these nullah making it impossible for normal water to pass through it let alone the rainwater following unprecedented rain.

It is a tragedy that despite being so vital for Pakistan, Karachi has continued to suffer the neglect of the numerous governments—both federal and provincial. Be it the MQM, PPP or PTI every political party has only disappointed the people

of the city of lights. Each government is sworn-in with promises of better infrastructure for Karachi and to provide basic amenities to the locals but everything is soon forgotten.

The forgiving city then looks up for another messiah who might bring some change for the better only to end up disappointed again. The cycle doesn't end and neither does the misery. One would assume that the number of times Karachi has gone through the worst, the city might be immune to all the vile but every time it hurts differently.

The impending doom of climate change

More than 1.8 billion people—one-fourth of the world's population—worldwide are at risk of severe floods.

A research published in the journal Nature Communications has found that nearly 90 per cent of people at risk of severe flooding live in poor countries and Pakistan is no exception.

Extreme weather events in South Asia are becoming increasingly frequent due to climate change, with temperatures in parts of India and Pakistan reaching record levels during a heat wave in April and May and steps need to be taken at the earliest to make things better.

Pakistan's Minister for Climate Change Sherry Rehman recently addressing a seminar on climate change said that Pakistan is at the frontlines of a global climate catastrophe and we cannot look towards nature to reset by default. The climate catastrophe is very much here and now for climate frontline states like Pakistan.

“Everybody is looking at the nature to reset to default, which is not happening. We need to build green technology and green goals and we would appreciate initiatives from the tech companies who are not looking for CSR Pilot projects to wash off their carbon offsets,” she underscored stressing over the threat that Pakistan faces. But the question remains whether these words actually translate into action and will Pakistan see a major shift in its policies to minimize its carbon footprint.

Pakistan has to deal with climate change on war footings and treat it like a national security crisis to avert any further damage and prepare itself for the catastrophe that Pakistan saw this year is not over yet and might well just be the beginning to the end. ■

Crippling Disease

Being so close to being polio-free, Pakistan's dreams were all shattered in a single blow

This year has been troublesome for Pakistan not just because of the political and economic instability but also due to the reemergence of the poliovirus which after being dormant for almost 15 months resurfaced in April and has so far affected more than a dozen children crippling them for life.

Being so close to being polio-free, Pakistan's dreams were all shattered in a single blow.

After being polio-free for over a year, 14 cases have been reported in the first half of the ongoing year from North and South Waziristan despite regular immunisation campaigns across the country. It is unfortunate that despite the government's best efforts not much progress could have been made in all these years. Federal authorities have confirmed the existence of the poliovirus in seven cities following the collection of sewage samples from different locations. According to authorities, the poliovirus cases have been found in five Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa cities— Peshawar, Bannu, Nowshera, Lakki Marwat and Swat. Polio has also been found in sewage samples from Islamabad and Rawalpindi.

Anti-polio campaigns have been held every two months with great monetary investment along with risking the lives of the polio teams involved but all the efforts have proven to be futile. In an effort to make the campaign more inclusive and ensuring that all children are vaccinated indelible blue ink is used by health workers to mark and distinguish immunized children from the ones who have not been immunized. Reports on the recent polio patients revealed that most of the cases were of silent refusals in which parents used ink to make fake marks on their children's finger eventually evading from immunization—a phenomenon that is discovered to be very common in the tribal belt. The report thus revealed that most of the children had never received any polio vaccine and had been highly susceptible



After being dormant for almost 15 months resurfaced in April and has so far affected a dozen children crippling them for life.

to the poliovirus.

This is a serious cause of concern as many children assumed to be vaccinated remain at high risk of contracting the disease further giving the virus more room to grow.

The refusals stem from conspiracy theories by religious groups that claim that the vaccination programme is part of a Western initiative to sterilize Muslim children. Another conspiracy theory suggests that the vaccines for polio are made with pig fat which is haram.

Believing in the same theories, during a routine immunization campaign in 2019, rumours were spread across Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa that some children were being poisoned and dying from contaminated polio vaccines. The rumors spread like wildfire, triggering mass panic. Mobs burned a village health center, blocked a highway and pelted cars

with stones. Medical workers were harassed and threatened. Mosques made announcements that children were having cramps, vomiting and diarrhea after they were given 'poisonous' polio drops. Word went out on social media that some children had died. Panicked parents rushed their children to hospitals, overwhelming health authorities. In Peshawar alone, about 45,000 children were brought to hospitals complaining of nausea and dizziness. Officials described it as mass hysteria, asserting there had been no deaths confirmed.

Apart from refusals there have been cases in the past where the children have been immunized against polio but have nevertheless contracted the virus. The root cause still remains a mystery and no official has ever been held accountable brushing the matter under the carpet without raising much alarm. This poses serious threat to the goal of being polio-free. Although such incidents have been really less the risk level involved is great.

Polio campaigns in the country are also widely threatened by violence from extremists who oppose the vaccination programme. Only a few weeks ago a polio team was attacked in North Waziristan by attackers riding motorbikes killing a health worker and two policemen providing security to the team. Another member of the team sustained injuries. In March, a female polio health worker was gunned down while suicide bombers have also

targeted polio teams in the past.

Pakistan and Afghanistan remain the only two countries across the globe reporting live wild polio cases. Kabul has reported two polio cases in the ongoing year and share the same terror history of violence on health workers as Pakistan. A total of eight polio workers were killed across Afghanistan in separate incidents during a polio campaign at the beginning of the year causing fear and terror among the locals who already are on the edge following the takeover of Taliban in Afghanistan.

Even more alarming is the emergence of traces of polio virus after a span of 40 years' in sewage samples in the UK. Between February and May, UK scientists found several samples containing closely related versions of the virus in wastewater at the London Beckton Sewage Treatment Works - the largest water treatment plant in the UK. Although the risk to the general public is extremely low since vast majority of the population is immunized against the disease during childhood the existence of the poliovirus strain only means that crippling disease is rearing its ugly head again.

In the most recent list of cases, US health officials reported a case of polio in a New York suburb in July - the first detected in the United States in nearly a decade.

State health officials said that polio was detected in an unvaccinated person in Rockland County, New York, and that the virus had been found in county wastewater samples in June, as well as in wastewater samples in two different locations in Orange County, New York in June and July.



Alarming is the emergence of traces of polio virus after a span of 40 years' in sewage samples in the UK

These occurrences, as well as reports that health officials in Britain had detected evidence of poliovirus in sewage samples in London, have reignited polio concerns.

A similar concern was voiced by the World Health Organization Polio IHR Emergency Committee which stated that the risk of international spread of poliovirus remains a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC). The statement comes in the wake of a polio case reported in Malawi.

The health au-

thorities in Malawi declared an outbreak of wild poliovirus type 1 after a case was detected in a young child in the capital Lilongwe. This is the first case of wild poliovirus in Africa in more than five years after Africa was declared free of indigenous wild polio in August 2020. Laboratory analysis showed that the strain detected in Malawi is linked to the one that has been circulating in Pakistan's Sindh.

Polio is an incurable disease and the only way one can dodge this bullet is by getting immunized against the disease. Continued efforts need to be made to inoculate children at a very young age to significantly reduce their chances of contracting the virus.

The menace of poliovirus can only be eradicated with joint efforts from all the stakeholders. Pakistan which remains the main source of the virus spread needs to find ways to convince people to inoculate their children against the disease. Taking religious scholars into confidence who can later preach others to help their children by immunizing them against polio would help the cause manifold. Heavy penalties need to be imposed on parents if they refuse to let their children being vaccinated. Jail terms and heavy fines should be used to deter parents from refusals. Similarly, other initiatives need to be taken by the government to rid the nation from the disease once and for all. ■





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The newsmaker



The General's Battle

The new chief of the armed forces will have to wage war of another kind



By Amir Zia

The writer is a senior journalist and managing editor, Narratives.

General Qamar Javed Bajwa had an almost perfect start when he took over as Chief of Army Staff (COAS) in November 2016, but as his second three-year term draws to a close, challenges faced by the country and its mightiest institution - the Pakistan Army - appear graver than they were six years ago.

Today, Pakistan stands far more polarised and divided than it was in 2016, as a highly unpopular government is trying to run the show on the back of a disputed mandate and an incomplete National Assembly. And this is not a crisis of the government alone. The key state institutions - from the Parliament to the Election Commission of Pakistan and from the Pakistan Army to the superior judiciary -- have all become controversial in one way or another.

With the political landscape increasingly mired in a myriad of conspiracy theories, involving the political and military leadership, the challenge of terrorism is once again seen rearing its ugly head, particularly in parts of Balochistan and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa provinces. This year, terror attacks on security forces have increased manifold. According to the Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies, 140 security forces' personnel and 147 civilians were killed in the first seven months (January-July) of 2022, while 532 people, including 163 security personnel, were wounded during the



Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif – an acceptable face.

“For the new chief, achieving equilibrium within the ranks, in the barracks and among the masses will be the foremost challenge.”

same period.

Meanwhile, the Pakistan Army is confronted with an additional challenge: how to pull the institution out of the quagmire of controversies and revive its popular support base, which has taken a significant hit in recent months following the ouster of the Imran Khan government. Security analysts say that the new army chief will have a heavy agenda on his plate, given the grave political and economic flux and uncertainty in the country. General Bajwa, who in recent months launched many initiatives, now has hardly any time to see them through, including fulfilling his dream of bringing stability to the country.

According to Lt General (retired) Amjad Shoaib, General Bajwa will hang up his boots this November. “General Bajwa is determined to retire and won’t

accept any extension,” he told Narratives Magazine. “He personally told me this in a meeting in the presence of some of his senior commanders... General Bajwa is clear that he won’t let the cycle of promotions and change be halted in the larger institutional interest.”

Director-General ISPR Major-General Babar Iftikhar had also announced in a press conference in January 2022 that General Bajwa would retire after completing his second term.

With media speculation now rife about who the new army chief will be, senior defence and security analysts in background interviews maintained that the biggest challenge for General Bajwa’s successor would be the extreme polarisation in society, which is also impacting the armed forces in different ways.

“Luckily for us, our armed forces are highly disciplined,” said General Shoaib. “The obedience of command is their core value.”

However, former senior military officers say that despite being a highly disciplined force, there remains an unease in the rank and file about the way an unpopular and controversial political leadership managed to wrest power through palace intrigues and form a hotchpotch coalition government.

“For the new chief, achieving equilibrium within the ranks, in the barracks and among the masses will be the fore-



Imran Khan's support base remains strong.

most challenge,” said a retired general, requesting anonymity. “This means that he will have to quickly move to distance himself from some of the recent initiatives taken by General Bajwa.”

Lt. General (Retired) Ghulam Mustafa, a war veteran, who held a number of top command positions, agreed that the biggest challenge for the new chief would be ending the acute polarisation in society. “All the political parties are targeting the Pakistan Army in one way or the other,” he said. “They are also trying to weaken the institution of the army chief by making it controversial... directly targeting General Bajwa is not good for the country or the army, as not just the soldiers and officers, but also the general public look up to the office of the COAS. The new chief has to see how to restore that image.”

Former military officials say that the army draws its strength from the unity within its ranks. “It is like a family which has faith in its leadership,” said one officer who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

In November 2016, when General Raheel Sharif retired, the Pakistan Army was perhaps at the zenith of its popularity and an overwhelming number of Pakistanis saw it as the ultimate guardian of the country's core national interests. The Pakistan Armed Forces had scored decisive victories in the war against terrorism through operation Zarb-e-Azb -- launched in 2014. The Pakistan Army and its allied wings were seen as the bulwark against the greed, corruption and opportunism of many politicians in the elected

Those accused of massive corruption have been allowed back in power, raising serious questions about Pakistan's investigation, prosecution and judicial system.

government, though this was not the institution's constitutional mandate.

The army as an institution also remained unyielding on Kashmir, despite efforts by the Nawaz Sharif government to put the issue on the backburner. The Pakistan Armed Forces' hawkish stand on the country's nuclear programme, their stand on overall relations with India, their management of the country's western frontiers and their resistance to the undue pressure from the United States and its western allies, remained in sync with the aspirations of the majority of Pakistanis.

General Bajwa -- as the face of the institution -- successfully began his term of command from where General Raheel Sharif had left it. The launch of Operation Radd-ul-Fassad in February 2017 expanded the ambit of the country's anti-terror

efforts across Pakistan, and managed to build on the success of General Sharif's Zarb-e-Azb, which started in June 2014.

Under General Bajwa, the Pakistan Army's image as an institution opposed to corruption, was bolstered by the manner in which it supported the Supreme Court of Pakistan in the Panama Case, which resulted in Nawaz Sharif's ouster from power following his conviction in a corruption case.

The 2018 elections cemented the Pakistan Army's popularity among the general public. By supporting the new government, it was seen as an institution that was serious about reforming Pakistan and holding the corrupt accountable.

While the mantra of the civil-military leaders being on the same-page gained currency, the opposition and its allied media coined the term 'hybrid regime' for the new political dispensation in an attempt to undermine the Imran Khan government. However, mainstream Pakistan appeared at ease with the fact that perhaps for the first time in recent history, both the civil and military institutions appeared to be working in tandem, which is vital for the stability of any country.

All this started to change toward the end of 2021, following the controversy about the appointment of the ISI chief. Nevertheless, both the civil and military leaders managed to keep the optics of unity in place for some time. But the controversial manner in which Imran Khan was removed from power in April this year through a no-confidence motion, and then replaced by individuals tainted with mega corruption scandals, triggered widespread public condemnation.

The Pakistan Army's politically correct stance of “neutrality” may have been popular among a tiny segment of liberals and sub-nationalists, but for many common Pakistanis it was a step backward by an institution on which they relied the most. Many firm supporters of the Pakistan Army, who were also followers of Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), saw it as handing over the country to the most corrupt politicians and their families.

General Ghulam Mustafa said that two bonds are critical for any army in the world. “The first, the rank and file's relationship with its leadership, and second, the institution's bond with the people.”

"In the 1965 War, the masses stood by the army and successfully warded off aggression by a far bigger enemy. But in 1971, the people in East Pakistan turned against us and the results of that are before us."

He said the confidence in leadership is vital. "If confidence in the leadership is shaky, juniors will obey orders, but the level of enthusiasm will be low. They won't put their heart and soul into the tasks at hand."

Another lieutenant general, who had also held a couple of senior government positions, said the credibility of the army chief should be above board.

"The way the institution and its leadership has been made controversial in recent months has never happened in the past," he said on condition of anonymity. "Everyone is now carrying a smartphone and they get affected by what is being said on the mainstream and social media. They get both, informed and misinformed. Therefore, restoring the trust of the leadership should be the number one task of the new chief."

General Amjad Shoaib said the challenge of terrorism may reappear more forcefully as Maulana Fazlur Rehman, who is a partner in the ruling coalition, is unhappy with the merger of the former Federally Administrated Tribal Areas (FATA) in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. "He is demanding the scrapping of this merger. The Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) also wants the same. If this happens, it would be a great leap backwards as General Raheel Sharif started pushing for it from the days of Nawaz Sharif."

"If Maulana Fazl prevails, this means that the TTP has also prevailed. The gains which the army made after 14-15 years of hard work and sacrifices will be reversed because of political expediency. The new chief must ensure that this does not happen."

One of the two generals, who spoke requesting anonymity, said that the new chief will have to bear in mind public sentiment, as well as that of the rank and file on the issue of occupied Kashmir and relations with India.

"Right now there appears to be a policy reversal on many fronts. There is US pressure on Pakistan to mend fences with India at the cost of Kashmir and resume trade relations with India. But this would be a highly unpopular policy change and



When General Raheel Sharif retired, Pakistan Army was at the zenith of its popularity.

The Pakistan Army's politically correct stance of "neutrality" may have been popular among a tiny segment of liberals and sub-nationalists, but for many common Pakistanis it was a step backward by an institution on which they relied the most.

hurt Pakistan's core interests. The new military leadership must not allow this to happen."

The former Imran Khan government had ruled out normal relations with India until it revoked the August 5, 2019 measure, which unilaterally made occupied Kashmir part of Indian territory. This is seen as the bare minimum Pakistan can do under these circumstances. Starting talks with India or restoring normal ties would mean that Pakistan has, to all practical purposes, accepted the new Indian position on Kashmir.

The country's economic problems

will also test the army's leaders, as there will be pressure to cut down defence spending.

Last but not least is the anti-corruption narrative, regarding which many see a climbdown by the military during General Bajwa's watch. Those accused of massive corruption have been allowed back in power, raising serious questions about Pakistan's investigation, prosecution and judicial system. It also paints all the institutions in a bad light as they seem to have an acceptance of the corrupt.

This climbdown is highly unpopular, especially among the educated and professional upper-middle, middle and lower middle classes of Pakistan.

General Ghulam Mustafa said that ideally the new chief would also have to distance himself from politics, but the army is so entrenched that if it withdraws totally, it would create a vacuum. "You can't suddenly withdraw and leave the space open for controversial forces. However, a gradual and organised distancing that is in line with the expectation of the masses would be better."

"People are angry not just because Imran Khan has been removed, but even more so because those people who are known to be corrupt are back in power," he said.

Against this backdrop, the new army chief will almost certainly have an extremely tough agenda in front of him in a highly charged and explosive political environment which will test both him and the institution to the hilt. ■



A Dangerous Game

The government goes on the warpath against Imran Khan – apparently with the tacit approval of the state institutions

By Amir Zia

The beleaguered Shehbaz Sharif government is playing a dangerous game in its attempt to contain the rising tide of former premier Imran Khan's popularity by resorting to an unprecedented crackdown on the media, the opposition and all dissenting voices.

Ironically, this time around, the state apparatus is not even trying to put up a facade of deniability. After cancelling the license of ARY News on August 12, authorities illegally kept Bol News off the air for several hours to ensure that Khan's August 21 Rawalpindi public meeting did not get coverage. And that's not all. Even YouTube was partially blocked by the government during the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan's speech, to prevent it from airing the event on social media.

Meanwhile, the witch-hunting of dissenting and critical voices continues.

Anchorpersons Imran Riaz Khan and Jameel Farooqi, and PTI leader Shahbaz Gill are the latest names in the ever-growing list of those who have faced the direct wrath of this government. Jameel Farooqi and Shahbaz Gill were allegedly tortured and even stripped. This is taking the clampdown of media personnel to an altogether horrific new level by any so-called elected government, at least in the recent past.

Then, there are journalists and prominent television faces like Arshad Sharif and Sabir Shakir who had to leave Pakistan in the wake of extreme pressure by the authorities. And there are many others who are being directly managed by the state apparatus, or indirectly through the owners of media organisations.

Yet, the government and its backers have failed to legitimise the new political dispensation in the eyes of many Pakistanis or dent Imran Khan's popularity, or in any way weaken his narrative of an independent foreign policy and the accountability of the corrupt.

Indeed, Imran Khan has emerged

as the only national leader having sizeable support and a committed following across Pakistan. This stands in sharp contrast to other leaders or political parties, which are operating either on the provincial or ethnic level, or representing one particular sect or religious school of thought.

The recent by-election results in Punjab and Karachi have only confirmed Imran Khan's popularity, which fails to lose its lustre despite the round-the-clock "character assassination" campaign by the government and its allied media. Imran Khan continues to be seen as the Mr. Clean of Pakistani politics by an overwhelming number of Pakistanis, despite the much-hyped Toshakhana and foreign funding cases brought against him.

All this is causing increasing trepidation in the ranks of the Shehbaz Sharif government and its backers. It explains the desperate attempt by the government to silence Imran Khan's voice by hook or by crook. The framing of a terrorism case against Khan is the latest attempt in this regard, though it is all set to backfire,

given the massive reaction to these ridiculous charges both domestically and internationally.

Imran Khan is being branded a terrorist for expressing his intent of taking legal action against those bureaucrats, who in a bid to please their political bosses, are allegedly resorting to illegal actions against his party members. The way the UN Secretary-General reacted to these developments and the international media highlighted how Imran Khan is being targeted, clearly indicate that the government's efforts to stifle his voice have backfired.

The Pakistani public is also questioning the legitimacy and strength of the cases and the allegations made against Imran Khan. Meanwhile, the case against Shehbaz Gill shows that the government is applying two different yardsticks to judge the same crime. Gill has been accused of trying to create a divide within the army. However, much stronger statements have been made in the recent past by the convicted former premier Nawaz Sharif, his daughter Maryam, Khawaja Asif, who is now ironically the defence minister, and many other PML-N and PDM stalwarts.

Imran Khan is hitting the bull's eye when he says that the government is trying to pit the PTI against the Pakistan Army - a situation which he has been working hard to avoid. The security establishment should also ensure that the Shehbaz Sharif government is not allowed to continue playing this dangerous game and use the Pakistan Army for the victimisation of the country's biggest and most popular political party and its leadership.

As Imran Khan continues to build pressure through his non-stop public rallies and engagements, there are visible signs that the government is feeling the heat. The tussle between the two sides is fast reaching a climax, with the government desperately trying to oust Imran Khan from politics through his disqualification from holding public office under one pretext or the other.

There are also efforts by the government to overturn the life ban on Nawaz Sharif's disqualification through the court or by some legislation they can manipulate to do so. However, both these options are easier said than done. Lawyers say that lifting the life ban on Nawaz Sharif from holding public office through the



Imran Khan's support base remains as strong as ever.

Imran Khan is being branded a terrorist for expressing his intent of taking legal action against those bureaucrats, who in a bid to please their political bosses, are allegedly resorting to illegal actions against his party members.

court would first require the senior Sharif to surrender himself to the authorities and go to jail. From there he could pursue his legal options, but a constitutional amendment would need a two-third majority in both Houses of Parliament, which this government does not have. Therefore, Nawaz Sharif is unlikely to return to Pakistan until he gets some fool-proof guarantees from the establishment.

For the PML-N, getting Imran Khan disqualified from holding public office is vital – it would bring him on the same footing with Nawaz Sharif, and then could be used as a bargaining chip to get him and Sharif senior both back into electoral politics.

For his part, Imran Khan is trying to force the establishment to change its pro-Shehbaz Sharif government stance

through public pressure. So far, all the odds seem to be stacked against him. Not just the political establishment in the form of the ruling Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM), but also powerful quarters in the civil and military establishment are ostensibly opposed to him. So the only way forward for Imran Khan and his politics is to keep the resistance going. This non-compromising stance has already paid dividends in the by-elections and given him an unprecedented surge in popularity.

But all this intense political polarisation and confrontation do not augur well for the state of Pakistan, which is already reeling under the pressure of weak economic fundamentals. To revive the economy on sustainable grounds requires political stability, which continues to elude the country.

All the political instability is also taking its toll on state institutions, including the parliament, the Election Commission of Pakistan and the judiciary, which have also become highly controversial.

Under these circumstances, it is vital for these institutions to act in Pakistan's interest and defuse the political situation. The only way out of this political impasse is the installation of an impartial caretaker government - for a period of six to 12 months, with the blessings of the judiciary. The caretakers should manage the economy and prepare the grounds for free and fair elections. If this highly controversial Shehbaz Sharif government is allowed to continue and play its self-serving dangerous games, Pakistan is likely to slide into even greater chaos. ■

Comment

Defying Odds



He came, He saw, He Conquered

The masses rose like the phoenix from the ashes and rejected an artificial coalition, they dismissed a government that was never theirs. It is for the first time in Pakistan that the people themselves influenced the results



By Lt. Gen. (R.) Tariq Khan HI(M)

The writer is a retired Lt. General of the Pakistan Army. He is noted for his services as the Commander of I Strike Corps at Mangla & Inspector General of the Frontier Corps.

