

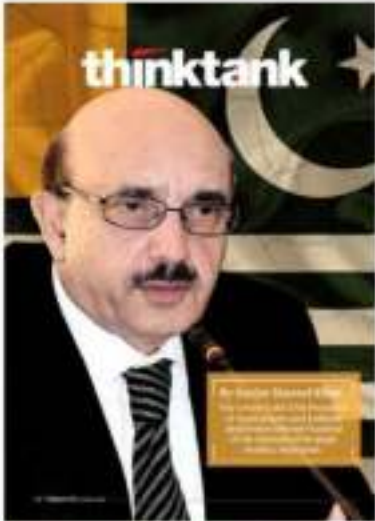
October 2020

# NARRATIVES

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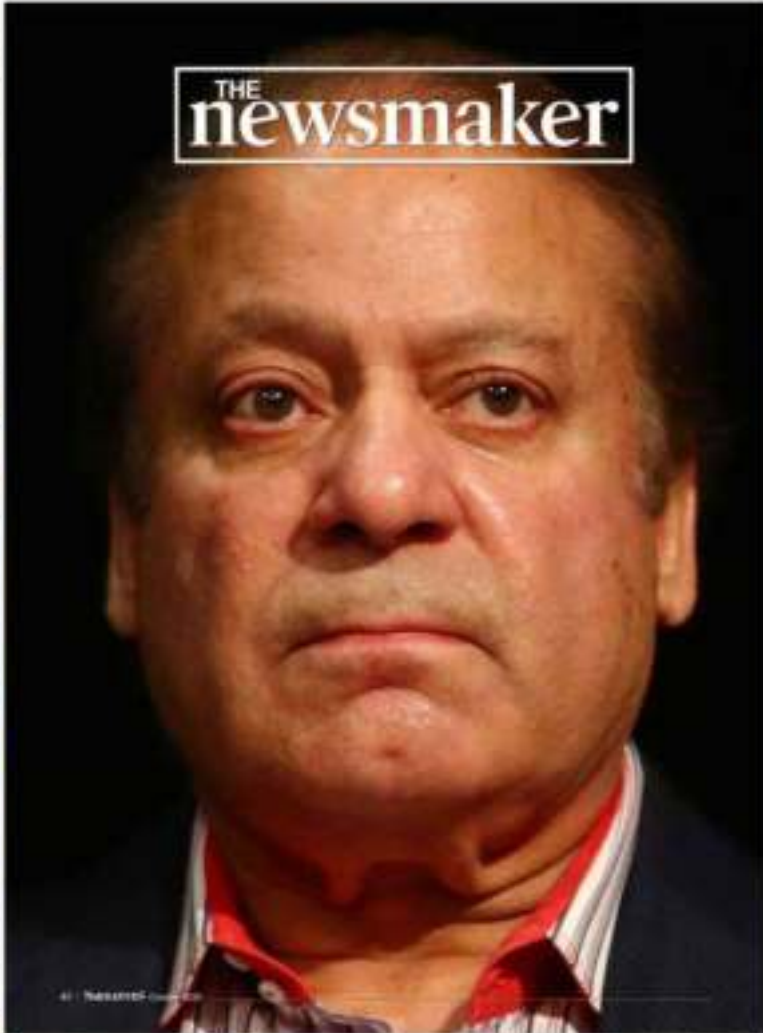
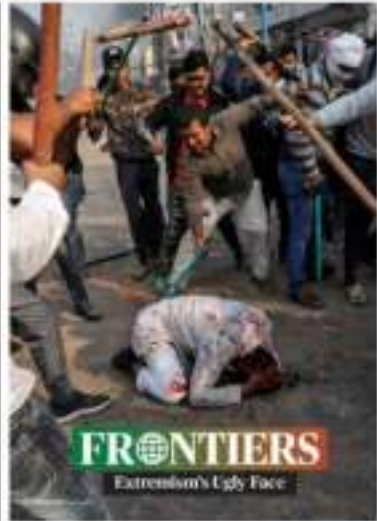
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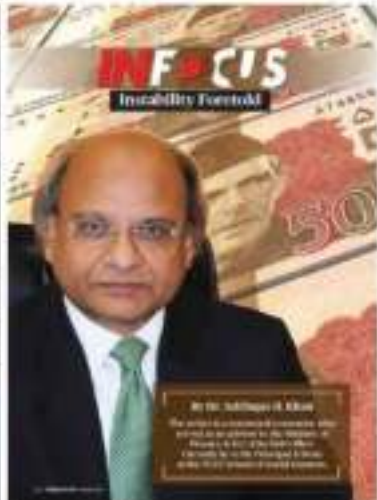
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From the Editor | 07

Your SAY | 08

**ZER•ING IN**

Mission Impossible? 11  
Lift the Moratorium 13  
Who Will Run Karachi? 14



**thinktank** 16  
Reimagining the Kashmir Policy  
By Sardar Masood Khan

**FRONTIERS** 22  
The Theology of Hate  
By Syed Hasan Javed

**INF•CUS** 26  
Contentious Award  
By Dr. Ashfaque H. Khan

**SCANDAL** 32  
Double Standards? 33  
Hostile Relations 36  
By Farhan Reza

**the newsmaker** 40  
Sharif's High-Stakes Gamble  
By Amir Zia

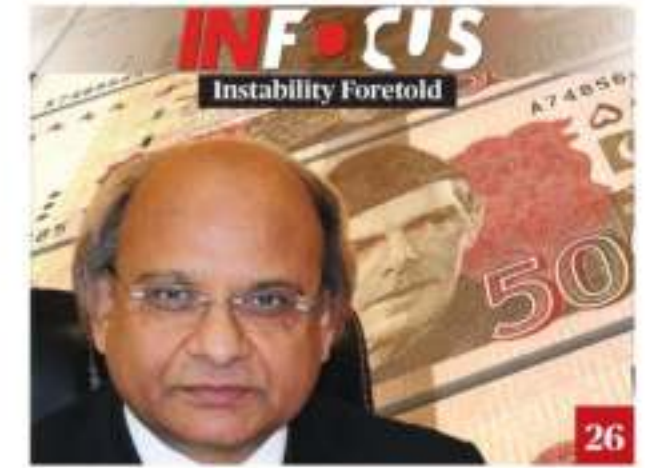
**BigQuestion** 44

**PERSP•CTIVE** 48  
The Post-Covid World Disorder  
By Maleeha Lodhi

**DEFENCELINE** 52  
Still Seeking Salvation  
By Tariq Khan HI(M)

**SCH•LAR** 58  
Curriculum Controversy  
By Javed Jabbar

**TOM•RORW'S PAKISTAN** 62  
Needed: A New Avatar  
By Jawad Ahmed



**HORIZONS 66**



**Mirage of Democracy**  
By Ibrahim Sajid



**Tribute 70**



**Hasil Khan Bizenjo**  
By Aziz Ahmed



**Pakistanicon 74**



**Publishing Powerhouse**  
By Zahra Chughtal



**BOOKSTORE 80**



**Time Travel 81**  
By Amir Zia



**Turning Points 83**  
By Maryam Iraj

**MEDIAMATTERS 84**



**In First Person**  
By Sajid Hasan



**Your Life & Health 88**



**Fighting Breast Cancer**  
By Dr. Zubaida Qazi

**MOOD-MOMENT 92**



**K-Electric vs the City**

**CRYSTAL BALL 98**



**What Tomorrow May Bring?**

# A New Narrative



Ibrahim Sajid Malick  
Editor, Narratives

**W**e find ourselves in a world where fake news and lies are animated at scale by troll factories, and rating-hungry media cleaves us into hermetically-sealed factions. Abetting propaganda, Pakistan's influential media houses select incendiary content over measured and reflective takes.

Going against the tide, we have decided to re-launch *Narratives*, after a two-year hiatus. Our friends remind us that in this fast-paced digital economy, the days of the print media are numbered. We, of course, disagree. With the re-launch of *Narratives* as an independent journalistic endeavour, we are committed to presenting Pakistan's case and its unfiltered story.

We are not here to share cute cat videos or promote Eurocentric liberalism. Instead, we are committed to broadening the public debate in many spheres, with a local, nationalist and progressive perspective.

A line-up of distinguished experts and analysts will sound off on the hot topics of the day, from politics to economy.

We believe that the infrastructure to develop, test and promote Pakistan-centric progressive ideas are inadequate. Pakistan's intellectual and media elite have systematically promoted imported ideas. They have become the dominant voices in Islamabad, Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar and Quetta, while the original local voices have been sidelined and barred from developing a countervailing opinion and narrative in the local English-language press.

The West has come to see us as a dangerous place, plagued with terrorism and religious fanaticism, where the irrational and unreasonable is taught to the young by the "evil clerics" who are "anti-democratic and virulently anti-Semitic." Unfortunately, Pakistan's neo-liberal talking heads and intellectual and media elite sing from the same sheet of music.

*Narratives* is here to address the need for a greater capacity to develop ideas, nurture creative public intellectuals and other leaders, make critical concepts accessible to everyone, challenge and highlight misguided policies, false conflicts, and political timidity. Our mission is to hold the powerful to account. The free press must expose hypocrisy, financial and intellectual corruption, wrongdoing and the abuse of power.

But it is an uphill task. Just a handful of billionaires, with strong political allegiances and financial motivations, now own most of the Pakistani media. We, at *Narratives*, are independent, and we need your support to survive.

In the inaugural October issue of *Narratives*, President AJK Masood Khan reimagines the Kashmir policy, while Pakistan's best-known diplomat and intellectual, Maleeha Lodhi explains the post-Covid world's challenges. Leading economist, Dr. Ashfaq Hasan Khan reviews the flaws and weaknesses of the current National Finance Commission Award, and Lt. Gen (r) Tariq Khan gives his take on national security.

The issue also carries insightful articles on the debate surrounding a single national curriculum by former information minister and leading intellectual, Javed Jabbar, India's future under Modi's fascist regime by (Retd.) Ambassador Syed Javed Hasan, the last interview of the late Baloch nationalist leader Hasil Bizenjo, and the woes of artists in the time of Corona by actor Sajid Hasan. Budding politician and singer Jawad Ahmed shares his aspirations for 'Tomorrow's Pakistan.' Readers will also meet a Pakistani icon and this month's newsmaker.

And yes, we will be breaking a few scandals and giving our take on the upcoming US elections.

Politicians, conglomerates, climate change-deniers, corporations and foreign stakeholders use fake news, propaganda and disinformation to sow confusion, dilute facts, create divisions, and pursue agendas. But we are here to state facts as they are, and analyse and debate issues relevant to Pakistan. But we cannot do it alone. We need your support to keep the lights on. ■

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# ZEROING IN



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

## Mission Impossible?

*The battle lines are drawn as the opposition braces itself for a confrontation with PTI and the establishment.*

**T**he newly-formed opposition alliance, the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM), is trying to raise the country's political temperature and whip up a storm against Prime Minister Imran Khan in the coming weeks. Whether it will succeed in its mission remains to be seen.

The stated target of the PDM is not just Imran Khan's government; it also aims to change Pakistan's political matrix by taming the mighty military establishment, which is being viewed by the main opposition parties as the reason for the repeated fall from grace of two major political dynasties – the Sharifs and the Zardaris/Bhuttos – on charges of corruption, misrule and abuse of power.

Nawaz Sharif and his loyalists in the Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N), and the Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam (JUI) of Maulana Fazlur Rehman are packaging their narrative as a battle by the civilian leadership to wrest control from the military, who they see as the real power behind the PTI government. This narrative is also being echoed by the smaller nationalist groups. However, the Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP) appears to be playing it safe and despite being part of the PDM, it has not aligned itself with Sharif's radical anti-army stance, highlighting the distrust and fissures within the opposition camp.

The party is trying to keep its options open because it rules Sindh and has a stake in the system. Any change in the power corridors that leaves the PPP high and dry and does not guarantee it a bigger slice of cake than it already has, does not suit it. For the PPP leadership to be playing second fiddle to the PML-N in the opposition alliance – the first time in



the party's history – is already a big climbdown.

Sharif's radical stance, though not fully owned by many even within his own party, is certainly music to the ears of a fringe section of society that traditionally maintains an anti-military bias and position. However, it is not a view held by the masses, who still regard Pakistan's Armed Forces – the Army, Navy and Air Force – as the most trusted institution in the country and any attempt to make them controversial or bring their leadership into disrepute will not go down well with them. Additionally, they maintain that Sharif's stance is not entirely objective because military interventions in politics were often the result of the political leadership's failure to act democratically and its attempts to weaken and undermine institutions, triggering an overt or covert chain reaction.

In fact the weakness, inefficiency and corruption of civilian institutions has paved the way for the involvement of institutions such as the judiciary and the military in the democratic process. Unfortunately, these interventions were merely stop-gap measures that did not help to set things right.

However, since 2002 there have been

regular and timely elections and an uninterrupted and orderly change of government in a constitutional manner. Yes, there were periods of uncertainty and faces changed at the Prime Minister's House before they could complete their term, but these challenges, too, were handled within the constitutional and legal ambit, which is a huge step forward.

In a way, Pakistan's flawed democracy is on track, but it still has a long way to go to become genuinely pro-people. The parties need to practice internal democracy and grow out of dynastic politics – be it at the national or constituency level; further they have to rid themselves of corruption and the politics of patronage. Without indulging in some serious self-criticism and self-correction, Pakistan's political parties can never serve the interests of the people.

It is no secret that it is the pressure of accountability that has forced the opposition parties to close ranks. While the PML-N and the PPP leaders maintain that they are being pushed against the wall, Maulana Fazlur Rehman is still bitter and angry about his personal defeat in the 2018 elections. However, each of the opposition parties have separate agendas and interests, which



Fight to the finish.

have converged, rightly or wrongly, because Prime Minister Imran Khan has taken them on, all at once. Had Khan been a conventional politician, he would have divided the opposition by going soft on one party and harsh on the other, but that is not his style of politics. But his passion for accountability comes with a hefty price tag.

Apart from the accountability process, which has united the opposition, the PTI government is also reeling from several self-inflicted wounds. Topmost among them is the choice of Usman Buzdar as Chief Minister of Punjab – the main battle ground – which has become the soft underbelly of this government. Then, the unfortunate delays in decision-making, the PTI leadership's own inexperience coupled with the kind of economic and political challenges it inherited on assuming power and its slim majority in Parliament that prevented it from pushing the reform agenda – all have, cumulatively, provided the opposition an opportunity to up the ante.

But the PTI government has not yet

*It is no secret that it is the pressure of accountability that has forced the opposition parties to close ranks. While the PML-N and the PPP leaders maintain that they are being pushed against the wall, Maulana Fazlur Rehman is still bitter and angry about his personal defeat in the 2018 elections.*

lost steam. Its prime minister still remains a popular leader and is untainted by corruption scandals unlike his main political rivals. Moreover, the PTI is the only political force which has roots in all four provinces of the country, cutting across barriers of ethnicity, sectarianism and provincialism, thus making it a formidable force on the ground. Furthermore, it is the only party which has cordial relations with the military. Given these factors, Imran Khan and his team are unlikely to prove a pushover for Sharif's bandwagon, as many in the traditional, mainstream media are predicting.

Accountability may be an issue for a few within the political elite – read the Sharifs, the Zardaris and their close associates – but it is not so for the masses. It does not hurt the common man, and seeing the mighty fall to the ground on charges of corruption, acts as a catharsis for many. The mantra of unfair accountability by the opposition is unlikely to cut any ice with the *awam* nor will Sharif's attempts to paint the military leadership in black. ■

## Lift the Moratorium

*The moratorium on the death penalty remains, even as cases of rape and murder of children register a rise.*

**C**hemical castration or public hangings? Both these options were being proposed and hotly debated in the traditional and social media last month, as fitting punishments for rapists, and child abusers and their killers. Prime Minister Imran Khan and some of his key federal ministers were calling for the enactment of new laws to punish rapists and killers. These suggestions were given on the floor of Parliament, at rallies, press conferences, in television talk shows and interviews by a cross-section of society.

Indeed, the September 9 gang-rape of a married woman in front of her children shocked the entire country. The public outrage at this heartbreaking incident, which occurred on the motorway while the victim was travelling from Lahore to Gujranwala, is understandable. Unfortunately, just before and after the motorway incident, there were several reported cases of rape and killings of children as young as five that added to the frenzied calls for harsher punishments to the perpetrators of such heinous crimes. In reaction, human rights activists and a handful of liberal lawmakers termed the demands for castration and public hangings of rapists and killers barbaric, uncivilised and inhuman.

Ironically, in this emotional debate, the real issue of bringing the criminals to justice as per the law, was lost. In fact, after the passage of a few weeks, even the intensity of emotions had faded away – as always happens in such cases. Our politicians – especially those belonging to the treasury

benches – are primarily responsible for defocusing the debate. Instead of giving a measured and practical response, they played to the gallery. They tried to outdo each other by making controversial, outrageous and impractical demands such as castration and public hangings of rapists.

Incidentally, Pakistan does not need any new legislation to punish

criminals. We already have laws in place, unfortunately our flawed investigation and judicial system lets criminals slip through the dragnet in most cases. What Pakistan needs is the implementation of existing laws rather than futile and time-wasting debates about introducing new ones.

For instance, under Pakistani law a child rapist and killer is to be awarded the death penalty. Period. As are rapists, under the controversial Hudood Ordinances 1979, though this law needs to be revisited to prevent its misuse. But in this "land of the pure" – which Prime Minister Imran Khan wants to transform into a "Medina-like state" – the government has imposed an undeclared moratorium on executions since end-December last year, following



## Who Will Run Karachi?

*The Karachi Package fails to address the key question: of who will run Karachi – the provincial government or an autonomous local government?*

**K**arachi continues to simmer, but in the federal and provincial corridors of power it is business as usual.

Following record rains in Karachi during August – when a freak monsoon spell resulted in more than 484 mm (19 inches) of rain over the month, including the highest-ever-recorded rainfall of 230 mm (9 inches) in just 12 hours on August 24 – the plight of the city became not just the top national story, but also moved the high and mighty in Islamabad and Rawalpindi to action.

From Prime Minister Imran Khan to the Chief of Army Staff (COAS), General Qamar Javed Bajwa, and from the provincial leadership to a number of high-flying federal ministers, all of them focused their energies on Karachi. Tall promises were made and passionate assurances were given, raising hopes that this time around Karachi would finally get its share of administrative and financial powers.

In his much-hyped and long-awaited visit to the rain-battered megapolis, the Prime Minister – flanked by Chief Minister Sindh



*Drowning his sorrows.*

Murad Ali Shah and Governor Imran Ismail – announced a Rs.11 trillion Karachi Package and assured Karachiites that the provincial and federal governments would work together for the city's betterment. Those were good optics. There was the initial burst of excitement followed by bickering between the top-guns of the Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP) and the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) about the size of the contribution made by each side to the package. And soon it dawned on the citizens of Karachi that while money had

been promised for a number of old and ongoing projects, the structural administrative and financial issues of their city had not been addressed; in fact, they were nowhere on the agenda. But all the key political stakeholders of the city – the PTI, the PPP and the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) – celebrated the announcement of the package and took credit for it.

The crux of the matter is that the announcement of any number of financial packages will always prove to be too little and too late to resolve the gargantuan and

complex problems of this mega city. Moreover, the critical question is, how will Karachi be run? Will it be run by the all-powerful provincial government, which has compounded the problems of this city over the last 12 years or so by usurping many functions and powers of the local government? Or like other big cities of the world, will it be run by an administratively and financially empowered and autonomous local government, with the mayor as its central figure.

Unfortunately, the latest Karachi package failed to address this main contradiction as the leadership focused on doling out money as an immediate, short-term relief measure rather than addressing the structural problems of governance and distribution of power and resources. Consequently, the crisis continues to brew, which is a bad omen for a city where the already existing ethnic, sectarian and class fault-lines, coupled with a multitude of grave civic problems, can explode into violence and mayhem any time.

Meanwhile the political leadership is found wanting as usual. The PPP is trying to maintain the status quo and further consolidate its grip on the city by creating new districts in utter disregard of the aspirations of the people. Meanwhile, the MQM has, once again, raised its contentious demand for an urban Sindh province,

– which would only stoke ethnic tensions and lead to polarisation. The PTI, which secured the biggest mandate from Karachi in the 2018 elections, appears clueless as to how to live up to the expectations of Karachiites as practically, the federal government can do little directly for the betterment of the city, by sidelining the PPP government in Sindh.

The failure of the political elite to reach an understanding among themselves on how to run the city and their continued game of brinkmanship has made them part of the problem rather than the solution.

The question of how to settle Karachi's problems and make it stand on its own feet should not be a complex riddle in this day and age. The administrative structure of other mega cities shows us the way. A straightforward, easy solution is to empower the third tier of the government and allow it to play its role. Ideally, an economically and financially vibrant city like Karachi should not be looking to the provincial or federal governments for funds. The city government, if allowed, can generate its own resources. Unfortunately, the rural-based political elite is not ready to empower the people and, in the name of democracy, is resorting to majoritarian politics rather than ensuring inclusivity.

Therefore, it is imperative that the state institutions intervene and serve as a

catalyst to get the issue resolved. The Supreme Court can do this by deciding the 2017 case filed by former Karachi mayor, Waseem Akhtar, calling for the implementation of Article 140-A of the Constitution in letter and spirit. Article 140-A reads: "Each province shall, by law, establish a local government system and devolve political, administrative and financial responsibility and authority to the elected representatives of the local governments."

The army chief, who has shown keen interest in the affairs of Karachi during his meetings with civil society members and businesspeople, can also use his influence to bring the warring political stakeholders of the city to the table and prod them to take a consensus decision, which redefines the rules of the game and empowers the city government.

In this day and age, Karachi should also be treated as a national security issue. A peaceful, efficiently managed and empowered Karachi will unleash its full economic potential, which will benefit not just the city and Sindh province, but the entire country. And this cannot be done without addressing the structural administrative and financial issues of the city and treating it as one holistic entity rather than dividing and bifurcating it for narrow election goals – as is being done by the PPP. ■



*The deluge and after...*

**II** pressure from the European Union and a handful of influential human rights groups. The last hanging in Pakistan was carried out on December 16. After that, not a single hanging has taken place – in violation of the law and the Constitution.

By placing an undeclared moratorium on the death penalty, the PTI government has followed in the footsteps of the previous Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP) government – but with one major difference: the PPP halted executions as a matter of policy. But the PTI has not even done that. However, just like the PPP, this government, too, has introduced a dichotomy in the system in which on the one hand, the courts are handing down death sentences, but on the

other, the executive authority is not carrying out the orders.

Either the government should go for a Constitutional amendment and scrap the death sentence once for all, or it should follow the law. This half-baked, hypocritical approach is bad news for those who are fighting crime and terrorism.

Pakistan needs a strong nationalist leadership, which can articulate its case effectively and does not kowtow to the EU and human rights groups which, by design or default, ignore the country's objective realities.

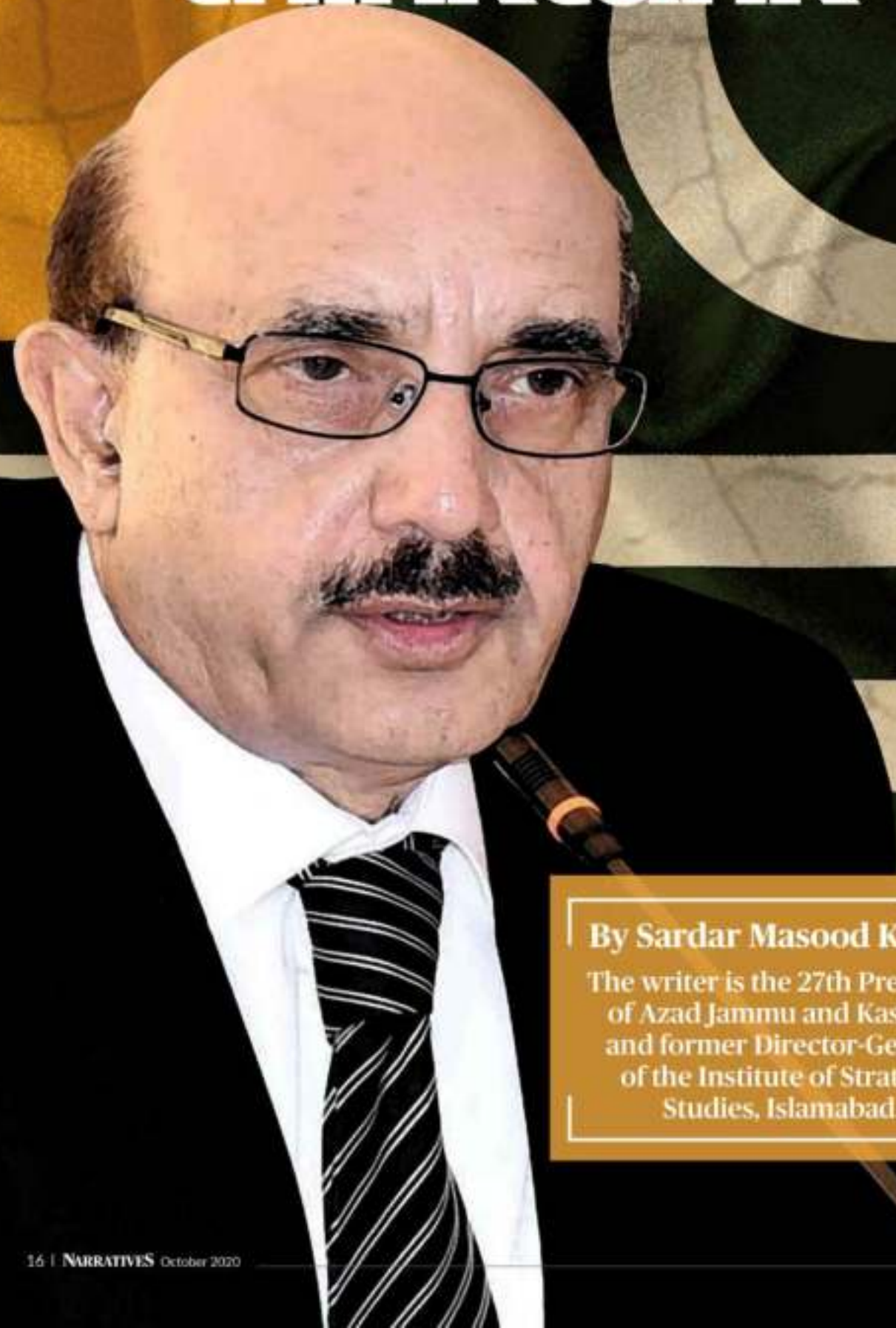
Prime Minister Imran Khan and his team do not need to reinvent the wheel by discussing senseless options of castration

and public hangings. Instead, the national debate on this issue should focus on police reforms, and on improving the investigation and prosecution systems and the judiciary, with the aim of ensuring that no criminal escapes justice and no innocent person gets punished.

Those opposing the death penalty are, in effect, supporting "criminal rights" that undermine and violate the rights of victims and their families and all the law-abiding citizens of Pakistan.

The government must immediately lift its undeclared moratorium on the death penalty and push for reforms which make justice swift, low-cost and easily accessible to the public. ■





**By Sardar Masood Khan**

The writer is the 27th President of Azad Jammu and Kashmir and former Director-General of the Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad.

## Reimagining the Kashmir Policy

Given the BJP government's audacious moves to make Kashmir a Hindu protectorate, in contravention of the UN Security Council Resolutions, Pakistan needs to revisit and reset its Kashmir policy.



**I**ndia's illegal and brazen annexation of the disputed Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK) on August 5, 2019 and the international community's strong censure of Indian actions taken in contravention of international law and the UN Security Council resolutions on Jammu and Kashmir, provided the people of Pakistan and Azad Kashmir an opportunity to reimagine, redesign and reset the Kashmir policy.

Prior to August 5, Pakistan's Kashmir policy comprised mainly five components: attempts to engage India through bilateral talks, which India has doggedly sabotaged since 2008 under one pretext or the other; raising the Kashmir issue before the UN General Assembly and its committees; using the platform of the

Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to condemn Indian atrocities in IOJK and demanding the right of self-determination for its people; marking special days in the calendar year in Pakistan, AJK and abroad, to highlight human rights violations in IOJK and express solidarity with the Kashmiris; and finally, mobilising international civil society, especially the diaspora community, in support of the Kashmir cause.

However, hopes pinned on that policy came crashing down when India took away the limited 'statehood' of the occupied territory by riling its separate flag and constitution, as well as stealing the rights and privileges of the Kashmiri population. In 1948, India itself had internationalised the Kashmir issue by

*As the BJP-RSS regime threatens to take Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan, and disintegrate Pakistan to realise their dream of Akhand Bharat, we have to conceive a Greater Pakistan Vision to save Kashmir, and Pakistan itself.*

taking it to the UN Security Council. But since 1972, after the signing of the Shimla Agreement, it has been harping on the bilateral nature of the dispute in order to prevent Kashmiris and the United Nations from making any diplomatic moves on Kashmir. Empirical evidence shows that India has never been sincere about initiating any meaningful bilateral process on Kashmir. Its tacit demand from Pakistan since 1971 has been that it should forget about Kashmir altogether and accept the status quo. India's facade of bilateralism was completely exposed last year, when it blatantly and unilaterally took a raft of illegal actions in the occupied territory, calling them an internal matter. The real intent of India all along has been to keep Pakistan and Kashmiris off-balance and buy time to consolidate its occupation of Jammu and Kashmir.

Since 1947, India has used every page from its playbook of tyranny to make Occupied Kashmir part of its federation. It carried out massacres, blindings, enforced disappearances, arbitrary arrests, torture, and used rape and sexual violence as an instrument of war. Nothing worked for them. Simultaneously, they also made crude attempts to win the

hearts and minds of the Kashmiris by giving development funds and bribes to select groups. This did not work either; people still demanded freedom. Successive Indian regimes also created an illicit pro-India political class in IOJK, led by Sheikh Abdullah, which would deliver Kashmiris to them. In return for privileges, these collaborators tried to sell Kashmiris to Delhi. But they did not represent the Kashmiris – and they do not, up to this day. India also tried to paint the Kashmiris' quest for freedom as treason and terrorism, and demonised Pakistan all over the world for backing the Kashmir freedom struggle. For 72 years, successive Indian governments and occupation forces exhausted all the tricks in their political and military repertoire to subjugate Kashmiris, but nothing worked.

The rise of the Hindu nationalist-fascist doctrine of Hindutva, under the leadership of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), marked a watershed in India's Kashmir policy. These extremist forces advocated and practiced direct action, instead of pursuing Chanakayan duplicity and dissimulation of the previous regimes. They would resort to settler-co-

lonialism, take hold of the land, change the complexion of its population and plunder the state's resources. They laid out an elaborate plan to impoverish the population by stealing their livelihoods and businesses. As a result of these fast-track actions, the population of the occupied territory faces disenfranchisement, dispossession and displacement. In fact, according to the US-based NGO, Genocide Watch, the occupiers are preparing for the extermination of the Kashmiris. The penultimate stage is the massacre of Kashmiris, reminiscent of the Nazi Party's mass killings and deportation of Jews in the last century. Never to be forgotten are the Jammu massacres of November 1947: nearly 250,000 Muslims were killed by violent Hindu extremists in just one month and some half-a-million were pushed out of the state. Kashmir is bracing itself for yet another holocaust.

Has the international community come to the rescue of the Kashmiris?

It has, and it hasn't, depending on the definition of the international community. The most influential parliamentary committees and the caucuses of the US Congress, the British Parliament, and even the French National Assembly and ASEAN spoke up. The Western media not

only called out the BJP regime but, in certain instances, heaped scorn on it for its crimes. A few countries also spoke up, notably China, Turkey, Malaysia and Iran. Some Western governments expressed similar concerns. One also heard carefully crafted and guarded statements from the UN leadership. There is a stark contrast between the groundswell of support for the Kashmiris in parliamentary and non-governmental circles and the silence of those governments that claim to champion human rights.

However, Kashmiris and Pakistan have scored some successes. After a gap of almost 50 years, Pakistan, with the help of China, succeeded in persuading the UN Security Council to hold three informal sessions on Kashmir. Early this year, 626 of out of 751 members of the European Parliament representing the entire EU political spectrum tabled half-a-dozen resolutions on Kashmir and India's unlawful Citizenship Act, though the vote on these resolutions was postponed. The entire Pakistani nation and the diaspora community have successfully galvanised support for the Kashmir movement across the world.

As a consequence of India's audacious moves, the Kashmir issue has been internationalised and moved up on the global agenda, though key decision-makers are still disinclined to intervene, stop India's aggression in Kashmir, and push the UN to play its rightful role of priming diplomatic machinery for solutions. The Sino-Indian stand-off in Ladakh has further complicated the situation with regard to Kashmir; the border clashes in the area and beyond are likely to prove to be a long haul. This and other developments may entail reinforcement of the status quo, which would give sufficient time to the BJP-RSS combine to accomplish its nefarious agenda in Kashmir.

Short of using nuclear weapons, India is moving full steam ahead. It is involved in multidimensional warfare in Occupied Jammu and Kashmir. Firstly, its 900,000 occupation forces are fighting a full-fledged war against unarmed Kashmiris, who reject India's writ. Secondly, worldwide, India is falsely projecting Kashmiris as terrorists. Thirdly, the BJP-RSS regime and their hardline affiliates have unleashed an all-out attack on Pakistan on the diplomatic and

political fronts throughout the world. Fourth, the BJP-RSS regime has sponsored a lethal hybrid war against Pakistan with the intent of pulverising Pakistan from within by employing tactics such as proxy wars, subversion, terrorism, incitement to hatred, economic meltdown, and weakening of national institutions. Cleverly, it has also put chokeholds on Pakistan at the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the UN Security Council and multilateral development banks to weaken Pakistan's economy. More evidently, it has started a vicious

*Key decision-makers are still disinclined to intervene, stop India's aggression in Kashmir, and push the UN to play its rightful role of priming diplomatic machinery for solutions.*

campaign against the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor with the help of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (commonly known as Quad, comprising the US, Japan, Australia and India). There are indications that the Quad may be transformed into a military bloc, like NATO, in the Asia-Pacific region. The purpose of these moves is to make Kashmir a Hindu protectorate, weaken Pakistan, advance its irredentist agenda and act as a regional gendarme in South Asia and beyond.

Given the plethora of challenges, what should be Pakistan's policy on Kashmir?

Here are some suggestions.

To begin with, you cannot succeed if you have a defeatist mindset. We must talk about the successes we have had. Unarmed Kashmiris, despite the most brutal repression in history, have continued their peaceful struggle and resistance against Indian rule. Kashmiri young men are giving their blood to

secure liberty and the Kashmiri nation has declined to be subjugated. Despite a myriad threats, and the costs that Pakistan has incurred, some that imperilled its own existence, it has not changed its pristine and robust stance on Kashmir and, in the recent past, through sheer grit, it has opened new doors for Kashmir diplomacy. The diaspora community and its friends across the world are ready to take the Kashmiris' freedom struggle against India to the next level.

Kashmir is an international issue. Let it remain in that domain. Don't bring it back to the bilateral chambers and tables. However, it would be a Herculean task to break the impasse on Kashmir in the UN or among the most powerful nations and muster their support for a solution. A number of factors hamper their engagement, which include *realpolitik*, emerging fault lines in the world order which have co-opted India as the West's favoured ally, Islamophobia, anti-China sentiment in many parts of the Western hemisphere, Pakistan's strong association with China, and the US, India-led opposition to the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). This does not mean that we cut off our lines of communication with the countries or forces that do not see eye-to-eye with us on Kashmir. Engagement with them is imperative. But, at the same time, we need to make new allies and remain in the international realm to build pressure to pave the way for multilateral diplomacy.

But while official diplomacy is crucial for seeking support on Kashmir, it has its own limitations. Therefore, we should now start a people's policy or a people-centred Kashmir policy. We should approach people directly all over the world. This may sound daunting but, in practice, such a policy is feasible. My own experience as a diplomat is that if you show up at the right forums, parliamentarians, councillors, mediators, human rights defenders, civil society activists, university students and faculty, think tanks and grassroots organisations will pay heed and respond to your narrative. It is critical that the Kashmir movement morph into an international civil society movement. The formal decision-making institutions will drag their feet but citizens on the streets



Hindu nationalists celebrate the scrapping of Kashmir's special status with a cut-out of PM Modi



A Kashmiri man being used as a human shield, a victim of India's brutal occupation.

would help. We have some good models to follow, which turned the 'impossible' into the 'possible'. Strong social movements have changed the world. For instance, a woman's right to vote, civil rights in the US, the abolition of apartheid in South Africa, the end of the Vietnam War, environmental protection, have all been made possible because of global citizenry's campaigns and resistance. Governments left to fend for themselves without the watch of the citizens, would tend to strike Faustian bargains and be blinded by crass mercantilism. The same formula applies to Kashmir. There is no dearth of evidence about the BJP-RSS regime's crimes against humanity in IOJK but the perpetrators are not being tried in tribunals. On the contrary, they are being appeased and mollified. So kick up a furore about this global acquiescence to Indian crimes and trampling of Kashmiris' rights through an international peaceful resistance movement.

Lawfare is another path. Contrary to public opinion that this tool has not been used in the past to attain the right of self-determination for the people of Jammu and Kashmir, the lengthy debates in the Security Council in the late 1940s and 1950s and more than a dozen resolutions on Kashmir passed in the Council were all a product of lawfare. Of course, lawfare today encompasses such areas as genocide, crimes against

humanity, ethnic cleansing, war crimes, targeted killings, cybersecurity and much more. We know for certain that India is accountable for its crimes in the occupied territory. The applicable law is clear too; it includes the Fourth Geneva Convention, Additional Protocol I, the 1948 Genocide Convention, the Statute of the International Criminal Court, several Security Council resolutions and many conventions and treaties under international humanitarian law. The Genocide Convention, in particular, enunciates that any action with the special intent, *dolus specialis*, to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group constitutes genocide. This is precisely what is happening in IOJK. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) considers the prohibition of genocide as a peremptory norm of international law, or *jus cogens*; so should its prevention, in my view. We could also seek the advice of the International Law Commission on the establishment of a special tribunal to conduct trials on the crimes against humanity being committed in IOJK.

A Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement should be launched against India because global corporate leaders, through their transactions and Foreign Direct Investment in India (FDI), underwrite Indian *genocidaires'* crimes in IOJK. The richer India gets, the more ruthless it becomes in weaponising its fascism and lebensraum in the occupied

territory. An incipient BDS movement has started in the form of thousands of media commentaries and extensive visual content on Kashmir, but it needs to be formalised.

Kashmir's freedom ought to be directly linked with Pakistan's national security. It is not mere sloganeering to say that Pakistan is incomplete without Jammu and Kashmir; it is a stark fact. Whether we think of Pakistan's territorial integrity, or its water security, or economic resilience, Kashmir lies at the centre. Given the threats from the BJP-RSS regime to take Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan, and disintegrate Pakistan to realise their dream of Akhand Bharat, we have to conceive a Greater Pakistan Vision to save Kashmir, and Pakistan itself.

To stem India's expansionist agenda, we have to secure our borders and boundaries that have become vulnerable to Indian misadventures and incursions. AJK and G-B need special protection. So do other areas of Pakistan that are being threatened by Indian-sponsored impulsive asymmetric wars, whether in the kinetic or non-kinetic realms.

In order to protect the country's vital interests and embark on the ambitious path of state building that includes Kashmir, the economy should be put centrestage. Economic and human development is of strategic importance. If this aspect is not handled well, all plans would prove to be mere sand castles.

The communications bonanza that we had on Kashmir at the international level last year, following India's occupation and annexation of the territory, is ephemeral and transient. It opened many doors for us, but this new space will disappear if we do not take the lead and demonstrate leadership. Despite numerous distractions, the world is still attentive to Kashmir. Now is the time to make the most of this opportunity, or else it would simply vaporise.

Finally, we need a bigger tool box to deal with India's hegemonism and expansion. Full-spectrum aggression demands a full-spectrum response. The balance of power should not remain skewed. We must scale up for establishing a tangible equilibrium and the entire nation must be galvanised for this endeavour. ■

## The Theology of Hate

Modi's Hindutva trident pierces through the very heart of India's secularism.



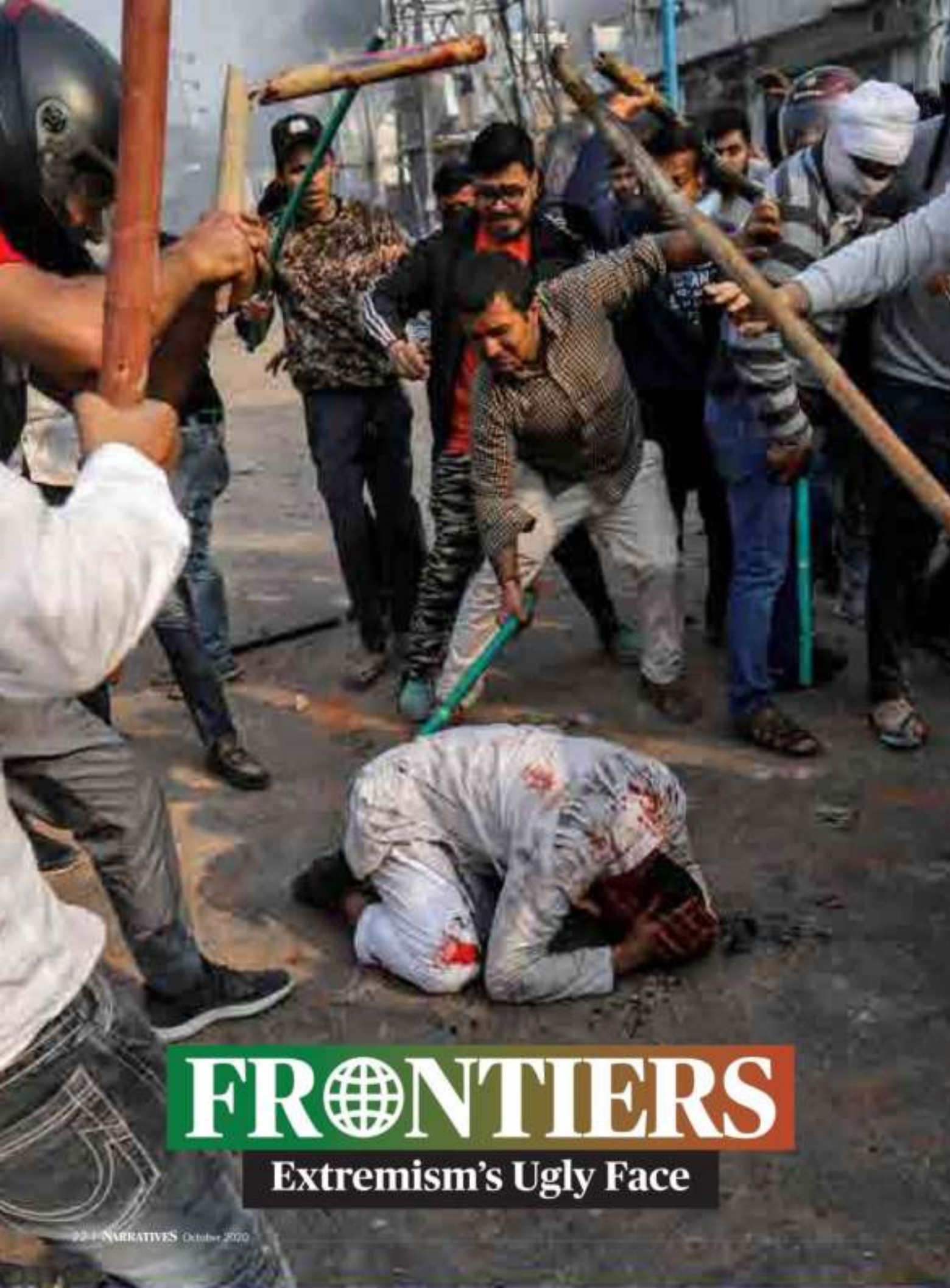
**By Syed Hasan Javed**

*The writer is a former Ambassador and the current Director of the Chinese Studies Centre at the School of Social Sciences and Humanities, NUST, Islamabad.*

**M**any Indians and even their friends in the West have never been more concerned about India's future as they are now, in 2020. The rapid deterioration in the country's polity, economy, regional position and global standing were unimaginable until a few years back, but the rise of Hindu extremist politics in the world's so-called largest democracy has stripped India of its thin veneer of Nehruvian secularism. Although the ruling Hindu fundamentalist Bharatya Janata Party (BJP) is trying to brush aside these concerns, blaming Covid-19 for the economic meltdown, the hard fact is that India's internal and external challenges are much bigger and far graver than this lethal pandemic. And the irony is that India's Western allies, who long projected it as a counterweight to China, are partially responsible for this situation.

The Western powers are extending generous technological and economic support to India in a bid to contain China, ignoring the hegemonistic agenda of Hindu extremists both within their country and the region, which threatens peace not just in South Asia but beyond.

Continuing Western support has made the BJP government more intransigent and, as a result, it has committed a series of strategic blunders that have sharpened the religious, caste and ethnic divide in India. The result is that on the one hand India appears isolated in its neighbourhood and on the other, its religious and ethnic minorities and the Dalits are increasingly becoming disenfranchised and insecure at the manner in which the Hindutva agenda is being thrust upon them. Yes, India may be feared by some of its neighbours by virtue of its size, but it is not respected.



# FRONTIERS

## Extremism's Ugly Face



A man protests the lynchings of Muslims and Dalits under BJP rule: The facade of 'Nehruvian secularism' laid bare.

Most people in the West are unaware that the core problem in South Asia is the 'structure and state of Indian society.' In 21st Century India, 'Hindu anachronism' and the revivalist movement are dominating each and every sphere of life – from politics to education to history to practicing sciences, including medicine. And this extremist Hindu mindset has not suddenly popped up out of nowhere. Its genesis can be traced back to the early 20th century, when right-wing Hindu nationalist, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, popularised the term 'Hindutva' (meaning Hinduness).

Western-educated Indians of the Congress Party attempted to present Hinduism as a tolerant, secular philosophy for nearly a century merely because they wanted to impose majoritarian rule in the subcontinent in the garb of nationalism and secularism – a narrative that was challenged and countered effectively by the founding fathers of Pakistan.

Hinduism has reasserted itself as India navigates the 21st century, with its delusions of past grandeur and oneness of the country. The Hindu extremist BJP and its ideological allies and mentors – the RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) and the Hindu Mahasabha – believe and propagate that primitive India was behind all the inventions, which other civilisations, including the West, later on

laid claim to.

The Aryans who descended upon the subcontinent in 1500 BC, brought with them the Hindu religion, art, the caste system, their social ethos and structure. They considered themselves a superior race, and relegated the indigenous population and the tribes to a marginal existence. The oppressive caste system, which plagues Indian society to this day, is just one example of this mindset.

India has not one, but several fault lines: the Indus/Eurasian fault line, the Ganges/Jamuna divide, the Aryan/Dravidian split, the North/South conflict, the Indigenous/Settler syndrome, the Muslim/Hindu conflict, the Vegetarians versus the Non-vegetarians, the High castes vs the Low castes, and the Hindi-speaking vs the non-Hindi speaking. It suffers from more contradictions and conflicts than any other country in the world. Geographically, too, there is a divide between the Ganges-Jamuna Plains and the Indus Plains; the Deltaic alluvial lowlands of the Eastern regions, which offer a stark contrast to the Rajasthan Desert; and the tall mountains of the North that have nothing in common with the Deccan Plateau.

The first ruler who established political unity in the subcontinent was Ashoka the Great 272-232 BC.

Later, Muslim rulers such as Alauddin

Khilji (1290-1316 AD), Muhammad bin Tughlaq (1324-1351AD) and the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb Alamgir (1618-1707AD), were among those who pushed the frontiers of their empires in Hindustan. They dreamt of a "united Hindustan," controlled by a central authority seated in Delhi. But this dream was only partially achieved by them.

India – the name given by the British conquerors – appears as the world's largest 'Cleft State'. Boasting followers of six major religions including, Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism and Zoroastrianism, India is not a cultural but an 'anarchic entity'. The high caste Hindus, who form the ruling oligarchy, are a minority comprising roughly one-third of the total population, in which only eight percent are Brahmins. They occupy more than half of all private and public sector jobs in the country. The lower castes – the tribals and Dalits,

*Western-educated Indians of the Congress Party attempted to present Hinduism as a tolerant, secular philosophy for nearly a century merely because they wanted to impose majoritarian rule in the subcontinent in the garb of nationalism and secularism – a narrative that was challenged and countered effectively by the founding fathers of Pakistan.*

comprising more than a third of the population – are under-represented both in the public and private sector jobs. The Muslims, who are estimated at 20



Farmers, increasingly marginalised in today's India, block a railway track in protest.

percent, are grossly under-reported in India's census for political reasons. India's Hindu caste society may be the only living 'apartheid' structure in the world, posing a serious challenge to human conscience and dignity. International law prohibits discrimination based on such frivolous considerations. Indeed, India is missing out on its future by remaining attached to its past. Indian unity – geographical, political, economic or cultural – is a 'myth.' It broke up in 1947. It can split again. BJP leaders recently talked about 'another partition.' India will be doomed, if it tries the Israeli template in Jammu and Kashmir. By annulling Article 370 and Article 35-A, which had granted special Status to Jammu and Kashmir, India has provided impetus to the Kashmiri freedom movement and internationalised the issue yet again.

Further, India has shot itself in the foot by its plans to build infrastructure projects along the edge of Chinese-claimed territory – a move that has antagonised China.

Indian society suffers from self-inflicted miseries. It was the British, who promoted the myth of 'India' being a

bastion of geographical political, cultural and economic unity, for their own imperial interests. Economically, India has never been a homogenous entity.

Different regions of India such as West Bengal, Assam and the northeast states, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Gujrat, East Punjab,

*Indian society suffers from self-inflicted miseries. It was the British, who promoted the myth of 'India' being a bastion of geographical political, cultural and economic unity, for their own imperial interests. Economically, India has never been a homogenous entity.*

Bihar etc are more or less self-sustaining economic units. The central government in New Delhi, drawing inspiration from the Soviet Union's centrally planned model of development, had made

concerted efforts to deprive these states of their economic sustainability. The objective was to crush the slightest aspiration of separation or independence. Agriculture-rich east Punjab, energy-rich Assam, mineral-rich Bihar and literacy-rich Kerala ended up getting a raw deal from the central government.

India attacked regionalism with regionalism, in an effort to strengthen the central government's power. It also encouraged resettlement and movement of population from states with a high concentration of people to sparsely populated regions. The division of East Punjab and the creation of the Haryana state was a case in point. Additionally, the creation of Jharkand

State was intended to deprive Bihar of its mineral-rich regions.