"I'm not an old experienced hand at politics. But I am now seasoned enough to have learned that the hardest thing about any political campaign is how to win without proving that you are unworthy of winning".

— Adlai Stevenson I



'A massive turnout of voters foiled rigging attempts' - PTI

So Imran Khan stood his ground and made history. He stared down all the elements against him - alone. He was unflinching in the face of deceit, treachery and betrayal -- neither losing his composure nor his sense of decency. He displayed no frustration during this ordeal of an election where nerves were tested and resolves challenged. He was not flustered, remained unruffled and was not intimidated by the one-sided show. A smaller person would have wilted in the face of the array of State machinery and government apparatus aligned against him.

I regret to say that I, too, proved to be among those smaller people, who gave up when they saw no light at the end of the tunnel. People such as myself looked for conflict and confrontation and when we did not find any, we were disappointed and disillusioned. Imran was proven right with his Statesman approach of avoiding physical conflict and instead galvanizing people into a force to be reckoned with. Never before has a hostile government been allowed to continue, illegally through a judicial license, and permitted to conduct an election of this nature and magnitude, where a con-

flict of interest was so blatantly served. The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) conveniently looked the other way so that the many violations -- that were duly reported -- were neither investigated nor addressed. The ECP fiddled with the voters' lists and tried its utmost to make it as difficult as possible for the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) voters to cast their vote. The living were declared dead and denied the right to vote, while the dead were declared alive and voted with impunity. What a shame!

In violation to the defined protocol, the Punjab government posted officials of their choice on key positions with an in-

The administration was overwhelmed by the masses who prevented fraud, scheming and deceit by sheer presence and the momentum of humanity.



tention to interfere in the election process. They shamelessly ordered the arrests of the prominent PTI leaders, arranged for others to be attacked on the streets and yet, banned many from entering the province. They ensured that transport was denied to the PTI voters and their movement hampered and disrupted.

The Punjab government and its hand-picked officials even encouraged their touts to stuff ballot boxes with bogus votes. I for one was neither surprised nor shocked at the blatant attempts of rigging these by-elections by the sitting government. I was sure that these elections would be conducted in a highly biased environment and I know I was right on all counts. I was also certain that with all these shenanigans, the PML-N would secure a huge victory and declare themselves the legitimate choice of the people. I was sure that the people -- weak, helpless, fatalistic and disheartened -- would surrender themselves to the elements and resign themselves to providence in recognition of their own irrelevance and insignificance; doomed to be nothing but inconsequential pawns in this great fraud.

However, I could not have been more wrong about my own country fellows -- men and women. The masses rose like the phoenix from the ashes, and under the clarion call of moral assertion, patriotism and principle, they spoke with one voice and ousted an aberration that ought never to have been there. They rejected an artificial coalition, they dismissed a government that was never theirs. They reacted and responded towards this charade where the single largest party was

Imran was proven right with his Statesman approach of avoiding physical conflict and instead galvanizing people into a force to be reckoned with.

reduced to a minority in the National Assembly by artificial means and engineered methods. Yes, the people have spoken, They have had enough.

Now, a day after these by elections -- the 18th of July -- I am amazed at some people who are appreciating, what they are now calling a free and fair elections. These elections were neither free nor fair.

The administration was overwhelmed by the masses who prevented fraud, scheming and deceit by sheer presence and the momentum of humanity. It is for the first time in Pakistan that the people themselves influenced the results. Such a thing happened in 1970 with Sheikh Mujib-ur-Rehman, but he never had to encounter the kind of opposition and hurdles as the PTI did, and the leader from the then East Pakistan won because the elections were actually fair and free. Though a belligerent Bhutto, who had lost the elections, could not live with this and manipulated whatever he could to prevent Mujib from taking away the premier-

ship. But here is a different case; it was the people who prevented an election from being stolen.

Yet whereas the people spoke, it was Imran Khan who by his sheer character, determination, and reputation, carried the people with him to victory. He gave them purpose, resolution and persistence. People sensed being part of the game to contribute to a national cause. Yet, most of all, Imran showed all that what an honest, selfless leader, and a determined and courageous leader of a nation looks like. Who would not follow him specially when the alternative was a band of convicted felons and people accused of theft, fraud and scams?

The manipulation, conspiracies and intrigues of the government were simply overwhelmed by the massive support that the PTI had. The sea of humanity at the polling stations, prevented the government from stealing these by-elections. People of the government who have conceded defeat and accepted a PTI victory ought to be commended and it is now prayed that the country should get on and move along as one people and one nation. Let's hope that now a general election is announced as early as possible so that a formal unified government can take its place to run the country and the uncertainty ends.

The new government, when in place, must set about putting the economy right on a war footing, define a clear direction for the foreign policy and specify the priorities for national security. Also in time, in the interest of history and to some extent, some accountability, a white paper must be constructed to illustrate how things unfolded and brought us to where we are -- divided, bankrupt and almost isolated. It's a matter of national importance that matters be identified so as to begin the process of reforms which this country needs so badly.

In fact, the new government, when it takes over, may like to establish a reforms committee for the purpose. It will help in restructuring the judiciary, the police, the constitution, accountability where needed, administrative units, education and many more issues of vital national importance. With the envisaged huge majority in parliament the new government, when elected, would be able to make radical changes and take difficult decisions with relative ease. ■

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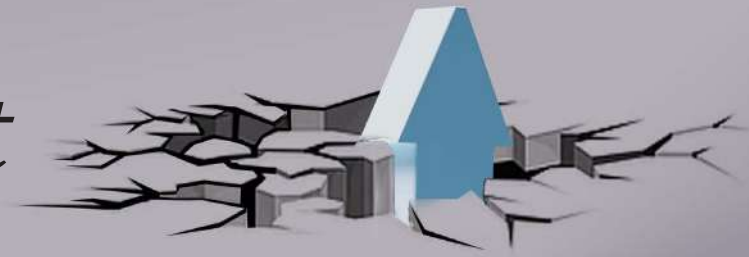
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By Ali Mahmood

The writer is a businessman and the author of three books including Muslims: The Real History.

The Economic Bluff

Pakistan's system of parliamentary democracy – flawed by populism, false promises, compromises and deceit – cannot take it out of chaos and crisis

Though all agree that the economy is a disaster, opinion is divided about who is responsible. Imran Khan supporters propagate that it was the corruption of the Sharifs and Zardari that reduced the state to poverty, whereas his opponents claim it was Imran's bad and irresponsible government policies that took us to the brink of the precipice.

The recently released Annual Economic Survey confuses rather than clarifies those trying to evaluate recent economic performance. Imran's supporters claim that the PTI policies succeeded in taking GDP growth up to 6%, agricultural growth up by 6%, exports up by 27% and remittances up by 7.6%. Anti-Imran analysts question the value of a survey that uses re-based numbers and even accuse government statisticians of using false numbers. They condemn the economic performance

of the PTI government and point to the growth in inflation to double digits, the massive fall in the rupee exchange rate, the Current Account Deficit (CAD) which has risen from \$0.5 billion to \$15 billion due to the increase in imports by 44% from \$50 billion to \$72 billion, and the huge increase in government debt, both domestic and external.

When measured in rupees, the GDP shows growth, but when measured in dollars, the GDP shows contraction or negative growth. Double digit inflation and rising prices increase the burden on a population that grows by over 2.5% every year. Despite the claimed growth of the economy, hardship and poverty grow. A hypothetical nation with a population of 100 that produces 100 eggs a year, with eggs costing Rs1 each, has an egg-GDP of Rs100. If its population grows by 2%, egg production remains the same (100) and the price of eggs doubles to

Rs2, egg-GDP has risen by 100% but each person in the country gets to eat less eggs which are more expensive to buy. Should we celebrate the rising egg-GDP or feel the pain of eating less eggs that cost more? When you factor in the rising cost of petrol, gas, electricity, edible oil, all imported commodities and even basic everyday items that are produced at home you have an economy that is both growing in rupees while contracting in dollars, as the poor are reduced to starvation, the middle classes forced to tighten their belts, and capitalists see their wealth erode in real or dollar terms. The GDP keeps rising in rupees, but the real per capita income keeps falling. This is what has happened to Pakistan.

The PTI government did not try to create prosperity. Imran Khan was more concerned with wooing the voters than building the economy. The hundreds of billions of rupees that were given to the EHSAAS programme and the massive subsidies in every part of the economy resulted in shortage of money for education, health, and infrastructure and even funds to pay our contractual obligations such as payment to the Chinese power plants for electricity supplied. This culminated in the unsustainable blunder of dropping the price of petrol, gas, and electricity after the Ukraine war when energy prices around the world were rising by leaps and bounds. Pakistan continued to buy oil and gas at fast rising prices and sell at a loss to voters despite the fact that there was no money to pay the bill. This resulted not only in the hemorrhaging of funds that Pakistan did not have and could not afford, but also in the suspension of the IMF programme without which the Pakistan economy could not survive.

Shehbaz Sharif, the new prime minister, had a track record of achievement in Punjab, but was caught in the dilemma of raising petrol and electricity prices in a pre-election year, while Imran Khan used his huge jalsas and jalooses to demand immediate elections. After Shehbaz had secured his right to rule till the end of the term allowed by the Constitution, he risked the unpopular raising of energy prices. Miftah Ismail, bowing down to necessity, announced a budget aimed more at satisfying the IMF rather than Pakistani voters or investors. At best the budget will buy time but will do little to address the basic issues.



Pakistan's unstable currency is leading to dollarisation of economy.

The PTI government did not try to create prosperity. Imran Khan was more concerned with wooing the voters than building the economy.

The most important steps to build the economy are to control the population, reform the bureaucracy to serve rather than oppress the people, promote pro-private sector policies that make it safe and profitable to invest, improve the quality of the workforce, increase agricultural productivity through better use of land and water, privatize loss making state owned enterprises, reduce the dollar deficit by attracting FDI, to increase exports and reduce imports, and to reduce fiscal deficits by giving taxpayers a better reason to pay their taxes.

Bangladesh, whose economy is beating both India and Pakistan, explains its success, saying 'This is what can be achieved when you have kids in school, women in the workforce, faujis in their barracks, and Mullahs in their Masjids'. In Pakistan, the economy is given a secondary position to the three priorities of democracy, security, and Islam.

Democracy in the West is government by rule of law, with elections every few years to select and give legitimacy to

those who are to govern. The rich countries of the West use democracy to decide on how to divide the economic pie but in bankrupt countries there is no pie to divide. Democracy in Pakistan lacks the rule of law, but has regular elections in which money, power, and false promises determine the results. Uninformed, poverty stricken voters demand what the nation cannot afford to give and it is they who decide who will win. More often than not, they make the wrong decision. Governments avoid the risk of reform and change, and retain the loyalties of their voters by giving subsidies supported by loose monetary policy and ever growing debt. Pakistanis believe strongly in spending more than they earn. The policies advocated by the IMF and adopted by the Shehbaz Sharif government may take the economy out of the danger zone but the cost will be inflation and austerity, a price that the voters are not happy to pay. In the coming election Imran will blame the current government for the hard times, but any beneficial consequences will accrue to the post-election regime. Reform and economic reconstruction seem unlikely, either before or after the election.

Pakistan needs to be kept safe from both internal and external threats. Security is the responsibility of the armed forces and Pakistan has one of the largest military establishments in the world. This costs money and after debt servicing, expenditure on the military consumes the largest share of state expenditures. We need to explore whether the combination of our nuclear capability, our relationship with China, and more effective diplomacy can enable a reduction in military expend-

iture. High military expenditure may have been a necessary burden on our economy but it has held back development. Domestic instability has been a serious problem, with Balochistan and Islamist parties being a constant cause of concern that have held back Direct Foreign Investment. The attacks on Chinese workers in Balochistan have had a negative impact on the CPEC projects. Until our security establishment can effectively reduce threat to an acceptable cost, a strong economy will remain a mirage. Some argue that the Baloch problem could be better handled by spending less on secu-

munity and nationalised industry, finance, and even trade. Though the experiment was a disaster, the large state-owned enterprises remain a black mark that continues to drain our economy due to their endless losses. Pakistan was determined to ignore the Muslim countries with successful economies, such as Malaysia, Turkey, and Indonesia, who encouraged and supported the partnership between the private sector and the state. Successive governments in Pakistan explained their antagonism to big business as an aversion to corruption. Though it is certainly true that important business groups looked af-

ies to live in, Dubai is an international Shangri-la and tourist destination to the world. When Beirut fell victim to war and destabilisation, Bhutto said he would turn Karachi into Beirut, but Karachi only took war and instability from Beirut whereas Dubai took the tourism, finance and glamour. Why are countries all around us so successful whereas we are a mess? The answer lies in our values and attitudes. Dubai knew where it was going, we keep changing our mind. We are like Alice in Wonderland when she asked the Cheshire Cat:

Alice: Would you please tell me which way I ought to go from here?

Cat: That depends a good deal where you want to get to?

Alice: I don't much care where.

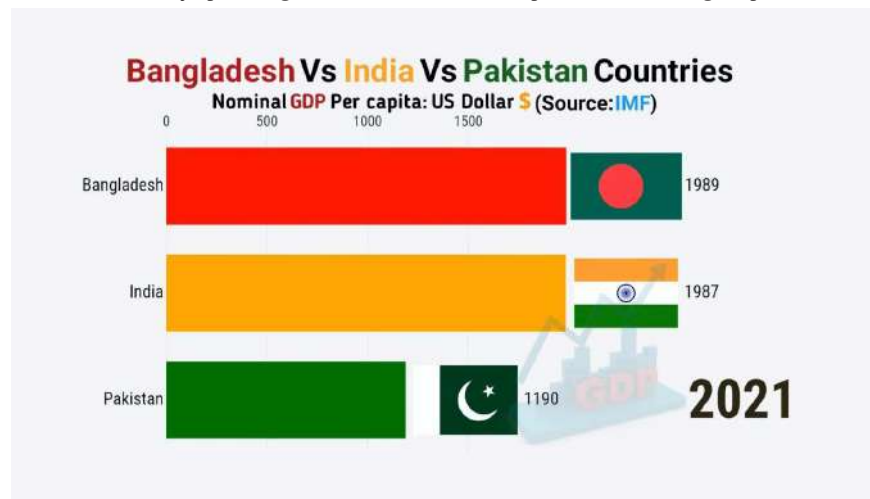
Cat: Then it doesn't matter which way you go'

Alice: So long as I get somewhere.

Cat: O you're sure to do that, if only you walk long enough.

With the election expected in 2023, some hope for Imran Khan to put things right while others believe the Shehbaz Sharif and his coalition will provide the solution. The sad reality is that Pakistan's slide will continue whichever of these two outcomes the election will produce. Our system of parliamentary democracy flawed by populism, false promises, compromises and deceit cannot take us out of chaos and crisis. Hard decisions, disciplined implementation, and rebuilding of national character, values and attitudes requires a period of authoritarian government that combines authority with technical capability. It is not individuals but the system itself that is to blame. If we continue in the same way, we will get the same results. If we want different results we must try a different way.

In 1947 the new state of Pakistan was born amidst high hopes. In 1971 Pakistan was shattered as Bangladesh broke away. By 2022, Pakistan is bankrupt and falling into chaos and increasing street violence, disrupted by politics and divided by religion, ethnicity, and class, as the gap between the privileged and the deprived grows. Will Pakistan live to see a hundred years as a state characterised by illiteracy, injustice, indiscipline, and an ever-growing population desperate to escape from the clutches of predatory government, unable to attract investment from the world, which preys on its own people? ■



rity and more on the Baloch. Stability in Balochistan would open up Reko Diq and many other such opportunities.

At the birth of Pakistan, it was assumed that Islam would be a uniting factor, now it is becoming a divisive factor. Throughout history, education has flourished under Islam and the great Islamic empires flourished due to education. In Pakistan today, Islam swims in a sea of illiteracy which seems to grow year after year. The killing of a Sri Lankan manager accused of blasphemy was a shameful incident. The recent violence in Karachi against Samsung, also attributed to blasphemy, can prove a disaster for our exports. Samsung's factories in Vietnam contribute more than \$50 billion a year to Vietnam's exports. The company controls a quarter of Pakistan's domestic market for cellphones, their entry into production in Pakistan is a golden opportunity that we cannot afford to squander.

Though Islam promotes the private sector and the Prophet (PBUH) was himself a successful businessman, Pakistan under Bhutto attacked the business com-

ter bureaucrats and politicians to facilitate their growth, it is no less true that today in Pakistan they have to pay protection money merely to remove obstructions and attacks. The result is a reduction in investment, the flight of capital, and an unending brain drain. Daim Zainuddin, the famous Malaysian finance minister called a meeting of prominent businessmen and told them, 'I (the state) am a partner in all your enterprises, 25% of all your profits comes to me in taxes. Come to me with your problems and I will help your profits grow.'

Pakistan and the UAE share a common religion but have very different values and attitudes. Pakistan bans alcohol which boosts smuggling profits, but Dubai Airport greets arrivals with a well-stocked liquor shop which despite being duty free is not cheap. Dubai profits from the trade, Pakistan does not. Emirates Airlines is one of the world's most successful airlines, PIA is a dismal failure. Both Dubai and Karachi were small towns which earned their living from fishing and trade. Karachi is considered one of the world's worst cit-

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By Muhammad Nasar Khan

The writer is a Bachelor's in Physics Freelance Writer for websites and blogs.

The Real Populists of Pakistan

While it is true that Khan built on the narratives of foreign conspiracy and religion, it should also be noted that these narratives were pre-existing

"In war, truth is the first casualty," wrote Aeschylus, the father of Greek tragedy. Theodore Dalrymple, the English cultural critic, built on it further, "Truth is not the first casualty of war alone: it is the first casualty of populism"

It seems as if the people of Pakistan discovered the phenomenon of populism only after the ouster of former prime minister Imran Khan. It might be because many political analysts have attributed the sudden and unexpected as-

cent in Khan's popularity to populism. It might also be because, for many perennial sceptics, only a populist leader can achieve such a level of acceptance among the masses. Whatever the case be, many people have now jumped on this bandwagon and have called Khan out for being a populist. While it is true that Khan built on the narratives of foreign conspiracy and religion, it should also be noted that these narratives were pre-existing. Thus, the question is not whether Khan has exploited these populist narratives, rather, the question is who built these narratives

in the first place? Who are the actual populists of Pakistan?

Populist narratives are easy to sell in a country where the political elite is aware of the country's history while the masses are unaware of it. A nation that suffers from historical amnesia and has a blurred notion of its history paves way for superficial slogans. Ethnic divisions and an identity crisis among the people nourish these slogans. An inverse proportion between the rising inflation and per capita income exacerbate the situation further. To top it all off, a destructive wave of terrorism or the constant looming threat of it pushes the masses deeper towards insecurity. As a direct consequence of all these scenarios, the helpless masses look for someone to blame. This creates an ideal environment for hollow slogans to clang louder than ever. At this point, the populist pounces into the political field as the ultimate savior of the masses and grants them a scapegoat for their anger.

"Populists draw on the politics of insecurity to galvanize their electoral base and depict themselves as the only genuine protectors of the people as they define it," writes Daniel Beland in a 2019 research article. He draws his conclusions from the populist policies implemented by former US President Donald Trump. The centerpiece of Trump's policies was the presence of immigrants in the US, who had been there for a long time. What Trump was able to do was to frame their presence as a hindrance to "making America great again". The masses got someone to blame and the graver, more important issues were clouded.

The current government in our neighboring arch-rival is another similar example. The policies of BJP and Narendra Modi threaten India's status as the world's biggest democracy. The overarching ambitions of Modi dressed under Hindutva are also populist in nature. It is possible that India, under Modi, gradually becomes the world's biggest autocracy.

Coming back to the original discussion, it is important for us as Pakistanis to confront the past. During General Zia's era, Pakistan was made to go through the process of 'Islamisation'. At the same time, Afghanistan was at war with the USSR. To



The problem arises when they extrapolate their domain, meddle with affairs that are alien to them, and consequently, make fatal mistakes.

contain communism, the US needed an ally in the region to fund and weaponise the Mujahideen against the Soviets. Who was a better option for the US than Pakistan? What followed was billions of dollars of US aid to the Mujahideen with Zia's blessings.

In return, Reagan turned a blind eye to the dictatorship and the religious exploitation occurring in Pakistan. He continued to fund the Mujahideen through Pakistan until the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan in 1989. The most ironic aspect of this scenario was that America was fighting a war for democracy with the help of a dictator. As soon as the USSR left Afghanistan, the US slapped sanctions on Pakistan in the form of the Pressler Amendment. It was a harsh betrayal.

From there, the anti-American narrative started to grow. The political elite of Pakistan should have realized that we were mere tools for the global powers. However, Musharraf reiterated the same mistake after 9/11 and Pakistan once again became an ally of the US in the War on Terror. Although, this time we did not

have much choice. The US war against the Taliban fuelled the anti-American narrative since many Pakistanis had their sympathies with the Taliban. During all this, Bush did the same thing as Reagan had. He turned a blind eye to the fact that Pakistan was under martial law and kept pouring billions of dollars of aid into the country. Musharraf tried to salvage some pride among the public by denouncing support for the US, even though he was secretly helping them.

The wave of terrorism which followed was the worst Pakistan had ever seen. The regions hit the most by these terror attacks were ex-Fata, KP, and Balochistan. These attacks also included the ones orchestrated by separatist factions within the country. The death of Baloch leader Akbar Bugti fuelled more people among the Balochs to join the separatist cause. In the aftermath of Musharraf's regime and America's war on terror, there still exists civil unrest in KP and Balochistan.

Every terror attack was followed by the attribution of it to some foreign conspiracy. India was the usual suspect, which seems to be the case after Kulbhushan Jadhav's revelations after his arrest. Many among the masses blamed America while many cursed the Jews for hatching conspiracies against the Muslims.

These are only a few examples of the intricate history of our authorities unable to control matters within their domain. That is not the problem, however. The problem arises when they extrapolate their domain, meddle with affairs that are alien to them, and consequently, make fatal mistakes. To cover these mistakes, they build populist narratives which hide the truth. Our authorities are the biggest populists. Thus, truth is the first casualty of populism. When the masses eventually uncover that truth, it is the civilian leadership that faces backlash. Imran Khan came close to becoming the victim of this vicious cycle of collateral damage for civilian leaders which has been going on for 75 years. Against all odds and forecasts, however, the masses have taken a stance and the air seems different this time. ■

BRASS TACKS

Fighting for Jinnah's Pakistan



Reshaping Pakistan

The days immediately after independence may not have been ideal for strengthening the roots of democracy, what befell the country in the subsequent decades has been harrowing



By Raoof Hasan

The writer is a former Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Information.

"You are free to go to your temples. You are free to go to your mosques or any other place of worship in this state of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion or caste or creed - that has nothing to do with the business of the state...We are starting in the days where there is no discrimination, no distinction between one community and another, no discrimination between one caste or creed and another. We are starting with this fundamental principle that we are all citizens, and equal citizens of the state...Now I think that we should keep that in front of us as our ideal and you will find that, in course of time, Hindus would cease to be Hindus and Muslims would cease to be Muslims, not in the religious sense because that is the personal faith of each individual, but in the political sense as citizens of the state."