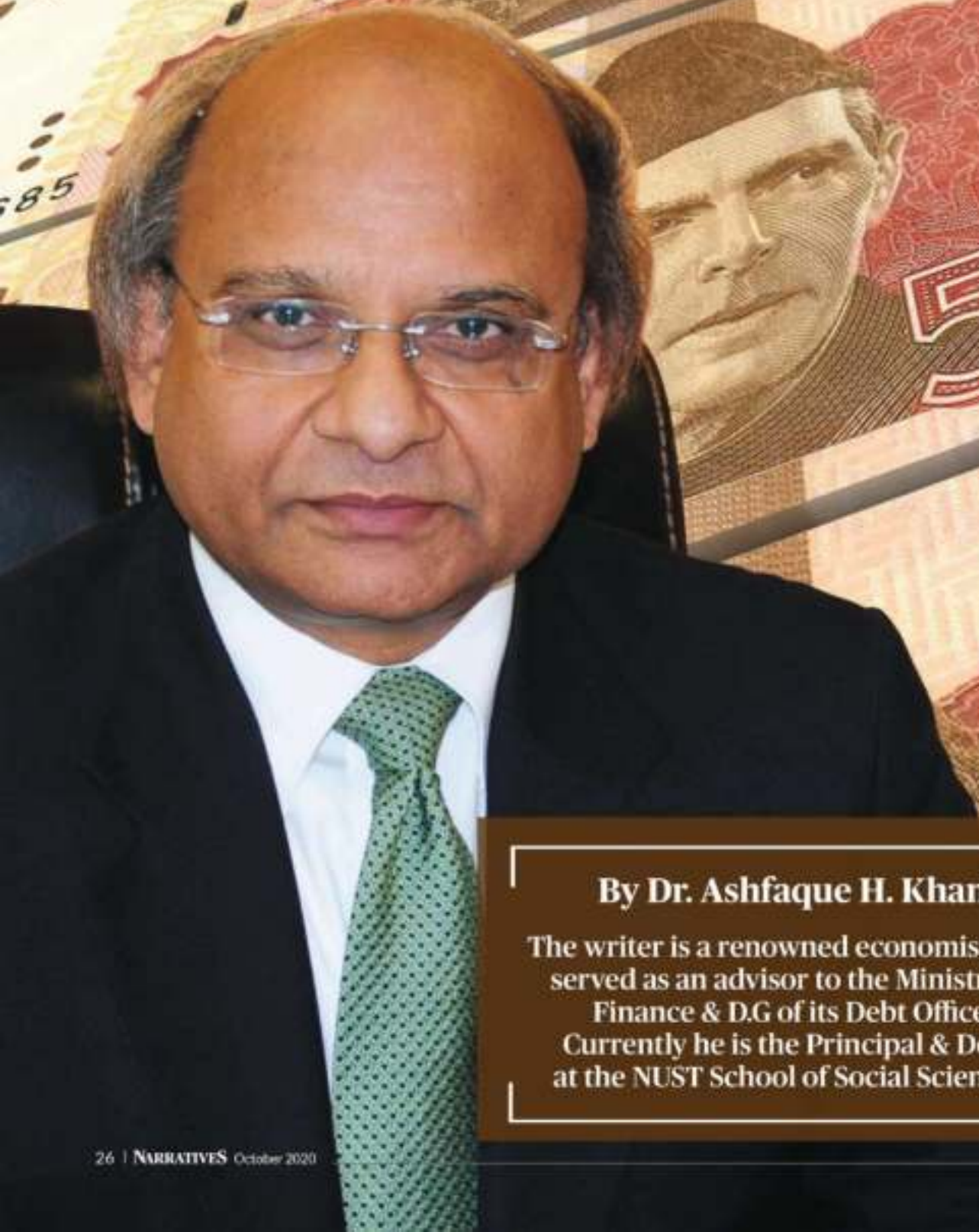
India's industrial landscape is highly skewed with power and wealth concentrated in certain pockets of prosperity and showpieces of development. It is beset with the largest number of

'insurgencies' – be they class conflicts, caste wars or outright secessionist movements. Despite the much-trumpeted mention of a middle-class of 400 million, 30 percent of India's population still lives in abject poverty. According to one credible estimate, one percent of the population in India, owns 74 percent of the country's wealth. And given the growing divide between the haves and have-nots, the country faces the danger of a 'bloody revolution' or disintegration à la Soviet Union, its former strategic ally. Alienation from the Centre keeps building up cumulatively. The Corona pandemic has laid bare the story of 'Shining India'

that was so enthusiastically formulated and promoted by its Western allies. Major policy missteps, a debilitating arms race with China, a divided polity and the raging Corona pandemic make India the 'wild card' of the 21st Century. ■

# INF•CUS

## Instability Foretold



**By Dr. Ashfaq H. Khan**

The writer is a renowned economist, who served as an advisor to the Ministry of Finance & D.G of its Debt Office. Currently he is the Principal & Dean at the NUST School of Social Sciences.

## Contentious Award

Cobbled together in haste, the 7th NFC Award creates a host of financial problems.

**E**ver since the 7th NFC Award became effective on July 1, 2010, it has attracted criticism from many independent economists. In recent years, the IMF termed this Award unbalanced and inflexible, making the country's macroeconomic management difficult, with serious consequences for overall socio-economic outcomes. It is generally argued that if no correction is made, Pakistan will continue to experience large fiscal imbalances leading to the acceleration of public debt. The present government is trying to address the challenges posed by the Award.

An effective system of intergovernmental fiscal transfers constitutes the cornerstone of strong and stable public finances in a country. The purpose of having a sound fiscal transfer mechanism is twofold. First, to minimise the vertical imbalances caused by the inadequacy of revenues of provincial governments to meet their expenditure requirements. Second, to alleviate horizontal imbalances caused by disparities in the revenue capacity of the constituent units of the federation, that is, provinces, so as to enable them to provide basic public services to their citizens at a reasonable level.

In recognition of the need to redress these two imbalances in a fair and orderly fashion, Article 160 of the Constitution of Pakistan provides for the establishment of a National Finance Commission (NFC) at intervals not exceeding five years. The NFC provides recommendations to the President of Pakistan on the distribution of resources between the federal and the provincial governments and amongst the provinces. These recommendations are implemented through a Presidential Order. The 7th NFC was constituted on July 21, 2005 and submitted its recommendations in April 2010 to the President. The recommendations became effective from July 1, 2010 through a Presidential Order.

In Pakistan, over 90 percent of taxes are collected at the federal level, and less than 10 percent at the provincial level.



Can this divided team salvage the NFC Award?

Provinces thus rely heavily on federal resources to meet their expenditure requirements.

There is broad agreement among professional economists that the 7th NFC Award has compounded Pakistan's financial difficulties. It has emerged as a major source of macroeconomic imbalances and promoted fiscal indiscipline. In a federal state like Pakistan, fiscal decentralisation is essential to improve quality of services provided to the masses. If fiscal decentralisation is badly managed, it can create serious difficulties for the provinces and the federal government.

The salient features of the 7th NFC Award include major adjustments in vertical and horizontal imbalances. First,

the tax collection charge the federal government deducted prior to the 7th NFC Award was reduced from 5 percent to 1 percent, thereby enhancing the size of the divisible pool by 4 percentage points and reducing the share of the federal government by the same percentage points. Second, the share of provinces increased from 50 percent to 56 percent in the first year (2010-11) of the Award and further to 57.5 percent in the second year (2011-12) onwards (See Table I). Accordingly, the share of the federal government declined to 44 percent in 2010-11 and further to 42.5 percent in subsequent years. This adjustment in shares was made to reduce vertical imbalances.

Based on the above shares as listed in

Table I

| Distribution of Resources |                       |                    |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Period                    | Provincial Government | Federal Government |
| 2010-11                   | 56% (50%)             | 44% (50%)          |
| 2011-12 onwards           | 57.5% (50%)           | 42.5% (50%)        |

Note: Figures in parentheses are the shares prior to the 7th NFC Award.

Table 2

| Transfer to Provinces |                |                   |                             |       |   |
|-----------------------|----------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|-------|---|
| (Billion Rs)          |                |                   |                             |       |   |
| Year                  | Divisible Pool | Straight Transfer | Special Grants/ Subventions | Total | Divisible Pool as % of total FBR tax collection |
| 2004-05               | 205            | 41                | 35                          | 281   | 35  |
| 2005-06               | 245            | 57                | 64                          | 366   | 34  |
| 2006-07               | 321            | 70                | 29                          | 420   | 38  |
| 2007-08               | 391            | 66                | 33                          | 490   | 39  |
| 2008-09               | 477            | 82                | 41                          | 600   | 41  |
| 2009-10               | 574            | 81                | 82                          | 737   | 43  |
| 2010-11               | 835            | 163               | 54                          | 1052  | 54  |
| 2011-12               | 1063           | 146               | 54                          | 1263  | 57  |
| 2012-13               | 1118           | 104               | 61                          | 1283  | 58  |
| 2013-14               | 1287           | 124               | 54                          | 1465  | 57  |
| 2014-15               | 1477           | 97                | 34                          | 1608  | 57  |
| 2015-16               | 1752           | 100               | 33                          | 1884  | 56  |
| 2016-17(E)            | 2044           | 92                | 40                          | 2176  | 56  |

Source: Pakistan Economic Survey 2010-11 (Table 4.3: PP 60) for the period 2004/05 to 2008/09; Pakistan Economic Survey 2012-13 (Table 4.7: PP 56) for the period 2009/10 to 2011/12; Pakistan Economic Survey 2013-14 (Table 4.6: PP 68) and Budget in Brief 2014-15 and 2015-16 for 2013/14 and 2014/15, respectively.

Table 1, a sizeable amount of resources were transferred to the provinces under the 7th NFC Award. Table 2 (next page) documents the amount of resources transferred to the provinces with 2010-11 representing the first year of the Award.

Let us examine the salient features of the 7th NFC Award. Firstly, a cursory look at Table 2 is sufficient to see that during the first five years of the Award, a sum of Rs. 6671 billion was transferred to the provinces as against Rs. 2613 billion during the five years under the previous (6th) Award – 2.6 times more resources were transferred to the provinces. Second, the share of the divisible pool as a percentage of the total tax collected increased from 41 percent in 2008-09 (the last year of the previous Award) to 58 percent by 2012-13.

Third, in order to address the issue of horizontal imbalances, inter-provincial resources were also adjusted. Table 3 documents the changes in the shares of the provinces. Balochistan appeared as a main beneficiary of the 7th NFC Award with its share increasing from 5.11 percent to 9.09 percent – an increase of 3.98 percentage points. Both Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) also gained, though marginally. Punjab, on the other hand, witnessed its share declining from 57.36 percent to 51.74 percent – a decline of 5.62 percentage points. The reduction in Punjab's share was distributed primarily to Balochistan and marginally to Sindh and KPK.

Fourth, while population used to be the sole criterion for revenue sharing prior to the 7th NFC Award, the current

Award is based on multiple criteria. This is one of the most significant features of the 7th NFC Award. These criteria include population (82%), poverty or backwardness (10.3%), revenue collection or generation (5.0%) and inverse population density (2.7%).

Fifth, special attention has been given to improve the financial health of Balochistan for its socio-economic development. For example, the share from the divisible pool was guaranteed at Rs. 83 billion in the first year (2010-11) of the Award, which was more than double the actual share in 2009-10. Balochistan has been guaranteed to receive its provincial share from the divisible pool on the basis of budgeted (as opposed to the actual) amount from 2011-12 onward. If there is a shortfall in revenue collec-

tion, Balochistan will not be affected and will continue to receive its share on the basis of budgeted or targeted revenue of the FBR. The federal government would compensate Balochistan from its own share in the event of revenue shortfall.

Sixth, recognising the role of the KPK as a frontline province in the war against terror, the Award provided an additional one percent of the net divisible pool to KPK to meet its expenses.

Having described the salient features of the 7th NFC Award, let's turn to the core question: has the 7th NFC Award worked for the betterment of the provinces and ensured financial discipline in the country?

There is general agreement among professional economists, the IMF and the present leadership that the 7th NFC Award, instead of addressing Pakistan's fiscal challenges, has compounded its financial difficulties. It has also been argued that under the 7th NFC Award, Pakistan can never achieve fiscal discipline and hence macroeconomic stability.

What went wrong in this Award? To begin with, it was finalised in haste by holding a few meetings in a short span of four to five months. Therefore, no proper homework was carried out and it lacked a sound economic foundation. Revenue projections for the duration of the Award were grossly unrealistic and as such created serious difficulties for subsequent macroeconomic management.

The scope of the Award was too extensive and its implementation too rapid to manage fiscal decentralisation in an orderly manner. Massive resources were transferred to the provinces in a short period without giving due consideration to their capacity to spend huge amounts of money prudently. Thus, it not only compounded macroeconomic instability, but also adversely affected the provision of public goods and services in the provinces. For example, net enrolment at the primary level, the overall literacy rate, and various health indicators, instead of improving, have deteriorated in the provinces.

The timing of the 7th NFC Award

Table 3

| Allocation of Shares to the Provincial Governments |        |          |
|--|--------|----------|
| Balochistan  | 9.09%  | (5.11%)  |
| Khyber Pakhtunkhwa                                 | 14.62% | (13.82%) |
| Punjab   | 51.74% | (57.36%) |
| Sindh  | 24.55% | (23.71%) |

Notes: Figures in parentheses are the old shares of the Provinces.



The 7th NFC Award has come under criticism from the IMF.

*There is general agreement among professional economists, the IMF and the present leadership that the 7th NFC Award, instead of addressing Pakistan's fiscal challenges, has compounded its financial difficulties. It has also been argued that under the 7th NFC Award, Pakistan can never achieve fiscal discipline and hence macroeconomic stability.*

was also inappropriate. Pakistan was already facing serious fiscal challenges; interest payment (a budgetary item) was rising at an unsustainable rate, doubling in just three years; the security environment was deteriorating due to the war on terror, which required more resources; power sector subsidies were rising at a greater pace and the public sector enterprises were bleeding profusely.

All these subjects fall under the domain of the federal government and require large resources. At a time, when financial requirements of the federal government were accelerating, the 7th NFC Award drastically cut its resources, increasing Pakistan's reliance on borrowing. On the contrary, the provinces were given so many resources that they were encouraged to pursue lax expenditure policies, thus contributing immensely to the rise of the overall fiscal deficit (the fiscal deficit rose from 6.2 percent of GDP in 2009-10 to 8.8 percent in 2011-12 and remained at 8.2 percent in 2012-13.) None of the growing financial needs of the federal government were taken into account when determining the shares between the federal and provincial governments.

It is strange that the bulk of the taxes collected from across Pakistan were transferred to the provinces and yet it was the federal government's responsibility alone to maintain financial discipline. The federal government, while receiving only 40 percent of resources from the divisible pool, cannot alone maintain

financial discipline in the country and also be answerable to the IMF for achieving revenue and deficit targets.

Because of the imbalances in the resources and responsibility of the federal government, it was forced to indulge in ingenious accounting. For example, the federal government was not releasing resources to the provinces on time; it gave perverse incentives to the provinces to not spend money; started holding back refunds/rebates to show higher revenue collection and treating privatisation proceeds and foreign grants as non-tax revenue instead of as financing items.

What needs to be done? How can this Award be salvaged without violating the Constitution? It goes without saying that the ill-planned, ill-timed and badly managed 7th NFC Award has created serious challenges for macroeconomic management in Pakistan. Ideally, a gradual move towards extensive fiscal decentralisation should have been made. This would have given more time and opportunity to the provinces to strengthen fiscal management by improving the



Former Finance Minister Ishaq Dar holds a meeting on the 7th NFC Award.

*Under the 7th NFC, almost three times more resources are being transferred to the provinces. Why then should the federal government with its depleted resources undertake federal projects in the provinces? Let the provincial governments finance development projects on their own.*

capacity of the provincial finance administration.

The damage has already been done as far as fiscal discipline is concerned. The real challenge now is to salvage the Award until a consensus is developed to have a new one. How can we salvage the Award? Here are some suggestions. First, it must be kept in mind that the present Award should not weaken the federal government's ability to reduce the fiscal deficit and public debt. Provincial governments need to improve either their own revenues or curtail unnecessary expenditure.

Second, the collection charges of revenue may be reverted back to 5 percent from the current level of 1 percent. This will immediately increase resources for the federal government. Third, under the 7th NFC, almost three times more resources are being transferred to the provinces. Why then should the federal government with its depleted resources undertake federal projects in the provinces? Let the provincial governments finance development projects on their own. Fourth, interest payments on public debt and defence spending are currently the responsibility of the federal government. Public debt is not incurred by the federal government alone, and similarly defence should be the responsibility of the entire country. Provinces therefore, may be asked to share the burden of interest payments and defence to the extent of their shares in the divisible pool.

Fifth, in the case of federal projects

executed in the provinces and any debt so acquired, the respective provincial governments may share debt servicing costs with the federal government.

Sixth, in order to achieve fiscal deficit targets without resorting to accounting tricks, some hard binding constraints may be put in place. Provincial governments should be bound to deliver surpluses to meet the consolidated fiscal deficit. The Council of Common Interest (CCI) or the National Economic Council (NEC) may be used as forums to decide the level of surplus that the provinces may have to generate.

Seventh, we may opt for a Permanent National Finance Commission headed by a renowned economist, with representation from each province. The purpose of the Commission would be to conduct research with a view to improving the fiscal decentralisation process; to monitor the specific fiscal reforms at the provincial level and to ensure service delivery in each province.

Eighth, a performance-based revenue transfer mechanism needs to be developed. 75 percent of the divisible pool can be released to the provinces on the basis of the NFC formula and the remaining 25 percent of the divisible pool may be linked with the performance of the provinces in service delivery. The high-powered Commission would monitor performance with provinces duly represented. Lastly, the provinces should set up Provincial Finance Commissions to make fiscal decentralisation a success. ■



# SCANDAL

## Shady Transactions

In my address to the General Assembly last year, I had highlighted the tremendous damage that illicit financial flows from developing countries to rich countries and to offshore tax havens cause. This leads to the impoverishment of the developing nations. Money that could be used towards human development is siphoned off by corrupt elites... The quest for getting back these stolen resources is nearly impossible given the cumbersome procedures. Moreover, the powerful money launders have access to the best lawyers... there is a lack of political will in the rich countries to curb this criminal activity...

*Prime Minister Imran Khan  
Address to the UN General Assembly,  
Sept 25, 2020*



## Double Standards?

CAYFIN suspects that funds held by JS family's SUN Trust & Akamoto Holdings Limited "might be derived from proceeds of criminal conduct."

**I**n his virtual address to the 75th session of the United Nations General Assembly, Prime Minister Imran Khan made a powerful case against money launderers, who siphon off massive amounts of foreign exchange from the developing nations to the rich countries and to offshore tax havens. He rightly complained about the lack of political will among the rich countries in taking on the issue because they remain the ultimate beneficiaries of the inflows of looted wealth.

"I call upon this Assembly to take the lead in efforts to build a global framework to stem the illicit financial flows and ensure speedy repatriation of stolen wealth," the prime minister urged. But Imran Khan's apparent strong and uncompromising stand against money launderers carries a tinge of irony. While he is taking on powerful politicians and their cohorts for their alleged involvement in corruption and money laundering, some persons linked to his own government are not above suspicion. And one such key character is Ali Jahangir Siddiqui, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government's ambassador-at-large for investment, appointed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to this position in "an honorary capacity" in June 2019.

Perhaps the prime minister and his core team remain unaware that the Confidential Financial Reporting Authority (CAYFIN) of the Cayman Islands has named both Ali Jahangir Siddiqui and his father, prominent businessman Jahangir Siddiqui, for "suspicious" money transfers.



*Prime Minister Imran Khan making a case against money laundering.*

In a letter dated December 16, 2019 (a copy of which is available with Monthly Narratives), CAYFIN has shared details of suspicious transactions made by the Siddiquis and their companies with the Director General of Pakistan's Financial Monitoring Unit, which operates under the umbrella of the Finance Ministry.

The CAYFIN letter, giving an overview of the case, said that this business family established The SUN Trust and Akamoto Holdings Limited in October 2011. "The (SUN) Trust was to be 'settled' by Jahangir Siddiqui for the benefit of himself and his son, Ali Jahangir Siddiqui (100 percent)."

*Perhaps the prime minister and his core team remain unaware that the Confidential Financial Reporting Authority (CAYFIN) of the Cayman Islands has named both Ali Jahangir Siddiqui and his father, prominent businessman Jahangir Siddiqui, for "suspicious" money transfers.*

Suspicion has arisen that Jahangir Siddiqui and his son, Ali Jahangir Siddiqui may be engaged in money laundering and that the funds received into the Trust structure, in whole or in part, directly or indirectly relate to the proceeds of crime.



Ali Jahangir Siddiqui – acceptable as an ambassador both by the PML-N and the PTI.

could be injected into the structure in this way in future as it was anticipated between US\$5-10m could be put into the trust," the letter stated.

As Ali Jahangir Siddiqui was aiming to enter public life and hold public office, he was excluded from any benefit from the Sun Trust on July 7, 2017. Instead, his father appointed three grandchildren - Alia Siddiqui, Zara Siddiqui and Jehan Siddiqui – as beneficiaries. At that time, these grandchildren were aged between one- to two-year-old.

In August 2017, Ali Jahangir Siddiqui joined the PML-N government and served as a Special Assistant to the Prime Minister with the status of a Minister of State. A few months later, in March 2018, he was appointed Pakistan's ambassador

to the United States by then premier Shahid Khaqan Abbasi amidst concerns within the foreign office as well as sensitive institutions, including the top brass of Pakistan Army, over his inexperience and ability to hold this high-profile and sensitive position. Later, Ali Jahangir Siddiqui maneuvered effectively to

Their Accounts were opened with the Deutsche Bank Cayman Island Branch in 2011. However, Deutsche Bank sold its global operations to Butterfield Bank (Cayman) Limited, which scrutinized all accounts. During the scrutiny, the Butterfield Bank found irregularities in accounts held by this Pakistani business

amount remains in cash in the Company as of date of filing this. Rileira was noted at the time of inception as being from the 'settler's' family foundation," the letter read.

The first twist in the tale, according to the letter, is that Jahangir Siddiqui refused to divulge information to the Deutsche

Bank about details of his foundation, citing confidentiality with Goldman Sachs. This refusal raised a red flag among the Deutsche Bank officials, who marked Siddiqui and all his associated accounts for strict monitoring. Ali Jahangir Siddiqui controlled the family foundation at that time.

"Notes on file suggest that the client was informed that no further amounts

become honorary ambassador-at-large under the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf government as well. The journey from being a close confidant of Shahid Khaqan Abbasi to holding office in Prime Minister Imran Khan's camp is an astonishing story of political and business wheeling and dealing, which has also left many in the government camp aghast.

The Cayman Island authorities

acknowledge that from 2013-18 "numerous investigations have been launched in Pakistan in relation to our client Jahangir Siddiqui, his financial services business and more recently Ali Jahangir Siddiqui in relation to embezzlement, insider trading, stock manipulation and money laundering." According to the Butterfield Bank Suspicious Activity Report these accusations related to activities as far back as 2007.

The CAYFIN letter stated that Jahangir Siddiqui and Ali Jahangir Siddiqui "may be engaged in money laundering and that the funds received into the Trust structure, in whole or in part, directly or indirectly relate to the proceeds of crime."

CAYFIN launched a through investigations into the business interests of the Siddiqui family and their companies. Although no further records were available with Cayman Island authorities on the Siddiqui family and their companies, open source searches did give a glimpse of their shady past, according to the document.

The CAYFIN investigations and the letter gives details of how Ali Jahangir Siddiqui was summoned by the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) in a case in which he was accused of siphoning off funds amounting to 23,758 million euros in 2008 for the purchase of an Italian company, Monte Bello SLR. Ali Jahangir

*The CAYFIN letter stated that Jahangir Siddiqui and Ali Jahangir Siddiqui "may be engaged in money laundering and that the funds received into the Trust structure, in whole or in part, directly or indirectly relate to the proceeds of crime."*

financial and government institutions at a price higher than the market rate to settle loan defaults, causing them a whopping loss of Rs.40 billion.

Similarly, the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) in its 2016 report revealed that prices of Azgard Nine group's share were artificially increased to Rs.70 from Rs.24, and

from Rileira Financial Corp, Goldman Sachs Bank AG Zurich on Dec 1, 2011, US \$950,000 was held in cash position, while US\$250,000 was invested in the money markets.

The Akamoto Holdings Bond portfolio as on Dec. 31, 2018 comprised of \$5,218,964 with the USD Market Value of \$5,407,470.98. "Akamoto Holdings seems to be taking short term loans against these bonds to execute a variation of investments," the CAYFIN letter said. "We are of the view that there are reasonable grounds to suspect that the funds held by the Cayman trust and underlying BVI (British Virgin Islands) company might be derived from proceeds of criminal conduct," it said, asking Pakistani authorities to contact them for further information.

"This information has also been disclosed to the Financial Crime Investigation Unit of the Royal Cayman Island Police Service for intelligence purpose only," the six-page letter said.

The CAYFIN informed Pakistani authorities that it holds numerous documents provided by the Butterfield Bank on this business family and it should not hesitate to contact it for their copies.

However, the matter remains gathering the proverbial dust on the file in the offices of Pakistan's Financial Monitoring Unit. And just as the NAB and SECP failed

**We are of the view that there are reasonable grounds to suspect that the funds held by the Cayman trust and underlying BVI company might be derived from proceeds of criminal conduct. We disclose this information to the Pakistan Financial Monitoring Unit for intelligence purposes only.**

family and alerted the CAYFIN about the dubious transactions in its Suspicious Activity Report.

"In December 2011, the (Akamoto) Company received an amount of US\$1.2m from an account with Goldman Sachs, Zurich in the name of the Rileira Financial Corp. These are the only assets of value to have been injected into the Trust, and a balance of approximately the same

Siddiqui was the director of investment firm Azgard Nine Ltd at that time and he allegedly used a foreign company, Fairytal SRL, Sweden for this purpose. NAB said that Fairtal SRL, which was used for the deal, suffered losses along with its shareholders because of the murky transaction.

The case of Agritech Limited was also highlighted in the investigations. Shares of this company were sold to various

payments were also made to an unidentified party.

However, none of these cases were brought to a closure because of the political and financial clout of Jahangir Siddiqui and his family. Both NAB and the SECP failed to follow through on these cases.

The CAYFIN letter disclosed that bank status of Akamoto Holding showed that out of the initial deposit of US\$1.2 million

to actively move against this politically connected business family, the Finance Ministry's Financial Monitoring Unit also seems to be following suit. However, it is also a test case for Prime Minister Imran Khan to walk the talk and while raising the issue of money laundering internationally and targeting rival politicians, also call for action against those powerful business interests that are now operating under his political umbrella. ■

## Hostile Relations

Will Jahangir Siddiqui be able to snatch away his sister Sultana's media empire?



By Farhan Reza

The writer is a senior Lahore-based journalist, who has worked for several leading media organisations

The Stock Exchange is just not a place for serious investors, but it is also a platform for speculators, who often manage to manipulate share prices and sometimes even dictate market trends. If the size of the market is relatively small—as in the case of the around \$43 billion Pakistan Stock Exchange—then manipulating the market can be difficult but not impossible. However, cornering a script and manipulating its price is a relatively easier task.

The latest example of manipulation in the price of a script is of Hum Network Limited (HUMNL). It surged by nearly 690 percent between March 31 and June 18, to hit a high of Rs.1705. This massive rise was as dramatic as many of the Hum Network plays that make it one of the most popular brands in Pakistan's entertainment industry.

While Pakistan's economy was slowing down and the market was lacklustre due to the Corona virus lockdown, the hefty gains in HUMNL share price were shocking as the company had booked massive losses for two consecutive years. In the financial year ending on June 30, 2019, the company slid into the red for the first time in its 14-year history to book a loss of Rs.535 million, while in the last fiscal it showed a loss of Rs.327 million till March 2020.

Certainly, the sharp surge in HUMNL share price was not because some bored investors confined in the wake of the lockdown decided to pass the time playing this stock while ignoring its fundamentals. With no chance of a turnaround in HUMNL fortunes in the near term due to the overall recession in the media industry, taking a chance with investment in HUMNL



Jahangir Siddiqui eyeing HUM Network?



Sultana Siddiqui – out to save HUM Network

shares did not make sense for any prudent investor. Even speculators do not take a plunge in such a stock, unless there are new developments.

Then what was the story behind the sharp rise in HUMNL share price? Who was accumulating its shares? And the biggest question, why?

As the price and trading volume of HUMNL shares moved up, rumours started circulating in the market that a serious hostile takeover bid of the company was imminent by none other than

Jahangir Siddiqui, the estranged brother of media Mughal Sultana Siddiqui, who established the Hum Network and remains the moving spirit behind its operations.

The feud between the younger brother and sister has all the elements of a tragic drama at the emotional level that has grown into a clash between their business empires. Jahangir Siddiqui, himself a leading businessman and big market player, is no stranger to controversies and scandals, but his high-profile political and business connections have allowed him to stay afloat in the murky world of Pakistani business. Sultana Siddiqui, compared to her resourceful younger brother, is seen as an underdog.

According to market data, abnormal activity started in HUMNL shares in mid-April when both its price and trading volume suddenly jumped up. If on April 14, HUMNL share price was Rs.2.31 with just 150,000 shares exchanging hands, on April 15 nearly 2.5 million shares were traded on the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSE) with a slim rise of Rs.0.34 in price as the stock

closed the day at Rs.265.

The next two days witnessed modest gains in the share price, but the trading volume remained above a million shares a day. Then, another buying spree was seen on April 17 as the trading volume peaked to 4.9 million shares, closing at Rs.350. Over the next 20 trading sessions, HUMNL shares were in high demand. This jacked up its stock price to Rs.1205 – an increase of more than Rs10 in a month. And by June 18, HUMNL price had shot up to Rs.1705.

By then speculations of a hostile takeover were rife in the market. Hum Network management noticed the abnormal activity in its share price and came out in the open, accusing Jahangir Siddiqui of accumulating its shares through companies and individuals affiliated directly or indirectly with the JS Group. Currently, the JS Group and its affiliated companies hold around 99 percent shares of HUMNL, while foreign investors, including Kingsway Group hold 44 percent, according to official company data.

As the battle to accumulate shares intensified ahead of HUMNL's August 22 Annual General Meeting, its management wrote a letter to the Pakistan Stock Exchange titled "Disclosure under Takeover Regulations" to inform shareholders that the company faced a hostile takeover situation. The letter, dated August 10, stated that Aitken Stuart Pakistan Private Limited (APPL) bought around 83 million shares of HUMNL between April and June 2020, which constitute around 8.83 percent of the total issued shares of the HUMNL.

"APPL during the period commencing May 20, 2020 to June 8, 2020 sold shares of the Target Company (HUMNL) to JS Bank Limited (79,030,303 shares), Jahangir Siddiqui & Sons Limited (3,375,197 shares) and Mr. Munaf Ibrahim (1,056,500 shares)," the letter said.

Hum Network management alleged that the "APPL is 100 percent owned subsidiary of OBS Healthcare (Pvt) Limited and is the holding company of AGP, which is a listed company. These companies are part of OBS Group, which is headed by Mr Tariq M Khan. JS Group and OBS Group have a long business association." To prove this point, the HUMNL quoted Tariq M Khan's statement in which he said that the "OBS has been associated with JS Bank since its inception." HUMNL also referred to a business deal, executed under the supervision of JS Bank, highlighting that share purchases for the APPL and Kingsway Group were made through the JS Global Capital Limited as their broker. Kingsway Fund also bought 16.5 million shares of Hum Network at the price of PKR 8.9 per share on June 8, 2020.

Market observers say that Sultana Siddiqui and her family themselves made their position vulnerable as they liquidated a significant portion of their holding to Kingsway Fund, becoming a minority shareholder with a 30 percent stake in the company,

down from 50 percent, although retaining management control. At the same time, the JS Group also entered a sell out deal with foreign investors and reduced their holding in HUMNL to 10 percent.

But after March 2020, APPL started acquiring HUMNL shares, increasing JS Group's holding to 90 percent.

Some leading market observers maintain that APPL and other entities, while accumulating HUMNL shares, breached the regulator's requirement under which they had to make their intention to buy voting rights share in the company public through the Pakistan Stock Exchange.

According to market sources, the Hum Network management spotted the organised purchasing of their company shares by end June. Now the total holding of JS Group and its affiliate companies is around 990 percent, whereas foreigners, including Kingsway own over 44 percent shares of the company. This panicked the Hum Management and it wrote a letter to the Pakistan Stock Exchange as well as going public with the information. The HUMNL share price rise is being equated with the stock market's La Azzard Nine Ltd scandal of 2008, in

The hefty gains in HUMNL share price were shocking as the company had booked massive losses for two consecutive years.

Hum Network Limited  
TECHNOLOGY & COMMUNICATION

Rs.6.95 ▼ -0.01(-0.14%)



which individual shareholders were among the worst victims of share price manipulation.

In the HUMNL share price manipulation, those who took positions in the script at the lowest level like Rs.2.30 were the main gainers in the April-June period. JS Bank, which is also a public listed company, allegedly used public money to buy shares of HUMNL at higher prices and passed the capital gain to Aitken Stuart, which made windfall profits.

Will the regulators, including the Pakistan Stock Exchange and Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan take note of such shady deals? So far no action has been taken as the issue has ended up in court, where a long and complicated legal battle awaits all the contenders for HUMNL's management control. The current management, however, managed to block the attempt to takeover in the August 22 AGM.

The JS Group in its reply to Pakistan Stock Exchange dated Aug 17, said that it was not acting in concert with Kingsway in the August 22 AGM of the company. It also denied any link with the HUMNL share trade during April and June.

"Aitkenstuart Pakistan (Private) Limited (APPL) is a separate entity which is completely unrelated to JS Group. JS Group is not concerned about APPL in any manner whatsoever," JS Group stated. JS claimed that "shareholders list of Hum

available to us as of June 30, 2020 does not have APPL on the share register."

"It is a commonly known fact that banks, investment companies and corporates regularly purchase and sell shares of listed companies over the PSX platform. Such normal commercial transactions are governed under the relevant securities laws and are a matter of public information. Therefore, there is no violation of any law if any JS Group company may have taken a position in the shares of the Company, especially since such transactions

are reported to the PSX," the JS statement said.

However, JS Group admitted that another company associated to JSCL and its subsidiaries held 3,375,197 shares of HUMNL. Although JS did not mention the name of company, but the HUMNL letter to the PSX had mentioned that Jahangir Siddiqui & Sons were holding 3,375,197 shares.

As both the current HUMNL management and its rival stakeholders dig in their heels for the battle to take over the company, it underlines how powerful and connected groups can dodge regulators to push their agendas. Meanwhile, legal battles and ongoing scandals can weaken even the strongest companies and distract the management from their real task of efficiently managing their entities and making them profitable.

Is HUMNL heading in this direction? Can Sultana Siddiqui and her team save their empire or will a new czar take over this media company? Perhaps it is too early to predict the outcome of this battle royal. ■

*The feud between the younger brother and sister has all the elements of a tragic drama at the emotional level that has grown into a clash between their business empires.*

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## Sharif's High-Stakes Gamble

Will Nawaz Sharif succeed in changing Pakistan's political landscape with his anti-military, anti-Imran agenda?



By Amir Zia

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

**A**fter months of speculation and waiting, the absconding former premier, Nawaz Sharif, finally broke his silence with a bang, throwing down the gauntlet not just to the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government, but also to the military leadership. In fact, his September 20 speech at the multi-party conference via video link was more against the military than the government. Sharif vowed to change Pakistan's political landscape and hold accountable those who had ousted him from power and installed Imran Khan as prime minister through what he alleged were manipulated elections in 2018.

Since those elections, Nawaz Sharif, head of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), has been continuously hammering his anti-army agenda through media talks and in interactions with party members. By doing this, he has not just raised the country's political temperature, but also crossed the red line from where retreat may be next to impossible.

But for now, his tough talk has certainly energised the anti-establishment camp within the party, as well as those small sub-nationalist groups which keep their politics alive on an anti-centre agenda. Sharif has also managed to eclipse all the other opposition forces in round one, and thrust himself centrestage as the main challenger to the current political setup. Many on the traditional and new media platforms are cheering and lauding his political rebirth as the nemesis of an institution which created, reared and placed him in the corridors of power. But that's become an old story.



*Sharif's tough talk has certainly energised the anti-establishment camp within the party, as well as those small sub-nationalist groups which keep their politics alive on an anti-centre agenda. Sharif has also managed to eclipse all the other opposition forces in round one, and thrust himself centrestage as the main challenger to the current political setup. Many on the traditional and new media platforms are cheering and lauding his political rebirth as the nemesis of an institution which created, reared and placed him in the corridors of power.*



Shehbaz Sharif outside the court: Paying for his brother's anti-army tirade.

on bail and allowed to proceed to London for treatment in an unprecedented bending of laws by the government. Never before in Pakistan's history, was any politician given such a concession on humanitarian grounds.

There was a glimmer of hope at the time that Shehbaz Sharif's policy of reconciliation, dubbed as 'appeasement' by the rival camp within the party, was working as efforts to send Maryam Nawaz abroad also intensified. As a consequence, despite strong anti-government posturing, secret deals made by the PML-N stalwarts, with the consent of Nawaz Sharif, helped the treasury members to pass laws. Maulana Fazlur Rehman's week-long Islamabad sit-in last year also played a role in strengthening Shehbaz's bargaining position, to the benefit of his elder brother.

However, while Shehbaz's appeasement policy helped secure Nawaz Sharif's passage out of the country, it did not get him any respite from the corruption cases against his own family and himself. Eventually, Shehbaz landed in prison soon after Nawaz Sharif's tirade against the military establishment. Interestingly, many in his party see this as a blessing in disguise for the former Punjab chief minister, who aspires to become prime minister some day – just like his elder brother. "He has been saved from making the critical decision of whether to join the protest camp or stay out of it," shared a PML-N stalwart.

Earlier, much to the dismay of Nawaz Sharif, the party's efforts to get permission to send Maryam abroad fizzled out not just because Prime Minister Imran Khan opposed it, but also because the establishment saw her as being very hawkish and bent on settling scores with the military leadership, whom she blames for her father's plight.

Senior PML-N leader and former Sindh governor, Mohammed Zubair, who advocated resistance, protests and hardening of policy against both the government and the military, was also tasked to talk to the military leadership. Zubair met with the Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Qamar Javed Bajwa twice, but as stated by the DG ISPR, the message from the military top command was clear: political matters should be settled in parliament and cases in courts.

One would have thought that this message would be welcomed by the Sharifs because the military leadership has long been accused of involving itself in politics. But that was not to be. Nawaz Sharif emerged from his hibernation all guns blazing against the security establishment.

According to a former senior military official, Nawaz's stance reflects his growing frustration with the political scenario. "He has burnt his boats... it is his last-ditch effort to sidetrack demands for his return to Pakistan to face the corruption cases

In the current context, there are other pertinent questions surrounding the 'Newsmaker' of the month, including the primary one: why did Nawaz Sharif and his daughter, Maryam, stay on silent mode for such a long time – even after the former was flown out to London ostensibly for treatment of a life-threatening ailment, and the latter was freed and allowed to reside in her house in Jati Umra? What were the father-daughter duo thinking, planning and anticipating even as PML-N parliamentarians hobnobbed with the civil and military establishment, thrashing out behind-the-scene deals on assorted issues, including legislation, with their complete knowledge and approval? And now that they have failed to get a reprieve, what do Sharif and his team mates hope to achieve through their anti-army rhetoric?

The long, but meaningful silence of father and daughter stemmed from 'great expectations' of winning concessions and political space from the establishment. In fact before his departure for London in November 2019, whenever Nawaz Sharif spoke to the press during his various court appearances, his tone and choice of words was always measured.

Meanwhile, Maryam Nawaz had completely cut herself off from public life since September 2019. "Not just her (Maryam's) twitter account was silent, but she had distanced herself totally from the party and its affairs since September (2019). It's only now, after almost a year, that she has resumed political activities," said a senior PML-N leader in a background interview. "During her long silence, she was in touch with just two people from the PML-N (Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz) – Pervaiz Rashid and Marriyum Aurangzeb," he said, requesting anonymity.

This silence, coupled with behind-the-scene manoeuvrings, resulted in some dividends for Nawaz Sharif: serving a seven-year sentence on charges of corruption, he was released

against him, as brother Shehbaz had promised," he said. "This stance is also an attempt to keep the party united and prop up supporters, who are getting more and more wary because many of them think that they have, once again, been thrown to the wolves, while the party's first family is cutting deals and enjoying their fortunes both here and abroad."

Sharif's breaking his silence is in great measure due to the refusal of the powers-that-be to get him off the hook of accountability rather than any burning desire to serve the interests of the masses and speak-up for their rights.

Sharif's central narrative also includes bashing the accountability process and slamming his ouster – neither of them peoples' issues but those of a handful of super-rich politicians, their aides and bureaucrats, who face corruption charges. The demand of Sharif and his allies in the newly formed Pakistan



*The long, but meaningful silence of father and daughter stemmed from 'great expectations' of winning concessions and political space from the establishment. This silence, coupled with behind-the-scene manoeuvrings, resulted in some dividends for Nawaz Sharif: serving a seven-year sentence on charges of corruption, he was released on bail and allowed to proceed to London for treatment in an unprecedented bending of laws by the government.*

Democratic Movement (PDM) to scrap the National Accountability Bureau has come only after their failure to get the accountability laws diluted. By building pressure through the PDM, Sharif wants to win concessions for himself and his family and create political space for himself.

His loyalists however, believe that whatever the party and the former ruling family had to lose they have lost. "Cutting a deal when we were in power made sense... but now, when all is lost, the only way out is through confrontation rather than appeasement," remarked a PML-N leader.

Even so, does confronting state institutions make sense? The answer to this tricky question within the PML-N, is a 'no.'

The joke doing the rounds during his third stint in power was that if 'Mian sahib' had his way, he would transform the Pakistan Army into a highly politicised and personalised Punjab Police... but he could not fulfil this dream."

The influential and business-savvy Sharif family used their political clout to advance their business interests – legally and

illegally. They exploited the flaws in Pakistan's investigation, prosecution and judicial system to their advantage. The Panama Papers and other corruption cases against Sharif and his family are not a figment of someone's imagination.

Will Sharif succeed in taming state institutions while remaining in the opposition – a dream which he couldn't realise during his three terms as prime minister? Will he be able to save his politics, wealth and family empire in this make or break fight? Will the PDM be able to deliver what he wants for himself and his family?

Although Sharif is being portrayed as a 'danger man' for the current political dispensation his followers, political allies and a section of the media, the fact remains that he is pitted against the combined might of the government and the establishment. And to expect him to forge change, both in the outcome of the game and its rules, remains a tough call not just because of his past baggage, but also because he appears to be playing only for himself and his family. ■

# The Big Question

Former premier Nawaz Sharif is on the warpath, not just with the government but also the military leadership. In a hard-hitting speech delivered at the multi-party conference from London, where he is presently 'recuperating,' he levelled several allegations against the latter, accusing them of calling the shots in every sphere of political life and engineering the political process, thus posing a threat to democracy.

Is Sharif's tough stance piling on pressure on the government and military establishment or is it leading his own party into a blind alley? Has Nawaz Sharif committed political hara-kiri with his September 20 speech?

**Narratives** asked former defence secretary, Lt. Gen. (retired) Asif Yasin Malik, senior journalist and former Group Editor of the English-language daily *The News*, Shaheen Sehbai, and security and political analyst Qamar Cheema, a faculty member at the Department of International Relations, National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad, to give their views on the subject.

## Lt. General (R) Asif Yasin Malik

Former Defence Secretary

**M**ian Nawaz Sharif delivered his controversial speech from the United Kingdom, which has become a 'safe haven' for many politicians and businessmen from Third World countries, who have either been convicted for financial fraud and stealing public money or stand accused for such white-collar crimes.

Followers of Sharif and his family celebrated his 'contentious' remarks with fireworks.

The speech Sharif delivered at the multi-party conference was the kind one expected from the so-called shining star of what we call 'democracy' in Pakistan. One has not forgotten his infamous 'dictation' speech and several other speeches in which he presented himself as the 'knight in shining armour,' but crumbled in a matter of hours when faced with the challenge of walking the talk.

In his latest outburst, Sharif read from a script written by those who wish to portray him as a warrior, which he certainly isn't. And in his exuberance, he lost sight of the very objective of the speech and ended up following a path that could lead him into complete political wilderness. A leader must have the vision to see beyond his nose. Sadly, *Mian Sahib* only exhibited his political short-sightedness through this speech and disappointed those few in the establishment who still believe that there remains a streak of leadership in him.

The PML-N has always been seen as establishment-nurtured party; consequently many of its leaders and followers support a pro-establishment stance. Unfortunately, Sharif has yet again, forced the establishment to take the unprecedented step of coming out in the open to make clear its own stance through the statement of the DG ISPR.

Nawaz Sharif's speech was preceded by several PML-N leaders' desperate attempts to mend fences with the establishment, end the distrust between them and create a favourable window for their party in Pindi and Ahspara. This episode has exposed the disjointed and contradictory approach of the PML-N leadership.

The greatest beneficiaries of Sharif's ill-timed and ill-structured diatribe are the PTI and the PPP. Both these parties are in power – the former at the Centre and the latter in Sindh – and

*A leader must have the vision to see beyond his nose. Sadly, Mian Sahib only exhibited his political short-sightedness through this speech and disappointed those few in the establishment who still believe that there remains a streak of leadership in him.*

are greatly dependent on the support of the establishment, which could improve further, given the latter's strained relationship with the PML-N. Also, the pro-Shehbaz Sharif lobby within the party would be quite happy with the Nawaz group's confrontationalist path as it could eventually open the doors for their faction within the party, which believes in reconciliation and national consensus to take the country forward.

Overall, Nawaz Sharif's controversial speech will have a positive impact on Pakistan's political landscape. Why? Because it has further exposed many of the leading politicians, including Nawaz Sharif, in their true colours. The earlier this mess is cleaned up, the better it will be for Pakistan.

There is also a lesson in all this for the establishment: the further it stays away from politics, the better it would be – especially for the political process. It would force the leadership to focus on grassroots politics and the welfare of the masses rather than lean on the establishment's support. In any case, in spite of helping these leaders at one time or the other, the establishment ends up being blamed for the deeds and misdeeds of these politicians and their respective parties. ■



## Shaheen Sehbai

Former Group Editor, *The News*

**T**wo years down the road, Nawaz Sharif is still harping on the theme of rigging in the 2018 polls and blaming the army in what appears to be an act of desperation.

He fails to realise that he has missed the bus. His party had not lost the elections by a wide margin. In fact, the PML-N had won a considerable number of seats both at the federal and Punjab levels. And had he immediately challenged the validity of the polls and refused to accept the results, there was a chance that some constituencies might have been opened and a thorough probe conducted. But that was not done, despite Imran Khan's offer to open any number of constituencies.

If discrepancies and rigging had then been established at the time, it would have raised questions about the entire polling exercise. And Khan might have been persuaded to go for re-election in all constituencies.

Nawaz did not challenge the results, in fact, he even rebuffed Maulana Fazl-ur-Rahman when he suggested that the Opposition should not take oath in the new assemblies. But poll results aside, Nawaz was overwhelmed in the game of wheeling and dealing that takes place after every election. If truth be told, he was no longer the "darling" of the Establishment, as he had been for years. A new man had stepped into that "coveted" position.

Then came the Panama papers that sent alarm bells ringing for the Sharifs. Nawaz was shown the door and no one came to his rescue. He had been abandoned by his erstwhile patrons. And now by blaming them in his September 20 speech, he has thrown his own family and his party into jeopardy.

Meanwhile his brother Shehbaz, who rightfully claims to be his political heir, having served as second fiddle for years, has openly advocated a no-confrontation policy with the Establishment and has always maintained his links with them, mostly to seek favours for his elder brother.

However, the tussle for the throne within the family and the



*Maryam Nawaz is pushing hard for a confrontation and Shehbaz Sharif has been thrown under the bus, by her and her father. The party cadres are bewildered because the PML-N was never known to have the genes to become a revolutionary party under the leadership of a "fake" Che Guevera, who was born and nurtured in the nursery of the military establishment.*

And even if Imran Khan and Rawalpindi were to end up having a major squabble that spins out of control – chances of which are remote – it would be extremely hard for Nawaz to stage a comeback. He comes with a heavy baggage – and no one wants to carry excess baggage any more. ■

confusion in the narratives of the brothers has subverted most of Shehbaz's appeasement efforts. In fact, Nawaz's speech proved to be the last nail in the coffin.

Maryam Nawaz is pushing hard for a confrontation and Shehbaz Sharif has been thrown under the bus, both by her and her father.

The party cadres are bewildered because the PML-N was never known to have the genes to become a revolutionary party under the leadership of a "fake" Che Guevera, who was born and nurtured in the nursery of the military establishment.

It appears that for now Nawaz cannot, or will not, return to Pakistan. He appears to be following in the footsteps of MQM founder, Altaf Hussain.

## Qamar Cheema

An Islamabad-based academician and political analyst

**P**akistan's political temperature has been on the rise since 2018 because a relatively new political party, the PTI, emerged as victor with a slim majority in the last general elections, breaking the status quo and challenging the strength of the two former ruling parties.

Since August 2018, the opposition parties, which are outside the power matrix, are being actively pursued by the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) on corruption charges, although the majority of these cases were registered during their own tenures. Many opposition leaders, who are in jail or living abroad, believe that they could politically engage the military establishment to clear their way back into the political arena.

At the recent multi-party conference, Nawaz Sharif announced that his struggle was not against Imran Khan, but against those who brought him to power, shifting the discourse towards the alleged interference of the establishment in political matters, which is neither good for democracy nor for the leadership in the security apparatus.

Pakistan's national security leadership would not like to be dragged into politics as this compromises their reputation and professional responsibilities. But at the same time, civilian leaders should also refrain from outsourcing their responsibilities to the military and instead, engage with the country's political forces in a mature manner to strengthen the democratic culture.

After Nawaz Sharif's speech, the trust deficit between the elected and unelected offices has increased. This is evident from the DG ISPR's disclosure that former Sindh governor Muhammad Zubair met with the COAS, Qamar Javed Bajwa, and allegedly pleaded Nawaz Sharif and Maryam Nawaz's case. This was followed by opposition leader Shehbaz Sharif's arrest, giving the Nawaz Sharif-led opposition more space to toughen its anti-establishment stance.

Nawaz Sharif's decision to confront both the government and the establishment at the same time will help Imran Khan, who is banking on a hybrid political system because of his slim majority in Parliament. Khan's decision to bank on the establishment



*Khan's decision to bank on the establishment rather than engage with the opposition, makes it clear that he does not believe in political consensus, which is not a good omen for democracy.*

doors, they are not taken on board. This has created a lingering distrust even within the PML-N itself and the House of Sharif. Such divisions could limit the PML-N's capacity to go full throttle on the confrontation path.

The opposition parties are well aware that they cannot bring down Imran Khan's government immediately, but challenging him can create an environment which would help them win the 2023 elections. ■





### By Maleeha Lodhi

The writer was Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the UN. She has also served as Pakistan's High Commissioner to the UK, twice, and as Pakistan's Ambassador to the US.

## The Post-Covid World Disorder

An increasingly fragmented international system will make addressing global challenges a formidable task in a post-Covid world.

**W**ill the post Covid-19 world see more international solidarity to deal with common challenges? Will the world move towards strengthening of multilateralism, which has been under so much stress? The short answer is, this is unlikely if current trends are anything to go by.

Never has the world been so interconnected and yet so atomised. Never has international solidarity been more needed to deal with common problems but unity so elusive. The Covid-19 crisis has thrown these telling paradoxes into sharp relief.

While unprecedented global cooperation and a collective response will be needed to negotiate the many consequences of the pandemic – threats to public health, economic recovery, food security, recession and unemployment – many countries will tend to turn inwards and act on their own. This is what has been happening after the coronavirus struck, with the pandemic only reinforcing a worrying global trend.

The world is, in fact, in the midst of one of history's most unsettled periods with a number of trends reshaping the international landscape: retreat from multilateralism at a time of multipolarity, the rise of anti-globalisation sentiment, erosion of a rules-based international order, trade and technology wars between big powers and the rise of populist leaders who reject internationalism, pursue hyper-nationalist policies and act unilaterally.

While the UN General Assembly's 75th session that started in September seeks to reaffirm the collective commitment to multilateralism, this is unlikely to go beyond declaratory statements and sanctimonious speeches.

The retreat from multilateralism has, in fact, emerged as one of the dominant trends in the pre-Covid decade and there is a big question mark over the future of collective global endeavours even at a time of rising multipolarity. There are



Multilateralism faces a bleak future as Covid heightens US-China tensions.



several factors at play that make the future stability of international affairs uncertain at best and more turbulent at worst.

A key factor behind this unpredictability is the renewal of East-West tensions. The confrontation between the two global powers, the US and China – who have the world's most consequential

relationship – underlines how the clash of geopolitical interests and ambitions is contributing to a fraught international environment. The pandemic heightened tensions between them, which were already at a record high before the Covid outbreak with the two countries locked in fierce trade and tech wars. This situation has variously been described as



a new Cold War, end of the post-1979 era, and a geopolitical turning point.

An important factor that could shape their future relationship will be the US elections in November, when the next American President will have to decide how to manage relations with China: to stabilise and recast the relationship on new terms, or embark on a course of prolonged confrontation? In both eventualities, a return to engagement that previously characterised relations with China is not expected.

This is because the political and Congressional consensus as well as public opinion that has emerged in the US – fanned by President Donald Trump's belligerent actions and incendiary rhetoric – sees China as an adversary or enemy that has 'manipulated' the US on trade and poses a strategic challenge that needs to be countered and contained, not engaged. Many foreign policy advisers of the Democratic contender for the Presidency, Joe Biden, also happen to be hawks on China. Therefore, whoever wins the election can be expected to follow a tough line on China.

Beijing's preference is to deescalate

*The world is, in fact, in the midst of one of history's most unsettled periods with a number of trends reshaping the international landscape.*

tensions and steady relations with Washington. But it is also evident that the Chinese leadership is no longer going to take aggressive actions by the US lying down. It is already pushing back against Western criticism and what it sees as US bullying. There is fresh thinking in Beijing about how to deal with a more antagonistic Washington and growing nationalist sentiment that their country should stand up to US provocations. This sentiment is already driving a more assertive Chinese policy in Asia and beyond.

As for European unity, this has been

further tested during the pandemic and with Brexit on even more contentious ground, the future of the European project is ever more uncertain. French President Emmanuel Macron has already been warning of the collapse of the European Union if certain actions are not taken. The role and influence of the EU in international affairs is therefore mired in uncertainty.

Meanwhile, challenges to established international norms and international law continue. It is not just the US that has acted in defiance of multilateral commitments – reneging on the Iran nuclear deal, rejecting the Paris Agreement on climate change, withdrawing from the UN Human Rights Council and the World Health Organisation – but other nations too. Russia by its annexation of Crimea, and in our own neighbourhood, India's illegal actions in occupied Jammu and Kashmir. Indeed, the most egregious human rights violations continue in occupied Kashmir, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government acting in utter violation of UN Security Council resolutions and international humanitarian law.