Quaid-e-Azam
Mohammad Ali Jinnah

We have come far from the ideals contained in the above proclamation of the Quaid from his ground-breaking speech from the floor of the first Constituent Assembly on August 11, 1947 - three days before Pakistan emerged as an independent country on the map of the world. 75 years separate us from how he perceived Pakistan to be on that eventful day, and what we have actually made of it.

Much has gone wrong in these years. More worrisome is that much continues to go wrong. It appears as if we are being propelled in a certain direction which runs counter to the inherent and foundational ideals of the country. There are also those who believe that the quantum of poison which has already been injected into the national veins may be difficult to cure and its infection may continue to haunt the country in times to come.

While the days immediately after independence may not have been ideal for strengthening the roots of democracy, what befell the country in the subsequent decades has been harrowing. This is particularly evident by the emergence of a sinister plan to systematically induct in the ruling echelons such kind of people who would suit the dominant regimented mindset in control of the reins of power, with the interests of the country becoming disdainfully irrelevant in the process. Unfortunately, we continue to suffer the consequences of that mindset. It may not be wrong to say that, with the passage of time, this mindset may have become more gruesome, having only changed its operational tactics, but not the essence of its thinking.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that the political leaderships that have ruled the country in the last 60 years, including the despotic interludes, were fully trained in imbibing the traits of this regimentation. From the Bhutto/Zardari and Sharif clans to Altaf Hussain and a number of others, they were all nurtured by dictators and then let loose to defang

the country of its assets and promise. The strangest part is that, in spite of substantive evidence available against them that certified their grievous crimes, not one of them has been convicted. As a matter of fact, when Imran Khan set about holding them to account, his path was blocked with countless hurdles leading to growing tension with state institutions. A convict was facilitated to leave the country while another has been enjoying the benefits of an eternal bail. Holding a senior position in her party, she spearheads its political activities with invectives pouring out of her mouth with sickening monotony.

It appears as if keeping convicts and criminals in power has become both a method and means to advance this regimented agenda irrespective of whether this would be suitable for the country and its interests. As expected, this sinister strategy has delivered gruesome results with the state literally withering away bearing the burden of this morbid enterprise: criminals nurtured as rulers of the country; divisions created among people with diverse opinions and beliefs; religious intolerance promoted; institutions weakened and rendered controversial; unnecessary wars espoused causing immense damage in financial and human domains; in blind pursuit of the United States, national sovereignty and honour

Quaid's ideal was Pakistan. Quaid's dream was Pakistan. Quaid's destination was Pakistan. An irrefutable integrity that was acknowledged even by his fiercest critics.



Calcutta police use tear gas bombs during the five days of Muslim-Hindu riots that took over the city in 1946. Prompted by clashing visions of an independent India, an estimated 4,000 people were killed in the riots and up to 10,000 were injured.

gravely compromised; the country dismembered causing untold damage to national psyche and earning humiliation worldwide - the list of debacles is unending but, sadly, the regimentation of the country continues to linger.

This blueprint has been tirelessly employed to maintain a firm stranglehold on the affairs of the state and how it would cope within and in the international arena. It is rooted in the need that the person who is chosen to lead should be excessively tainted in corruption with stacks of files available as irrefutable evidence of his or her criminal indulgences. Thus, such a person would be rendered vulnerable before his handlers and would wag his tail as and when directed. This drama has been played repeatedly after the days of direct military take-overs were no longer looked upon charitably by their international benefactors and sponsors. The stint of 'democratic' rule spanning ten years from 2008 to 2018 is crudely symptomatic of the policy of "not being able to take over, but continuing to rule the country by making puppets dance to the chosen tune". Imran Khan is the one who fell out being uncompromisingly committed to upholding the interests of the state rather than those of a tiny and insatiably corrupt lot.

This latest reversal in the shape of a regime change conspiracy, orchestrated and implemented with the rabid support of the United States, has proved to be

It appears as if keeping convicts and criminals in power has become both a method and means to advance this regimented agenda irrespective of whether this would be suitable for the country and its interests.

counterproductive in so far as the dominant will of the people is concerned. The scenes so far have been enormously encouraging with an ocean of people surging to attend rallies called by Khan in all parts of the country. This broad support base has been further reiterated by the thumping election victory in the recently-held by-elections in Punjab which was traditionally reckoned as the bastion of PML-N political power. It has not just been punctured; it has been virtually dismembered. This party had already been reduced to one province. With its hold there

in disarray, and the disastrous performance of the criminal cabal anointed in power by exploiting the caveats in the system and making the institutions deliver as ordered, it may well be heading towards extinction.

The PPP has virtually no support base beyond the confines of rural Sindh which has been maintained by using the draconian state machinery and gory tactics including eliminating critical voices. Like the Sharif, Zardari clan's properties and monies are all invested outside the country. Pakistan has been and remains a fertile ground for reaping dividends and then shipping them out in safe havens to be used when they would either run away as they have done frequently in the past, or they would desert the country after having juiced it to their heart's content.

The religious song in this criminal enterprise is strummed by the JUI and its accomplices who have their private armies which are used to advance their political goals. In spite of repeated protestations to regulate their seminaries which have routinely received funding from foreign countries, these remain breeding grounds for impressionable minds who are then used as rabid tools for advancing grossly obscurantist agendas. I am reminded of the inimitable Faiz:

*"This pock-marked light, this night-stricken dawn
This is not the dawn we had waited for
This is not the dawn we had craved for
Hoping that in the sky's limitless expanse
We would reach the final destination of the stars
Surely, the slow, placid night
Will touch its inexorable shore
Surely the moorings of the heart's agony
Will come to rest somewhere"*

This is the picture Pakistan presents at this stage in its evolution: a criminal cabal, with most of them wanted by the courts of law, ruling the country with the support of both international and local sponsors. They have been put there simply to keep Imran Khan out because he is neither corrupt, nor does he have incriminating files stacked against him; he is unwilling to provide safe passage to those who have indulged in a remorseless spree of loot and plunder; he remains unwaveringly determined to uplift the poor segments of the society even in times of the pandem-



Partition witnessed the biggest, and most violent and bloody migration in the 20th Century.

ic and grave economic challenges; and, above all, he wants to change the fate of the country by freeing it of the traditional hold of Washington and its western allies and link it with power centres which would be beneficial for its long-term interests. He wants to assert Pakistan's sovereignty and reclaim its honour. And, he wants to rid the country of the tentacles of manipulators and their criminal cohorts who have pushed it along destructive and self-inflicting paths in the past which have brought it nothing but humiliation and shame.

This battle is raging. The difference this time around for the patrons of the master plan is that Khan is neither a criminal himself, nor does he belong to the tribe of convicts and criminals whom the sponsors have faced in the past. He has nothing to be afraid of and he remains undeterred in carrying forth his agenda of reform and change. The people of the country have surged to his support. Wherever he goes, he is received by passionate crowds who look upon him as the architect of a new, sovereign, self-respecting and prosperous Pakistan.

But those who have, directly or indirectly, ruled this country ever since it became independent would not let go of their hold easily. They are using all the tricks in their bag to thwart his rapid progress to reclaim his rightful place.

The PPP has virtually no support base beyond the confines of rural Sindh which has been maintained by using the draconian state machinery and gory tactics including eliminating critical voices.

They have let loose their anointed pack of hounds upon him who, in addition to making sickening noises ad nauseam, are desperately trying to hold him back by registering a sequence of false cases and unleashing the most draconian fascist tactics through use of the state machinery. But the populist fervour is only growing with time. With every trick that the criminal cabal employs, people are only becoming more daring, more passionate, and more vociferous.

This is a classic battle scene with forces of evil lined up together with their

sponsors against a surging army of enervating people who are determined to bring about the much-delayed and much-thwarted change in the country.

Quaid's ideal was Pakistan. Quaid's dream was Pakistan. Quaid's destination was Pakistan. An irrefutable integrity that was acknowledged even by his fiercest critics was his forte. It is thus that Pakistan came into being. From that ideal, that dream, that destination and that universally acclaimed integrity, Pakistan has plunged deep into a pit of regression, gasping for breath. The forces of evil with their masters are out to perpetuate this empire of crime and corruption while Khan is trying to retrieve it from their clutches. Those who can make a difference by tilting the balance away from the grip of the criminal cabal are the people of the country who have announced their choice in no uncertain terms. In spite of the fascist methods of the criminals in power, their grip is loosening and the inevitability of change is showing through.

What we have today is not the Pakistan that was envisioned by the Quaid back in 1947. What Khan is struggling for is a realisation of that ideal which is both the dream and the destination. With people surging behind the coveted cause, a new Pakistan is slowly taking shape from the debris of crime and corruption. It must for it is our destiny. It is onward to success! ■

FRONTIERS

The Bitter Stalemate



By Shamshad Ahmad Khan

The writer is former ambassador and foreign secretary of Pakistan. He carries a distinguished public service experience in bilateral and multilateral diplomacy, regional cooperation, conflict resolution, preventive diplomacy and public affairs and has held various diplomatic assignments in Pakistan missions.

Elusive Pakistan-India Peace

South Asia's problems are aggravated by the complex regional configuration with growing Indo-US nexus and India's resultant strategic ascendancy in the region with an unprecedented influence in Afghanistan and serious nuisance potential against Pakistan's security interests

Despite lingering hopes for peace between Pakistan and India - the two nuclear-armed neighbours - remain inextricably tied together in a strait jacket with both looking in the opposite direction while crying hoarse at each other. They just cannot unbuckle themselves in their traditionally knotty animosity, and are today the world's only two countries, which remain perennially locked in a confrontational mode. At times, they are not even on speaking terms with each other as is the case now. Both countries need to come out of this self-defeating mode and give peace a real chance. Any purposeful discussion on Pakistan-India relations must begin with a clear understanding of four basic realities:

- Legacy of a troubled relationship
- Complexity of the issues involved
- Centrality of the Kashmir issue
- Cruelty of Geopolitics

As for the historical perspective, we are dealing with the almost 75-year-old legacy of a troubled relationship marked by conflict and confrontation and unresolved disputes that goes back to the dawn of their independence. The complexity of the issues involved is manifest in the deep-rooted mistrust and apprehensions on both sides which will not evaporate simply by blowing out the flames. Pakistan and India will have to go beneath the fire to extinguish it at its source. And at the core of all their problems is the Kashmir issue which has kept their relations perennially bedeviled, perpetuating mutual animosity. Besides being the key unfinished agenda of the partition plan, it is a question involving the inalienable right of self-determination of the Kashmiri people.

While all other issues are amenable to easy solutions, the Kashmir dispute invokes intense feelings among the people of India and Pakistan as well as Kashmir. Scars of partition, legitimate Kashmiri struggle, Siachen dispute, Kargil crisis,



a volatile Line of Control and water disputes - all converge in the Kashmir dispute. The cruelty of geopolitics did not end with Pakistan's breakup in 1971. India still militarily occupies a vast territory, including Kashmir, Siachen, Kargil and water sources that belonged to Pakistan. No wonder, from the very beginning of their independent statehood, the two countries became adversaries and have remained so till now. Indeed, it's a legacy of conflict rooted in their history.

They have also had a long history of unfruitful peace processes. In the 50s, as a follow-up to the UN Security Council resolutions on Kashmir, UN Special Representative Sir Owen Dixon tried to negotiate a settlement based on his partial plebiscite and partition plan. In the early 60s, Bhutto-Swaran Singh talks were held without any significant headway. After the 1965 war and in the post-1971 period, internal problems kept Pakistan focused domestically. The 1972 Shimla Agreement created its own dynamics which India has always used to assert its own version of bilateralism in its relations with Pakistan. In the 80s, President Ziaul Haq gave a fair chance to the Indian approach of 'normalisation first,' but his cricket diplomacy failed to produce results.

In the 90s, the Kashmir resistance

added a new dimension to the conflict and brought sharper international focus on this issue, especially in the context of the human rights situation and the enormous cost in human life and limb. During 1990-94, seven rounds of foreign secretary-level talks remained inconclusive. In March 1997, the foreign secretary-level talks in which I represented Pakistan were resumed. When I started negotiations with my Indian counterpart Salman Haider, there was no illusion in our minds. We both expected no miracles. Yet, in June 1997, we did reach an agreement on a peace process familiarly known as Composite Dialogue involving an eight-item agenda and a structured mechanism to resume the long-awaited dialogue process.

When we signed this agreement, we knew that India-Pakistan peace was never meant to be an event. It was going to be a process with a carefully structured framework to address the whole gambit of Pakistan-India issues. The period from 1997 to 1999 no doubt saw significant developments in the peace process in the form of several summit-level meetings between the two countries on the sidelines of the UN annual sessions and other regional and international conferences.

These high-level contacts led to the

Lahore Summit in February 1999 as a genuine breakthrough in the history of the two countries. The Lahore Declaration signed on February 21, 1999 was a high watermark in Pakistan-India bilateral relations.

But the peace process initiated at Lahore was soon interrupted when the two countries faced the Kargil crisis. Even after Kargil, the region remained under dark war clouds with India and Pakistan standing at the brink of yet another conflict over Kashmir. The tragic events of 9/11 should have served as a catalyst to bring South Asian nations together in the fight against terrorism. We, however, saw terrorism itself becoming an endless issue between Pakistan-India. An intense diplomatic pressure by the United States and other G-8 countries then led to a ceasefire in November 2003, averting what could have been a catastrophic clash between the two nuclear states. The same pressure from influential powers led to resumption of their stalled dialogue in January 2004.

The January 6, 2004 Islamabad Joint Statement became the basis for the resumed India-Pakistan dialogue. But for one reason or another, since 2006, the dialogue process has remained deadlocked. And that's where we are stuck today. As it got a sympathetic ear in the US and elsewhere in the world on the issue of what it alleged "Pakistan-sponsored terrorism," India smelled blood thinking that now was the time for a "kill." It came to realise that while the world was fixated on terrorism, there could be no better opportunity to exploit this global concern. In its view, the time was ripe for it to pressure Pakistan to an extent where it would surrender on Kashmir. Somehow, our ruling hierarchy had no idea what it meant to surrender in Kashmir.

They only helped facilitate this overbearing confidence in Delhi by weaknesses in our own Kashmir-related strategy in the last decade or so. Meanwhile, encouraged by its "strategic" partnership with the US, India managed to gain unprecedented influence in Afghanistan with serious nuisance potential against Pakistan, which it has been trying to use as part of its state policy to 'redefine' the Kashmir issue. Taking advantage of the post-9/11 anti-terror global sentiment, India kept blaming Pakistan for successive train attacks in Mumbai in July 2006 and Samjhota Express in February

2007, and then for the Mumbai attacks in November 2008. No wonder, since then, the Pakistan-India dialogue process has remained deadlocked.

South Asia's problems are further aggravated by the complex regional configuration with growing Indo-US nexus and India's resultant strategic ascendancy in the region with an unprecedented influence in Afghanistan and serious nuisance potential against Pakistan's security interests. This situation is not without serious implications for the delicate balance of power and stability in this region and is already undermining the peace process and prospects of conflict resolution

While all other issues are amenable to easy solutions, the Kashmir dispute invokes intense feelings among the people of India and Pakistan as well as Kashmir.

and nuclear and conventional stabilization between India and Pakistan. But Washington had its own priorities for this region as part of its China-driven larger Asian agenda and its ongoing Central Asia-focused great game in pursuit of its worldwide political and economic power.

India, once a founder of the non-aligned movement, is today one of the most aligned countries of the world. It has allowed itself to become a tractable wheel in America's larger Asian power play. The US has been openly encouraging India to assume a larger role in regional affairs and assert its leadership in Asia. For Washington, that will positively shape the future of the Asia-Pacific. This aspect of America's Asian policy, it seems, is being played out more aggressively in the backdrop of China's increasingly firm assertion of South China Sea, Tibet and Taiwan as its core interests. India, because of its size and overbearing centrality, has also sought to remain alone as an exclusive power asserting itself as a *primus inter pares* (first among equals) in the region.

It is this anomalous geopolitical situation that has also kept SAARC captive to its geopolitics. Already, India's size and clout generate many problems in the region including the fear of domination among its smaller neighbours and a host of border conflicts and water disputes with most of them. Conflict is the last thing this region needs. As the largest country in the region, the onus lies with India to inspire confidence among its neighbours. With our lingering fears and suspicion that India never reconciled to the subcontinent partition, we in Pakistan have been living since independence in the shadow of Indian hostility and belligerence. This fear was not exaggerated when Pakistan saw Sikkim, Goa, Hyderabad, Junagadh and Kashmir falling to Indian avarice.

This fear is not exaggerated today as Pakistan faces India's continued cold-blooded realpolitik. Over the years, the Kashmir dispute has turned into a global issue of peace and security. It has a magnified manifold becoming today a veritable nuclear flash point. On the frozen landscape of the Siachen as along the ever-volatile line of control in Kashmir, both countries remain locked in an eye-ball-to-eye-ball confrontation. What we in Pakistan now understand is that weakness always begets indignity. Only a strong and stable Pakistan can withstand India's declared belligerence. This is what Pakistan demonstrated in its befitting response on February 27, 2019 to India's naked act of aggression in its territory. We had a different kind of leadership in Pakistan at that time.

Through its illegal abrogation of Article 370/35-A on August 5, 2019, India made another ruthless attempt to change the status of Jammu and Kashmir in violation of the UN Security Council resolutions. The world must know that there is but one fair, just, legal and moral solution to Kashmir which was provided by the United Nations, and which both India and Pakistan mutually accepted in UN Security Council resolutions. On other issues, we cannot ignore India's illegality in Siachen and its ongoing water terrorism in Occupied Kashmir by building dams and reservoirs on Pakistani rivers in violation of the Indus Waters Treaty. The government must not rush into one-sided trade that brings a negative effect on our industry. Trade requires a level-playing field.

Given its turbulent political history, this region needs stable peace, not confrontation. And peace in South Asia will become a reality only if India returns to the negotiating table in good faith and with sincerity of purpose. Perpetuation of hegemony will not serve the cause of peace. The risk of an India-Pakistan conflict erupting into a nuclear apocalypse is fraught with a disaster of an unimaginable magnitude and must be averted at all cost. There can be no compromise on Kashmir as long as India continues to deny the right of self-determination to the Kashmiris. Until then, we must continue to extend full political, diplomatic and moral support to the Kashmir cause and keep upholding the Kashmiris right of self-determination in every international forum.

The truth is that Kashmir is neither about cross-border infiltration nor terrorism; it is about the denial of an indigenous people's right to freedom and dignity. It is about the inalienable right of the Kashmiri people pledged to them by the international community through numerous UN Security Council resolutions. No matter what the Indians claim, there is but one fair, just and legal solution to Kashmir as provided in those resolutions, and which both India and Pakistan had mutually accepted. The wishes of the Kashmiri people must be ascertained impartially, in conditions of freedom from military coercion. This is the crux of the Kashmir issue.

Way forward

There can be no two opinions on the need for durable peace between India and Pakistan – the only two nuclear-armed neighbours with a legacy of outstanding disputes and a history of conflicts. India-Pakistan problems are real and will not disappear or workout on their own. The only way forward is the resumption of the 'composite dialogue' under any nomenclature with sincerity of purpose. To make this process sustainable, Pakistan and India will have to develop a clearer framework of principles on the basis of which to organise their future relations while exploring peaceful solutions to their problems.

This would require purposeful contact between the political leadership of the two countries. India must reconsider its present 'no-talk' approach. Disputes

can only be resolved through dialogue and engagement. I remember that as lately as the late 1990s, India and Pakistan were showing "flexibility of approach" in their quest for a peaceful settlement of all outstanding bilateral issues, including the Jammu and Kashmir dispute. They knew the people in both countries had suffered for too long as a result of continuing tensions and conflicts and would welcome

South Asia's problems are further aggravated by the complex regional configuration with growing Indo-US nexus and India's resultant strategic ascendancy in the region with an unprecedented influence in Afghanistan and serious nuisance potential against Pakistan's security interests.

any new innovative approach that facilitates a practical and achievable solution of the Kashmir issue.

Obviously, they knew that this would require them to move beyond their respective stated positions and to find a "practical and achievable" solution of the Kashmir issue which would not be based on legitimisation of the LoC. One thing is clear: Beyond UN resolutions, there is no compact formula or tailor-made solution available for addressing the Kashmir issue. But if India and Pakistan can join together with the Kashmiri people, they could explore mutually acceptable common ground for a genuine Kashmir solution beyond the status quo. Surely, there will be no quick-fixes and perhaps a long-drawn-out process with freshness of po-

litical approach would be inevitable.

What we need is an 'uninterrupted and unintermittible' dialogue with firm commitment to a result-focused engagement. And peace in South Asia will remain elusive as long as Kashmir remains under Indian occupation. The international community must facilitate this solution. By now, what should be clear to both sides is that there will be no military solution to their problems.

For this purpose, regular agenda-specific and result-oriented engagement between the political leadership of the two countries would be required. There has to be visible progress at least in some areas. Steady improvement of relations requires mutual confidence-building measures. In the ultimate analysis, the success of this process would depend entirely on the freshness of political approach that leadership on both sides would be ready to bring in with sincerity of purpose. To negotiate an honourable peace with India, our own country must first be at peace with itself. Indeed, weakness begets indignity. Our foremost challenge is to overcome our domestic weaknesses.

It is time we restored our dignity by putting our own house in order. Domestic consolidation with special focus on security and economic situation should be our foremost priority. We must free the country of its current weaknesses and ignominies. Only then, can we sit at the negotiating table with a position of strength. Meanwhile, we also need to change world's perception of our country, which has many reasons and assets -- other than terrorism and violence -- to be recognised as a responsible member of the international community. We must free ourselves of the forces of obscurantism, extremism, violence, militancy and intolerance.

In recent years, we have become weak and crippled domestically because of leadership miscarriages and governance failures. India has been taking advantage of our weaknesses. Domestic consolidation with special focus on security and economic situation must be our priority. It is also time for the voices of reason and responsibility in the United States, China, Russia, Europe and the Arab and Muslim world to caution against militarism and demand strict adherence by all states, large and small, to UN Charters central principle prohibiting the use or threat of use of force in international relations. ■

FRONTIERS

75 Years of Illegal Occupation



Kashmir Fights Back

An early solution of the Kashmir problem will be of great benefit not only to the people of Kashmir but teeming millions of both India and Pakistan who have been craving for a better future



By Altaf Hussain Wani

The writer is Chairman, Kashmir Institute of International Relations (KIIR), Islamabad. He is a member of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference, AJK chapter.

While two nations of the subcontinent celebrate their 75th independence day this year, the India-held territory of Jammu Kashmir has been bleeding profusely under the tentacles and clutches of New Delhi's settler colonialism. Kashmir, predominantly a Muslim majority state, has since long been a victim of chaos, conflict and belligerent military occupation. Once hailed as a paradise and a true sanctuary of peace and tranquillity, this historic land has now been turned into a virtual hell for its own people.

Since 20th century, the region had been a battle field of powerful emperors who invaded and ruled its people from time to time. Afghans, Sikhs, Mughals and Dogras are amongst those ruthless tyrants Kashmiris have ever seen. These rulers were uncultured and, in most cases, uncouth, accounting for inhuman treatment of Kashmiri people.

But what India has done with Kashmir and the Kashmiris during its past 75 years of illegal rule is something that finds no precedent in human history. Indian rulers proved to be the worst of all the tyrants.



Peaceful protests fail to build pressure on India.