In fact, right-wing populist leaders such as Modi and Trump have been in the forefront in flouting international rules and acting unilaterally. The rise of such populism, predicated on extreme and intolerant nationalism, has been a major contributory cause for the increasing turbulence and instability of the international system.

A frustrated UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres has had to frequently remind a fractured global community to respect human rights and international law, and about the value of international cooperation for the common good. In a speech in July, he also drew attention to the "growing manifestations of authoritarianism, including limits on the media, civic space and freedom of expression." He warned that "Populists, nationalists and others who were already seeking to roll back human rights are finding in the pandemic a pretext for repressive measures unrelated to the disease." Guterres has repeatedly called for unity and solidarity to address global challenges, often pointing out that multilateralism is needed more than ever to "repair broken trust in a broken world."

Despite these entreaties before and during the pandemic, international cooperation has remained in short supply. Indeed, weakened commitment to multilateralism continues to be an unedifying feature of the global environment today. From the resurgence of intense geopolitical competition between the big powers, diminishing respect for global rules and go-it-alone strategies of populist leaders, who fan xenophobia for political gain, the picture that emerges is of an increasingly fragmented international system.

This is unlikely to change in the post-pandemic world. It is far from certain what kind of international order will evolve from the present Hobbesian-like melee. The deep divisions between and within countries and a fractured world will make addressing global problems much more formidable in the future. The US Presidential election later this year will be critical for its global impact. Its outcome may not overturn the trends already in evidence, but it could have a major influence on the future of a fraying multilateral system. For now, the outlook for the post-Covid

*From the resurgence of intense geopolitical competition between the big powers, diminishing respect for global rules and go-it-alone strategies of populist leaders, who fan xenophobia for political gain, the picture that emerges is of an increasingly fragmented international system.*

world is not encouraging even at a watershed moment when global cooperation is most needed for the multiple challenges that lie ahead. ■

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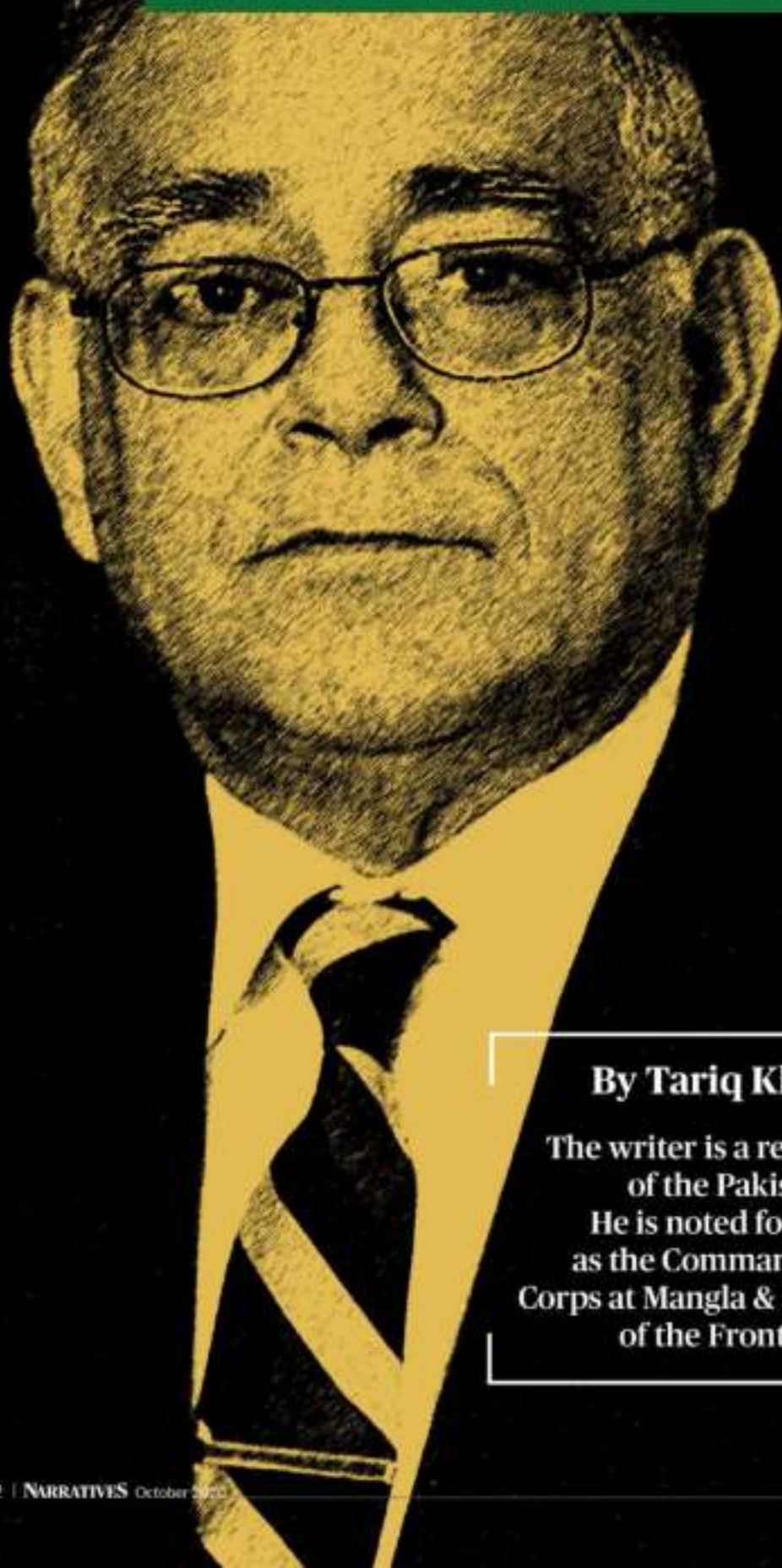
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## DEFENCELINE



**By 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.

## Still Seeking Salvation

In the seven decades since Partition, Pakistan remains a country without a nation, in search of an identity.

**P**akistan is a relatively new country, but soon after its inception it had already begun to lose its true direction and purpose. It is now commonly misbelieved that the country was conceived because of ideology. In fact, it was conceived to escape ideology. Two factors point in this direction: first, that the majority of Muslims were actually abandoned in India at the altar of the Lahore Resolution of March 24, 1940, in favour of Muslim majority areas. Second, the current status of Muslims in India and the treatment they are receiving in a Hindu-dominant ideology. This can be further questioned in the wake of the Two-Nation Theory and the break-up of East Pakistan. Two conclusions stand out as a fact: Bangladesh never joined India, and Pakistan was not constructed for Islam.

However, it is this very thinking that dominates our external and internal policies. Resultantly, the country has morphed into something it was never designed to be. Over the years it has refused to become a nation, instead forcing its people to look towards a larger objective – the 'Islamic Ummah.' Thus, instead of looking inwards, the country has insisted on looking outwards – for assistance, for resources, for employment, for support and for recognition. This has determined its outlook and profile, and engendered both, an alignment with ideologically compatible elements, and with globally acceptable governance principles. This in turn has led to two different and opposing perceptions in perpetual conflict with one another: a government trying to find its place in the comity of nations as an international entity based on a universally accepted social order, and a public at large held hostage to an extreme position based on ideological thinking – which nothing short of death would do to defend. Somewhere between these two positions lies the State of Pakistan – a country without a nation, in search of an identity.

In this situation, the backdrop of National Security for Pakistan has to be discussed; the parameters not only need to be defined, but clearly understood. After all, before any collective wisdom leads to commitment whereby red lines are established and limits recognised, let us first examine what it is we want to lay down our lives for, and more importantly, what it is that we wish to live for.

The State and Government are two different things. The former is permanent and comprises people, land, sovereignty and government. The latter is intangible and temporary; it is a



component of State; it may be a democracy, an aristocracy, a dictatorship or even a monarchy. In a democracy the government usually represents the majority of the people, but not all the people, whereas the State includes all the people in it. In the case of Pakistan, the purpose of the State was never documented, but in keeping with the Quaid's vision, it was amply expressed in his 'Unity, Faith and Discipline' statement. Unity was a quest for being one nation, faith was to have confidence in a new and fledgling state and its people, while discipline was a reference to the rule of law and regulation. The future profile of the state was defined by the Quaid's address to the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan on August 11, 1947: "You are free; you are free to go to your temples. You are free to go to your mosques or to any other places of worship in this State of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion,

*Before any collective wisdom leads to commitment whereby red lines are established and limits recognised, let us first examine what it is we want to lay down our lives for, and more importantly, what it is that we wish to live for.*



A return to the values of the Quaid is the best course for our National Security.

caste or creed – that has nothing to do with the business of the state.”

The Objectives Resolution put paid to Jinnah's vision for Pakistan. The immediate contradiction between State and Government is blatantly displayed in the constitution by this Resolution. This was first only a preamble to the constitution, later becoming part of it on the orders of a dictator. The very notion of structuring a separate state, unbound by religion or ideology, was challenged by the people who were thrust into the corridors of power – pygmies and men of straw. The mullahs who rejected the Quaid and declared him a 'kafir' and who labelled Pakistan as 'Kafiristan', slowly acquired control of the government. This led to serious social polarisation, damaging the first principle that the Quaid laid out for the State: 'Unity'.

Then there is the issue of the Constitution, a document that is a codified law which only deals with the limits of the government's power. Though the objectives of the constitution are many, first and foremost of these is to define the components of government itself, and even more importantly, it is in fact a set of regulations designed to protect the people from their own government. It embodies laws and regulations that guarantee human rights, equality, freedom of speech and access to information among many other matters. However, in Pakistan's Constitution it is clearly stated that a non-Muslim cannot be the head of State or the Prime Minister, making some people more

equal than others. It also sets the flavour and precedence for selecting people to high office. This is the second contradiction that all governments have with the Founding Principles of the State as defined by the Quaid in his first speech to the Constituent Assembly. This has led to divides that have taken on a violent turn as was the case of the riots that prompted Justice Munir to state, "As the commission noted, no two religious divines could agree on the definition of a Muslim. If the members of the commission tried imposing a definition of their own, the ulama would unanimously declare them to have gone outside the pale of Islam. Adopting the definition of any one religious scholar entailed becoming an infidel in the eyes of all the others."

Thus in the years preceding 9/11, Pakistan witnessed two thousand sectarian killings. Religion had now become a part of politics. The sitting government of the time could not find it within itself to say a few words of prayer for the departed soul of their own governor, Salman Taseer, when he was killed by his guard. Governments were forced to review foreign policy as well as administrative policies in keeping with the maulvis' views. This has resulted in the ridiculous spectacle of a Mullah Aziz of burqa fame to openly challenge the writ of the government in the heart of the capital even today, or the disgusting sight of a crippled Mullah Rizvi, sitting in his wheelchair, abusing everyone in government publicly. There is a comic illustration of the maulvis' hold on the public that is regularly displayed from some roof when a band of these lame, blind and bearded self-appointed custodians of the faith, try to find the moon through a telescope at every Eid.

Questions are asked about sovereignty and how it must be defended. Yet how does one view sovereignty? Is it merely a wish – a distant intangible phenomenon – or does it have real implications in real terms? When a country owes so much to international financial institutions and when it depends upon alliances for its existence, sovereignty can never be total but always proportional to the power potential that a country has. Today, Pakistan is not in a position to formulate an independent foreign policy and has to acquiesce to regional and global demands. More so, Pakistan is not even in a position to construct its own annual budget without IMF approval. Thus sovereignty is relative and Pakistan has very little control over its own matters. In other words, what are those National Objectives that Pakistan needs to promote through a foreign policy? The first and foremost of these would be to convince the world that it is in compliance with international norms and values. Yet, Pakistan is often on the back-foot, defending non-state actors, extremists and known wanted militants. Is this government policy, or is the government coerced into it? An external threat to Muridke

*Today, Pakistan is not in a position to formulate an independent foreign policy and has to acquiesce to regional and global demands.*

would put Pakistan in a situation where it would have to fight to defend an extremist institution put up by maulvis. So does National Security call for cleaning up these areas or defending them? This ambiguity needs to be addressed and the prevailing confusion must be dispelled. Then there is the account of the drone attacks during the War on Terror which FATA was subjected to, of the 48000 square kilometres, 35000 square kilometres had been cleared of the militants, leaving only 13000 square kilometres that generally included North Waziristan. This was where the drone campaign focused. It was mainly because Pakistan actually had no real control of its own area and its sovereignty was being continually violated by foreign fighters. Was it right for the State to abdicate its responsibility and not remove the foreign fighters thereby subjecting its own citizens to a bombing campaign? Violation of sovereignty was the first argument that the State offered the world, but refused to take measures to establish that sovereignty even at the cost of its own people. National Security therefore has to take on a more deliberate note and a defined direction.

National Security must always be seen in the context of 'threat' and vulnerabilities. After all, security against what and who? People tend to confuse military conflict with war. War is a term derived from 'werre', a Greek term, which means chaos. It is an all-encompassing term and military conflict is the last and

smallest component of it. War includes, economy, food security, liberty, infrastructure, communication systems, industry, etc. Thus military conflict has very little role in National Security and usually when it comes to the necessity of a military application, the war has already been lost. East Pakistan is a very good example, where no military action could have kept Pakistan united – the war was already lost. So, first and foremost, the threats to Pakistan and the vulnerabilities it is exposed to must be identified. In this case, where the economy is being devastated by

*Military conflict has very little role in National Security and usually when it comes to the necessity of a military application, the war has already been lost. East Pakistan is a very good example, where no military action could have kept Pakistan united - the war was already lost.*

governments themselves, where industry cannot grow, where GDP is negative, to identify the threat is not at all difficult. When the provinces do not see eye to eye and there are provincial issues, when people are divided by ideology and sects, then this polarisation has a serious impact on the very foundation of the State. Yet when one sees that all governments have remained in conflict with the state, then what can any National Security Plan



The Armed Forces are the "cohesive factor" in Pakistan. Media smear campaigns only play into the enemy's hands.

do for the country? A country disunited, without a nation, living on borrowed resources and borrowed time, looking around to defend itself against a threat when its own governments have been the biggest threat, while the people of this country follow at second place, needs serious and detailed retrospection.

If it is National Security that must address these internal and external issues, it must first examine the very ethos of the State and bring back those values that the Quaid had stipulated in his first speech as well as his vision of Unity, Faith and Discipline. No other course would ever serve this country better. For this, the following reforms are recommended, which need to be put in place by the National Security Council.

Judicial Reforms to provide a homegrown judicial system compatible with international law. To ensure equality for all and a state where no one will be treated as a lesser human being by profession, belief, caste, creed or birthright.

Another area in dire need of attention is the depoliticisation of the police and making this institution independent of politicians. Ensure good recruitment among the leadership and provide international-level training. This would bring an end to bullying of society by the politician in the chair. It would also address the VIP syndrome and unnecessary protocol demands.

There is also the issue of modifying or rewriting the Constitution. It must be remembered that this is a document provided by the 'people' to the legislators to ensure that they understand the limits of their power and remain confined within stipulated parameters. Human rights and individual freedom, liberty and security to life and property must be the basis of the constitution. In Pakistan democracy has become the tyranny of the majority and the constitution must address this matter.

Also in urgent need of redressal is the matter of ideology. Religion must be separated from State business. It should be an individual choice and not a communal business. Maulvis have to be put out of the business of politics. They should be allowed to function only after being licensed and with a strict code of conduct and stipulated regulations.

As for the provinces, Pakistan must either consider the United States of Pakistan with total autonomy to the provinces, or the provinces should be further divided to create about 20 or 25 provinces. Provincial separatist movements that keep threatening national cohesion can be addressed by more provinces.

Furthermore, the government must reintroduce merit in the bureaucracy. Education must be given very special attention. Only the best must be selected for government. Education must have another field promoting skilled manpower and labour that is affiliated with international guilds. This would establish standards in workmanship and also provide better jobs the world over.

People that have robbed this country must be held accountable. No plea bargains should be allowed. Closure must be brought to these matters as quickly as possible.

And as for governance, the government has no business participating in the corporate sector and must divest all its businesses. The government must make policy and not run businesses. The power distribution system is a good illustration, the government cannot control theft, corruption and mismanagement. If handed over to the private sector and competition is encouraged, the matter of power distribution would easily be resolved. On the other hand, the amount of misappropriation and mismanagement that one witnesses on a day-to-day basis negates the need for the government regulation as it stands. A free market economy should decide how businesses develop. Most importantly, development funds must never be placed at the disposal of the legislators; it is unconstitutional, an indirect bribe and a basis of corruption.

A country in a conventional democratic order is governed by the three pillars of State: Legislative, Executive and Judicial; the fourth pillar, 'Journalism and Reporting' was added by the United States after the Civil War. It is now commonly recognised as the Media. This was meant to add a process of checks and balances, not one of disputes as we have. However, in Pakistan, in very real terms, the shots are really called by the clergy, who determine what is kosher for foreign policy as well as adminis-

trative functioning without a nod from them, nothing of substance can move forward. The mafias who dabble in crime and thievery are proving to be another force to reckon with and who manipulate judicial decisions and legislation to their own convenience. It would not be out of place to add them to the pillars of the State as viewed in Pakistani democracy. With such contradictions in place and with the common knowledge that the provinces are held together by the military and not through political cohesion or through any constitutional convention, maybe the armed forces too should be given the status of a pillar of the State. Thus as long as 'Volume 10' remains secret, the Model Town killings will see no closure, in fact, all inquiries will continue to die without conclusion, mosques will be filled to capacity, but no child will be safe on the streets. But it is not

surprising that the army has a role in governance. It has been accorded that by the successive governments of the country who need it to clean drains and desilt canals, collect electricity bills, manage disasters and contain pandemics.

If National Security has to secure the interests of the country, it must establish the country's relevance in the world. Here it appears that Pakistan is going down the CPEC route – and that is not a bad thing. The connectivity of the sea to the land and Asia to Europe has huge potential. Pakistan is central to this activity and if it engages in this activity in earnest it will

establish itself as a Global Trade Corridor. This allows for many stakeholders and partners the world over to benefit and participate in an economic synergy never seen before. That would bring Pakistan international relevance and with it, clout and a voice at various forums. However, the internal vulnerabilities remain and are huge. To weave this country into a nation, to unify it, to bring faith in its own capacity, to ensure discipline among communities, a great deal would have to be done. The constitution needs to be revisited, the social contract reexamined. The contradictions between the State and the Government must be removed and political manifestos must define only how they could enhance State objectives, principles and vision, or at the least, how best they could serve them. In this vein, the distortion of history must stop and real issues with a factual record must be encouraged. Culture, tradition and history make a nation – lies do not. The political structure needs to step up to the block and resolve these issues or the army is there to stay for better or for worse. In the paradigm of national security, the enemy always searches for the centre of gravity, that if targeted and dismantled, would bring about an early demise of that particular country. In Pakistan, it is now universally recognised that the Armed Forces are the cohesive factor and must be attacked at every level, i.e. moral and physical. People must be informed that smear campaigns, media onslaughts and unnecessary criticism without understanding either the backdrop or the environment is playing into enemy hands. What needs to be understood is, as has been famously said, you will always have an army, if not your own, then someone else's. ■

*In Pakistan, it is now universally recognised that the Armed Forces are the cohesive factor and must be attacked at every level, i.e. moral and physical.*



## Curriculum Controversy

Are critics of the Single National Curriculum overlooking its salient features?



By Javed Jabbar

*The writer, an honorary Adviser to the National Curriculum Council, has also served as a Senator & Federal Minister.*



*The SNC aims for a unified curriculum for all Pakistani students.*

**T**he formulation of a Single National Curriculum (SNC) for schools and madressahs in all segments of Pakistan's education sector is being conducted by the Ministry of Federal Education over the past two years. The process reflects, as of the time of writing this text, dimensions of consensus as well as controversy and contradictions.

The SNC is a prominent part of the 2018 PTI election manifesto. There is perhaps an unspoken, yet real desire to complete the process of formulation and implementation by the next election in 2023. While the aim of attempting implementation within an electoral term is understandable, it is hoped that an accelerated pace is not pressed purely for partisan electoral purposes. This subject is of crucial importance for the present and future generations of Pakistanis.

It is pertinent to note that the government led by President Pervez Musharraf in 2006 had introduced a National Curriculum from which the new version derives significant parts

Implementation and monitoring of the 2006 NC was derailed by the events of 2007-2008 that ended his tenure. While about 60 per cent of the 2006 NC has been rightly retained in the 2020 SNC, the section of the 2020 SNC dealing with subjects such as Computer Science has introduced about 70 per cent new material in order to reflect new developments in science and technology over the past 14 years.

The individual leading this process in 2020 is Shafiqat Mahmood, Minister of Federal Education, Professional Training and National Heritage. He has demonstrated qualities of balance and moderation. He is willing to listen with patience and respect to critical and sceptical comments on the process and the draft text of the SNC. He is assisted by Raheq Tahir, Director-General in the Ministry. The task is unenviable: to reconcile viewpoints that are polar opposites on basic issues and to forge a consensus between the Federal Centre and the 4 provinces and regions as well as a consensus

*Contrary to the allegations about undue standardisation, the draft SNC repeatedly stresses encouragement of critical and creative thinking and for the first time offers ways to tangibly assess the impact of education through Student Learning Outcomes and through evaluations of teacher performance.*

between sub-sectors and institutions within the five broad sectors of one Federation, four provinces and regions. For example, between the civil and the

military spheres of school education, between public sector and private sector (further sub-divided into high-fee schools and low-fee schools), between conventional systems and diverse religious madressah systems.

Some principal perceptions – or misperceptions – are being projected in the discussion unfolding in both print and electronic media. One is that the SNC is being imposed by the Federal Centre on the four provinces. This perception blithely ignores the fact that, particularly after the 18th Constitutional Amendment of 2010, the Federal Centre does not have the power and authority to arbitrarily impose the SNC on any province. This misperception also strangely ignores the hard fact that, from the start of the process in end-2018 to date in 2020, all four provinces have willingly participated in deliberations. Provinces and regions retain full discretionary powers to interpret the implementation of the SNC when they, in turn, formulate their respective schemes of studies which take the process of implementing the SNC to a brass tacks level. Provinces have already contributed their comments. In the case of Sindh, total, unqualified endorsement has been withheld on some aspects.

This last reservation is reportedly related to the religion-related content proposed in the draft SNC. But this should not come as a surprise. Even when, in 2017, before the initiation of the on-going consultative process of SNC by the PTI government, the compulsory reading of the Holy Quran (Nazira-e-Quran) law was enacted during the PML(N) government both at the Federal and provincial levels, Sindh was the only province which did not enact the law that requires the mandatory reading of the Holy Quran to be initiated from Class-I.

Thus, the draft SNC currently being discussed in 2020 has to be read in conjunction with a legally mandated provision inherited from the previous government. Without proposing

memorisation, fully authenticated sections of the Hadith are required to be read. Presumably due to the engineered hyper-sensitivity about anything to do with Islam, the PTI government at the Centre, in Punjab and KP and its allies in Balochistan have not attempted to amend or reverse the Nazira-e-Quran law. Sindh remains consistent in its reservations.

***There must be something good about the draft SNC. On the one hand, it is being harshly criticised for being too religion-heavy by those regarded as secular and liberal. On the other, the head of the Jamaat-e-Islami has recently alleged that the SNC is being prepared by the enemies of Islam and Pakistan.***

A second misperception about the draft SNC is that it seeks to arbitrarily regimentise the content of education and thereby suppress the rich diversity and pluralism that is an intrinsic element of Pakistani society. A perusal of the draft SNC will conclusively establish that this is an incorrect and misleading contention. There are several explicit acknowledgements of the cultural, linguistic, ethnic diversity within the Pakistani nation. At the same time, just as in other countries, there is advocacy for the building of a broad, unifying national identity. The co-existence of pluralism and of singularity is possible as long as they are aptly contextualised.

A third misperception being

projected is that the SNC claims to address – or does not address – all the crucial, fundamental problems that afflict education in Pakistan. For instance: training of teachers; severely inadequate physical infrastructure in government schools; emphasis on rote-learning; deficiencies in educational aids; flaws in evaluation aspects et al. At no point in the draft is there an attempt to either ignore or to promise resolution of these problematic issues because these are beyond the scope of the SNC. The vital operational facets need to be addressed separately and urgently by each government entity concerned. Further, contrary to the allegations about undue standardisation, the draft SNC repeatedly stresses encouragement of critical and creative thinking and for the first time offers ways to tangibly assess the impact of education through Student Learning Outcomes and through evaluations of teacher performance.

There is then the assertion being made, that the draft SNC will swamp the non-madressah segments of the education system with graduates from madressahs who will conduct the teaching of Islamiat. While there may well be an increase in the number of madressah graduates employed in non-madressah schools, it needs to be remembered that an increasing number of madressahs are also providing contemporary, non-religion related content in their own education processes. Appropriate criteria of merit for selection of such teachers will also prevent an imbalanced influx.

This writer continues to have strong reservations about the rationale for the Nazira-e-Islam laws enacted in 2017. The proponents of this law refer to Article 31 (2A) of the Constitution to say that the law simply gives practical shape to a requirement of the Constitution. The relevant text reads: "Article 31 Islamic way of life... (2a) to make the teaching of Holy Quran and Islamiat compulsory, to encourage and facilitate the learning of Arabic language and to

secure correct and exact printing and publishing of the Holy Quran." So, unless the Constitution is amended, that law is entirely valid and obligatory. Yet, we as a nation must acknowledge that in a society that is overwhelmingly Muslim – 97 percent – every child is already fully immersed in the Islamic milieu. The call to prayers is heard five times a day in every neighbourhood; almost every Muslim home has a copy of either the complete Holy Quran or sections of its sacred text; for 30 days a year, fasting is devoutly practiced in most homes; there is solemn observance of Muharram; there are major festivals such as Eid-ul-Fitr, Eid-ul-Azha, Eid-e-Milad-un-Nabi; many families perform Umrah or Haj each year; millions throng at shrines of Sufi saints; and religion marks common activities such as births, weddings, funerals. There is little justification for loading a child with religious content when the family, the household, the community and society at large already provide a comprehensive religious framework.

A major feature of the draft SNC that is not being given fair attention is the fact that, for the first time, non-Muslim children in schools will be able to study aspects of their own religion as a separate subject under "Religious Studies." Prominent non-Muslim educationists and scholars formulated the curriculum for this subject. Previously, non-Muslim students were required to give attention to their religion under the broad subject of General Knowledge or Ethics rather than the exclusive focus now rendered in the draft SNC.

Even though the process has involved interactions with over 400 individuals associated with virtually every part of the education system, it is claimed by some that the process has not been ideally inclusive and broad-based. Perhaps the Federal Centre had to exercise a cut-off about numbers because, at a given point, numbers can become unwieldy. Among the 400 individuals and entities

that have contributed their views and expertise are those representing non-official yet wholly credible institutions such as the Aga Khan Education Foundation and The Citizens' Foundation, high-fee charging



**Minister of Federal Education, Professional Training and National Heritage, Shafiqat Mahmood is spearheading the implementation of the SNC.**

English medium private school networks as well as religious madressahs; educationists from rural and urban areas in the civil sector, and institutions from the military spheres as also citizens like this writer who humbly serve the cause of education on a voluntary basis.

The issue of the medium of instruction from Classes I to V remains unresolved. In an extraordinarily multi-lingual society where Urdu and English also exert an exceptional influence and allure, there is an unavoidable complexity to the challenge of creating unanimity on this subject. As per the 2017 census, even though Urdu is the mother tongue of only about 9 percent of the population, it is clearly the single most popular lingua franca for 220 million people. Whereas English is spoken regularly by a very small percentage, it is an official language along with Urdu and is the

language of the courts, the bureaucracy, the armed forces, the corporate sector and is regarded as an aspirational model for the vast majority of low-income and middle-income segments of the population.

A hybrid language of "Minglish" is also widely in use. Even illiterate people fluently use several English words and phrases. Every adult Pakistani has a National Identity Card that also uses English (and Urdu) to give personal details. English is also used in currency notes and postage stamps.

Where global research establishes that a child absorbs best when imparted education in the mother tongue in the first few years in school, there is a strong, almost overwhelming demand for the use of English as the preferred medium, if not a guarantee for further progress in education and employment. With Pakistan being the fastest urbanising country in South Asia, there is now the phenomenon of four or five different mother tongues being spoken by children in a single classroom in many parts of Karachi. Perhaps the most appropriate response to this issue is to leave the final decision to the provinces and the Federal Centre, at the risk of permitting the status-quo to continue. But in the hope that variety and unity – not uniformity! – will evolve into an accommodative synthesis.

There must be something good about the draft SNC. On the one hand, it is being harshly criticised for being too religion-heavy by those regarded as secular and liberal. On the other, the head of the Jamaat-e-Islami has recently alleged that the SNC is being prepared by the enemies of Islam and Pakistan.

In the 21st century, as the momentum of change increases in all spheres, we should enable the formulation and the implementation of an SNC that truly empowers the nation to effectively overcome historic disparities and dichotomies and to face the unknown future with confidence and cohesion. ■

# TOMORROW'S PAKISTAN

## Needed: A New Avatar

Seven decades on, Pakistan remains a promise unfulfilled.



### Forecasting The Next Few Years

**By Jawad Ahmed**

The writer is an artist turned politician who leads his own left-wing Barabari Party.

He has also been an ambassador for several societal causes such as the polio-eradication drive.

**W**e recently celebrated our 73rd independence day, but it is clear that we have not yet arrived at our destination. So the question is, are we on the right path? By looking at our history and indicators for human development, it is clear we are not. And if we continue along the same path, we will keep getting the same results: increasing poverty, disappointing human development indices, poor infrastructure, mounting unemployment and an even greater inequality of wealth and income.

If we want to alter the trajectory of events and make our future better than our past, we will have to make some bold decisions. Nations are not built on borrowed money or borrowed ideas. They are also not built if their own people are exploited and kept subjugated. In order to envision a Pakistan that we can be proud of we will have to make some fundamental and structural

*Nations are not built on borrowed money or borrowed ideas. They are also not built if their own people are exploited and kept subjugated. In order to envision a Pakistan that we can be proud of we will have to make some fundamental and structural changes.*

changes. To begin with, we will need to focus on a few major issues: the economic, political, governance and policy systems currently in operation in the country.

In respect of the economic, the goals are to prevent a concentration of wealth, reduce inequality, provide the equitable access of all to resources, to retain state control over strategic assets and inclusive economic growth. In order to achieve these we need, with some urgency, a comprehensive land policy. Pakistan is a populous country with limited land. It is crucial that we have a land policy that takes into consideration: a) the food requirements of citizens, b) decent housing for all, c) the need for public spaces like parks, libraries, places of worship, sports, art and culture etc., d) an efficient and people-friendly infrastructure, e) the exploration of natural resources, f) the building of factories and setting up of other economic and



public service institutions like banks, educational institutions, hospitals, transport, post offices, etc., and g) the state's public sector needs. Land is a strategic asset and cannot be allowed to be controlled by a few, whether urban or agricultural.

Additionally, there can be no two opinions about the fact that Pakistan needs to focus on building its industry. Currently, we are shamefully importing even simple items of daily use. Pakistan has been converted into a market for others to sell their wares and to provide cheap labour. All strategic industries should be under state control, and the state itself has to be actively involved in this process. It cannot be left at the discretion and to the advantage of national or international forces.

Taxation is unarguably a crucial vehicle for not only fulfilling a state's obligation towards its citizens by providing social services, but also in keeping inequality under control and helping in making economic growth all-inclusive. At this time Pakistan's tax system is complex and full of loopholes. The tax burden is borne mostly by the working and middle classes and salaried people. Agricultural income is not touched. And subsidies and amnesty schemes help the already rich. This has to change for the state to fulfil its promise of providing its citizens universal education, healthcare and other necessities for a decent living.

The monopolisation of the market is a

common problem, even in developed countries where they have tried to control it by setting up and enforcing antitrust laws. In Pakistan, it is an open secret that some sectors of the economy are controlled by vested interests. Here those who make policies and are responsible for implementing them are the same who are affected by them, and in the absence of any check and balance against a conflict of interest issue, the problem continues.

If we want to create a more egalitarian society and an even playing field for everyone, we will have to make some tough decisions against entrenched and vested powers.

Pakistan has suffered from undemocratic institutions, not only under the military, but also under civilian rule. The essence of democracy is to allow all segments of the population to have a voice in major decisions. However, in Pakistan, parliament is dominated by a certain class that does not represent the majority of the people of the country.

The solution to this is threefold: Give constitutional cover to the local government system so it is truly recognised as a third tier government system after the federal and provincial level ones. Strengthen and empower local governments to make decisions at the local level and give them financial control over local resources. Amend the electoral system and laws to reduce the role of money during elections. This, coupled with a strong local government system will

*There is a dire need for transparency. Federal, provincial and local government budgets should be made available to the public in an easy-to-understand format on government websites. People should know how their tax money is being spent.*

allow new leadership to emerge from the grassroots.

As for governance, there are many definitions of it, but perhaps the one which fits our needs is this, "Good governance means that processes and institutions produce results that meet the needs of society while making the best use of resources at their disposal. The concept of efficiency in the context of good governance also covers the sustainable use of natural resources and the protection of the environment."

There is a general consensus that governance in Pakistan neither meets the needs of its citizens, nor uses the available resources efficiently. This problem is not unique to Pakistan, even developed countries suffer from inefficiencies, but far fewer than ours. Extensive research into the issue has highlighted some key problems in Pakistan that need to be addressed post-haste. These include inefficiency, the waste of resources, a lack of transparency and accountability, and the inability of citizens to access the relevant authorities, or compel the

authorities to respond in a timely and appropriate manner once accessed.

To achieve these ends we will need a devolution of political and fiscal power down to the local government level. There is general consensus that this improves transparency and accountability which positively impact efficiency and access to relevant authorities. The performance-based evaluation of relevant personnel, whether elected or in civil service, is also important. There have to be rewards for good performances and consequences for bad ones.

There is also a dire need for transparency. Federal, provincial and local government budgets should be made available to the public in an easy-to-understand format on government websites. People should know how their tax money is being spent. As far as the budget is concerned, there should be a movement towards a performance-based budget rather than just financial input.

Improving access to the relevant authorities when needed, and the resolution of peoples' problems is imperative. It is a common complaint in Pakistan that people do not have access to their elected representatives or to the appointed officials. In fact, instead of acting as servants to the public, as their role demands, they behave as their superiors. This needs to be addressed. This can be accomplished by establishing websites for this purpose.

Furthermore, duplicative departments, ministries and services need to be consolidated in order to streamline service delivery and reduce waste and government expenses should be cut wherever possible. Last but certainly not least, there has to be accountability of all elected and appointed officials by the public, and in order for this to be effective, there has to be a proper structure and defined and clear mechanisms.

Pakistan needs comprehensive policies for many sectors, among these primarily perhaps, a comprehensive youth policy. Pakistan is one of the youngest countries in the world. The so-called "youth bulge" can be an asset or a liability depending



*Education a right, not a privilege.*

*Pakistan is one of the youngest countries in the world. The so-called "youth bulge" can be an asset or a liability depending on how it is handled.*

on how it is handled. There is no question that in spite of many problems and hurdles, Pakistani youth want to contribute towards making the country better. Unfortunately, no government so far has developed a comprehensive policy for this. This policy should include a plan not just for the education and employment of youth, but also a setting up of platforms to include their voice in policy decisions at various levels of the state.

There can be no argument with the fact that no nation can progress with 50 percent of its population being isolated from the political, social and economic activities of the nation. Women have to be given equal opportunities for education and financial independence, their special needs for protection,

transportation and child-bearing responsibilities have to be taken into account, and they have to be provided the right to air and have their grievances addressed.

Workers are the backbone of the economy. Without their contributions the wheels of the economy will stand still. And yet, this segment of the population has been sidelined from political discourse. Their needs must be addressed. These include the guarantee of a secure job for each, a living wage, safety in the workplace, social protection in case of disability or death, and old-age benefits.

Pakistan is still an agriculture-based country. It is mandatory that agricultural practices are modernised in order to improve yield, save water, meet the food requirements of the population and earn foreign exchange.

Also needed on a war footing is a comprehensive policy regarding the state's natural resources. In a fair world the first right over resources is that of the local people in the area. Not having this policy in place has caused grievances among the smaller provinces and created conflict. And finally, crucially, the state has to ensure the provision of all basic needs to each citizen – regardless of race, religion, gender, ethnicity or nationality. ■



*Pakistan must address the issue of inequitable access to basic needs.*



## The DisUnited States of America?

On the eve of elections, the United States is at war with itself.

By Ibrahim Sajid

The writer is a senior journalist and the Editor of 'Narratives.'

**W**riting about the forthcoming elections in my adopted homeland, the United States of America, I am reminded of two great philosophers: Al-Ghazali and Thomas Hobbes.

Al-Ghazali's political theory's core is derived from a holistic, harmonious, well-ordered cosmos created by God for a clear purpose. The opposite of Ghazali's model is a state of chaos and insecurity, which Thomas Hobbes termed *bellum omnium contra omnes* (the war of all against all).

We are, it feels, living in Hobbes' America – plagued by disease, plunged in economic catastrophe for the majority, inflamed with racial violence, and torn between isolation and globalism. Six months into the pandemic, the economic outlook is getting darker for the masses, but lining a handful's pockets.

In the last 30 years that I have been living in the United States, income inequality has been growing. According to data analysed by UC Berkeley economist Emmanuel Saex, income disparities are so stark that "Americans in the top one percent tower stunningly higher. They average over 39 times more income than the bottom 90 percent." However, that gap pales compared to the divide between the nation's top 0.1 percent and everyone else. A handful of Americans are taking in over 196 times the income of the bottom 90 percent.

In 2020, over 20 million Americans have lost jobs, over 200,000 lost their lives, and thousands are still dying every week. However, the wealthiest 643 individuals yielded a 29 percent increase in these six



months. Their wealth grew from \$295 trillion to \$3.8 trillion between March 18 and September 15. More than 22 million Americans lost their jobs during this period, and fewer than half have so far returned. Even when they were working, many people were not earning enough to get by.

Paul Krugman, the left-leaning Nobel laureate, calls it "America's cult of selfishness."

Despite the month-long global chant of "Black Lives Matter," the lack of indictments in the Breonna Taylor case indicates that the police have an unequal right to self-defence.

"When you are injured or killed by community violence, the law is on your side, or on the side of the loved ones who grieve you. Justice in those cases can be swift and brutal. However, when the state does the hurting and killing, the law is on their side. They are the law," writes *New York Times*' Charles Blow. State violence is so insidious that it renders citizens helpless to protect themselves.

The perpetual parade of anger and astonishment, of demanding justice and being denied, weighs on the souls of Americans. Undoubtedly an unsustainable condition, ready to explode, and be exploited.

Anti-racist protest across the country is not just a rallying cry for marchers against police brutality and the Trump government. It has also been a call to arms for the white militia groups across the nation. To sum it up, America is in turmoil, at war with itself.

In a recent *NY Times* OpEd piece, Susan Rice, former national security adviser and US ambassador to the United Nations, writes: "While foreign policy has barely figured in the presidential campaign, national security is plainly on the ballot. If everything feels chaotic and dangerous, it is because we face a remarkable convergence of security challenges."

A month before the elections, polls show Joe Biden leading Donald Trump by eight points. The likelihood is, Donald



Protestors call for suspension of rents as over 20 million Americans lose their jobs to the Covid lockdowns.

Trump will not win the majority vote, but he still can win the election.

Unlike other democracies of the world, the United States president is not elected by a nationwide majority vote of the American people; instead, he is chosen by 538 individuals (electorates). It takes 270 electoral votes to win the 2020 presidential election.

Many around the world are often surprised to learn that the United States is not a democracy. It was founded as a republic. The founding fathers of America, Alexander Hamilton and James Madison in the Federalist Papers, emphasised "the total exclusion of the people, in their collective capacity, from any share" in the government.

The Electoral College favours small (and rural) states and most of those states currently lean Republican. I am registered to vote in New York, historically a blue state, but my vote does not mean a thing. However, if I lived in one of the swing states, my vote would have been worth much more.

To make matters worse, Trump refuses an "orderly" post-election transition, questioning the process' integrity. Now Americans have to worry if democracy will continue to function post-November 3.

Democrats and Republicans (in the two-party system) have very different foreign policy approaches. According to the

Council on Foreign Relations, "the lists of the top five threats for Democrats and Republicans don't overlap at all. Democrats worry about Covid-19, climate change, racial inequality, foreign interference in US

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elections, and economic inequality. Republicans worry about China, terrorism, immigration, domestic extremism, and Iran."

When he took office in January 2017, Donald Trump was a novice. His foreign policy has been unconventional and driven primarily by self-interest rather than the United States' national interest. His administration, having withdrawn from the Human Rights Council, stopped funding Palestinian refugees, and owes the United Nations \$36 billion. The Trump administration and US animosity towards the UN, has hit new highs. No wonder that the Americans are isolated at the United Nations under President Trump, whose

administration has withdrawn from several UN bodies and agreements, even as the United States government remains the most significant single contributor to the 193-member organisation's budget. Under Trump, the United States withdrew from the Paris climate agreement leaving a void now being filled by Europe.

On the other hand, Joe Biden was chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for years, and later as Vice President, he was the face of Barack Obama's foreign policy. Analysts have called him "a creature of the American foreign policy machine."

So do we transition from Hobbes' America of chaos to Al-Ghazali's harmonious, well-ordered cosmos?

As we enter the final month of the presidential election campaign, Americans are preoccupied with the coronavirus pandemic, racial justice issues, and their challenges in a collapsed economy with a dismal outlook. However, if the virus has taught us anything, the United States' fate is inseparable from the world. The United States' recovery from the pandemic and the economic collapse depends on other countries' public health, trade, peace and security. As November approaches, Trump's disastrous lack of any coherent policy to advance US interests and to keep Americans healthy, prosperous, and safe – as well as his still-accumulating string of failures – should be at the centre of the country's debate. ■

# Tribute



Farewell Comrade

## Hasil Khan Bizenjo

February 1958 - August 2020



*“Funds that were allocated for Balochistan were filched away by the corrupt”*

### In Conversation with Aziz Ahmed

“Today’s so-called insurrection in Balochistan bears no resemblance to the 70s insurgency. That movement was indigenous and attracted a large number of followers who had no funds, but they were armed with idealism and a few rifles. Today’s rebellion has only a handful of recruits, numbering less than 3,000, who are fully funded and armed by foreign powers,” remarked Senator Hasil Bizenjo, president of the National Party of Pakistan (NPP), in one of my last conversations with him before he died of lung cancer in a Karachi hospital on August 20 this year.

I had known Hasil since the early 1980s when, as a strapping young man, he joined the Department of Philosophy at Karachi University. Son of Mir Ghaus Baksh Bizenjo (popularly known as *Baba-e-Balochistan*), he entered student politics from the platform of the Baloch Students Organisation (BSO). We worked alongside other student activists against the Islami Jamiat-e-Talaba, and when the 1983 MRD movement was launched we struggled together against the Martial Law

regime of Zia-ul-Haq.

Born in 1958 in Nal in Khuzdar a remote village of Balochistan, Hasil had seen the world and experienced politics at all levels. A former MNA, and a Senator since 2009, Bizenjo also served briefly as Federal Minister of Maritime Affairs in Khatun Abbasi’s tenure. He grew up in the formidable shadow of his iconic father, Mir Ghaus Baksh Bizenjo. His elder brother Bizen also served as a Senator.

I met Hasil off and on to solicit his views on the burning issues of the day.

Over the years, I saw him grow from a die-hard optimist to a pessimist.

He was perturbed by the recent attack on the Pakistan Stock Exchange building and the bomb attacks in Balochistan. He lamented the fact that we had not learnt any lessons from history, and that the political polarisation within the country and between the provinces had gone from bad to worse.

However, he still retained a glimmer of hope in the youth of the country, who were growing up in a new world of instant connectivity and communication.

In the dark, barren days of politics, Hasil Bizenjo stood out as a principled and courageous leader – a beacon of hope...



Aziz Ahmed (left) in conversation with Hasil Khan Bizenjo (right).

**What, in your view, was the motive behind the recent attack on the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) and the resurgence of terrorist activities in Balochistan. Does this pose a danger to the unity of the federation in the future?**

The present insurgency has no connection – or any ideological moorings – whatsoever with the insurrection that took place in the 1970s, when Bhutto dismissed the provincial governments of Balochistan and the then NWFP (present-day Khyber Pakhtunkhwa). That movement was for the restoration of the two provincial governments.

Please allow me to go back a little in history so that the readers may have a full understanding of the Baloch problem. Khair Baksh Marri was always of the view that the problem could not be resolved within the confines of Pakistan and advocated an independent Balochistan. He went into exile in Kabul when the Marxist forces, backed by the Soviet Union, assumed power. Subsequently, when the Leftist government was ousted, we went to Kabul after consulting with the establishment and escorted Khair Baksh Marri back to Pakistan, where he had full freedom to express his political views. The situation was normalising and peace was returning, but the assassination of Nawab Akbar Bugti overturned everything. Had Bugti not been assassinated, the situation might have been different today.

After the Bugti incident, within a period of three to four years, we started witnessing a growing Indian influence in Balochistan.

Regarding the second part of your question, the present insurgency does not pose any danger to the federation of Pakistan as this is a very low grade insurgency. The insurgents have lost a lot of popular support in the last five years.

There was a time when women would take out processions and large public meetings were held in their support, which is not happening anymore.

The insurgents first lost their support in the cities, and later in the rural areas and the mountains; now they are restricted only to the border areas. The recent attacks on the Chinese Consulate and the PSX in Karachi, and the spate of bombings in Balochistan are attempts by these insurgents to stay relevant in today's politics, as they have lost their clout. They are trying to create their own nuisance value by indulging in such acts.

**Can you give us a rough estimate of the strength of these insurgents?**

They enjoy different strengths in different regions. For instance, in Makran they might number around 1500-1600, whereas in central Balochistan they have no presence. In the Bolan area there are

roughly 500-800 people, but they have a minimal presence in the Marri area. Thus, I do not perceive them as a major threat.

**Can you draw any parallels between the movement of the 1970s and today's insurgency?**

The '70s movement was a totally indigenous political movement led by prominent political personalities under the umbrella of the National Awami Party, whereas the present-day insurgents have no political party. In fact, they are killing those workers and leaders of political parties in Balochistan who disagree with them.

In recent days, we have seen differences cropping up among them as well. In fact one of their leaders, Humble Baluch, stated that Baloch leaders in Pakistan should also be consulted. I believe that as time goes by, their frustrations will increase.

These forces have also targeted my party (NPP) and have killed 10-12 leaders and 40-50 workers so far. Additionally,

*“The present insurgency does not pose any danger to the federation of Pakistan as this is a very low grade insurgency. The insurgents have lost a lot of popular support in the last five years.”*

they have killed members of other political parties.

Their major difference with us is that we support the federation of Pakistan and they are opposed to it. Our stand is that we will live and struggle in Pakistan for the rights of the Baloch people, while staying within the constitutional limits. Whenever we try to participate in any political activity, the insurgents try to stop us by force, going to the extent of killing us. Even a person like me cannot tour Balochistan, without armed guards. In the 1973 movement, no political leaders were targeted, and there were no killings of civilians either, whereas now thousands of civilians have been killed, including the Punjabi-speaking in Quetta



among others. There have been forced migrations of the Baloch, Pashtuns and Punjabis.

**In the recent past, there were reports that efforts were being made to bring the insurgents into mainstream politics.**

Yes, efforts were made on behalf of the National Party when Dr Abdul Malik was the Chief Minister of Balochistan. We had spoken to the then Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif, and the Chief of Army Staff (COAS), Raheel Sharif, after approaching Brahmadagh Bugti, their leader-in-exile in London. The prime minister and the COAS were keenly interested in starting negotiations with them. In fact, General Raheel Sharif was in such a hurry that he asked me and Dr Malik to go to London the very next day. In our discussions with Brahmadagh in London, it was agreed that he would return and start negotiations. Unfortunately Dr Malik's two-and-a-half-year tenure as chief minister ended soon after. The new chief minister did not continue the process and the initiative was lost.

*“Manipulation apart, the Sardari system has been replaced by money. Each individual vote is bought for Rs 5,000. So, people like me and my party members cannot afford to contest elections. Drug money is coming in and things are spinning out of control. A provincial assembly seat can be bought for Rs 45 crores.”*



The glory days of student politics.

**Can the whole process be restarted?**

Yes, if people who are genuinely interested restart the whole process. Akbar Bugti's followers were never anti-Pakistan or anti-establishment; it was only because of the assassination of their chief, that they took to the mountains and became insurgents.

**One of the major factors that has led to the insurgents taking up arms is the lack of development in the province and the widespread poverty and illiteracy. What can be done to mitigate this situation?**

The money that is allocated to Balochistan in the budget is not sufficient to develop such a huge land mass. Now we are talking about building Special Economic Zones in the province, but these will not be beneficial as we do not have locally trained and educated Baloch to work in them.

**Balochistan was given massive funding by both the Musharraf and the PPP regimes. Whatever happened to those funds?**

Massive funds were allocated to

Balochistan in the NFC Award but to no avail. Funds that were allocated were filched away by the corrupt.

They never reached the people and the projects they were earmarked for. They were used by the corrupt to line their pockets and take the money out of the country.

**Do you have a long-term democratic solution for the province?**

We need to have clean, non-manipulated elections, in which people can vote for their chosen representatives. Manipulation apart, the Sardari system has been replaced by money. Each individual vote is bought for Rs 5,000. So, people like me and my party members cannot afford to contest elections. Drug money is coming in and things are spinning out of control. A provincial assembly seat can be bought for Rs 45 crores.

**What is your opinion of the current Chief Minister, Jam Kamal?**

He is a good man with good intentions, but as the whole system has degenerated, he is constantly being blackmailed by his coalition partners, and worse still by the bureaucracy. ■



## Publishing Powerhouse

As country head of OUP Pakistan and founder of the Karachi Literature Festival, Aameena Saiyid's contribution to the literary landscape is unparalleled.



By Zahra Chughtai

*Zahra Chughtai has served as Online Editor, Newline and also as Assistant Editor, Herald. Presently, she freelances and runs her own interiors and lifestyle online publication.*

**H**er simple appearance and unassuming manner give little hint of the powerhouse that is Aameena Saiyid. It is only when she begins speaking of her remarkable career, spanning several decades, that the stories of determination, courage and sheer hard work begin to emerge.

She is best known as the Country Head of Oxford University Press in Pakistan, a position she held for 30 years and saw the company grow from a fledgling selling house into a respected and influential publishing concern. Unfortunately, her successful tenure at OUP ended on a bitter note.

But even as she bid goodbye to her lifetime's work, Aameena plunged into a new venture. "I have never been one to give up. People launch start-ups in their twenties. I have done so in my seventies," she says, referring to Lightstone Publishers, her latest initiative.

She continues to travel all over the country, visiting schools, hunting out suppliers and scouting new authors. Just



*"I wanted to publish Stanley Wolpert's **Jinnah of Pakistan** but it had some controversial material in it. I just couldn't get permission for it. Then General Zia died in a plane crash and Benazir Bhutto came to power. Suddenly there was no problem getting approval. We pushed ahead with the book."*

back from Kasur, and after a full day at her new office, Aameena still exuded a quiet energy.

She spent her early childhood in the US and later in Karachi, where she grew up. Her father was in the foreign service and her mother a home-maker, but with a remarkable entrepreneurial spirit. "She used to buy properties and build houses," recalls Aameena. "In fact, my brother says that over the years, she brought in more income than my father, who was a senior civil servant."

The entrepreneur also had a literary

flair. "My mother was a poet and would write verse to mark every occasion. I even recall her writing verses on a napkin in a restaurant. She was a very independent and determined lady. In fact, whenever I wanted to do something but there was risk attached, she would say 'kood pari' (plunge in)."

Aameena's father was also an avid reader. Literary discussion and debate on current issues was encouraged at home and, the second youngest of seven siblings, Aameena thrived in this intellectually challenging atmosphere. Her elder



With Shashi Tharoor at the Jaipur Literature Festival.

daughter was born soon after she started working. "There was no maternity leave in those days. All I got was three weeks of annual leave. I would travel to Jhelum in the day and rush home at night to nurse her. It was tough but I enjoyed my work and was very passionate and driven. In fact, I still am. And of course, I had the support of my husband."

After working for OUP for six years, Ameena moved back to Karachi where she decided to set up her own publishing house. "I had some money saved up and I used that to travel to the UK to do a six-week course on publishing and book-selling. I returned and decided to start importing books to generate income. My banker at the then Grindlays Bank was very helpful and he walked me through the entire process of getting licenses and LCs etc."

Her mother gave her a room in her house to set up office and Salyid Books was born – a one-person operation but

sister was the respected journalist, Naushaba Burney.

Schooling at the Karachi Grammar School was followed by a stint at St Joseph's College. And then came marriage and a move to Lahore, where she began teaching at the Lahore American School. "On a visit to Karachi, I interviewed for a job at the Oxford University Press. And I joined them in 1979."