Sufferings of the Kashmiris under Indian occupation

Since 1947, Kashmiris have witnessed immense hardships and miseries, including torture, rape, untold numbers of deaths not to mention the widespread destruction of the state and its economy. However, the last three decades have been the worst of all in terms of brutality and barbarism unleashed upon Kashmiris by the Indian state.

Nearly a million military and paramilitary troops deployed in every nook and cranny of the valley have been involved in a slow-motion genocide that has led to uncounted deaths and human rights violations. A silent war the Kashmiris have become casualty of has been going on in the region for the past three decades. Over a 100,000 people mostly youth have been killed, whereas tens of thousands of people, between the age group of 15 to 30 who have been subjected to forced disappearances remain buried in unmarked graves discovered in many parts of the Kashmir valley.

August 5, marked a new low

August 5, 2019, marked a new low in India's colonial history of Kashmir. It was the darkest day in Kashmir's contempo-

rary history when India's racist regime—the BJP broke all hell in Kashmir before revoking article 370 and 35 A of the Indian constitution that guaranteed special status to Kashmir.

The valley of Kashmir reeled under a suffocating military siege and communication blockade for more than 14 months. Thousands of Kashmiris, mostly youth, were arrested under notorious Public Safety Act and sent behind the bars. Not to forget the hundreds of top-rank politicians who were arrested and booked under infamous laws and left to rot in jails outside the Kashmir valley. Millions of Kashmiris were virtually caged en-masse in their homes. A complete ban on all forms of media was imposed, the region was turned into an information black hole for the rest of the world to hush up the naked aggression.

The acts of brutality perpetuated during this tumultuous period have left bitter memories, some of which continue to persist to this present day. The essential fundamental freedoms including the right to freedom of speech and expression, the right to protest and peaceful assembly remain largely suspended in the valley.

While social, political and economic



life remained critically suppressed, normal life in Kashmir remains still out of gear despite the passage of three years. And the hapless Kashmiris, who are battling for survival, continue to suffer under the prolonged military occupation.

There is no denying the fact that the Indian government's August 5, 2019 action was a brazen violation of the UNSC resolutions and other relevant international treaties. But, the way the international community, especially the influential governments, watched the situation was simply disgusting.

Rather than holding the Indian government accountable, the world watched the abysmal situation in Kashmir like a silent spectator, this is perhaps the biggest reason that a rapidly growing global concern could not even break the vicious cycle of violence in the region.

World community's apathy

The level of indifference and apathy with which the international community approaches the dispute has been one of the major reasons behind the continued bloodshed in the Kashmir valley. The inaction on the part of the global community is something that has emboldened and encouraged the government of India to carry on with its brutal policies of oppression and suppression to silence the Kashmiris.

Sadly, the Muslim world is completely silent and except issuing empty statements no practical measures were taken to alleviate the un-ending sufferings of the Kashmiris. Western and European countries by and large see the Kashmir problem through the Indian prism. Owing to their economic interests no country

August 5, 2019, marked a new low in India's colonial history of Kashmir. It was the darkest day in Kashmir's contemporary history.

seems to be willing to take a categorical stand on the issue of Kashmir and the US, which has now embraced India as its strategic partner is watching the gory death dance in Kashmir as a silent spectator.

The prevailing political and economic instability in Pakistan is another important factor that has a direct bearing on the Kashmiris' freedom movement.

So long as realpolitik steers dynamics of the Kashmir dispute at the international level, people of the Indian occupied Kashmir will continue to suffer.

UN's role

The United Nations (UN) has time and again expressed its concern and compassion for the innocent and oppressed people of the world. It has been a beacon of hope for Kashmiris too, but its lackadaisical approach has raised many questions over the forum's impartiality.

In the case of Kashmir, the forum (UN) has not shown the amount of interest it had shown in resolving the issues like East Timor and South Sudan.

Despite the fact, Kashmiri people still

maintain a degree of faith, believing that the UN will take note of their sufferings and take necessary initiatives to end the agony endured by them over the past 75 years.

Sadly, the successive Indian governments took advantage of the situation and used jackboot tactics to exercise its stranglehold over the territory. While exploitation of Kashmiris' resources, killing and maiming its population through heavy militarization has been a consistent policy, New Delhi has been practicing religiously since the day its forces set foot on Kashmir's soil.

What Kashmiris are asking for?

All that Kashmiris demand is that the UN, which acknowledges Kashmiris' right to self-determination through a number of its unanimously adopted resolutions, should fulfill its promises and proclamations regarding the right of every human being to live in peace and practice self-determination.

The suffering humanity in Kashmir demands the august forum to vigorously support the relevant resolutions on Kashmir and impress upon the government of India to implement these resolutions, which upheld the rights of the Kashmiri people to self-determination.

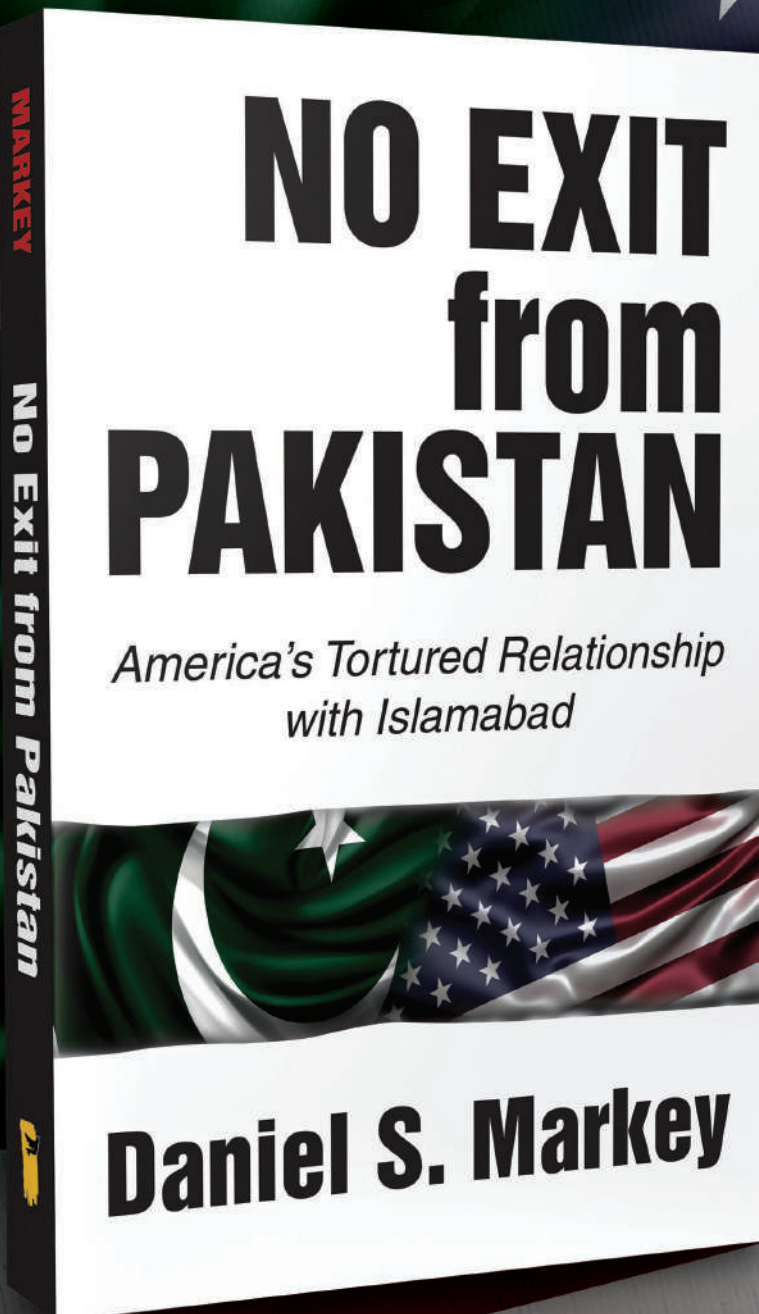
Fulfilling the explicit commitment made to the people of Kashmir is the only way out to resolve this lingering dispute that has been major cause and consequence of unrest in the region.

Pertinently, the main cause behind the continued conflict is the perpetual denial of the right of self-determination and the anti-democratic policies pursued by the Indian government.

An early solution of the Kashmir problem will be of great benefit not only to the people of Kashmir but teeming millions of both India and Pakistan who have been craving for a better future.

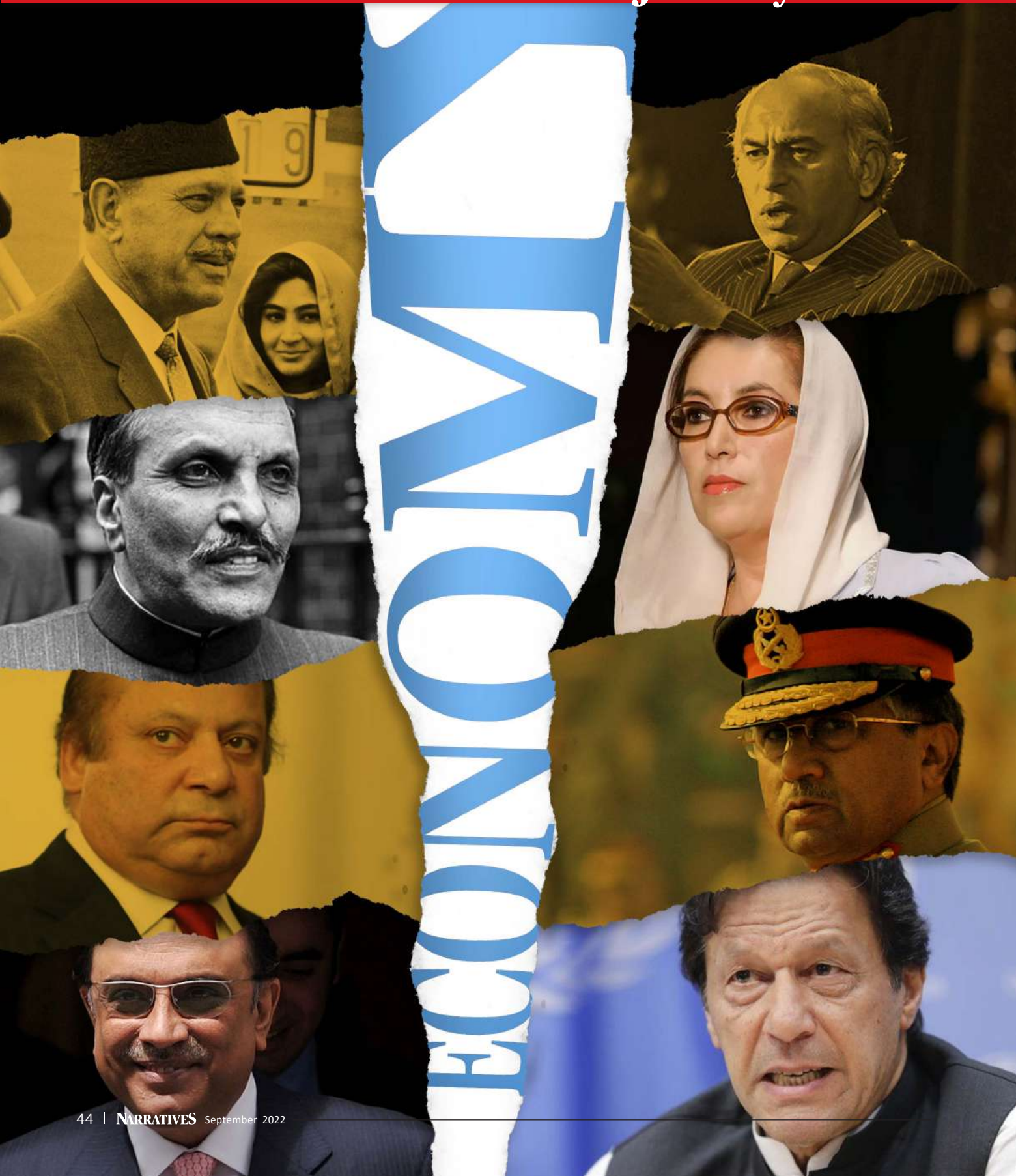
Since the principle of right to self-determination continues to guide the UN in its decolonization efforts and freeing people from the clutches of foreign occupations grant of plebiscite to the people of the Kashmir in line with the UNSC resolutions remains the only viable option to settle this long-drawn conflict that poses existential threat to Kashmiris who have already lost their three generations during their decades' long struggle for right to self-determination. ■

**Solve the riddle of US-Pak relations
this August**



Balance Sheet

Pakistan's Economic Journey



The Boom & Bust Cycle

Ups and downs of Pakistan Economy since 1947 have a pattern in which political instability always acted as a dampener wiping out all the hard-earned gains



By Waqar Masood Khan

The writer is a former finance secretary who served as Advisor to Prime Minister Imran Khan on Revenue and Finance in the capacity of a Minister of State.

Pakistan Economy has had a checkered history. The country has followed a variety of models for economic management. There are several eras distinguished by their policies pursued and outcomes realized. For each of these eras, we would identify key characteristics defining them and listing their major achievements and failures. The space would not allow to go into significant details and therefore a very brief account is captured which would enable the reader to appreciate the nature of economic policy pursued during the period and what kind of failures and disadvantages suffered by the population.

Planned Economy (1947-1970)

Starting with a planned economy, a select group of capitalists were sponsored to lead the process of economic development. This was succeeded by a major wave of nationalisation and attempt to foist a socialistic model of economic management. Military intervention pushed back this model.

This was the first phase of Pak economy and a number of governments came and left during this period. But the defining characteristic across the period was its planned nature. It's most prominent and much talked about time was the so-called decade of development under

Field Marshal Ayub Khan during 1958-1969. As a Cold War ally of the United States, the country received considerable military and economic assistance. The Harvard Advisory Group had set-up the Planning Commission of Pakistan, which at the time was the hub of all economic planning and allocation of development resources. The so-called five-year plan framework was evolved. There were widespread economic controls and licensing regimes prevailed across all key economic activities such as investment, imports and industrial locations. Based on a belief in trickle-down theory a select group of industrialists were patronized to be the winners.

Major Achievements: There were many achievements during this period. First, Pakistan was one of the fastest growing economies with growth rates averaging more than 6%. With high production, inflation remained low. An industrial base was established. Second, the Green Revolution in agriculture led to productivity gains and high incomes for the farmers. Third, rapid industrialization resulted in a continuing rise in urbanization as migration increased from rural to urban centers leading to a consequent rise in urban population. Fourth, there emerged a well-defined capitalist class which enjoyed state patronage and dominated the labor class. The winners were selected through allocation of state patronage in the form of access to licenses and state controlled credit and finance.

Major Failures: Despite its glittering spectacle, there were serious imbalances in the distribution of benefits beneath the surface. Visibly, the West Pakistan saw significantly more development while the Eastern wing of the country lagged behind. The capitalist class was exceptionally rich and symbolized by 22 families which controlled a lion's share of industry and commerce. Not surprisingly, income distribution worsened both in the Western part and across the two provinces. Import substitution was promoted at the expense of export promo-

It is a bit puzzling that all governments since 1988 have followed the same path of running the economy into the same macroeconomic stability which required a request to the IMF for help.



Persistent inflation is testing middle and low income groups

tion. The open alliance with the United States compromised Pakistan's standing in the non-aligned world.

Nationalisation & Socialism (1970-1977)

The failures of the last economic regime eventually led to the break-up of the Eastern Wing of the country and adoption of socialist model of economic development and management. There was large scale nationalization of industry, trading, finance and banking. A gigantic public sector in the economy emerged in the country leading the process of economic development. The infamous 22 families were off the scene as much of their assets were nationalised.

The framework of the five-year plan was suspended. The non-planned development largely took place in the public sector as all the key areas of the economy were banned for the private sector. Economic values were transformed with capitalists held in low esteem and labor unions wielded considerable powers.

Major Achievements: One of the major policy initiatives was the correction of anti-export bias through a major devaluation of rupee leading to exports surplus after Korean War in 1951-52. Second, in the public sector, basic industries were promoted -- necessary for a strong industrial base. Third, labor relations were protected though the capitalist class was marginalised. Fourth, a new direction was given to foreign affairs and external economic relations by following a "Look Middle

Even a relatively stable government of President Musharraf succumbed to similar pressures of growth and voters appeasement.

East Policy" and their generous support helped remove the US label, finally, the country also moved toward establishing a nuclear programme against all odds.

Major Failures: The nationalisation led to an over-stretched public sector without adequate preparation and capacity to manage them. The private sector was marginalised which disrupted the pace of private sector-led industrial growth. The size and timing of devaluation was shocking and soon led to high inflation which created disaffection among people. Improved income distribution was mired by high inflation. Growth was also stalled as many of the major investments such as steel mills had a long gestation period. The combination of low growth and high inflation led to general discontent and the luster of the regime's popularity was affected.

Mixed Economy: Public-Private Sectors (1977-1988)

Opposition to nationalisation-social-

ism was also fierce. Initially, the martial law government vowed to undo the whole nationalisation but soon it realized that it was a huge vehicle for political patronage and would help it tighten its stranglehold on power. The government revived the five-year development framework and began to gradually open the economy for the private sector. As luck would have it, the Russian invasion of Afghanistan helped bring significant support from the US also.

Major Achievements: After a hiatus of more than seven years, the economic growth was revived and inflation was kept low through an improvement in supply logistics (National Logistics Cell) and by promoting a network of weekly Bazars which continue to this day. Private sector was gradually inducted back into economic development. Industrial sector was also revived primarily through private sector participation. A process of gradual deregulation of price controls was initiated that led to improved pricing for the agriculture sector thus bringing more incomes to farmers. Significant reforms were introduced in the forex regime and labyrinth controls were removed. As part of this reform, a policy of creeping devaluation was initiated.

Major Failures: The initial promise to return and denationalise the industries and financial and banking assets was not honored, rather a more organised and strengthened system of public enterprises was established. This eventually resulted in loss of efficiency and corruption in public sector enterprises. The gigantic public sector was used as a source of political power and patronage rather than an engine of economic growth. They became a source of distortion and their divestment or privatisation was immediately warranted but no serious effort was expended in this direction.

Revival of Democracy, Market Economy and Political Instability (1988-1999)

The departure of President General Ziaul Haq coincided with the introduction of Symington/Pressler Amendments which brought an end to the US financial support to Pakistan. Soon the fall of Berlin War heralded a new era of globalisation and the traditional model of financing through the forum of Aid to Pakistan Consortium was dismantled in favor of

newly spurred private capital for which hitherto restricted areas such as power and telecommunication were opened up. However, the decade was defined by political instability as governments changed in quick succession and the average tenure of four governments was about 2.5 years. The most distinguishing feature of this period was the start of IMF's adjustment programmes in the country which later became a regular feature of economic management.

Major Achievements: Space was created for the private sector as its role was expanded. The process of privatisation was initiated and a number of industries and public sector banks were divested. Broad-based reforms were implemented to create an enabling environment for encouraging private investment. A large number of controls on pricing and supplies were removed such as investment licensing and import permits. High walls of tariffs were removed and trade taxes common to local production and imports were gradually introduced; the IMF programs required a market based transformation. Forex controls were nearly abolished so much so that a distortion was introduced. Full convertibility of current account was allowed. But because of extraordinary facilities extended to residents to maintain foreign currency accounts (FCAs) with full permission to remit funds outside Pakistan effectively amounted to convertibility of capital account also. The Board of Investment was established to promote investment. Tax regime was transformed with income and sales taxes becoming more important revenue spinners overtaking by a significant margin excise and customs duties.

Major Failures: Inconsistent policies, political instability fueled by rapid changes in governments failed to inspire investors' confidence. Economic growth suffered and inflationary pressures mounted. The IMF programmes were pursued half-heartedly and frequently abandoned mid-stream. Pakistan earned the infamous reputation of a single-tranche country. Macroeconomic instability became a norm, discouraging investors to take long term decisions. Freezing of Foreign Currency Accounts on the eve of nuclear tests and subsequent decision to open IPPs' agreements damaged the prospects of foreign investment in Pakistan.



Living on borrowed money

Inconsistent policies, political instability fueled by rapid changes in governments failed to inspire investors' confidence. Economic growth suffered and inflationary pressures mounted.

Market Economy & Military Rule, Economic Stability (1999-2008)

Political instability led to another military intervention. Under President General Pervez Musharraf, economic governance improved significantly and after 9/11, resource availability became easy and sizable. The period also witnessed high growth with remarkable price stability. Key reforms were implemented by following two IMF programmes which were nearly completed. War on terror soon started shaping the economic and political discourse, imposing a very high cost on the economy.

Major Achievements: Political stability and private sector friendly policies spurred domestic and foreign investments. Economic growth was high and inflation was low. Foreign reserves, aided by American support and Paris

Club rescheduling, were highest at the time. Banks were privatised and performance improved markedly. Partial debt retirement of expensive debt was also undertaken.

Major Failures: Toward the end of its tenure, the military government became complacent and its focus on economy was distracted after the judicial crisis erupted in which the chief justice of Pakistan was made dysfunctional. More importantly, it coincided with the global financial crisis where commodity prices rose historically high and oil prices touched \$150/barrel. The fragility of the economic model was visible in the face of the global financial crisis and exceptional increase in oil prices. The budget discipline was compromised as the government decided not to pass on the prices to consumers which doubled the fiscal deficit relative to the budget and current account deficit was highest. Around the time of its departure, much of the reserves were depleted and there were even rumors of lockers' seizures and freezing of FCAs. The stock market had to be suspended for more than three months.

Market Economy & Crony Capitalism-III Democratic Revival (2008-2018)

Judicial crisis and Benazir Bhutto's tragic death led to the fall of the military government. Democracy was revived and the next coalition government of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) completed its five-year term. After the 2013 elections, PML-N formed the new government and it also completed its term.

Major Achievements: Gilani-Ashraf Governments

Transition to democracy after Benazir Bhutto's death. New NFC Award was given and the 18th Constitutional Amendment was enacted. The IMF programme and other inflows helped build higher reserves compared to the military rule.

Major Achievements: Nawaz-Abbasi Governments

Successful implementation of a three-Year IMF programme. Revival of economic growth and low inflation. Launching of the CPEC which was a transformational concept. LNG terminals and import of large quantities of LNG to meet the industrial and power generation demands. Huge investments and additions to power, highways and other infrastructure projects.

Major Failures: Gilani-Ashraf Governments

The two democratic governments had entirely different economic performance. The Gilani government had to seek an IMF programme at the outset and in the wake of the global crisis and oil price hike. The programme was abandoned mid-stream as the government failed to implement a key reform on taxation. Growth was lowest averaging less than 3% in five years and inflation was at an average of 12%. Although reliable estimates are missing, poverty was reduced (BISP). Power sector arrears became a major issue and liquidity shortages led to acute power shortages. Around the close of its term, the government squandered much of the external resources obtained through a front-loaded Fund programme and other development partners.

Major Failures: Nawaz-Abbasi Government

The government had to seek a fund programme as reserves had nearly depleted and a situation of default was imminent. It attracted significant investment through the CPEC. During the programme period, the government adhered to reforms diligently but thereafter it unfastened the guards and went on for a spending spree while revenue collections were slackened (fiscal deficit 6.6%; reserves \$10 billion). The problem of power sector arrears resurfaced and outstand-

ing circular debt remerged and reached the same level as it was in 2013.