"It was a very tiny organisation then and budgets were tight. I had to promote OUP books in institutions all over Punjab and the Frontier," recalls Ameena. "The budget only allowed for public transport." "I remember loading heavy bags of books and catalogues onto a rickshaw and going to schools. I would take one bag and leave the other in the rickshaw. Then rush back thinking, what if he drives off with the books." She made presentations from Islamabad and Lahore to Jhelum and Peshawar. "But one felt safe in those days. I would take an overnight train from Lahore to Peshawar and stay in some small hotel. I can't imagine asking a young woman to do that today."

Still, being a woman in a sales job was challenging. Especially in places like Peshawar. "The book-sellers didn't know how to deal with me, an unveiled woman. They felt their reputations were at stake.

*"The book-sellers in Peshawar didn't know how to deal with me, an unveiled woman. They felt their reputations were at stake. They wouldn't even ask me to sit down. In fact, the first few times they told me to send a man to speak with them. But gradually, over time, they accepted me and the same book-sellers would offer me tea."*

They wouldn't even ask me to sit down. In fact, the first few times they told me to send a man to speak with them. But gradually, over time, they accepted me and the same book-sellers would offer me tea."

Even in Lahore, being a woman was not always easy. "One had to deal with attitudes and comments. And it always revolved around character, either mine or their own. However, it got easier because I persisted. So I tell girls today, you must continue on your path, but take others along with you. It is okay to adapt and change oneself a little bit because in doing so you can change mindsets and make a difference."

Then there was, of course, the challenge of family life. Ameena's eldest

with big goals. "I would drop and pick my children from school and in-between manage the entire business. I have had my car towed several times, once I even chased the tow truck," laughs Ameena. "I would go to the airport to collect books, get them cleared, bring them home, get orders, type invoices... It was hard but I learnt all the ropes from start to finish."

Gradually, things picked up. "I started getting good orders from libraries and other places. I realised I was actually making a profit so I hired a few more people."

After about two years of running her own business, Ameena was approached by OUP once again. "They took me to a Japanese restaurant in Karachi and over dinner offered me the post of head of



sales and marketing. But buoyed by the success of my own business, I had the confidence to say that I wanted to be MD for Pakistan. I remember there was a pause. And then they said, "Thank you."

To Ameena's surprise, some time later OUP contacted her again and offered her the post she wanted. "It was quite a dilemma. My sister Naushaba said, 'Munni you are mad.' But OUP assured me that I would have all the resources I wanted to start publishing books rather than just importing them, which is what I really wanted to do. So I accepted."

"And they were true to their word. They gave me their support and I went to town. I hired editors, designers, illustrators, had them trained. Very quickly we came up to speed. And we started publishing."

In accepting the offer, Ameena became the first woman in Pakistan to head a multinational company. But she is quick to point out that it was a very small operation then. "Our office was located in a house on Shahrae Faisal and we had a staff of 16." When Ameena left the organisation, it was employing 600 people and occupied its own impressive custom-built premises.

Ameena took the reins of the publishing company in 1988, the peak of the General Zia era, when censorship was strong and conservatism pervasive. "I remember I wanted to publish Stanley Wolpert's *Jinnah of Pakistan* but it had



At the Karachi Literature Festival (clockwise) with Intezar Hussain and Nadeem Aslam; Abdul Sattar Edhi and Tehmina Durrani; I.A. Rehman; Asif Aslam Farrukhi.

some controversial material in it. I just couldn't get permission for it. Then General Zia died in a plane crash and Benazir Bhutto came to power. And suddenly there was no problem getting approval. We pushed ahead with the book. Emboldened, I wanted to have it translated into Urdu as well. That also went ahead without any backlash."

But the book that really established OUP's reputation as a serious publishing house was Hasan Zaheer's *Separation of East Pakistan*. "It was seminal work. And it generated a fresh debate on the East Pakistan episode. People like General Niazi contacted me and wanted their versions printed. Then others contacted me. We published half-a-dozen books on the subject."

But sparking debate on controversial topics has its dangers. "I have had to go

into hiding. I have had *fatwas* issued against me and warrants of arrest," recalls Ameena. "I have had to travel in a bullet-proof car with guards behind. At one point I would roam around with a ticker to the UK in my bag in case I had to leave the country quickly."

Meanwhile OUP was growing and schoolbooks had become one of their most lucrative revenue chains. But at the same time, pirated copies began to flood the market. "I got legal advice and had raids conducted on bookshops and seized the pirated copies. In one year, 150 raids were conducted in Pakistan. But in Karachi a certain political party told me to back off or my body would be found."

More death threats were in store for Ameena. "After we published Ayesha Siddiqui's *Military Inc.* I had to leave the country for a while. But that book actually

sold well. The threats and all the publicity generated so much interest.”

Besides her work in publishing, Ameenah's most valuable contribution is, perhaps, the Karachi Literary Festival (KLF). “I was very disturbed by the status of writers in our country. They were financially insecure and were given little recognition or reward. In contrast, when I attended the Jaipur Festival, I saw that authors were treated like celebrities.” Ameenah was determined to change this situation. “I approached my old friend and academic Asif Aslam Farukhi with the idea and he said, “Let’s do it.” Again OUP allowed me to use their resources and the British Council also helped a lot.”

The first Karachi Literature Festival was held at the Carlton Hotel and was an instant success. Some 5000 people attended it. “I remember telling William Dalrymple this and he said the first Jaipur Festival had 40 attendees, that too probably Japanese tourists. So we were very encouraged.”

The KLF has now become a regular event on the Karachi cultural calendar and is thronged by people of all ages and from all walks of life. The last festival drew in a crowd of some 200,000 and it has spawned various spin-offs in Lahore, Multan, Hyderabad etc.

But changes were brewing at the organisation that had encouraged and supported Ameenah all these years. “A new management came in and a new matrix structure was established. People were no longer reporting to me and my authority was greatly diluted, my judgement questioned. Things started to go wrong since I was losing control.”

“I wanted to resign under the new management but they would not let me, saying if I did I would not receive my dues. Thirty years worth of dues is a lot, so I stayed. But I really felt like bonded labour.” Matters came to a head when Ameenah was held responsible for a professional irregularity at work by a team no longer reporting to her.

Ameenah finally left in 2018, without the dues owed to her. “I filed a case against OUP in England under the Employment Tribunal. The case is still on record. But it was declared out of jurisdiction in England.” People whom she had worked with in the old management, rallied around her and she managed to get some



*Sparking debate on controversial topics has its dangers. “I have had to go into hiding. I have had fatwas issued against me and warrants of arrest,” recalls Ameenah. “I have had to travel in a bullet-proof car with guards behind. At one point I would roam around with a ticket to the UK in my bag in case I had to leave the country quickly.”*

of the amount owed. Many other authors and academics also threw their weight behind Ameenah in this difficult time.

Ameenah had parted ways with OUP but

still wanted to continue with the Literature Festival re-named the Pakistan Literature Festival. But the company sued Ameenah and Asif Farrukhi for using the same name for what they saw as OUP’s festival. “Fortunately, we were supported by Khalid Mehmood at Getz Pharma who got us a lawyer. He told us to simply change the name and so it became the Adab Festival.”

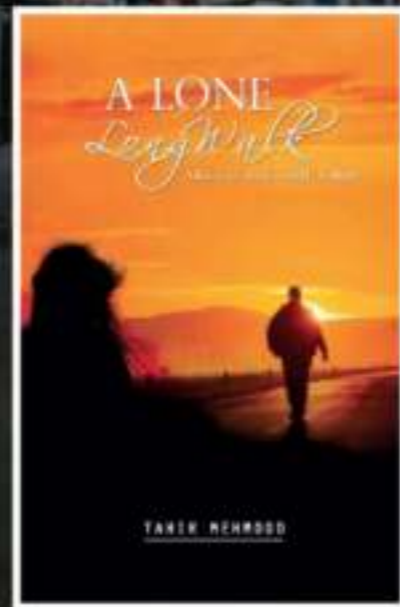
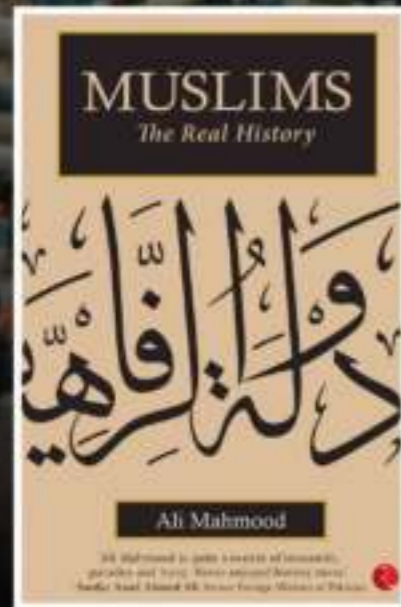
Two Adab Festivals were successfully held before the Corona pandemic set in. But a bigger blow was in the offing. Asif Aslam Farukhi died of a sudden heart attack this year. “He used to say we were partners in crime. Now that I have lost that partner, I can’t think of continuing the festival without him.”

During the course of her career Ameenah has racked up an Order of the British Empire conferred on her by the Queen. She was also awarded the *Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres* by the French government for the Karachi Literature Festival. But the award she values most is the *Sitara-e-Imtiaz* received for “courage in publishing.”

Today, Ameenah Salyid is as hands-on and determined as ever, forever, on to the next project. “I am very excited to be soon publishing a novel, something I couldn’t do with OUP. It is that excitement of cultivating an author, seeing the book take shape and then being read that remains as thrilling.” ■

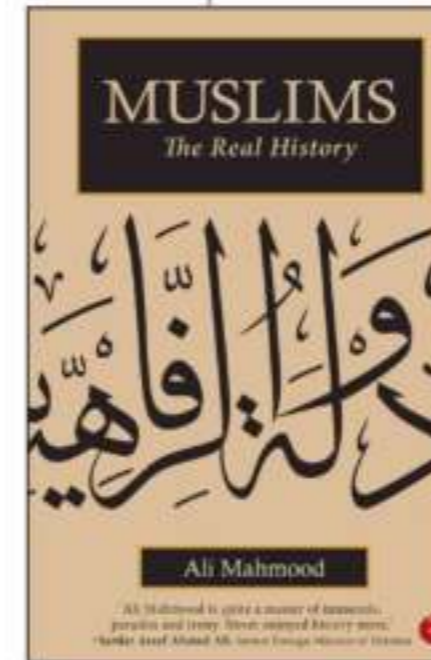


# BOOKSTORE



## Time Travel

Tracing Muslim history through the ages, Ali Mahmood spins a riveting tale.



### Muslims

Author: Ali Mahmood  
 Publisher: Sapphire Books, Islamabad  
 Pages: 528  
 Price: NA

### By Amir Zia

**T**here is neither any dearth of well-researched and well-preserved material on the early days of Islam, nor of historical accounts of the rise and fall of Muslim empires and dynasties. The paramount challenge for any historian attempting to write on this subject yet again, is to discover a fresh angle or interpretation. Ali Mahmood – politician, businessman-cum-author and thinker – takes up this humongous task and comes out with flying colours.

The voluminous 528-page *Muslims – The Real History* – is Mahmood's second book. Its first and so far only hard-back edition was printed sometime in 2017. His first book, *Saints and Sinners: Why Some Countries Grow Rich, And Others Don't*,

was published in 2013.

In his second book, the author takes the reader on a whirlwind, captivating tour of Muslim history, from the days of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to the emergence of a new generation of freedom fighters and nation builders in the 20th Century. And yes, there is also a sprinkling of post 9/11 events and how the US-led war on terror impacted Muslims.

In one volume, the author has showcased the rise and dominance of different Muslim empires in various parts of the world over a period of one thousand years – the golden era – along with their downfall and conquest by the European powers from the 17th Century onwards. After three hundred years of defeats, indignities and exploitation, the saga of Muslims took a new turn in the 20th Century. They started to fight back. New Muslim states were born and great leaders fought for their people – from Mustafa Kemal Ataturk to Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. And the two World Wars acted as a catalyst in liberating many Muslim lands, though a number of these young states remain bogged down by internal contradictions and are manipulated by the Western powers.

The canvas of the book is vast. The Muslim epic is breathtaking. Starting from the early days of Islam, the

author objectively identifies key turning points and critical junctures of Muslim history in broad strokes, lacing his narration with interesting anecdotes and insights.

The reader is taken on a fast-paced journey. One gets a bird's-eye-view of the period of the first four 'righteous caliphs,' followed by the glorious and magnificent empires of the Umayyads, Abbasids, Fatimids, Timurids, Ottomans, Safavids and Mughals. But the book is not just a paean to bygone days. The author objectively highlights the internal contradictions and rivalries among the leading figures of those times, the structural weaknesses of these empires and the reasons why they collapsed one by one.

Mahmood's writing style is lucid and gripping. He packs a lot of punch in every sentence and crisply written paragraph. Given the constraints of space, he manages to paint characters effectively. He introduces Hazrat Umar (RA) thus: "Umar was a hard man. Hard on others, even harder on himself. This stern, austere puritan was amongst history's greatest leaders. Strategist and administrator without equal, he built a civilisation and created an empire that endured for a thousand years. He was willing to pay the price for his beliefs. His justice was absolute – no privilege, no favour, equality for all before the law. When his son was found drunk, the law was mercilessly applied – his son was lashed, eighty strokes without remission. The lashing killed the boy."

And one finds such brief and incisive character sketches and anecdotes woven all through the book, giving readers interesting insights, yet leaving them craving more. But the author briskly draws them to another empire, another era, another story or another personality in this page-turner.

Unlike those historians whose heavy-weight academic works are meant only for other academics, Mahmood's

'Muslims' cuts through this barrier. His book is as much for common readers as it is for scholars – à la William Dalrymple. Once you start reading the book, it is difficult to put down.

While the author captures the broad trends and direction of Muslim history, he also underlines the Muslim contribution to the world in terms of science, medicine, philosophy, art and architecture. While Europe was slumbering in the dark ages, civilisation was thriving in Muslim lands.

He celebrates the contribution of Muslims to knowledge in a dedicated chapter. "But perhaps the greatest of the great was al-Khwarizmi the mathematician, from whose name the term algorithms was created – to describe a set of numerical calculations critical to software design, modern engineering, computers and smart electronics. Al-Khwarizmi's greatest contribution to mathematics was the simple zero which he learned from Hindu mathematicians of India."

There was political order, justice and tolerance as well as grandeur. For example, he writes about the court of Harun al Rashid thus: "The court... is the stage setting of the *Arabian Nights*, the *Thousand and One Nights* of Scheherazade. It was a time of culture, romance, brilliance and above all, extravagant luxury. Ambassadors of kings from Asia and Europe marvelled at the splendours of Harun's lifestyle."

In Muslim civilisations, slaves were not just treated well, but could build careers and become masters and rulers, establishing their own dynasties. Religious minorities, including Jews and Christians, could climb up the social ladder and were allowed to hold important positions without the fear of being persecuted – barring times of war or if found breaking agreements or changing their allegiance.

Mahmood weaves the thread of a shared common history based on faith among people inhabiting different regions, belonging to distinct cultures and ethnicities and separated from one another by time and space. The only common and binding factor remains religion, which often proves too weak to hold them together, resulting in assassinations, conflicts and wars. Yet conceptually

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ally and ideologically, it overwhelms the hearts and minds of many Muslims even today.

The book also sheds light on almost all major, bloody conflicts between Muslims. Just to quote one, "Almost a century later (after the tragedy of Karbala) the Hashemites had their revenge when the Abbasids... invited the Umayyads, almost a hundred of them, to dinner and clubbed them to death; their corpses together with those wounded but not dead were covered with a huge carpet and the banquet continued amidst the stench of the dead and groans of the dying."

The book discusses the tradition of fratricide among the Ottomans, one of the factors behind their decline. Wars for the throne and power tussles among brothers remained the hallmark of

Muslim empires and dynasties all throughout history, contributing to their weakening and eventual demise.

And *Muslims* is not just about the history of men. Prominent women played a vital role all through history – starting from the days of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) to the modern era. Women were in decision-making positions, at times they wielded the real power behind the throne and at other times remained clearly in the forefront. The author manages to drive home this point effectively.

The last 10 chapters, out of 29, are dedicated to the revival of Muslim states, starting from the birth of modern Egypt and the reincarnation of modern Turkey following the decline and demise of the once mighty Ottoman Empire. The author takes the reader to the roller coaster history of Muslims in the 20th Century, when new countries were being created and larger than life personalities such as Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Gamal Abdel Nasser, King Faisal, Saddam Hussein and Muammar Gaddafi redefined and rewrote the history of Muslims, winning them independent homelands.

These leaders – especially Atatürk, Nasser and Jinnah – had huge influence as role models for many modern day Muslims.

However, caught amidst hostile neighbourhoods, conspiracies hatched by Western powers and the general backwardness of their own populace, many of these Muslim states remained vulnerable and volatile. While the plant of Western democracy and concept of human rights failed to flourish in Muslim lands as objective conditions were not favourable, the Muslim leadership also failed to create institutions and systems fitting their own requirements. Foreign interference remained a factor behind its decline as the Muslim world tumbled from one crisis to another. And this story continues.

For students and scholars of history and politics, Mahmood's book is not just a treasure trove of information, but it also offers a new perspective as it attempts to find unity in diversity and tell the story of Muslims through the ages in a single thread. ■



**A Lone Long Walk**

Author: Tahir Mehmood  
Genre: Short-Stories (Fiction)  
Publisher: Ferozsons (Pvt.) Ltd.  
Publication Year: March 2020  
Pages 116  
Price: Rs 395

**By Maryam Iraj**

In a good short story, every word contributes to "a single and unique effect," as defined by Edgar Allan Poe in his review of Hawthorne's *Twice-told Tales* for *Graham's Magazine* in the May of 1842. Centuries apart, Tahir Mehmood's craft of short story writing can best be understood in this light. Readers cannot escape noticing a concentrated effort on the part of the writer, to compose an enduring and sustained narrative which evolves and revolves around tales of life, love, and duty.

His stories are crisp and rich in texture, sweet as *Candy* and complex as *Riddle*. Fate remains irreversible in his stories as it is in life. But he, being a writer, renders his characters with choices which life barely offers to us. Hence, his characters can introspect and understand the inevitability of both their actions and circumstances. In the fictive weave of Mahmood's craft, we find characters and their conduct more inseparably entwined than they could have been in real life. Smoothly carved out of reality, his themes flow like the modern consciousness of man: cyclical, abstract, at times transient and temporal and, at times, drunk on eternity.

"To be, or not to be," is not the question Mahmood's characters wrestle

**Turning Points**

Mehmood's characters face danger and defeat with love and compassion.

with, primarily. They are in the know of their being, if not fully, then partially. They do not feel the "rub," the way Hamlet felt it – the rub of not knowing what happens after death. It's not particularly the existential crisis they suffer from but they learn to introspect to explore life in all its shades. Be that a soldier of *He Chose to Die*, sage-owls from *The Next Day*, a puppeteer from *A Town Beyond Sorrows*, a widow from *She Lives in the Garden*, a sad old man from *The Stretch of Rise and Fall*, a proud soldier and the husband of a lonely wife from *Mortals Immortal*, or Neelum – the painter of *Line*, his characters are dynamic, capable of being moved through love, compassion, and with an unyielding desire to question the given, and to dare the distant. They go through uncertainty, danger, defeat, love, loss, sacrifice, and silence to rummage through the folds of life with poise; be those folds dark or sunny.

Stories like *The Remains* don't give us a sense of unrequited love lost to the war zone but an aching heart consoled in the bosom of nature. War may claim more than the lives of those who enter the battlefield; yet those who are left behind bleed the most. But these are the souls, in his stories, who are braver too.

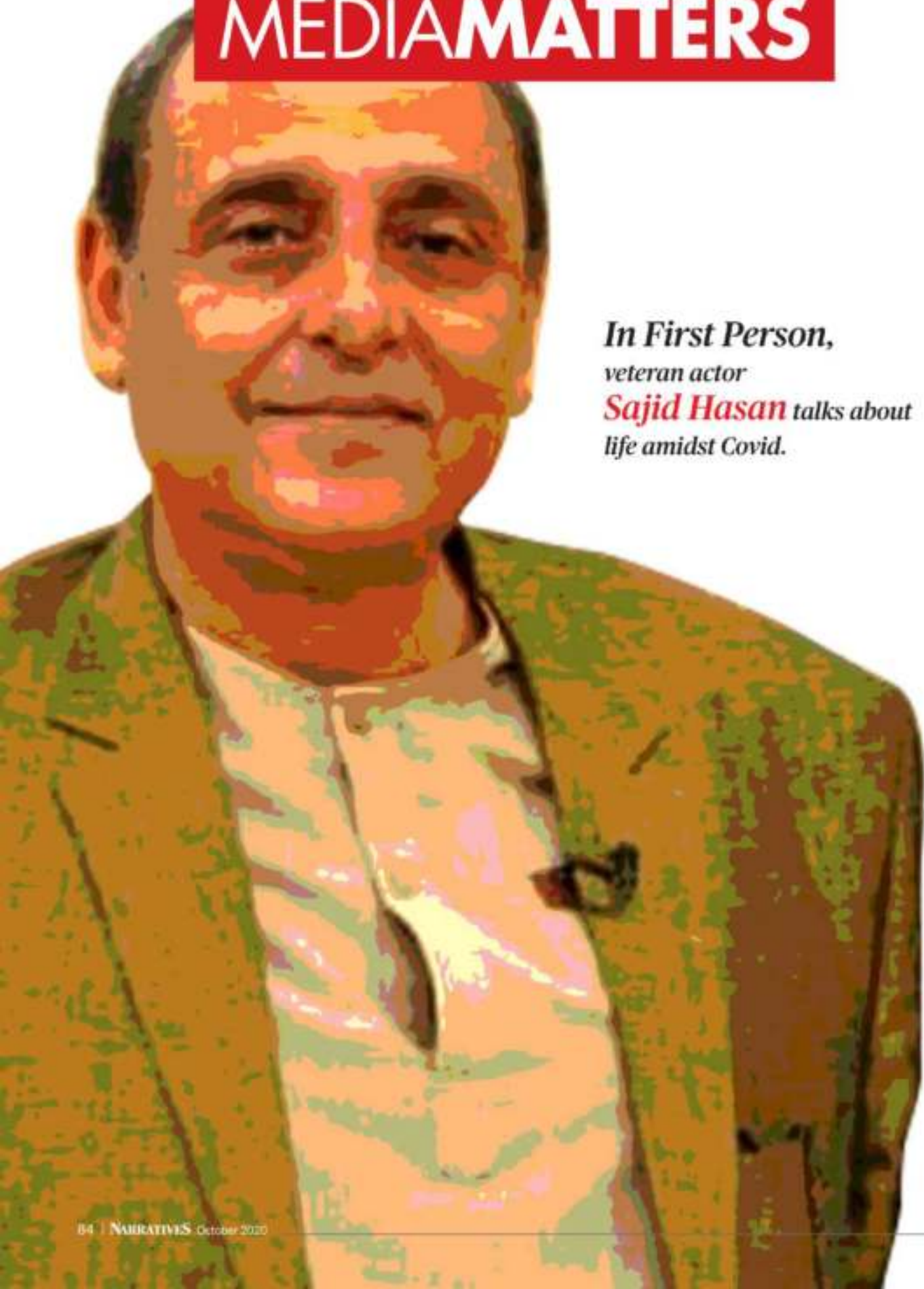
At this point, it is important to talk about the balance that Mahmood strikes with his creative ingenuity. He does not move his war narrative with death and destruction in its wake. He does far more. There is a lot at stake in the battle among hard realities of war zones, imagined memories, subjective experiences, and poetic reconstruction of fact. While war historians always looked at the grand narrative of war; the "why" of it – the rationale of it, creative writers reduced the nuanced metaphor of war to a mere individual tragedy and the absurdity of human loss. While both entertain dissimilar conceptions of meaning to enter the war zones; a historian views a soldier's death allegorically, as the expression of patriotism. However, a

creative writer will judge it in existential terms, as something unique to the soldier concerned. When it comes to war themes, a creative writer hardly makes sense of the event but that of an individual experience. From Homer's epic *Odyssey*, to Tolstoy's *Hadji Murat*, or Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage*, to Barker's *Regeneration*, and Faulks's *Birdsong*, creative writers always tried to denude war of its idealism, abstraction, and larger than life ramifications. All in an effort to make it more human, deep and penetrating. And this is exactly the point where the gap between a war historian and a creative writer widens.

Mehmood tries to bridge this gap. He knows how to relay the sensation of war into fiction with ease, grace, and honesty, keeping it human without stripping it off its idealism. His subtle, visceral renditions of uncharted terrains of both landscapes, physical and emotional, leave his readers vulnerable to his nuanced power of story-telling. In short stories where there is a very narrow scope of complex plot-development, Mahmood imparts his characters with emotional and psychological depths to set them off on an unending journey of self-discovery. This process of writing serves as a kind of reclamation of those lone long walks that divulge inchoate and nebulous stories – stories to bring home the glory of the lonely yet brave hearts. He does not slot them in hard and fast symbolic frameworks. His soldiers may feel torn asunder from within when away from home with hearts filled with memories, yet they choose to die for millions to live in peace.

Mehmood has an instinctive ability to halt the narrative for readers with his poetic spells. At a point when authors usually allow their characters to unfold in the uninterrupted glory of their narrative, he holds them back with his poetic interludes to weave a mystique around them. To sum it up in Mahmood's words: *From a drop to ocean, diamond to dust, Divinity reveals itself in silence, solitude, and nothingness.* ■

# MEDIAMATTERS



*In First Person,*  
veteran actor  
**Sajid Hasan** talks about  
life amidst Covid.

## Life in the Time of Covid

The more things change, the more they remain the same...



*Even before Covid, I had learnt compromise was the name of the game. So I unabashedly worked for lunatics, murderers, mafiosos, smugglers, dirty politicians and sex-obsessed couch masters. This is the reality of the underbelly of the industry I belong to.*

I had thought this pandemic might change the world for the better. How wrong I was! To recap my life during the pandemic would be to delve into a tale of total chaos. The same could probably be said for most Pakistani artists.

As of now, my life is a mess. Like most Pakistanis – and people across the world perhaps – I feel utterly helpless. I spend first and think later. My credit is mounting, but no payments are due – there is no work. But I am not in a unique position. Those attuned to the old system, i.e. seeking out a premier multinational company or corporation, attaching themselves to working for these giants, and complacent in the belief that their futures would be secure, are, post-Covid, on the open seas. Joblessness runs rampant. And now it is every man for himself. And I am lost, as are they.