Market Economy Democratic Revival (2018-Present)

In 2018, a new political party - the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) came to power through a coalition of small parties. It was led by Imran Khan. In the last two years of the PML-N, the macroeconomic framework was weakened with both budget deficit and current account deficit (CAD) running very high. The cir-

The Harvard Advisory Group had set-up the Planning Commission of Pakistan, which at the time was the hub of all economic planning and allocation of development resources.

cumstances the new government inherited warranted an immediate request to the IMF for a new programme. However, in its wisdom, the government resisted to follow this course. Nearly one year was lost before the decision was made. In the process, even before the programme, significant devaluation and interest rate was increased. As part of the programme, more devaluation, increase in interest rate and heavy taxation was done. This led to a major decline in economic activity. During 2019-20, the country was hit by Covid-19 which led to economic disruption. The second year therefore saw a negative growth. It was in the third year when economic revival started with a 5.6% growth followed by 6% in 2021-22.

It is paradoxical that the PTI's performance of 2021-22 which witnessed high economic growth, high exports and remittances and significant growth in both agriculture and industry, eventually led to the same external account imbalance which the PTI government had inherited.

Concluding Remarks

It is a bit puzzling that all governments since 1988 have followed the same path of running the economy into the same macroeconomic stability which required a request to the IMF for help. In a recent article in Business Recorder (dated:20-7-2022), I had made the following observation on the PTI's last year and contrasted it with what other governments had faced and concluded it as follows:

"While it is sad to see such an end of a hopeful year, in many ways it has ended in a characteristic fashion of many such years in the recent history of Pakistan. The PML-N had successfully completed an IMF programme during 2013-2016. But the gains were soon sacrificed on the altar of pushing the growth beyond the capacity of the economy. There was also the issuance of Panama Papers which turned into a major crisis for the government and eventually led to the disqualification of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. The succeeding economic team was indifferent to gains made under the Fund programme and also an election was looming in July 2018. The fiscal deficit of 4.6% in FY16 shot up to 6.6% in FY18 while a modest CAD of \$5.0 billion in FY2016 rose to a record level of nearly \$20 billion. All this was done to achieve a high growth rate of 5.8% which was subsequently revised to 6.3% after rebasing of GDP.

A similar situation happened during the last year of the PPP government in which no growth was witnessed but it happened in the backdrop of failure to resurrect the stalled IMF programme and running down most of the reserves, built while under the IMF programme, to a dismal level toward the end of its term in FY2013.

Even a relatively stable government of President Musharraf succumbed to similar pressures of growth and voters appeasement. In its last fiscal year 2007-08, in the backdrop of three developments, namely judicial crisis, planned elections in January 2008 and the world financial crisis, the government decided not to pass on the higher POL prices leading to emergence of PDCs and doubling of the fiscal deficit from 4% budgeted to about 8% actual. CAD was at an all-time high 8% of GDP. The government of PPP was forced to approach the IMF in October 2008. Thus, the relatively good performance of that era ended on a whimper." ■

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Balance Sheet

Lacking Strategy, Vision

Unless a vision for such an outward-looking economy is articulated, a plan is put in place and a strategy is made, institutions to implement these strategies are established and are run under a streamlined due process Pakistan will keep floundering

By Dr. Salman Shah

The writer is a former Finance Minister and founder of Bridge-Asia Financial Services. Currently, he serves as an advisor to the Chief Minister of Punjab on Economic Affairs and Planning & Development.

When the Soviet Union collapsed it had enormous resources at its disposal with economic and nuclear power and military might. The countries that emerged as a result of the collapse of Soviet Union along with other European and Asian countries worked on economic reforms and became transition economies for which they took drastic policy actions.

These economies made transition economies towards market economies—an economy in which decision-making including resource allocation and investment is determined by the market. This was adapted by the US with Regan reforms followed by similar Margret Thatcher reforms in UK. Sadly, in the same period no reforms were made in Pakistan.

In the decade following the Soviet Union collapse Pakistan underwent political instability with a musical chair between political parties and the 1990s went by with no significant economic reforms. Another major reason for this was the missing capacity to make reforms. Pakistan did not have the professional manpower to make those reforms. And even when we tried to bring about change it was piecemeal and not a wholehearted effort.

When General (retd) Pervaiz Musharraf came into power he promised economic reforms, resultantly the economy was in recession for the first few years. But when he brought in economic reforms we witnessed an investment boom recording growth to around 9%.

But following his resignation, the

same political parties which were key players during the 90s were back in power and the reforms that were the need of the hour were not made but rather many reforms were reversed adding to the pile of debts.

At the end of Musharraf's era the external debt amounted to \$38 billion which soared to \$90 billion when Nawaz Sharif's government completed its tenure in 2018. Today, we face the effects of the debt crisis that began in 2018. Debt crisis coupled with current account deficit has led to a major balance of payment crisis which has edged the country towards default.

During this time, Pakistan was taking loans but did not have the capacity to service those loans. The government keeps delaying the defaulting by deferring payments or getting free oil from Saudi Arabia or taking similar loans from IMF or the World Bank but even their attitude has changed over the period of time.

The latest deal with IMF reflects Pakistan's conduct in the past decade. When IMF asks Pakistan to revisit its CPEC agreement with China over power projects it indicates that the schemes are not sustainable and the contracts need to be renegotiated. It questions Pakistan's ability to make these strategies which are unsustainable. Another thing that is more alarming is the IMF asking the government to make a task-force to curb corruption. The move comes after the government recently made amendments to the NAB laws ending years-long corruption cases against politicians. This indicates IMF's distrust in the government. It has also asked the government to recover full costs of the system and not pile on circular debt.

It is important to ask these previous governments that claim to have brought Pakistan out of darkness what have they done all these years to bring prosperity to the country. But time has only proved that the previous governments have gotten into unsustainable agreements making it worse for the economy in the long-run. The previous governments have taken on loans without planning for the future and now when it is time to return these loans all the pressure is being passed on to the people who have to pay heavy taxes.

The incumbent government created a huge budget this year without cutting down on any expenses eventually passing on the burden to the private sector which

has to now pay not only taxes but super taxes cutting down on their investment options. The government is forcing money out of industries to survive which only reflects our seriousness in tackling these issues.

Despite being the world's fifth largest country Pakistan lacks a comprehensive strategy. We should figure out why we are a basket case and work towards making it a powerhouse. None of the political party or state institutions including the bureaucracy, establishment or judiciary have any plans for this transformation.

Pakistan, as per its population, requires a bigger, diverse, outward-looking and globally competitive economy which we have not been able to achieve it in the past 40 years.

The economy and energy sector needs to be revamped and hurdles faced by manufacturers be removed. We should dig deeper into why Pakistan's manufacturing power is low and why no attention is being paid to the services sector although it is a major part of the economy, especially in fields like IT and artificial intelligence. Employment opportunities need to be created for our youth which can happen if agriculture, manufacturing and services sectors are allowed to boom in the country.

Unless the vision for such an economy

It is important to ask these previous governments that claim to have brought Pakistan out of darkness what have they done all these years to bring prosperity to the country.



President Pervez Musharraf's era witnessed high economic growth.

is articulated, a plan is put in place and strategy is made, and institutions to implement these strategies are made and are run under a streamlined due process we will keep floundering.

Our latest episode of economic crisis—which has been bought on by our own expenses and global situation because of the Ukraine War, the change in energy and food chain and before that the pandemic—it has brought a realisation that we need resilience in our economy and cannot be a basket case forever because we do have outstanding resources both natural and human to be a major player in international markets.

Owing to the political polarization in the country, early elections is the need of the hour and the new government should come with a fresh mandate and implement the IMF-associated reforms. We need a stable government in order to fix the economy.

Political parties need to develop a vision and a plan. They need to spell out their investment and sustainability plans. The election campaign of political parties should reflect the economic strategies they plan on bringing when they come in power.

Currently, Pakistan's economy poses an existential threat to the country. The coercion on the economy endangers the country's independence. To get out of this situation we need to take up the herculean task and carry out all the much-needed reforms. ■



Path to Economic Sovereignty

In the wake of Pakistan's 'worst economic crisis', 25 eminent economic and energy experts and professionals write **an open letter** to politicians and decision-makers, urging for energy-sector reforms on a war-footing

Signatories

1. Mr. Aamir Khattak
Security Analyst
2. Mr. Abdul Rehman Warraich, CFA
Ex-Director General, Debt Office, MOF
3. Dr. Adeel Waqas
Professor of Economics, NUST
4. Dr. Ashfaq Hassan Khan
Principal, School of Social Sciences & Humanities, NUST
5. Mr. Asif Ali Qureshi, CFA
Ex-Member, Economic Advisory Council
6. Mr. Asim Riaz
Energy Specialist
7. Dr. Athar Masood Ahmed
Professor of Economics, NUST
8. Mr. Faisal Bengali
Director, Sui Southern Gas Company
9. Dr. Faisal Jamil
Associate Professor of Economics, NUST
10. Dr. Fiaz Ahmad Chaudhry
Director, LUMS Energy Institute
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11. Mr. Javed Jadoon
Ex-General Manager, Mari Petroleum
12. Mr. Mansoor Ghayur
Ex-Head of Regulatory Affairs and Business Development,
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Ex-Chief Executive, Premier Oil
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15. Mr. Muhammad Jawaid Iqbal, CFA
Ex-President, CFA Society of Pakistan
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18. Mr. Muqtadar Quraishi
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Faculty, IBA
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Ex-Managing Director, PSO
20. Mrs. Natasha Jehangir Khan
Lawyer and Consultant, Power sector reforms
21. Mr. Saeed Qureshi
E&P Specialist | Ex-Director, OGDC
22. Mr. Shahid Hameed
Ex-Chief Executive, Spud Energy
23. Mr. Shamsuddin Shaikh
Ex-Chief Executive, Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company
and Engro Powergen Thar
24. Mr. Syed Faizan Ali Shah
Renewable Energy & Grid Integration Expert
25. Dr. Zafar Mahmood
Principal, USPCASE, NUST

In the wake of Pakistan's 'worst economic crisis', 25 eminent economic and energy experts and professionals write an open letter to politicians and decision-makers, urging for energy-sector reforms on a war-footing.

'Energy reforms provide the only sustainable path to economic sovereignty'

Pakistan is presently in the midst of one of the worst economic crises in its history. High inflation, large twin deficits, dwindling FX reserves, fast weakening currency and elevated Eurobond yields are all symptoms of an economy in severe distress.

Pakistan's external and fiscal finances are crumbling under the overwhelming weight of energy costs. The share of imports, which was 43% of total primary energy supply in FY2020, has been continuously increasing. At more than \$26 billion, energy imports (oil, LNG and coal) were the single biggest contributor to Pakistan's current account deficit of \$17.4 billion in FY2022. It is tragic that a country endowed with large fossil fuel reserves and huge renewable resources meets more than 2/5th of its energy needs through imports.

Decades of misguided policies have fostered energy inefficiency and favoured imports over development of indigenous energy resources. Misgovernance and policy failures have created a monster in the form of circular debt which has devoured trillions in budgetary resources and yet there is an outstanding circular debt stock of over PKR 3.2 trillion in power and gas sectors combined.

National dignity and security are compromised with each economic bailout that we seek from our close friends, international donors, and multilateral lenders. As the nation celebrates the diamond jubilee of its independence, we must take a moment to introspect as to why our country has failed to achieve economic sovereignty in the last 75 years?

Fortunately, the energy sector has the potential to swing from being the biggest burden on the country's economy to propelling it towards economic security and prosperity. This course reversal, however, will require unflinching commitment by our leaders and decision-makers to energy sector reforms in the face of inevitable resistance from the current beneficiaries and deeply-entrenched vested interests.

Just as national security transcends politics, there is a dire need for non-partisan commitment and support for energy sector reforms. Below we offer a high-level blueprint for the critical reforms to transform the energy sector into a vibrant contributor to power the economic and social development dreams of our nation.

Overhauling Governance and Building Institutional Capacity

Excessive government involvement is the central cause of the present state of affairs of the energy sector. For the sector to function properly, it must be decentralised and deregulated. The energy minis-

Pakistan's external and fiscal finances are crumbling under the overwhelming weight of energy costs. The share of imports, which was 43% of total primary energy supply in FY2020, has been continuously increasing.

try's role must be restricted to policy making and not actually running the energy sector entities. The energy ministry needs to be staffed with professionals with relevant sector knowledge and experience.

NEPRA and OGRA must be turned into first class regulatory bodies staffed with professionals. There should be a formal mechanism for coordination between the two regulators and considering the growing convergence in the energy sector with increased electrification, a transition towards a unified energy regulator may also be considered. The top commissioners/members must be appointed based on their professional competence, integrity and relevant experience instead of being political nominees. The institutional capacity of NEPRA and OGRA should be enhanced making them

more progressive and strong regulators entrusted with ensuring supply of reliable and affordable energy while maintaining high standards of efficiency in the system.

Public Sector Entities (PSEs) that are not to be privatised should be made autonomous, not just on paper but in reality. Fully autonomous integrated petroleum state companies are very successful in other parts of the world while competing with the private sector at equal footing and can undertake strategic energy projects which the private sector will shy away from. So, while most PSEs can be privatised, some may have to remain within the state domain but without bureaucratic controls.

Energy Conservation

Immediate relief to Pakistan's external and fiscal finances can only come from adherence to strict energy conservation measures. A 5% energy savings would reduce the energy import bill by 12% or over \$3.0 billion. The ongoing turmoil in the global energy markets is taking a heavy toll on even the most secure economies in the world forcing them to adopt unprecedented measures to reduce energy consumption. Disregard for energy efficiency has made wasteful consumption endemic in the system.

The following instant measures can help achieve meaningful reduction in energy consumption: i) introduction of daylight saving timing by moving clocks forward by at least one hour, ii) closure of shopping centres by 7.00 PM and restaurants/wedding halls by 10.00 PM, iii) closure of bank branches by 2.00 PM, iv) closure of all public/private offices at 5.00 PM, v) reduction of school working days to four per week with longer hours per working day, vi) keeping minimum temperature setting for air-conditioning at 26 degrees in all public and private offices, and vii) switching off alternate street lights.

While there will be resistance and push back from traders and businesses against the energy conservation measures proposed above, the successful enforcement of health measures during the first year of COVID-19 proved that if there is strong political will, the governments can ensure compliance with mobility restrictions and early market closures and people adjust their shopping habits without causing any loss to the businesses.



It is time to promote environment-friendly energy resources.

Harnessing Indigenous Resources

The need for exploiting Pakistan's domestic energy potential cannot be over-emphasised. Imports met 80% of oil, 73% of coal and 24% of natural gas supplies of the country in FY2020. Domestic natural gas production peaked at 4,250 MMCFD in FY2012 and has fallen by more than 21% over the last 10 years. Domestic oil production peaked at 94,500 BPD in FY2015 and has since dropped by 19%.

Bureaucratic delays, security risks and dissuasive wellhead pricing regime are major obstacles to increasing domestic production from existing gas fields and to more aggressive exploration activities. Reallocating unused gas commitments, encouraging third party sales at bilaterally negotiated prices and increasing wellhead prices for older fields and tight gas reserves can significantly increase natural gas production in the short term.

Public sector companies are the biggest players in the upstream oil & gas sector but there has been a noticeable lack of effort by these companies to arrest the country's rapidly declining production streams. This slackness has, in part, resulted from unwarranted interventions and often unfair actions by accountability institutions which have hurt, and in some cases killed, the morale and motivation and initiative at public sector institutions. We must regain the trust and confidence of public sector decision makers to encourage them to take initiatives and risks without having to worry too much about the consequences of their decisions. The

government should form independent committees comprising professionals with relevant knowledge and expertise who should evaluate complaints of indiscretions and only cases approved for further investigations by these committees should be investigated further by the relevant accountability institutions.

Expansion of Thar coalfields should be a national priority. Having potential reserves of over 175 billion

Pakistan is blessed with huge potential of renewable energy resources including hydro, wind and solar. The country holds over 40,000 MW of unharnessed hydroelectric potential.

tons, Thar coal alone can substitute the country's coal imports of over 19 million tons costing almost \$3.0 billion annually. With international coal prices at record levels, Thar coal can help cut the cost of production for the large coal consumers, namely, cement and power generation. Increasing mining capacity, setting up coal processing plants and connecting Thar with the Pakistan Railways network should be carried out on a fast track. Gasification of Thar coal can help compensate for declining domestic natural gas supplies with increasing risks to local fertiliser production. All these projects can be done by the private sector and the government simply needs to act as a facilitator to help the private sector capitalise on the opportunities that Thar coal holds.

Pakistan is blessed with huge po-

tential of renewable energy resources including hydro, wind and solar. The country holds over 40,000 MW of unharnessed hydroelectric potential. While hydroelectric plants require several years to complete, solar and wind projects can be developed within 6 to 12 months and also in a modular manner to fit more precisely with the demand projections. The Gharo-Ketibandar corridor alone has an exploitable power generation potential of more than 60,000 MW. Chaghi (Balochistan) also possesses excellent wind and solar potential. According to the World Bank, utilizing less than 1/10th of one percent of the country's area for solar PV power generation would meet Pakistan's current electricity demand. Moreover, achieving a least cost electricity mix in Pakistan would require a rapid expansion of VRE (solar/wind), reaching at least 20% of installed capacity by 2025, and at least 30% by 2030, as per World Bank study.

Conversion of existing wind farms to wind/solar hybrid models should be allowed where it is economically feasible. Expansion of rooftop solar installations can be further accelerated through financing schemes and ensuring faster net-metering approvals. Private investment in export-oriented green hydrogen projects should also be encouraged by offering fiscal incentives and development of energy parks in suitable coastal locations.

Setting up a state-of-the-art refinery with integrated petrochemical complex is another key requirement given the present redundant inefficient refinery infrastructure and the need for substitution of imported petroleum products. Refining of imported crude saves dollars and can even earn foreign exchange through exports as refined products sell at premium to crude oil. Global shortage of petroleum products has seen record price levels for diesel and gasoline in recent months resulting in added burden on Pakistan's fragile external account.

Electrification of Energy Use

Out of the 80.6 million TOEs of Pakistan's primary energy consumption in FY2020, 50% went into electricity generation, 21% in transportation and 11% in the residential sector. With rapid technological advancements, electricity's role is rapidly expanding in meeting the energy needs for transport, process heating demand in industries, and space and water

heating. Electrification of energy use and increased reliance on domestic resources, in particular from renewable resources, for electricity generation shall reduce the energy imports while contributing to the country's GDP growth.

China's Shenzhen city offers a model for conversion of its entire public transport system of buses and taxis to electric vehicles in a short period of time. The same can be replicated in major cities of Pakistan beginning with Karachi to address the cities' problems of lack of decent public transport and growing pollution. Hybrid wind/solar farms could be set up to power the electric buses by wheeling electricity through KE's network.

Given the rapidly shrinking domestic gas production, high UFG in distribution networks, low efficiency of natural gas appliances and to encourage the shift towards electrification, the supply of piped gas to households should be phased out gradually. Only less than 30% of the country's population and that too in urban areas, has access to pipeline gas. The rest relies on biomass, wood and LPG.

Use of natural gas should be eventually restricted to power generation and industry. Time bound plans should be put in place to shift residential consumption of natural gas to electricity or LPG and conversion of all public transport and passenger cars to Electric Vehicles (EVs).

Energy Efficiency and Removal of Price Anomalies

From production to consumption, Pakistan's entire energy chain is riddled with inefficiencies and wasteful practices. Abysmally inefficient power plants continue to operate, wasting precious and fast-dwindling natural gas reserves. Large quantities of diesel are consumed in moving petroleum products by road and ironically even water is supplied to many parts of large cities including Karachi via tankers. Building code and appliance energy standards are not enforced. Moreover, energy price anomalies especially the supply of massively subsidised natural gas to households and industry encourages wasteful use of the commodity.

To reduce energy inefficiency in captive power generation, minimum thermal efficiency standards for different fuels should be defined and enforced. Moreover, uniform gas tariff should be

charged to all natural gas based IPPs except those being supplied by low BTU gas fields.

Oil pipeline networks should be expanded to reduce road transportation of petroleum products. Moreover, water supply infrastructure in the country's large cities should be revamped to ensure supply of water via pipelines.

A national effort is required to create awareness and enhance capacity for energy efficiency in the construction industry. In addition, development and enforcement of new efficiency standards in manufacturing household and industrial appliances to reduce consumptive load requirements.

Prices are the biggest motivator for energy conservation and efficiency im-

NEPRA and OGRA must be turned into first class regulatory bodies staffed with professionals. There should be a formal mechanism for coordination between the two regulators.

provement efforts. On average, the natural gas price for domestically produced gas is about 50% lower than the cost of supply and much cheaper than the imported LNG and other energy substitutes. Abysmally low gas tariffs for domestic categories encourage wasteful consumption by households who constitute the biggest consumer category. Industrial tariffs for domestically produced gas are also very low and hence provide little incentive for energy efficiency.

There is an immediate need for rationalisation of natural gas tariffs by implementing Weighted Average Cost of Gas (WACOG) and eliminating all explicit and implicit natural gas subsidies. This will help arrest the build-up of natural gas sector circular debt and encourage energy conservation and efficiency. Only targeted subsidies should be provided to deserving households through subsistence schemes.

Deregulation and Privatisation

Competitive markets, if designed and operated properly, perform much better than regulated industries. Pakistan has a successful track record of deregulation and privatisation. With improving service standards and efficiency, consumers turn out to be the biggest beneficiaries. Telecom and banking sectors are clear examples. K-Electric, the only privatized power utility, reduced its T&D losses from 37.8% in FY2005 to 17.5% in FY2021.

Deregulation of price controls and privatisation of energy sector PSEs is the most logical path to achieving energy sector sustainability in Pakistan. Unwarranted fears about the cost of stranded assets to the government are used to stymie progress towards competitive energy markets. The Competitive Trading Bilateral Contract Market (CTBCM) model must be implemented in letter and spirit. The gas markets should also be opened up on a similar model.

Transmission and distribution is the weakest link in Pakistan's energy supply chain. High T&D losses and billing under-collection are the biggest contributors to the circular debt problem. Large investment is required in energy transmission and distribution (both in electricity and natural gas sectors) for rebuilding, modernising and expansion of energy networks in a short period of time. This is a task better left to the private sector.

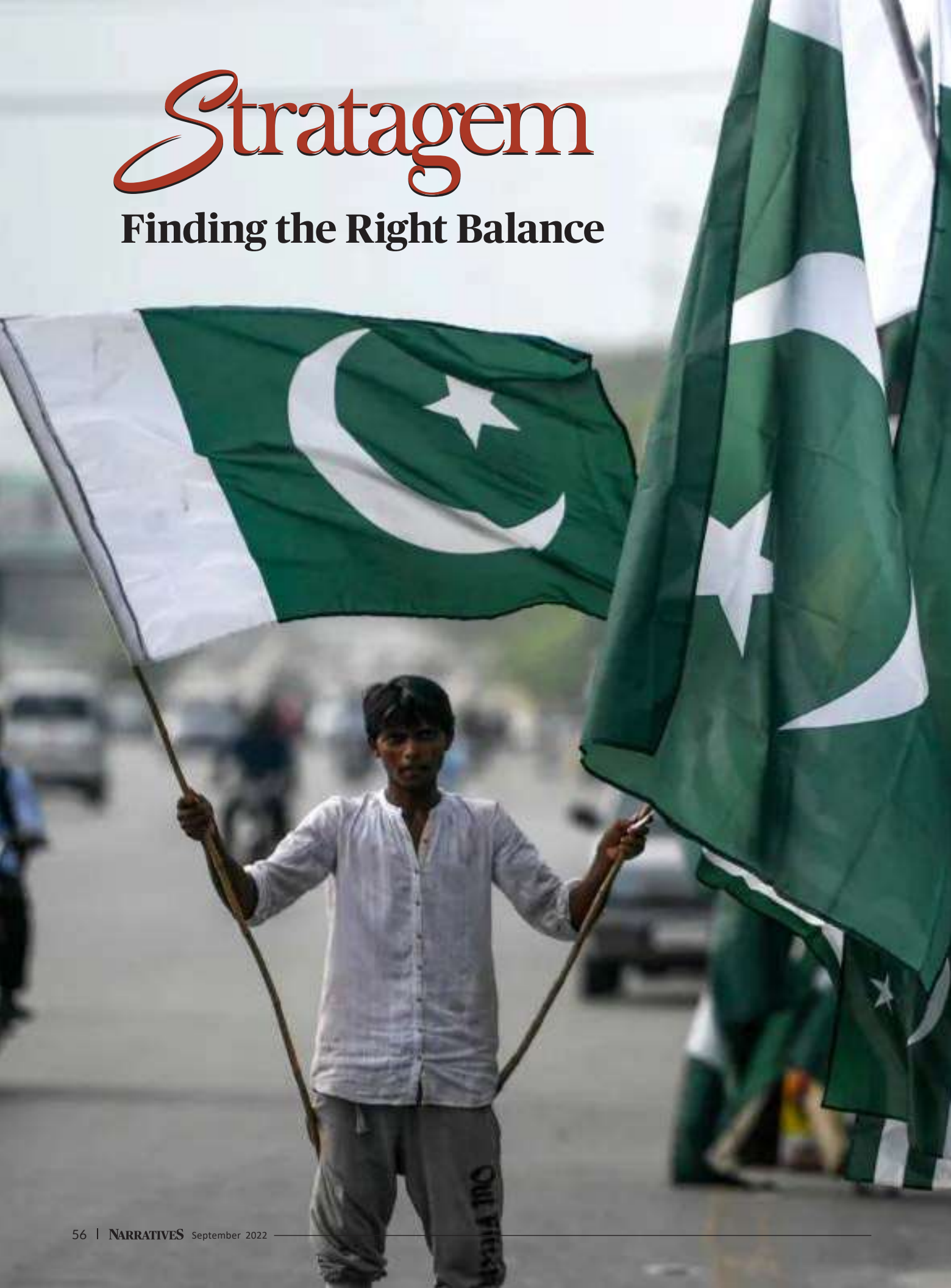
Let's make it Pakistan's last economic crisis

While Pakistan has faced recurring economic crises throughout its 75-year history, the frequency and intensity of crises have been increasing in recent decades. Moreover, there is a deepening sense of national despondency that we as a country are falling behind our regional peers who embarked on the journey as independent states at the same time as Pakistan or even later.

Pakistan is not a 'resource poor' country but it has certainly been 'leadership poor'. All stakeholders in the system must realise that time is not on our side and we must set our house in order before it is too late. Pakistan's energy sector has the potential to pull the country out of the economic tailspin. Let's make the current economic crisis our last one by transforming the energy sector along the lines suggested in this note. ■

Stratagem

Finding the Right Balance



The Ungovernable Nation

There will be no end to the troubles of states, or of humanity itself, till philosophers become kings in this world, or till those we now call kings and rulers really and truly become philosophers, and political power and philosophy thus come into the same hands -- Plato

By Lt. Gen. (R.) Tariq Khan HI(M)

When I started writing this article, I was advised by a friend that under the prevailing circumstances, I should try to be as politically correct as possible. It was what General Douglas MacArthur was told to be by President Truman in one of their exchanges. When MacArthur asked, what being 'politically correct' was, Truman replied, 'that it was a doctrine, recently fostered by a delusional illogical minority and promoted by a sick mainstream media, which holds forth the proposition that it is entirely possible to pick up a piece of shit by the clean end.' We in Pakistan are finding it more and more difficult to be politically correct since we have now begun to run out of 'clean ends'.

Having stood witness to the affairs of my country and watched each passing phase of a political evolution unfold before my eyes, I do not know whether to be concerned or amused. The former for the obvious effect, this political system, may have on the future of our nation and the generations to come - the latter, because I, now having lived long enough, relatively insignificantly, can recognise my irrelevance to the future, yet, I feel entitled to an unqualified opinion. I am reminded of the famous Shakespearean quote, 'the evil that men do lives after them. The good is oft interred with their bones'. Our graveyards are so full of the good that people did - foregone conclusions, forgotten and ignored and yet this nation remains enveloped in the evil so many



Democracy or mobocracy.

others have left behind! So one wonders, what will this country look like in another generation but what would we want it to look like and these are two very different sentiments -- the first, a likely outcome of what we do today and the second a dream of what it could have been.

Nations have collapsed in the past; history stands witness to such happenings but if one looks into it searching for a lesson one will discover that this is a familiar human story. A story of a people who believed, for a long time, that their actions did not have consequences. It is the story of how those people will cope with the crumbling of their own myth. It is our story. Sorry and sad.

We have now reached the dizzying heights of disorder and have established the rule of chaos. Democracy and mobocracy are synonymous in our chosen way of life and preferred system. No rational, no reason, judicial or administrative application, logic or judgement stand as factors in any equation to affect right from wrong -- black from white, in this system.

The thin line dividing propriety from impropriety is not visible nor does it matter anymore. Individual acts are no longer

governed by honour, honesty, sense of doing the right thing, moral persuasion or human empathy. We roam the streets either like predators or those who are hunted. Might is now effectively right - who you are is far more important than what you do. Merit is sacrificed at the altar of parochialism, nepotism or cheap popularity while every office exhibits a totally clueless, incompetent and unqualified semi-literate idiot who misuses his authority and causes damage to whatever institution he belongs to. Justice is dispensed selectively, that is, if time is found for any dispensation at all, in the first place. It is so shamelessly forgiving to the few undeserving criminals and yet so shamefully and disproportionately punitive to others who are implicated in exaggerated or false cases. Consistency in governance is measured by the convenience it offers to the administrator, continuity in routine is only specific to the corruption it lives on, security of the individual depends on how far and wide one can avoid the government, law enforcement and the justice system. Survival in this country has now become an art performed by communities and individuals,



Pakistan's sovereignty stands compromised because of a weak economy.

despite the government and in spite of the administration.

It is impossible to tell how fast our society is collapsing because history has been riddled with disinformation and reality is composed of half-fiction and full of paranoid conspiracy theories. Yet, if nothing changes in the way things are being done now, then this envisaged collapse is not only predictable but inevitable. The causes of a societal collapse have always been either economical or moral but in our case they are both, and together collectively, which makes it even more ominous. Aristotle (384 BC-322 BC) had feared that the inherent dangers in democracy were, first, the conflict between the aristocracy and the poor, second, it would usher in corruption. Both processes would lead to collapse unless separation of power was enforced. We have arrived there already. The swagger of the insignificant crook as he is followed by his armed guards are all indicative of this reality. Polybius (200 BC -118 BC) asserted that all nations follow a cycle: democracy, oligarchy, dictatorship, tyranny and collapse. We managed to 'collapse' without even sampling the other forms of governance. Are we to be denied basic nationhood and are we then a failed State even before becoming a State?

Closer to our own times, Ibn Khuldun (1332-1406) stated that dynasties (Governments) repeatedly become sedentary, senile, coercive, pompous

and subservient to desire. Group feelings disappear as the dynasty (government) grows senile and senility is a chronic disease for which there is no cure because it is something natural.

Has our society become too senile and indifferent to rise above status quo? States do die or disappear occasionally but mostly they outlive the span of human life. There are moral difficulties in indicting a whole nation, because to do so would be to make the passive majority suffer the acts of the criminal minority and future generations for the sins of their fathers. Are we destined to continue living as such - in the wake of the sins of our fathers while we suffer the consequences of the phenomenon we are mistakenly living in and classifying as, 'democracy'?

The question is, are we dying and very possibly we are. Corruption has brought about an economic and a moral collapse. A senility has permeated our society as we learn to accept the status-quo and not challenge the convention as it governs our society. Democracy now lies firmly in the grip of rogues, who by the inconsistencies of destiny sit in the chair of authority. The power that they wield is not a consequence of any qualification, education, awareness, experience or moral equation but simply the manipulation of the State machinery and apparatus. This manipulation has no moral censure, law, rules or regulation that either control or govern it. The aberration of injustices,

maladministration and poor governance are explained and justified by the jugglery of words in a dishonest rhetoric; opinions shaped through a twisted mass media, spewing dishonesty and deceit. Democracy has now taken the full circle, a phenomenon recognised by the tyranny of the few that exploits the silent majority. Thus, the democratic process for Pakistan can never be a solution to the problems its society and nation face since the application of democracy as we know it, only empowers criminals, convicts and villains through the low values that have been introduced, new conventions, bad practices and wayward morals that now grip our society. To oppose such values one must fall to the level of such standards and many prefer to hold their peace in silence rather than compromise on their own principles. Thus the rogues in power walk away uncontested, hooting into the wind while celebrating their conquest shamelessly holding up their fingers displaying the victory sign.

Having watched the happenings that go around us on a day to day basis, I have finally come to the conclusion that there is no political solution to Pakistan's woes - not with these people, not with this leadership or that which is available in the country. So many reasons are cited for where we as a nation have descended to. Corruption is first and foremost.

In Pakistan, the slogan remains, 'I pray that I rise to a material level where I too can afford to be honest' - it is conditional, relative and flexible. Corruption is not exclusive to those in power but envelops anyone who has the opportunity regardless of what his status is -- from the lowest level of human being to the highest. No transaction, business or engagement is possible without some sort of corruption. It's the norm. Even the one offering the sweetener, is himself relieved, in that he has discovered a way forward to whatever he wanted done, acquire or sell. Officials put up their demands and justify their claim on the basis that they are going for Hajj. We proudly call ourselves the Islamic Republic of Pakistan where every mosque is filled with humanity yet no child is safe on the streets. Ours is a nation destined to be rated as 130th out of 139 countries in the rule of law, one of the most corrupt countries in the world (140th in ranking out of 180), a bankrupt State living off the largesse of others and

on the edge of being declared a failed state.

Our political acumen is measured by the loans we can acquire as we stand before the world hat in hand, begging, suppliant and pleading. Our people are an accomplice to this phenomenon of shameless conduct as we keep bleating about the joys of democracy and sell our vote to the highest bidder. A society of hypocrites, whose religion evolves around form while substance is quietly set aside; a people caught in ritual as they forget God in their enthusiasm to practice their belief. We have allowed the benefits of Islam, as a way of life, to be adopted and enjoyed by countries which may have no Muslims and yet, we who are Muslims, living in an Islamic republic, have ignored the basic principle of Haquq-al-ibad as we steal, lie and cheat each other.

Can democracy be the answer to this aberration of a country where people and government both are an accomplice in misrule and mal-administration - each living off the other? Can anyone be so naïve as to expect that 'of the people, by the people, for the people' is the panacea for the ills that we suffer? That we need to continue to follow the course and in time we shall finally get it right? To me such people are living in a fool's paradise - they cannot see the irreversible damage being done by the games we are playing; we are running out of resources and time. Each day of democracy in Pakistan, has proven to be worse than the one before it - nothing improves in this system as each day brings us closer to our own demise.

So I ask myself as to what is the purpose of this article. Is it just the rants of a frustrated person who has found a method to unburdening himself? These lines are not likely to influence, affect or impress anyone at all; the thought within them will matter even less. I write in disgust and contempt, more with myself than anything else. I am now living that hopeless feeling of failure reinforced by the inability to do anything, being another helpless, irrelevant citizen surrounded by a society drowning in fatalism who remain resigned to whatever destiny metes out to them.

The offices that matter neither have neither the intellect to comprehend the gravity of our situation, nor do they have the moral courage to do anything about it. They live on in the hope that things will

right themselves. Others are simply beneficiaries of this flawed system and till it collapses, they have much to gain from it. However, when it finally implodes, these leaders and the privileged few will flee from this country like rats abandoning a sinking ship.

There is no example of any country that was in a predicament such as we are in, that pulled itself out of its misery, through a democratic exercise. In our own region South Korea, Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia and Malaysia are

We have now reached the dizzying heights of disorder and have established the rule of chaos. Democracy and mobocracy are synonymous in our chosen way of life and preferred system.

some good examples of nations who raised themselves up from the ashes to take their place amongst the comity of nations. The administrative models or type of governance forms that they adopted could be studied. Then again, even in the west, States in crisis did adopt measures such as technocrat Governments or National Governments to bring order to disorder and these were Greece, Italy and France amongst many others. Never before has a nation needed to do something unconventional, different and quickly to confront the future and sustain itself, as Pakistan needs to do now. We need a change.

The change could be anything but it must be able to bring about a difference quickly and permanently. We need a technocratic government at the Provincial levels as well as the National level. Small cabinets of a dozen experts at the national level and half a dozen at the provincial level. That they be selected by a judicial team with a military overwatch. They must be mandated to address the three crucial areas immediately, i.e. the econo-

my (Including documenting the informal economy), the foreign policy direction and priorities and National Security. The Government must be installed for at least 5 to 7 years and tasked to carry out the reforms that the country needs so desperately. These reforms must include:

- Judicial reforms.
- De-politicisation of the Police.
- Rewriting or moderating part of the Constitution.
- Developing more Provinces.
- Education based on internationally recognised standards.
- Merit Orientation in the bureaucracy and civil services.
- Privatising Government owned Businesses immediately.
- Madrasa Reforms and reigning in the influence of the Maulvi or of Religion in Politics.
- Industrial Reforms to boost manufacturing and production.
- Bringing in services into the private sector to include energy distribution, type of energy, consumer services and establishing national consumer standards.
- Defining red lines for waste disposal, energy distribution, water management, the enforcement of regulation and implementation of rules.

I strongly recommend that having been able to bind the country within regulatory parameters, standards and sustainable growth, the technocrat government can then ease the way for a more people inclusive democratic process. This could be the parliamentary system for which, apparently, we are not suited or then a presidential form of government, if that is the preferred choice. Whatever may be the need of that time? I end this note here. I do not know if it has any significance for anyone, will it influence thinking, can it contribute towards a new mechanism to improve our country but I hope that it is at the least considered towards such ends. To conclude it would not be amiss to quote from the serenity prayer:

'O Lord! Give me the serenity to recognise the things I cannot change,

The courage to change the things I can

And the wisdom to know the difference between both.' ■

HORIZONS

The Cost of Democracy



Provocation that did not work

It seems that the US political and military thinkers and strategists now firmly believe in enticing and provoking China into a military conflict, before it overtakes America in the fields of economy



By Lt. Gen. (R) Naeem Khalid Lodhi

The writer is a former defence minister and defence secretary. He has held major command positions in the Pakistan Army.

A deliberate risky attempt by USA to flirt with the Red Lines of People's Republic of China, by sending Speaker of their House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi, to Taiwan, while on a tour of certain Asian countries, ended without any big incident, resulting in a big sigh of relief for the world at large. The immediate winner, apparently seems to be USA, as they successfully called the Chinese bluff, who were hurling warning after warning towards US asking them not to play with fire. However, larger American aim to provoke China in some sort of military conflict could not be achieved.

A lot of countries across the globe, including European, Asian, Middle Eastern and African countries reiterated stance of One-China Policy, which clearly meant political victory for China. So except for exhibition of its military might and recklessness, United States could not achieve much. However, they did demonstrate the



Nancy Pelosi's dangerous agenda.

broad contours of their future politico-military strategy and direction of their line of thinking.

It seems that the US political and military thinkers and strategists now firmly believe in enticing and provoking China into a military conflict, before it overtakes America in the fields of economy, cutting edge technologies and political clout. Chinese have their own philosophy of continue moving on the trajectory of economic and technological development, and avoid big military entanglements, till it becomes formidable politically, economically and militarily. WILL AMERICA ALLOW CHINA TO ACHIEVE PEACEFUL GREATNESS? The answer is, "Definitely Not". Otherwise also in the annals of history, whenever an established Great Power was challenged or threatened by an emerging power, there was always a high probability of military clash. Thus the famous 'Thucydides's Trap' situation.

After the demise of erstwhile Soviet Union and resultant dissolution of Warsaw Pact, questions were raised about keeping NATO intact and for what purpose. Those were the times that the concepts like 'Clash of Civilisation' by Huntington gained traction, and threats from Islamic and Chinese Civilisations were conceived. Thus not only NATO re-

mained intact, but thoughts of expanding NATO membership got practical manifestation citing the two threats mentioned above along with the fear of revival of Russia. And since then the military and political minds of the West have been working overtime. And the world witnessed that the US and NATO forces have been actively employed all across the globe.

Under the guise of Arab Spring phenomenon nearly all significant Muslim countries were targeted, changing the regimes, creating civil strife, destroying economic, social and political structures. Sudan, Libya, Nigeria, Iraq, Yemen, Syria, Afghanistan, Iran, Turkey, Pakistan were all in the crosshairs. Only few significant Muslim countries those so far have escaped the wrath of 'Civilisational Clash' are the ones that willingly joined the western plans to save their skins like some Middle Eastern Kingdoms, or where the leadership was quick in understanding the machinations against them, like Indonesia and Malaysia. It is yet to be seen if this relief for the remaining Muslim countries is short term or enduring.

After diluting the political and economic foreign bases (Africa, Asia etc) of China and Russia, and weakening Islamic Region in the name of fighting



US triggering wars in the name of democracy, human rights.

'Terrorism', NATO and Allies turned their attention towards Revisionist China and Resurgent Russia (as American thinkers call them). They decided to deal with the 'menace' before it grows and becomes difficult to tackle. First NATO and European Union started creeping forward wooing Eastern European Countries in the vicinity of Russia to get them into the Western lap. Many of them obliged and Russians started feeling the heat on their borders. Russians reacted violently and reinstated their influence in many areas but are now entrapped in Ukraine as a result of deliberate and well planned provocation by the West. But it seems that Russians had made good preparations to fight a prolonged and less violent conflict, mostly concentrating on fighting back, so far successfully, the envisaged economic and

Under the guise of Arab Spring phenomenon nearly all significant Muslim countries were targeted, changing the regimes, creating civil strife, destroying economic, social and political structures.

trade sanctions. Thanks to the unflinching support to Russia by the Chinese, who

are well aware of the Grand Plan, and know that they are the next target.

In this backdrop, that the entire episode of Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan should be viewed and analysed. After successfully dragging in Russia into a military conflict in Ukraine, the US now intends to tinker with the Redlines of China. And as their usual strategy they are making others fight their war. Ukrainians are facing the entire brunt of economic and human losses, with west only adding fuel to the fire by pouring in weapons and dollars. They are creating an environment of fear in the other countries in the vicinity and attracting them to join the western block, thus finding more future guinea pigs for the project.

Similar game plan US wishes to unfold in the Indo-Pacific Region, by antagonising China and propping up opposition by countries like Taiwan, Vietnam, Japan etc. Again waging a remotely controlled war sparing itself of the physical casualties and letting other's blood be shed to furthering US interests. However, dollars and military hardware will keep pouring in to ensure continuity of the deliberately ignited inferno. But, thanks to the resilience and wisdom of old Chinese civilisation, that China has not fallen in this trap. Not yet. However, US has planned another prick in the Himalayas where their troops are having joint exercises with Indian Military, close to the Sino-Indian border in the north.

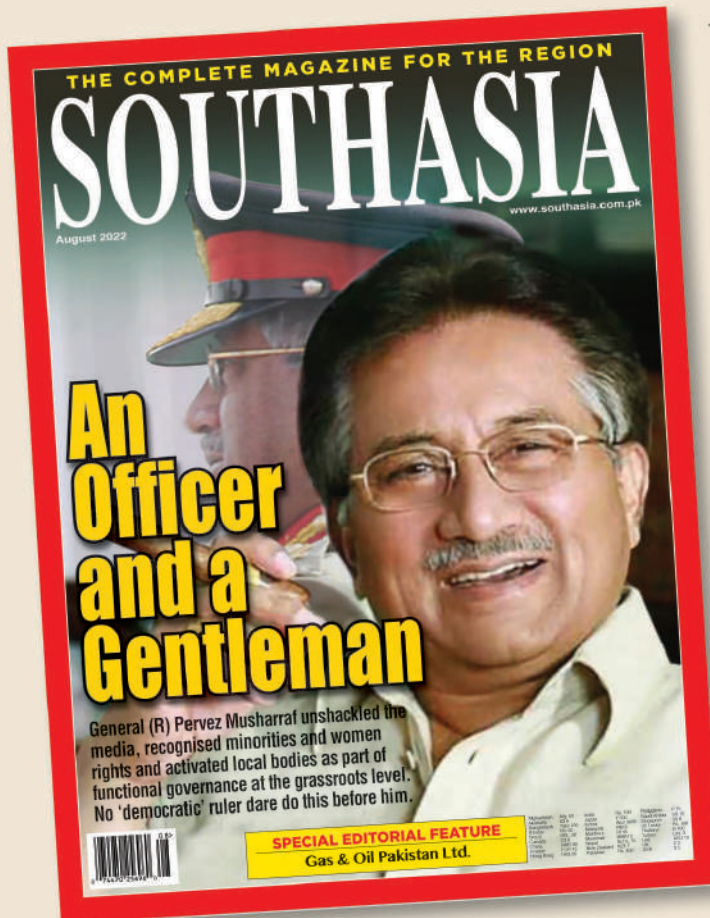
But India's foreign and economic policies are too independent for the Americans to goad them into any large scale military conflict with China. However, there are two incentives for India, on which if Americans play their cards wisely, can drag India into the vortex of conflict with China. One is a decisive politico-economic drive against Pakistan to force a permanent solution of Kashmir and secondly to invoke a spirit of revenge to redress the embarrassment and humiliation that India faced in the recent years at the hands of Chinese. However, neither Pakistan, being an atomic power, is a walkover, nor is India that unwise to dance to the tunes of USA. So China may escape the American trap this time, but for how long? American belligerence pitted against Chinese wisdom!

You may not be interested in war, but war is interested in you
Leon Trotsky ■



Pakistan remains a firm supporter of one China policy.

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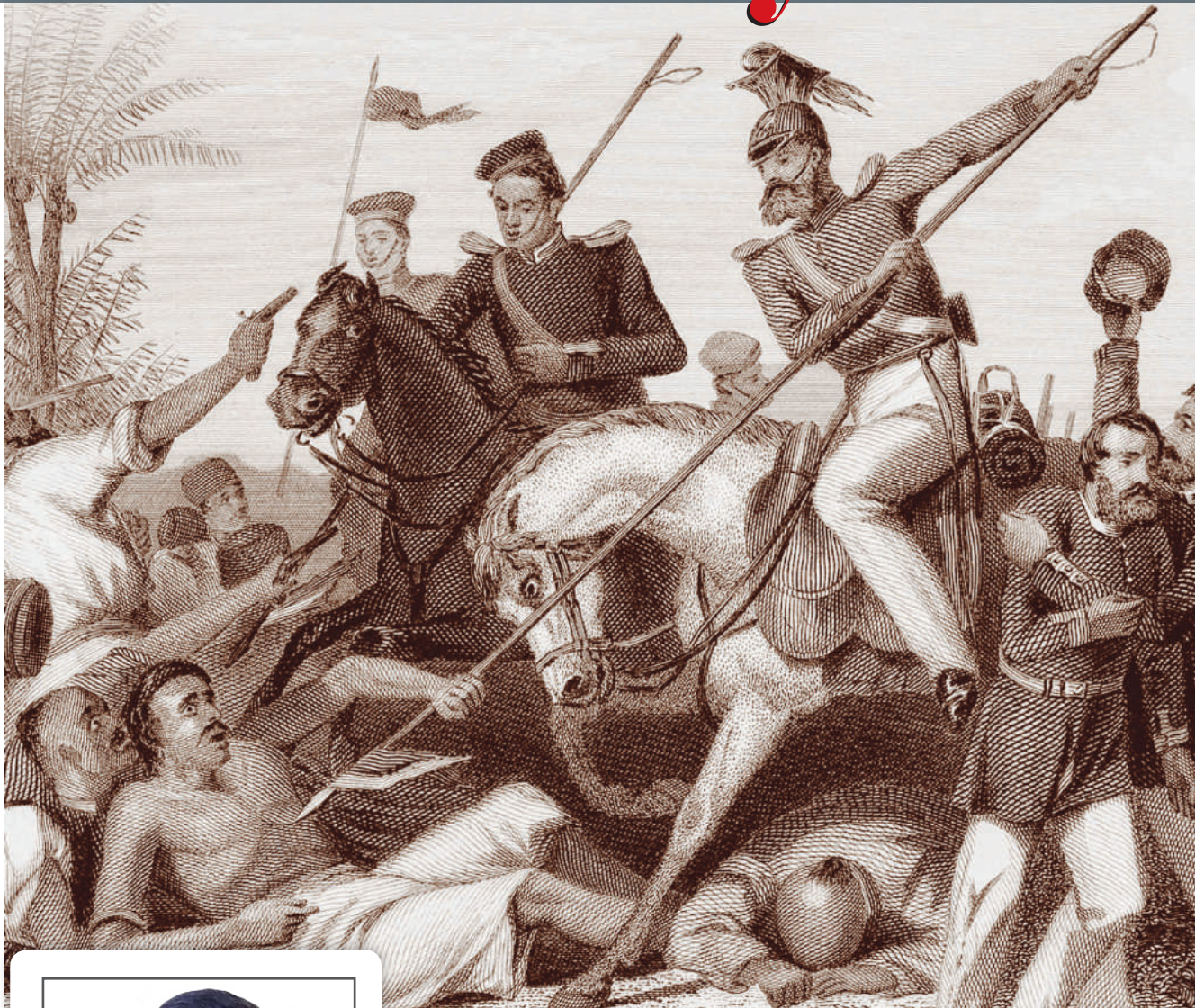
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By Tahir Mehmood

*The writer is a student of human history. He has authored two books: **A Lone Long Walk and Where Clouds Meet.***

A Long Journey to Nationhood

Pakistanis are celebrating the golden jubilee of their independence in an economically precarious, politically fractured and socially decayed society, but we have a future and can build it

An individual human life is not one-dimensional. When individuals are grouped into communities and become part of a larger nationhood, it becomes manifold complex. This complexity is further thickened when a new nation is born on an idea and does not have historical roots as a single nation per se.

Pakistan falls into the category of those few countries in the world where an idea preceded the birth of the nation. The struggle for Pakistan, which spans almost a century, passed through many phases, including demands of basic rights as a minority in a Hindu-dominated British India to achieve a separate homeland in the cul-

minating stage of this Herculean struggle. Since its independence, Pakistan has followed a peculiar path as a nation and an in-depth understanding of this continuity with a psycho-social analysis is a prerequisite for moving further on the path of a strengthened nationhood.

Birth of a Nation

Till in 1857 when the British finally took over the reins of power, Muslims had been ruling the subcontinent for over 700 years. However, during this period, Muslims as a ruling elite settled in various parts of the subcontinent -- Hindustan of those times -- remained without any conscious effort to form a nation. After the death of Mughal King Aurangzeb in 1707, and subsequent militant rise of Hindus and Sikhs, Muslims did invite foreign Muslim rulers to support them in the power struggle, yet this struggle was aimed at ruling the entire subcontinent and not forming a separate country.

It was in the aftermath of War of Independence in 1857 (called mutiny by the British) that Muslims saw a quick ascendance of Hindus as a community that they felt compelled to protect their rights within the framework of an equal, yet distinct citizenry. When the leadership of the Indian National Congress took a biased stance on Bengal's Partition in 1905, Muslims formed their own political party to present their case effectively to the government.

Gradually when the Hindu-dominated-Congress demanded for independence and asked the British to Quit India, Muslims feared that in a new country working on western style democracy, they would be overwhelmed by the majority. This gradually led to the demand for a separate country for the Muslims on the basis of religion from asking for political rights like separate electorate and more representation at every level -- from the Parliament to the government jobs.

This religious distinctness from Hindus served as a founding pillar of the 'Two Nations Theory.' The Muslims in India nurtured this thought for many years. However, after Independence they had to adjust according to the emerging realities. Principally on the basis of the 'Two Nations Theory' and Pakistan as a separate homeland for the Muslims, all Muslims living in India should have been allowed to migrate to Pakistan. But it was



Against all the odds we won our freedom.

In the last 75 years, one factor has been established that the federation of Pakistan has always reverted to democratic practices, and now the need of time is to reinforce it with suitable changes to make it efficiently functional

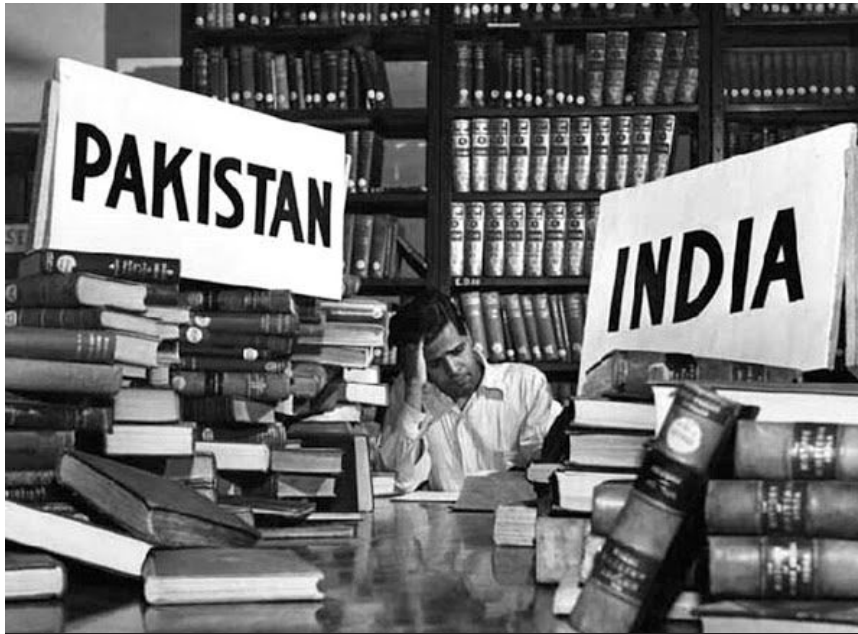
not followed with a plea that a Muslim Pakistan will be a deterrent guarantee to safeguard the interests of Muslims living in Hindustan. Since Pakistan was founded on the golden universal ideals of Islam, it was assumed that a fair and equal treatment to the minorities in Pakistan will set an example for Hindu-India to treat its Muslim minority fairly.

While majority of Muslims in India were politically committed to achieve a separate homeland, two distinct groups within the Muslim community opposed the birth of a new country. The clergy opposed Pakistan as they, without taking into account the ground realities, dreamed of ruling a united India. The other group comprised those nationalists and

ethnic leaders who were affiliated to the Indian National Congress for various reasons. After the creation of Pakistan, clergy took it as an opportunity to transform the new country according to their version of a religious state, which somehow did not sanctify equal rights of the minorities. The acrimonious debate on separate or joint-electorate for the minorities did not help build a nationhood. The clergy till now is less focused on social, political and economic issues of a modern nation state and its citizens, and often bogs down the government and people on their transnational and extra-territorial ideals. The other group that comprised the Indian nationalists and ethnic sub-nationalism took the new country as a fait accompli, but created a lot of hindrance in promoting Pakistani nationalism. Often their demands for provincial autonomy vis-à-vis a strong center varied from a weak federation to confederation to secession. The politics in the first decade after creation of Pakistan faced this challenge of fully autonomous provinces leaving only defence, foreign affairs and currency to the center to the extent that it took nine years to formulate the first constitution.

These two divergent groups prevented strengthening of nationhood after the Partition of India in 1947.

Pakistan was a new country and a nation comprising two distinct regions: one in south-eastern part of the subcontinent as a homogeneous community of Bengali ethnicity and the other, a conglomeration of four distinct ethnicities in north-western region. This new country



Pakistan treated unjustifiably by the British at the time of Partition.

and nation also faced two foreign opponents right from the beginning: India and Afghanistan.

Since the Indian National Congress had enjoyed a lead in the demand for an independent country and overthrowing British rule, it had already nurtured a nationhood dominated by Hindu majority. This Hindu-dominated Indian nationalism had not only opposed the creation of Pakistan, but later made it an agenda to nullify the partition to materialize the dream of Akhand Baharat. Afghanistan had also existed as a nation since 1747 in some form and had ceded various areas to the British that now formed part of the newly born state of Pakistan. Afghanistan caused many irritants when Pakistan started consolidating its nationhood (disturbances in the princely state of Dir on the issue of complete accession to Pakistan is one such example, and the subsequent fanning of the Pakhtunistan issue). This malaise which started just after the creation of Pakistan continued in some form even till now. Following the adage of enemy of your enemy is your friend, both Hindustan and Afghanistan either collaborated or potentially presented not only a two front scenario but also caused, aided and abetted ethnic schism to Pakistani nationhood.

Notwithstanding the need for genuine provincial autonomy under the 1973 Constitution, the growls for more autonomy and the alleged exploitation by the

center continue even today. The Pakistani nationhood has to wink or close the eyes from this schism in good faith, yet one cannot completely ignore the presence of such elements whose demands for more autonomy have a hidden malaise than a genuine concern for the poor masses.

So, in nutshell after the creation of Pakistan due to its peculiar background, the country faced internal challenges which were both ideological and political, and which never allowed the state and society to chart a clear path of nationhood that converges to an efficient modern functional state.

Treading the Difficult Path

After Independence, Hindustan emerged as a homogeneous state as it did not face any Hindu group to challenge its foundations. The Muslims that were left behind in Hindustan and had fully supported creation of Pakistan, soon adjusted themselves to the new state. One result of this homogeneity was early formulation of the Indian constitution in which Hindustan was to function as a federation with a strong center but fairly autonomous provincial states. Contrary to this, a part of Bengali top leadership had already proclaimed views like Sovereign United Bengal when it became apparent on Partition that Bengal would be divided in two parts.

The former chief minister of Bengal preferred to stay in West Bengal for

some time and even initially did not accept Pakistani citizenship. This resulted in internal division of the only political party which had created the new country. When Quaid-e-Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah visited East Bengal in 1948 and declared Urdu as a national language, the signs of provincial schism became visible in support of Bengali language. Notwithstanding that Bangla was language of a majority province, but still it was language of a province, and Pakistan had four more provinces (merging all four provinces into One Unit took place much later in 1954 when these provinces were jointly called West Pakistan, and East Bengal province was called East Pakistan), which could also claim equal language rights if same were given to East Bengal.

In Hindustan, contrary to this, now the state demanded for a state language to be adopted as equal to Hindi language. In the same vein, when the Pakistani Constituent Assembly started drafting the Constitution, it faced the power issues on provincial grounds keeping in view of a clear majority of East Bengal vis-à-vis all four western provinces. Resultantly, the principle of 'parity' was introduced which at best can be termed as a politically expedient tool but surely not in line with best practices of majority-led western democracy by a nation that had chosen it as a system of government.

In these post-independence early years of internal power bickering, Pakistani nationhood developed a political culture where most provincial leaders were asking for maximum autonomy, whereas the ruling party was trying to carve a strong center that could transform this heterogeneous country into one nation that had to survive facing rivalry of its two immediate neighbors Hindustan and Afghanistan.

In the harsh political squabbles when an opponent showed any affinity with any of these two rival countries, or asked for more autonomy, the terms like 'ghadar' (traitor) came into use with impunity. Today, when we condemn this trend and mostly blame state agencies for this negative assertion, we often forget that this political culture was nurtured by the politicians during the early years of Pakistan. Two stalwart politicians from East Bengal - Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy and Moulvi AK Fazlul Haq -- had to face such

allegations, but ironically, they also were responsible for a fog which led to this.

Two passages which are part of book 'Party Politics in Pakistan: 1947-1958' by KK Aziz throw light on the issue. He writes on page 94: "When in June 1947 the Viceroy of India announced the scheme under which the province of Bengal was to be divided between Pakistan and India, HS Suhrawardy started a campaign for an 'undivided sovereign Bengal'. Coming from an old Muslim Leaguer and a former Chief Minister of Bengal, this idea of an Independent Bengal was not palatable to the All-India Muslim League which had fought for and achieved a partition of the country. From this incident may be traced the Muslim League-Suhrawardy difference of opinion. The Muslim League took the first step in replacing him with Khwaja Nazimuddin as leader for the Bengal Muslim League. On his part Suhrawardy made the rift irrevocable by staying on in India, professedly to look after and comfort the Muslims left in India; later it was alleged by his political opponents that he had done so because he had no confidence in Pakistan's survival as an independent country. He came to Karachi in December 1947 to attend the Muslim League annual session, and protested against the rule that residence in Pakistan should be a requirement for membership of the Constituent Assembly. But his seat in the Assembly was declared vacant on the ground that he had never attended any session and was residing in a foreign country".

One can just imagine the charged environment in December 1947 when India had already forcibly occupied the State of Junagadh in November and had attacked Kashmir in October and war was still ongoing.

Moulvi AK Fazalul Haq also came under the same fog of suspicion and fervor of patriotism when he was charged for anti-Pakistan statements during his visit to Hindustan in May 1954 as Chief Minister of East Bengal. It is also interesting to note that he became chief minister as a result of 1954 elections in Bengal in which the United Front had defeated the East Bengal Muslim League. It will also be of great instructive value for the student of history if they study the original 21-point manifesto of the United Front which demanded maximum provincial autonomy, including abolition of visa between Indian Bengal/Hindustan and East

Bengal (Dawn, 20 December, 1953 as quoted by KK. Aziz in his above referred book on page 104).

On page 19 of his book, KK Aziz writes: "After his return [Karachi visit in May 1954] to Dacca, Haq visited Calcutta, the capital of Indian Bengal, and there indulged in some alarming utterances. At one reception he said that he hoped, with the help of people of India, to remove the artificial barriers between the two Bengals; on an-

Pakistan started its journey with almost a zero account as a nation but today we are a nuclear power, being counted in the top 10 military powers of the world, GDP growth ranks in the first 30 countries, our cities are thriving, and literacy rate for both genders has improved.

other occasion he declared that he did not believe in the political division of a country and was not familiar with the 'two new words', Pakistan and Hindustan". Though when asked by the then Prime Minister of Pakistan Mohammad Ali Bogra, who himself was a Bengali, Haq retracted and denied any such statement. However, as KK Aziz writes on the same page, "But more was to come. On 23 May the New York Times published an interview with Haq by its Karachi correspondent, in which he was reported to have said independence of East Pakistan would be the first thing that his ministry would take up". Haq again refused, but "When the Prime Minister confronted him with the correspondent who had interviewed him and the Reuters' representative who had accompanied the correspondent, both the journalists stuck to their story.... It was on the basis of Haq's Calcutta speeches and his interview

with the American paper that the Prime Minister described him as a traitor to his country and to his province."

When all this was done between East Bengal and the Center, all was not amicable on the western portion of the country. Pakhtunistan issue was smoldering in erstwhile NWFP, Sindhi sub-nationalism also was demanding complete autonomy, and the princely state of Kalat was also becoming militant instead of voluntary assimilation to Pakistan; and there were irrefutable evidences that government in Afghanistan was continuously feeding this fire with some collusion of Hindustan.

From those days onwards Pakistan continuously suffered from the unending internal schism on political nature of the state, and its center versus provinces autonomy issues. The same conflict led to dismemberment of the country in 1971 with direct interference of Hindustan. Although the 1973 Constitution has clearly settled the issue legally, yet undercurrents in political life of three minority provinces do hint on a potential conflict area which enemies of Pakistan feel convenient to exploit.

The Present Challenges

In the last 75 years, Pakistan as a nation made substantial gains. Pakistan started its journey with almost a zero account as a nation but today we are a nuclear power, being counted in the top 10 military powers of the world, GDP growth ranks in the first 30 countries, our cities are thriving, and literacy rate for both genders has improved. However, despite this there are serious challenges to our nationhood.

● **Economy.** The worst among all is the almost dilapidated economy which is breathing on foreign loans and grants. Our foreign reserves are shamefully so low that our friends have to lend us money as a guarantee to arrange for more loans. If the situation is not addressed quickly then for how long can we sustain as a nation on other people's money? The ever burgeoning unemployment of youth is a volcano that can erupt a social and political turmoil. Often our ruling elite is found complaining about diminished exports, but there is no national realization that despite being called an agriculturist country, we don't produce enough to sustain ourselves and rely on food imports.

● **Politics.** Politically we are a house

divided. In such a mess that cries of bloody revolution, which is no indication of a healthy society. We have not been able to mature our politics where it should mean more than opportunism, corruption and election sloganeering. To meet people's rising expectations, one easy way of our politics has been to acquire loans and subsidize life for people. Politics is not leading the people to a strong nationhood but renting those to foreign lenders in such a way that the future will not belong to us. Pakistan has tried martial laws in the past, but those also didn't work and again had to revert to democratic system. However, our democracy has not been able to deliver efficient governance. The continuous obstruction to district governments by the political parties is in fact anti-people. Similarly, there is a clear lack of trust between politics and various institutions, and this mutual suspicion and maneuvers seriously dent the nationhood. We must never forget that it is not the riches that strengthen a bond, but predictability and consistency that nurture a lasting trust for the growth of a healthy nation. Ironically, we have neither riches, nor predictability and trust!

● **Power Distribution.** Although the 1973 Constitution has significantly resolved the power balance issue between provinces and the center, there is a growing concern among a significant portion of the national leadership that after 18th Amendment the center has become weak, particularly its financial health. Similarly, by grant of education as a provincial subject, the national narrative for future generations will get a relegated attention. It is a bitter irony that provinces in Pakistan have more distinct and powerful ethnic identities, and if popular politics are exploited, will nurture a centrifugal culture than uniting all in a single nationhood. India is continuously feeding all types of dissident elements to damage the federation of Pakistan. Afghanistan, despite its worst sufferings, still is never hesitant to air its irredentist claims or fueling the ethnic movements. There are numerous examples in the recent past which make it evident that foreign threat to Pakistani nationhood has not subsided.

Need for a Consensus

Pakistanis are celebrating the golden jubilee of their independence in an economically precarious, politically

fractured and socially decayed society, but we have a future and can build it for proud centenary celebrations in 2047. The good thing is that despite many low points, we have a Constitution, a parliament, nationwide political parties, functioning national institutions, a vibrant media, and a middle class that is keen to change things for the better. All we need is a national dialogue to achieve a national consensus on various long term goals. The parliament can lead this pro-

Pakistanis are celebrating the golden jubilee of their independence in an economically precarious, politically fractured and socially decayed society, but we have a future and can build it for proud centenary celebrations in 2047.

cess by making various Pakistan National Dialogue and Consensus Committees for 2047 (PNDCCs-2047). These committees should comprise members from parliament in lead roles, and others in all fields including representatives from establishment, economist, scientific and social sciences academia, media, lawyers, etc. and make actionable policy guidelines for the next 25 years. Pakistan had enough ideological debates, therefore, these policies should aim at tangible economic, education and political goals. In the last 75 years, one factor has been established that the federation of Pakistan has always reverted to democratic practices, and now the need of time is to reinforce it with suitable changes to make it efficiently functional. If there can be separate democratic models by the US, UK, China, Germany, France and many other countries, then Pakistan can also have its distinct model in line with its history, demography and aspirations. These PNDCCs-2047 can take a year-long time to answer these questions given

below and formulate tangible plans for achieving Pakistan 25 Years Nation Plans & Goals (PNP&G-25). After PNDCCs have finalized these goals, the same PNDCCs can select National Oversight Committees from its members on a 25 years basis, and make it part of the Constitution for the next 25 years through an amendment. The likely area to focus can be:

- Agricultural self-sufficiency and exports.
- Industrial growth and exports.
- Meeting energy needs of the country (only reliance on water, solar or atomic).
- Population growth and related issues.
- Building communication infrastructure particularly railways for national and international trade.
- Implementing a local government system for efficient governance.
- National education policy to substantially promote scientific enquiry, social growth, national cohesion and market based functional/vocational knowledge.
- Power balancing between center and provinces to ensure a viable relationship meeting needs of national unity and provincial autonomy.
- Intra political party democratic practices to avoid perpetual dynastic political hegemony.
- A well regulated law-bound harmony between institutions and politics keeping in view the past experiences, and thus ensuring institutional autonomy as well as overstepping by them.
- Ensuring merit and checking corruption by resorting to technology and transparency.
- Regulating media for the good of society without impinging upon freedom.
- Pursuing the goal of accumulating \$100 billion as foreign reserves which are to be maintained at all times (The spendthrift tendency to deplete foreign reserves in the name of development projects and later subsidizing through foreign loans should be made a national taboo).

A well-constructed Pakistani nationhood for our future generation is awaiting for our timely and selfless response! All is constructed in this world and nothing is an impossibility for a collective national will. ■

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WOMEN'S
RIGHTS
ARE
HUMAN
RIGHTS

INFOCUS



By Tahira Abdullah

The writer is a development practitioner, researcher, human rights defender, peace activist and humanitarian volunteer.

Poverty & Women

Women's work is not just denied by their spouses, fathers, brothers, sons, along with extended natal and marital family members - but shockingly, also by successive civilian and military dispensations over the past 75 years

How many times have we heard this assertion, by now almost a cliché: “meri beevi kaam naheen karti” (my wife doesn't work), stated with male superiority complex, egotism and patriarchal arrogance - often accompanied by the twirling of a real or imaginary mustache tip? Answer: one time too many ... sigh ... yawn.

Way back, around three decades ago, Nigar Ahmad and Advocate Shahla Zia, co-founders of Aurat Foundation, produced a startling poster bearing the same title “meri beevi kaam naheen karti” - and then proceeded to graphically illustrate and enumerate the myriad items of work that women do, comprising productive,

reproductive and domestic labour.

It was a long list, but almost all of it comprised unwaged, unpaid, unremunerated hard labour. Sadly, women's work still remains mostly unrecognised, unappreciated, uncounted and unvalued.

Women's work is not just denied by their spouses, fathers, brothers, sons, along with extended natal and marital family members - but shockingly, also by successive civilian and military dispensations over the past 75 years. Thus, both poverty and hunger, silently but inherently, have a Woman's Face in Pakistan.

Two decades ago, a federal minister courageously acknowledged this publicly, at an international forum - even as-

serting that the male-female poverty ratio stood at 1:3; i.e. 3 out of 4, or 75% of the poor in Pakistan, are women. To date, no one has refuted this.

However, left-leaning and progressive rights activists, economists and analysts might counter with the assertion that poverty as a whole is increasing rapidly today - unfortunately coinciding with Pakistan's 75th anniversary - thus, why focus on women?

True, it is no longer news that inflation in Pakistan (and globally) is at an all-time high, with skyrocketing food, fuel and energy costs now also hitting - and badly hurting - our slim middle class, in addition to hurtling more and more millions of our compatriots into abject poverty. Our internationally respected guru, Dr Hafiz Pasha actually predicted an exponential rise in Pakistan poverty before and during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, and beyond. He was right, of course. We are seeing it play out now.

But those then in power chose to ignore Dr Pasha's (and others of his ilk) doable and necessary prescriptions, both short- and long-term measures repeatedly detailed in his recent fascinating comprehensive economic reform agenda work: *Growth and Inequality in Pakistan: Agenda for Reform and Charter of the Economy* - which, if heeded, might have been able to save the economy (and the rupee too) from the freefall we are now witnessing, or the possible default staring us in the face.

Successive Pakistani governments push the blame for economic mismanagement on to their predecessors - and then proceed to commit the same, if not worse, blunders themselves, in a classic catch-22 downward spiral. But this is a sore subject, better left for an in-depth discussion another time.

It is worth taking the time to read Oxfam's 2022 report on global poverty, titled "First Crisis, Then Catastrophe". It estimates, inter alia, that 263 million more people could be pushed into extreme poverty in 2022, due to the combined impact of Covid-19, inequality, poverty, and food plus energy price inflation (excluding climate change impact). A sobering eye-opener, it ought to be required reading for those in power in all three pillars of our state (as well as those operating behind the scenes) - and also for the few sane elements in our fourth estate.

One recalls that in December 2021, Dr Pasha had forecast an additional 6 to 8 million Pakistanis imminently falling into poverty, based on then-current macroeconomic trends. After the cataclysmic impact of the fiscal and economic policy measures the incoming coalition government was forced to take between April and July 2022 - mainly to meet the IMF's stringent conditionalities - he and his team might well be crunching out new numbers now - presumably topping 10 million, given the visibly increasing throngs of beggars and charity-seekers, mostly women and children.

This does not include large swathes of the urban blue collar working class sliding down to the "nouveau-poor" category, or those in the lower middle class who are unable to beg or borrow - and would not dream of stealing or accepting charity - but are now in desperate straits, unable to make ends meet.

One wonders who - if anyone - is looking out for the rural poor or the poverty-stricken urban katchi abaadi-jhuggi dwellers - the downtrodden - the unemployed - the unemployable - the barely subsisting awaam, who are now finding it difficult to eat even one square meal per day, with rotli going up imminently from Rs15 to Rs20 at urban tandoors, especially in Pakhtunkhwa cities. For a family of 7, that comes to Rs140 per meal for bread alone, and times two meals, it amounts to Rs280 per day, coming to a whopping Rs8,400 per month. It is needless to point out that minimum wages have not kept up with galloping food inflation, energy and fuel price hikes or devaluation.

Important note: "minimum wage" is not the ILO definition of a "decent living wage".

Along roadsides in the big cities, when one sees long queues of men waiting to receive (or sitting there and eating) a free meal in charity from philanthropists, one wonders what the women, children and elders of their households are eating at home, if anything.

That brings us back unapologetically to women in poverty. Over the past two decades since that former federal min-



Over the past two decades no macro-level research study or survey on the quantum of feminisation of poverty has been commissioned, either by the federal and provincial governments.

ister's startling announcement, no macro-level research study or survey on the quantum of feminisation of poverty has been commissioned, either by the federal and provincial governments, or by the external donor/creditor agencies, who fund our governments, NGOs, research entities, academia, and so on.

Nevertheless, Dr Pasha and his team have been computing the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) too. Earlier, Dr Mahbubul Haq conceptualised and tabulated our Poverty of Opportunity Index (POPI) at around 40% (1990s). Unsurprisingly, for compiling its poverty reports, the World Bank uses government data, based on the PSLM and HIES, from the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). The previous government asserted that overall poverty stood at 22% in 2021, whereas independent researchers agree that it was much higher then and is significantly higher in 2022.



To quote a 2016 UNDP-funded study on MPI, also using PSLM data:

“...multidimensional poverty “head-count ratio” was estimated at 38.8% of the population. This means that 38.8% of the population of Pakistan are poor according to the MPI. The average intensity of deprivation, which reflects the share of deprivation which each poor person experiences on average, is 50.9%.”

However, while pointing out stark urban-rural and provincial disparities, UNDP omitted mentioning gender inequality in poverty, hunger and MPI data.

Based on the government’s UN-supported national nutrition survey (2018), Pakistan has a high level of food insecurity (37%), with chronic hunger at over 18.3%; moderate under-nutrition (7.6%); mild (11.1%). This data needs to be sex-disaggregated too.

In its 3rd quarterly report FY2019, the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) noted that we rank 106th among 119 countries on the Global Hunger Index: “...characterised as facing a ‘serious’ level of hunger”. The SBP called it a ‘dismal’ state of affairs, caused mainly by poverty and inequality, not a shortage of food stocks in the country.

It is important to recall the outcome of that cringe-worthy debate and debacle on basic poverty data computation in FY2005-06 between the Ministries of Finance & Economic Affairs and Planning & Development under the military dictator, General Pervez Musharraf and his imported PM Shaukat Aziz. Kudos to then-Chief Economist, Dr Pervez Tahir, for his courageous, principled stand - albeit at high professional cost.

The subsequent outcome was that the annual Pakistan Economic Survey (PES)

Women’s lack of assets ownership renders them ineligible for formal credit - so they remain locked into underpaid, unpaid, bonded, or slave labour - or beggary, sexual trafficking and prostitution.

of the federal Ministry of Finance “resolved” the problem by simply omitting the poverty chapter. An indirect, cursory discussion on social safety nets in a chapter titled “Social Protection” is clearly not a substitute for poverty and cannot fill the glaring void.

Hence, there remains a lack of credible official data and analysis on poverty in Pakistan, leave alone what successive governments ought to be doing to eradicate it. Researchers thus rely either on independent analysts, or international data sources, or inaccurate PBS official statistics, but “The PBS has in recent months engaged in presenting biased statistics” (Dr Hafiz Pasha, Business Recorder, 6 May 2022).

Without accurate or credible baseline data for planning, policymaking and budgeting, it is unclear how Pakistan can ever hope to achieve any of the

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially Goal #1: Poverty Eradication and Goal #5: Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment. In an ideal world, both would be addressed together.

The Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) - which the ousted PTI government politically renamed as its “Ehsaas” programme - was never intended to be a poverty reduction (leave alone eradication) programme, as it was simply a temporary, miniscule social safety net for the ultra-poor. However, successive governments have proudly - albeit erroneously - showcased it as their flagship initiative against poverty. Despite quantitative, geographic and budgetary expansion over the past 12 years, it still remains just a small drop of minor relief in a huge ocean of deprivation and need.

In fact, the BISP is seen to foster long-term dependency instead of self-reliance and resilience. Unfortunately, it has allegedly also been perceived as an election vote-gathering ploy, especially its unconditional cash transfer (UCT) component. Conditional cash transfers (CCTs) - e.g. those linked to girls’ education - are somewhat better conceptualized.

On the positive side, by focusing on women, the BISP has monetarily incentivised patriarchal male family heads to consent to obtain CNICs for women. This also serves the objective of increasing women’s voter registration and obtaining other ID legal documentation.

Pakistan signed on to the UN’s Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015. Having failed spectacularly in all the MDGs, it remains to be seen whether or not any of the 17 SDGs can be achieved by 2030. Currently, the signs are not hope-inducing.

Despite the 2010 Constitutional Amendment, Article 25-A - Right to Education - and ensuing provincial legislation; and despite girls’ increasing school enrolment in urban areas; there is continuing stark gender disparity in access to education and vocational skills training, especially in rural, remote, marginalised communities - thereby perpetuating the feminisation of poverty across generations. Of the estimated 23 million children out of school, the vast majority are girls.

Women’s lack of assets ownership renders them ineligible for formal credit - so they remain locked into underpaid, un-

paid, bonded, or slave labour - or beggary, sexual trafficking and prostitution.

There is no dearth of analysis of these challenges over the past four decades. Since we know what the problems are, thus such self-serving euphemisms and classic delaying bureaucratese jargon as: “need for comprehensive vulnerability assessment for achieving gender-responsive social protection” are ludicrous. Neither is required at this juncture. Urgently needed is implementation of the recommendations below.

The way forward

It is high time, and beyond, for our leaders and policymakers to stop perceiving poverty as a temporary, minor aberration, to be “alleviated” or “reduced” in the charity and welfare mode, rather than as a huge challenge for human dignity, empowerment, and environmentally sustainable economic development - requiring complete poverty eradication, as per our Constitutional provisions.

There is nothing new about the varied prescriptions below. What would be astonishingly new and refreshing would be their endorsement by any political leadership, followed by actual implementation.

Data: correction of macroeconomic data and labour statistics, e.g. changing the definition and methodology of calculating the GDP, labour force, and other statistics to count and quantify women's sizeable economic contribution - their currently invisible work and productivity in unpaid, underpaid, or informal labour.

Ensuring accurate annual collection, compilation, presentation of sex-disaggregated data in official poverty and employment statistics (e.g. PES, LFS-LFPR, MPI).

Immediately reinstating the poverty chapter in the annual PES, along with reporting on the SDGs.

Legislation is urgently required to eliminate women's economic exploitation; non-recognition or devaluation of women's productivity; revised definition of work for inclusion of: rural agricultural women, urban domestic and home-based workers (HBWs); informal, contractual, piece-rate workers in the formal organised labour force; legal recognition and formal registration of de facto women-

headed households (WHHs).

Likewise, registration of all women workers as formal labour force, especially rural agricultural women, urban home-based workers (HBWs), domestic workers/maids, industrial contract labour, and ex-bonded slave labour, will ensure women's access to the benefits of social security (ESSIs); workers welfare funds (WWF); pension (EOBI); free reproductive health services (RSHR); children's education (RTE); vocational skills training; OSH training and protective equipment; life and disability insurance; gender-respon-



sive budgeting (GRB) and credit; legal ID documentation; and the right to unionize (via TUs, CBAs and cooperatives).

Assets: required measures include: ensuring women's personal ownership of assets and credit-worthiness, including joint land and property title ownership; ensuring implementation of women's legal right to inheritance; 50% ownership of marital moveable and immoveable assets; granting title deeds to minimum one acre of cultivable state land to each woman landless peasant-farmer in her own name.

Credit: to address visibly increasing socio-economic gender inequality, there is a need for facilitation of women's access to easy, cheap credit, without impractical collateral requirements.

For low-income (or no-income) women's entrepreneurship and self-employment, there is an urgent need to reactivate and revitalize the First Women's Bank (FWBL), recognising its intended purpose, mandate, and value as an affirmative action entity focusing on women in poverty - not to be privatised for puny short-term gains.

There are also other successful commendable women-focused financial models for the state to replicate, e.g. inter alia, Kashf Foundation, AKRSP, RSPN, village cooperatives, group guarantees.

Recognising chronic gender injustice, structural inequality, and an uneven playing field, concrete Affirmative Action is required to decrease the feminisation of poverty and hunger by ensuring implementation of women's public sector job quotas, paid maternity-paternity leave, child care services, hostels, transport; also, most importantly, professional, market-focused job-creation programmes; women's vocational, technical skills training, along with career development paths - in order to break that invisible but real glass ceiling that women face.

Correcting the definition of “poverty reduction” requires acknowledging that the BISP is a tiny social safety net for temporary social protection - not the required vast “poverty reduction programme”, as discussed above.

There is a need to incentivise poverty eradication in the longer term, via increased, strengthened conditional cash transfers (CCTs), especially girls' professional education and skills training, particularly in the STEM sectors; along with a corresponding increase in sustainable, climate change-focused job creation, with public-private partnership.

Implementation of gender equality measures requires compliance with ILO-ratified Conventions 100 and 111; also the urgent ratification of ILO Conventions 177 and 189; along with initiating Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) across the board.

Lastly - most importantly and imperatively - urgent measures are required to reduce the currently unsustainable 2.4% annual population growth rate, which negates all other steps to improve economic growth and eradicate poverty and hunger.

In the 75th year of our Independence, as a nuclear power of around 230 million citizens, the state of Pakistan can no longer afford to ignore the twin elephants in the room - runaway population growth, plus burgeoning poverty, social injustice and inequality, especially women in poverty, hunger and destitution.

While equality of outcome for human endeavour cannot be guaranteed, equality of opportunity is a prerequisite. It is practically doable and morally imperative. Our policy, law and decision-makers need to wake up before it gets too late. ■



A Conversation with Dr. Huma Baqai



The way forward

Pakistan's education system and how to improve it

The eighteenth summer for most young men and women is filled with hopes, dreams and anxiety. After 12 years of schooling, they are now ready for university. Those who score well in high school enjoy smooth sailing to the best available higher education institutions. Unfortunately, that group represents less than 10 per cent of peer high school graduates. What happens to the remaining 90 per cent is rather scary.

The insufficiency of state welfare services has resulted in substantial private health care and education. Budgetary changes required to handle Pakistan's fiscal restrictions have historically resulted in cutbacks to social services. But the private

universities in Pakistan are also facing a headwind. Enrollment in colleges and universities across the globe worsened in spring 2022, sparking fears of a fundamental change in perceptions regarding the value of a college degree.

In this issue of Narratives Magazine, Dr Huma Baqai discusses Pakistan's education system and how to improve it. Being an educationist, Dr Huma Baqai has dedicated over two decades of her life to teaching and mentoring students in one of the best business institutes in Karachi. Dr Baqai is a scholar, reviewer, author, and co-editor of two books, apart from contributing to various magazines and newspapers. Dr Baqai has also authored 29 research papers.

By Narratives Desk

L UMS and IBA serve about 1% of students. What about the rest of the 99%? How can they get a similar standard of education, notably if they haven't fared well in their high school?

If you have the desire to learn, the options are many. Institutes that are not IBA or LUMS produce some fantastic graduates. Many students do exceptionally well, but that is not what the institute has done for them but what they have been able to

do for themselves.

That is where a paradigm shift needs to come. These reputed institutes (IBA, LUMS) work on each student, entitling them with elements to be competitive in the market. That's how the learning culture or environment is. Providing them with cooperative exposure, extracurricular activities, and interface with the industry is taught to these students.

These universities also work on an advantage. IBA has a rejection rate higher

than that of an IVY League university. We get 12,000 applications and accept 900 students. This is a sad commentary on how difficult it is for students to get into an institute.

More private institutions should come in. Public sector education is not sustainable anymore, so more private initiatives should go in now and inculcate in students all that is required in competitive markets.

You have left IBA. What's next?

I am now affiliated with a new institute called MITE Millennium Institute of Technology and Entrepreneurship, where the ethos is very different. This university's entire thrust is to create a mindset where the student is groomed into becoming a job-giver and not a job-seeker. So the construct of entrepreneurship is spread over the three verticals in a fashion that when a student graduates from us in four years, he is groomed into somebody who has the confidence and has had the exposure to become an entrepreneur and then provide jobs. That is the kind of service society needs.

Having said that, many other options exist; for example, the regulators need to do more than look into the infrastructure and the curricula of universities. They need to focus on quality rather than quantity. The role of HEC should also change. We need to look at them as facilitators, mentors, and a regulatory body that does some hand-holding rather than shutting down one institute after another, which is required, but there should be more compassion.

What would a student be like when she graduates from MITE four years from now?

One, she would be a very confident individual, a risk-taker who knows that failure is not the end of the world. It is a new beginning because that is what entrepreneurship is all about. She will be well-versed in technology because that is most important for tomorrow. We significantly focus on ensuring that all our verticals have that component. And last but not least, we want to introduce the element of personal effectiveness. We want to focus on not just classroom learning but also personal grooming - 360 learning. The classroom makes up only 20% of the education in a university, and the rest happens outside.

So down the line, this individual will



Are the private educational institutions providing quality education?

The classroom makes up only 20% of the education in a university, and the rest happens outside.

be very networked, very confident and become our ambassador when she steps out into the market.

What is your opinion on ranking

firms and their methodologies?

Most of them are commercial entities, others are manipulated, and yet others have personnel who are cultivated by very smart institutions who get the kind of rankings they are looking for, and that is a major reason why they have lost credibility. There was a year when HEC did not give out rankings because the year previous to that, there was a scandal. So these are the issues that need to be addressed.

Eventually, you need rankings. Competition is good, but you have to weigh credibility. You have to be unbiased and have consistency and quality standards. ■



MITE aims to groom students to become 'job-givers' and 'not job-seekers' - Huma Baqai



By Dr. Zubaida Qazi

The writer is the founder & President of Pink Pakistan Trust – a non-profit NGO. She has been long associated with philanthropic work.

Breast Cancer: The Silent Killer

Around 40,000 women lose their lives to breast cancer in Pakistan annually

Nabila, a 30-year-old mother of four young children, recently lost her battle with breast cancer due to the very late diagnosis of the fatal disease. Coming from a village in the remote part of Punjab, she was reluctant to talk to her family members about her disease. The cultural taboos restricted her from seeking medical help from the only male doctor accessible to her in her village. She went to the local spiritual healer to get treated for her illness, but it did not help. By the time she sought professional medical help, it was too late.

Nabila's tragic case is one of around 40,000 women who lose their lives to breast cancer in Pakistan annually. Pakistan has the highest breast cancer incidence rate in the Asian region with one in nine women at risk of the fatal disease. As Pinktober 2022 approaches us, we need to ponder on what the causes of the high inci-

dence of breast cancer are and what we can do to deal with it.

Limited health facilities and poor healthcare services are to blame for the high mortality rate due to breast cancer in Pakistan. With only 1,282 public hospitals, 45,987 registered doctors, and 116,659 registered nurses in 2020 for a population of 221 million, the healthcare facilities and the number of healthcare professionals in Pakistan are much below the minimum standards set by the World Health Organisation. The situation of healthcare services in the rural parts of the country is more critical. Pakistan is among the few countries in the world that do not have a universal healthcare system.

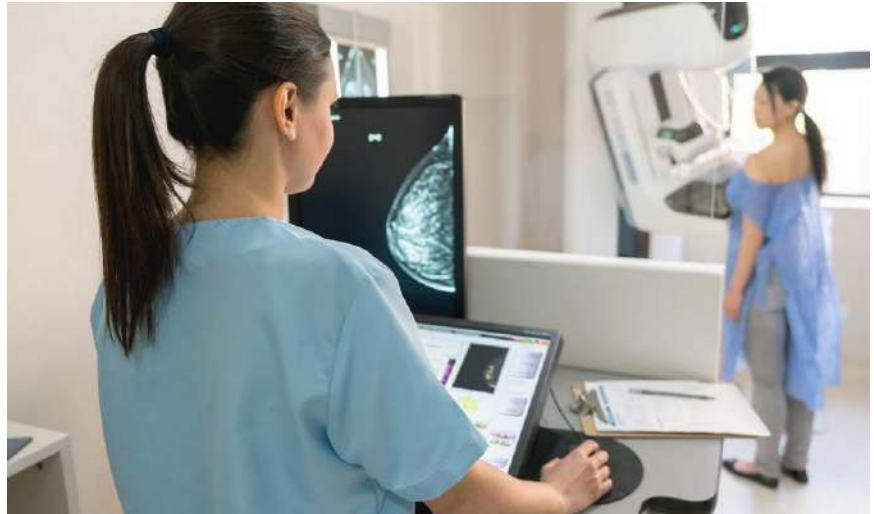
The access of Pakistani women to healthcare services is severely limited especially in the rural areas. There are no breast care screening centres in the majority of public hospitals in the country. In fact,

there is only one breast cancer screening center established by the government of Pakistan at the Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) in Islamabad. Qualified oncologists, radiologists, and psychologists needed to treat breast cancer patients are not available in many public hospitals. The high cost of treatment in private hospitals makes it impossible for the majority of breast cancer patients coming from the middle and lower strata of the society to receive treatment.

The social taboo around the disease is also one of the biggest causes contributing to the high mortality rate among Pakistani breast cancer patients. Pakistani women feel reluctant to talk about their health issues with their family members. Breasts are considered a 'secret organ' in Pakistani society and they cannot be discussed in public spaces. Women in rural areas are especially reluctant to go to male doctors due to the cultural restrictions, even when they find lumps and changes in their breasts. They turn to alternative medicine or seek help from spiritual healers initially instead of seeking professional medical help.

The lack of awareness about the symptoms of breast cancer is also contributing to the rise in deaths caused by the disease. Women in Pakistan are mostly not aware of the early signs of breast cancer and they often ignore them. They are not educated about it in colleges or universities nor do they receive any information about it from their elders or local health workers. This lack of awareness results in 89% of breast cancer patients getting diagnosed at later stages of breast cancer in Pakistan which severely limits their chances of survival.

What can we do to fight breast cancer in Pakistan? I believe a comprehensive and well-coordinated action plan is needed to fight breast cancer among Pakistani women. Firstly, the government needs to set up Breast Cancer Screening Centers at all major public sector hospitals and Basic Health Units (BHUs) across Pakistan to ensure early detection and timely treatment of the fatal disease. BHUs can play a key role in providing healthcare services to people in the rural and remote areas of the country. The government needs to provide sufficient funding, well-trained staff, equipment and medicine to BHUs to ensure their effective and smooth functioning for the betterment of the community.



An early detection of breast cancer can save many lives.

There are no breast care screening centres in the majority of public hospitals in the country.

The government also needs to consider running BHUs in partnership with the NGOs working in the health sector of Pakistan. The NGOs can resolve the administrative issues in managing BHUs and significantly improve their performance in serving the community. My organisation, Pink Pakistan Trust, has applied for the adoption of four BHUs and has been waiting for the Sindh government's response.

Secondly, Breast Cancer Awareness Centers need to be set up in educational institutions, community centres and women's workplaces to create much-needed awareness about breast cancer symptoms among Pakistani women. These centres will organise workshops, seminars and interactive talks by doctors, religious scholars and community leaders to break the taboo around breast cancer in society. Pink Pakistan Trust has taken the initiative to set up Breast Cancer Awareness Centers in universities across Pakistan including the University of Karachi, Quaid-e-Azam University, Government College University (Lahore), Benazir Women University (Peshawar), University of Lahore and Superior University.

Thirdly, financial assistance needs to be provided to breast cancer patients coming from middle and lower-income families. Many breast cancer patients do not seek treatment as they do not want to burden their families with their medical expenses. A separate fund needs to be set up for needy breast cancer patients to help them receive treatment for their disease.

Finally, we need to use technology to create awareness about breast cancer among the masses in Pakistan. Mobile phones and the internet have become part of our lives and people in rural areas are also using social media, Tik Tok, and YouTube now. We must utilize social media platforms to create awareness about the symptoms and treatment of breast cancer among the public. Pink Pakistan Trust has recently launched the first mobile application to create awareness about breast cancer and provide medical assistance to Pakistani women. Available in English and major local languages for both Android phones and iPhones, the Pink Pakistan application assists women to do self-screening for breast cancer by explaining the step-by-step procedure and provides free of cost consultation with national and international specialist doctors and psychiatrists.

Breast cancer is a silent killer which is depriving thousands of Pakistani women of their dreams and scarring their families for life. It is high time that the government and people of Pakistan come together to fight breast cancer and give Pakistani women a chance to live their lives fully to pursue their dreams. ■



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