Even before Covid, I had learnt compromise was the name of the game. The ideals of imaginative and creative people particularly, are never realised, for they are usually unattainable, so I had ceased to bother with who it was that

employed me. As far as I was concerned, it was not my problem or my job to verify the character of my employer, so I unabashedly worked for lunatics, murderers, mafiosos, smugglers, dirty politicians and sex-obsessed couch masters. This is the reality of the underbelly of the industry I belong to. It is a reality we all know, but do not acknowledge. My histrionic abilities had been recognised and I gained a measure of fame, so I stayed.

Then Covid caught me unaware. The one company that I have consistently worked with told me to lower my daily wages to half, or take a walk. I took the walk. Enough humiliation I thought. Enough of mindless, stupid scripts justifying morality that I never agreed with, but job demanding, had to be a part of anyway. I had recently heard that the CEO of the same company's channel had called artistes "condoms," meant I assume to mean that we were as valuable as throwaways. This may not be factually correct, but still it hurt me deeply. I began to wonder, have we given our lives to

bolster our employers' egos, their very fickle and despotic tendencies?

So, in the new world order, where I was out of work, I made up my mind. I was going to change like the world had, and get into some other business.

But Covid also put paid to that. Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah announced a lockdown – basically amounting to stay home, even while you have not a penny. I thought, what will become of me and the

people dependent on me. Not that my family is not used to uncertainty. We are and thank God for that, but this was different. Since there was no other ready business I could find to step into, and staying home didn't help with job hunting, I had to start begging for loans. Unfortunately, no one would come through. The more I called, the less responsive the world became. Food rations, cigarettes all became scarce. I was in a mess.

In such trying times I had hoped my wife would come to my aid along with my three sons, but alas, it was not to be. My lovely wife turned on me. She stated I was entirely responsible for our family's sorry state and started calling me things akin to the condom comment. My sons also jumped on the blame game bandwagon. I kept telling them that I had worked for 30 years and if Rana Sheikh of the PPP had not done the ultimate injustice of doing away with royalties, I would be a rich man. But my pleas for understanding and empathy fell on deaf ears. They refused to listen. I was mortified. I began to think okay, this is the end of the road for me. I will die of Covid sooner or later, so there is no point working in my last days on planet Earth. I should resign myself to my fate, and live the impoverished life I was obviously destined for in the few days I had left.

While waiting to die, and that not happening in a hurry, I decided to leave Pakistan. When I told Samina Peerzada my plans, she merely smiled. She knew perhaps that I am 'Pakistan' and how can 'Pakistan' ever leave Pakistan for good? And when I arrived in Dubai still planning on making it a final exodus from Pakistan, every Pakistani I met was only interested in knowing about Pakistan. Therefore, I returned.

Then came a possible business opportunity. I was told that a very reputed company was looking to import masks. I knew someone whose company was dealing with medical supplies and I got them together, thinking my luck had changed, feeling ecstatic about getting a foot into the medical supply business. But like Khan I am awfully bad at geography. Considering China is a big mask manufac-



Adapting to life post-Covid.

*... Covid caught me unaware. The one company that I have consistently worked with told me to lower my daily wages to half, or take a walk. I took the walk. Enough humiliation I thought. Enough of mindless, stupid scripts justifying morality that I never agreed with, but job demanding, had to be a part of anyway.*

turer, and our neighbour and ally, I failed to factor in the CPTEC and our direct route, instead finding a mask supplier in the US of A. The masks along with airfreight ended up costing five times the average going rate, and this too for UV masks alone. So, never mind that my masks had FDA (the primary food and drug regulator in the United States) approval, who was going to pay for them when Chinese and locally made masks were so readily and cheaply available. The ordeal of this business lasted a month, and at the end of it, the money I was supposed to make in

brokerage was lost as the other two concerned parties joined, leaving me out in the cold. It was a rude awakening.

As is the reality of the entire medical business – and really, for the most part, that is what it is the business of making money. Shockingly I learnt, even in the life and death situation that Covid has wrought, faulty tests are the norm, and many hospitals and their owners manipulate patients for a quick buck.

And so, I suddenly realised that I would have to return to the same business I had worked in for the last three decades.

Now let me talk about our media and its narrow-minded moguls. I had joined NTM when one big party had left, and the other had taken over. I was made the public relations guy. Initially, there was just one channel. Then when the electronic media started mushrooming, the turf battles began. I found myself in the middle of these turf wars. For others it was not that big a deal. I on the other hand foolishly favoured one side over the other, so much so that this powerful faction started to completely ignore what little talent I had. Ultimately, I was left at their mercy.

"Sir we know we can never give you the kind of money you really deserve, we just can't. We just hope that we will be able to more than compensate you for your time in the future. We know it is nothing, but sir it is more than the young starlet who is the main lead" – the constant refrain.

In addition to this, it was only much later that it dawned on me that the scripts were pretty much always the same. Work for any media house and you find yourself dealing with virtually the same people who are always in it together. How amazing is that. What that really means is that there is no competition. Just one group trying to maintain their position by creating a certain perception, just like the political parties.

But here I am, a slave to this system – the only one I really know. And is the world and this industry I belong to even a marginally better place post-Covid? Sadly, the more things change, the more they remain the same. ■

## Fighting Breast Cancer

## Policy Platforms

The inception of a digital system for management of clinical data is essential for breast cancer research and policy formulation.



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.*

**T**he prevalence of breast cancer is one of the highest among this deadly disease around the world. The survival chances of patients depend on how early the patient has consulted an oncologist. Early detection can boost survival chances, as recommended by WHO. Breast cancer is categorised in various forms regarding their origin, grading, staging, and receptor status. When the prevalence is high, a fair assessment of stage at presentation is of vital importance.

A renowned professor of surgery at the Liaquat National Hospital, addressing the 56th Public Awareness Breast Cancer Seminar on 14th February 2020, said that 80 percent of women with breast cancer have no family history and about 77

percent of the women are above the age of 50 when diagnosed.

In Pakistan it is difficult to access data on a national level due to the unavailability of a national cancer registry. Researchers mostly obtain data from the hospital-based tumour based registry centres. Unfortunately, there is no concrete data available about the stage and age of the breast cancer presentation. In the absence of such data, a comprehensive health policy cannot be devised to address the problem.

The data collection techniques are manual, with higher probabilities of miscalculation and errors. Besides, it's costly and time-consuming, mostly collected from past medical records and treatment of patients. If automated data capture systems are put into place, they prove to be cost-effective and time-saving. Once data has been generated electronically it will facilitate both doctors and patients. In a typical clinical setup, hospital performance is assessed by surgical audits performed on the primary data, whereas the secondary data serves the purpose of investigating breast cancer patterns, distribution, and determinants of the disease.

Multiple disciplines and departments are involved in making the diagnosis and treatment of typical breast cancer patients. Various doctors from different disciplines i.e., general surgeons, pathologists, radiologists and oncologists are involved in diagnosis and treatment. The crucial part for such disease management is proper data handling. Textual data has more chances of misinterpretation, therefore, computation collection of clinical data has greater significance. The electronic medical record (EMR) is a digital format of a systemised – collection of patients' health data. It is gaining popularity for future medical research and practice. EMR is used in epidemiological analysis,

in addition to clinical service evaluation.

Digitally managed records have opened ways and means for big data solutions. Research questions are answered with more proficiency. The extracted data from the data repository devises a new course of action for clinicians and researchers. In this case, artificial intelligence can also assist in detecting and managing data.

Data aggregation from different sources is of fundamental importance in health care. New health care regimes are introduced by extracting the hidden

*Pakistan has a high rate of breast cancer and around 90,000 new cases are diagnosed every year.*

knowledge in patients' data. The clinical research database features reinforce the data quality. The components needed for a successful clinical research database incorporate clinician engagement, integration of outdated computer systems, and the convenience of research.

The legacy system of collecting and storing data has been revolutionised by cutting edge computational technology and advanced informatics in medicine for computational research.

Maintaining a computational data repository is the need of the time for better medical services. Many countries have initiated EMR systems to manage enormous amounts of clinical data. These programmes included NHS care records service in the United Kingdom, National Programme For Information

Technology (NPFTT), National Electronic Health Records (NEHR), Allscripts, EPIC, The Royal Children's Hospital Electronic Medical Record in Melbourne, Care 360, OPTUMinsight, McKesson, Nextgen, Eclinicalworks, Greenway in the USA. Malaysia is still in the budding stage of implementing electronic medical record and hospital information management systems.

Pakistan has a high rate of breast cancer and around 90,000 new cases are diagnosed every year. It is extremely important to take initiatives for digital data collection to address these critical health issues. The country needs a transition from manual records keeping towards incorporating emerging information and communication technologies in the health sector.

The Ministry of information technology and telecommunications (MOITT) has passed a bill for personal data protection in April 2020. The bill highlights guidelines for personal data collection, privacy, and security and introduces a fine of Rs.25 million for its unlawful possession.

The guidelines provided for personal data protection will enhance the collection of clinical information required for research. Automated data collection will help clinicians and researchers to educate a mass audience. Clinical research knowledge will facilitate the researcher, while the patient's primary record is kept safe and secure. Clinical research knowledge base via de-identification of primary patient records prototype fulfills the international standard for data transfer, Health Level-7 standard (HL7), for clinical and administrative information.

The availability of consolidated, accurate, and compiled data can be ensured through an electronic national cancer registry platform, to control and create awareness of the disease with accurate statistical figures. Epidemiological research, health planning programmes, and patient care improvement are accelerated with digital data accessibility. For this, a holistic national-level system of cancer patient registration is imperative. The cancer data bank will assist clinicians and researchers in better understanding

breast cancer and its prevalence and will help its treatment and prevention.

The Pakistan Health Research Council (PHRC) has been elected by the Ministry of national health systems resource

*The country needs a transition from manual records keeping towards incorporating emerging information and communication technologies in the health sector.*



centre (NHSRC) to form a cancer registry platform with the help of all major public and private hospitals. The hospitals that are part of the national cancer registry programme are Civil Hospital (Karachi), Jinnah Postgraduate Centre (Karachi), National Institute of Child Health (Karachi), Nishtar Hospital (Multan), Allied Hospital (Faisalabad), Bolan Hospital (Quetta), Khyber Teaching Hospital (Peshawar) and Armed Forces Institute of Pathology (Rawalpindi). These hospitals send their data to PHRC every quarter in mostly non-digital form. Resources are limited and data shared on an institutional level is still in its preliminary stage.

University Malaya medical centre in Malaysia has a system for electronic

medical record, the i-pesakit© system developed by the university's department of information and technology. It has seven modules for patient management activities that include patient registration, inpatient, emergency medical visits, billing, folder tracking, and reporting. It has been operational since July 2012, and was further upgraded by the inclusion of clinical documents, orders, and results. This is a model for replacing the paper-based model of a patient's record. The electronic medical record has further extended to clinical audits based on primary data obtained from the patient. They have incorporated organisational policies for handling digital data by developing solutions according to the personal data protection act.

Like Malaysia, Pakistan needs to involve stakeholders, academicians, students, departments of information and technology, and clinicians to make a proper document policy structure for the implementation of the electronic medical record system. Personal data with identification can be used with written permission obtained from the ethical committees or should be used under the personal data protection act.

The not-for-profit (Pink Pakistan) for data collection and EMR Pink Pakistan are putting efforts into facilitation, awareness, betterment, and enhancement of breast cancer patients' outcomes. Pink Pakistan has initiated efforts in providing a platform for the country's transition into an electronic health record registry, and the promotion of information technology usage in the health sector for the betterment of patients. To facilitate and promote this, a nationwide information system needs to be introduced by digital information structure expansion.

Digitisation of existing medical records, creating networks among public and private hospitals, diagnostic centres, clinics, and availability of concrete data about the stage and age of the breast cancer presentation, along with demographic information will aid in creating awareness programmes and lead to an evidence-based health policy formulation. ■

# MOOD OF THE MOMENT

## K-Electric vs the City



## Powerless City

In spite of its poor performance, KE is shielded by the terms of its agreement.

**T**he Karachi Electric (KE) is in the line of fire – and rightly so. Frequent and prolonged power outages have hit industrial, business and domestic consumers alike, making the life of a vast number of Karachiites miserable. It is not just ordinary consumers, civil society activists and opposition legislators who are in the mood to protest, but even lawmakers belonging to the provincial and federal governments were seen protesting outside the KE head office. The irony could not have been starker.

However, the government bigwigs, including some high-profile federal ministers, failed to move the KE management. The KE bosses, including Chief Executive Officer, Monis Alvi, have successfully weathered the storm of criticism and survived to tell the tale. The end result of all the meetings by federal ministers and calls from governor Sindh to improve the power supply situation was nothing at all. And the KE continues to deal with its consumers as it always has – with rude indifference to the sufferings and problems caused by what it terms, in its jargon, “load-shedding.”

While there is excess electricity available in the national grid, consumers of Karachi continue to suffer short supply. Why? Because the KE has failed to invest in the upgradation and modernisation of the system, as per agreement. And as the current private management of the KE wants to sell its stakes in the company, there are little chance that it will invest more money or go for structural changes and improvements.

Many politicians, businesspersons and ordinary citizens want the government to take over the company – but that is easier said than done. It is also a fact that even in its present bad shape, the privately-run KE performs better than the government-run KESC of yesteryears. Then, the challenge is, what to do? Is bringing about improvement in KE's performance possible under the current management? Is breaking the monopoly of KE in the megacity an option? But here again there are many legal issues that prevent the government from taking the plunge. *Monthly Narratives* asks former chairman, KE, Ikram Sehgal, Jamaat-e-Islami Karachi chief, Hafiz Naeem-ur Rehman and Chairman All Karachi Tajir Ittehad, Atiq Mir, how they view the challenge.



## 'No Need for New Power Plants'

*"This perception of shortage of electricity is created deliberately to make the case for additional power stations."*

The government cannot end KE's monopoly because its agreement is binding. If the government moves in this direction, it can cite several reasons where the KE violated the agreement, including failing to deliver constant power supply to the people and industries of Karachi. The government will, however, seem to be violating the terms of the agreement, whether good or bad. Pakistan will seem unfair to the world. The confidence of foreign investors will be shaken. This despite the fact that in its entire history, foreign investment has always been secure in Pakistan. Profits are made and repatriated without hitch.

It is preferable that power generation should be separated from transmission with distribution on the lines of DISCOS (Distribution Companies) of the North. But how workable this solution may appear, it cannot materialise given the agreement with investors, who have bought 66.4% of KE's shares. We'll have to wait for the agreement to end by 2023 to make any changes.

Reforms, however, are possible. I'm certain that the KE can produce more electricity than it generates now. A foreign national is KE's chief generation and transmission officer. He is also affiliated with Abraaj Group and Al-Jomaih Group consortium, which holds the majority shares of the K-Electric as KES Power. This is in violation of best corporate practices, because it is a conflict of interest. This perception of shortage of electricity is created deliberately to make the case for additional power stations. KE does not exploit the full potential of power generation and is always looking to set up new power units to expand its hold. Please let me know of any deal for equipment is done without kickbacks. Siemens is infamous for it and penalised not only by the German government but by governments all over the world. The foreign national is alleged to have close links with Siemens.

There should be an independent outsider to assess the KE's power generation capacity. By not fully utilising its power generation capacity and resorting to load-shedding, the KE wants to force the government to install new power plants.

But there is no need to set-up new plants because 1,200 megawatts of electricity is available with the HUBCO. Then there is around 500 MW available with Lucky Power. I strongly objected to setting up new units and that's one of the reasons I resigned. The National Transmission and Dispatch Company is the main culprit. They know that extra power is available at Karachi's doorstep. Instead of its being evacuated elsewhere, it should bring it to Karachi. We also have coal-based Power Plants in Tharparkar. Whatever electricity is being produced in Thar can be brought directly to Karachi. Therefore, I say that we do



Ikram Sehgal  
Former Chairman, KE

not new power generation plants. What we need is just the right management and independent assessment of the KE.

If the KE's private management goes to the international courts, I doubt it could hold its own there because of its poor performance. KES Power always has good connections with every incumbent government. However, KES Power as a corporate entity is itself in doubt, given that 51% of it (Abraaj) is under liquidation.

The irony is that a power company supplying electricity to a big city like Karachi has appointed a chartered accountant as its CEO. If there's one thing he knows for sure, it is how to fudge figures. Ask them, when they claim to make zero profits, how much did they originally pay for the KE takeover? What multiple gains they stand to make if the deal with Shanghai Electric happens? The only money ever brought in was the \$100 million in equity when the first power station was installed, and that happened before the Abraaj Group joined the Al-Jomaih Group consortium and took over KE's management. And how did Abraaj pay for its share? Defraying against management fees. Though legitimate, the fact remains not a single penny was brought in. The KE is heavily under debt, who is going to pay for all these loans once the agreement is over and the current management leaves without independent audit? We should know that all KE's assets are used as collateral. The people of Karachi will pay through their noses for these loans. ■

## 'Scrap the Agreement'

*Political rhetoric aside, what we want right now is that the regulator should declare KE's license void.*

Political rhetoric aside, what we want right now is that the regulator should declare the Karachi Electric's license void. That's it. Do not change it. Do not amend it. Do not allow other entrants to compete alongside it. Just nullify the current agreement with the KE. The next step should be to constitute a committee comprising technical experts to probe what went wrong and how. Find out who is involved in mismanagement and corruption and bring them to justice. It's not vendetta. The government can simultaneously go forward to improve the KE and take stock of that what went wrong in the past by auditing at least 15 years of its accounts. In fact, the government should also audit the privatisation process and hold all the facilitators responsible for the murky deal accountable.

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government, too, is trying to conceal the records and wrongdoings of the KE.

The rulers want the issue resolved by incurring all the cost of line damages and other issues to the national exchequer and allowing the KE management to go scot-free. Yes, we know how Arif Naqvi, the head of Abraaj Group, supported the PTI's election campaign. If people find out how he fleeced the national exchequer after the KE takeover, the PTI government will also be brought in for trial - at least in the media.

The KE gets more gas than originally agreed upon, but its management still holds gas supply shortages responsible for the frequent power outages and punishing the citizens of Karachi.

The situation is getting worse as there is no accountability. The ruling party is doing its best to bear the liabilities of the KE and help the current management escape an independent audit. Whenever there is a crisis situation, the KE always gets its way and the national exchequer bears the liability at the behest of the ruling party. And then, eventually the people pay the price in the name of fuel adjustment charges and other such levies.

In the last public hearing of NEPRA, no PTI leader was present



Hafiz Naeem-ur-Rehman  
Ameer, Jamaat-e-Islami, Karachi.

*We know how Arif Naqvi, the head of Abraaj Group, supported the PTI's election campaign. If people find out how he fleeced the national exchequer after the KE takeover, the PTI government will also be brought in for trial - at least in the media.*

to advocate the case of Karachi.

We demand the restructuring of the KE and a fresh agreement to bring it back under state control. New power entrants should be allowed to play their part and make honest profits, but not fleece the citizens.

The government should keep 51 percent shares of the KE to maintain its control and out of this 51 percent, 25 percent must be transferred to the city government's holdings to boost its earnings. From the remaining 26 percent, the provincial and the federal governments can work out their terms. Now for the remaining 49 percent, allow everyone in the private sector to bid after diligence due. Just make sure that

there's no monopoly. By doing this, the government can encourage the private sector, quash monopoly, and still keep control of the KE.

Lastly, for the threats the KE made recently that it would move the international courts if NEPRA changed terms to amend its exclusivity, let me tell you that the KE does not have a case to plead. ■



## 'End KE's Monopoly'

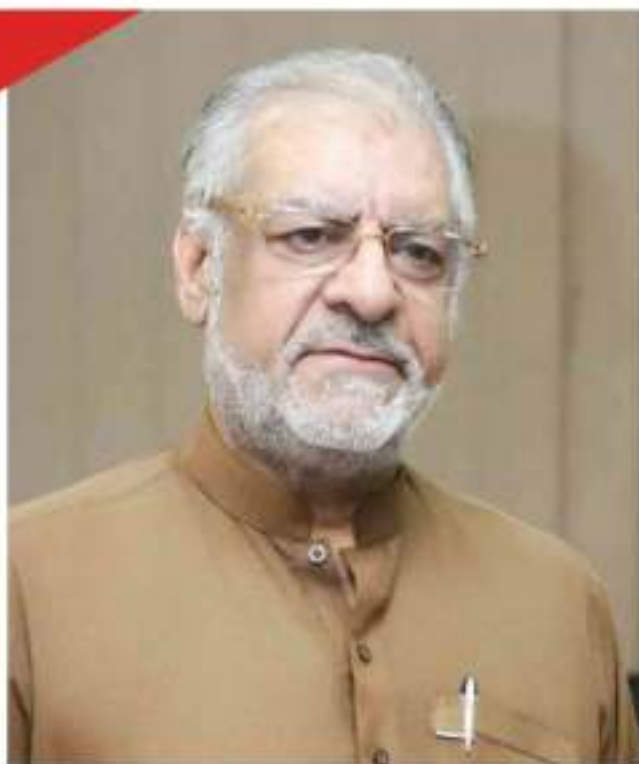
*The agreement that enshrines its exclusivity also envisages due distribution of energy to all consumers and that not on exorbitant rates, but at an affordable price. The KE breached the agreement.*

With the KE's privatisation in 2005, it was envisaged that a new era of power supply would dawn in Karachi. The Karachi Electric Supply Corporation was transformed into K-Electric, but apparently that was the only significant change after privatisation, as neither power transmission and distribution improved nor generation. Now we have reached a point where the KE is clearly unable to meet the growing demand for power in the city. Domestic, commercial and industrial consumers all are suffering alike. The power outages is hurting businesses and taking toll on the household incomes and quality of life. It is a shame that the KE did not deliver as per agreement with the government. The government has every right to initiate corrective measures, keeping in mind that the KE management does not have the grounds to invoke those agreement clauses that could go in its favour.

Even 15 years after privatisation, the KE's production is still a long way from hitting its full potential. It is not even enough to cater to today's active consumers, leave alone being capable of meeting the needs of a growing population. Load shedding is the inevitable result. It is futile to hope that from here on the KE will improve its performance, deliver on its promises and compensate the people of Karachi, who suffer its poor performance.

The way forward is either to scrap the agreement and let the state regain control of the KE, as it is already extending heavy subsidies to it; or at least to abolish its exclusive right to distribute electricity to Karachi, allowing new entrants into the market.

The government must allow new entrants to ensure fair competition. It can distribute districts among various companies. Only then will the government and the people come to know whether it is really impossible to manage Karachi's energy



Atiq Mir  
Chairman, All Karachi Tujir Ittehad.

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demands or has the issue been created by monopoly, political opportunism and corruption.

But the KE will never let this happen. It does not want to be exposed by competition. It will threaten and try to blackmail Pakistan's regulatory body of legal consequences for the breach of agreement, while itself blatantly transgressing from what was agreed upon. Its case is weak and will not stand a chance in international courts. The agreement that enshrines its exclusivity also envisages due distribution of energy to all consumers and that not on exorbitant rates, but at an affordable price. The KE breached the agreement. It cannot call out NEPRA for amending the clauses or even for

cancelling the agreement.

The government must allow new entrants to ensure fair competition. It can distribute districts among various companies. Only then will the government and the people come to know whether it is really impossible to manage Karachi's energy demands or has the issue been created by monopoly, political opportunism and corruption. ■

# CRYSTAL BALL

## What Tomorrow May Bring?

**I**f one thing in Pakistan is believed unanimously today, it is that the country is embroiled in a plethora of crises. However, this consensus is sans any afterthought about where this trajectory might lead us, whether it is a tunnel that leads us to light – or to an abyss.

The outbreak of the pandemic may have made matters worse, or perhaps it has worked to the government's advantage, having given it some breathing time, a buffer period to undo, rethink and redo what it may have been doing wrong.

The PM has himself admitted the multiple crises the country is riven by – for which the opposition lays the blame on the PTI

government. Among these, a natural gas crisis, a power crisis, and a rapidly mounting cost of living, exacerbated by Covid-related growing unemployment – all of which cannot fail to engender rising hostility towards the incumbent government. The PM, in turn, blames the opposition for wholesale corruption and the gift of circular debt which he maintains is the root cause of all the problems.

Against this backdrop, the government has embarked on its third year of rule. So, given past indicators and the shadows on the wall, what lies ahead for Pakistan?

### Analysts & their perspectives...



**Zafar Hilaly**  
Political Analyst

I think the adversaries of this government are ready to wage war and shed blood. They are defying the law. Why? Because their leaders have been summoned. So they are taking to the streets, the madrassah students who have little understanding of political narratives, accompanying their leaders to the courts. These leaders would rather lose Pakistan than lose power. This

sort of desperation is unhealthy.

A man staying abroad, calling the shots in Pakistan and not coming here to face his court cases, says he's fighting for democracy. He says Pakistan has no democracy. These

people know what they have done and how the courts will rule in their cases so they will not come back here, instead enforcing their narratives long distance. They will only come back if Pakistan is transformed into a country whose construct favours them. And then you have the Maulana, who says he'll visit the courts if summoned, but with manpower consisting of 30 to 40 thousand madrassah students. Why? Not because he's innocent, but because he can because he has tasted power.

Well, these people will lose Pakistan. Then they will run away because they have fortunes and offshore companies to their names in other countries. These indicators draw a very bleak picture and I'm confused as to how this year may end.

fairly well. Meanwhile, the opposition has continued to mount pressure, but for the most part ineffectively, as it remains inchoate and unfocused on the real issues. It is amazing that all the parties combined are not posing any really potent opposition to this government. It has been dealing with them quite effortlessly, probably because of their lack of a coherent and meaningful narrative.

If the PTI trumps the Senate elections, it will emerge as an overtly strong political party. The threats they may face then will probably be from within the party itself and the rising food inflation, among other things.

Yes, there are challenges, but the indications are that the Imran-led government will face them and steer Pakistan through them, clearing any impediments along the way. The year, the third down the line for the Imran Khan government, will conclude better.



**Amjad Shoaib**  
Defence Analyst

At the moment, the defence and foreign policies of the government can be considered to be clubbed together, since we deal with India and Afghanistan on our foreign fronts. Against this backdrop, the performance of the current government has been the best by far relative to previous governments.

Looking at our Kashmir policy and the Indian front, we undoubtedly do observe some lacunae, for example, our poor campaign in favour of Kashmir. We could have done more. Our PM delivers good speeches on international platforms. It is imperative for him to follow up on these speeches with the right campaigns, so that when he returns to those platforms the next year, he has data and statistics, and at least some plausible achievements to his name. The bottom line: his performance must match his claims. Perhaps our under-achievement on the Kashmir front is due in part at least, to the fact that our foreign office has not been very active lately. And the government did mark some milestones with the new political map courtesy its lobbying, which irked India.

So shortcomings notwithstanding, the work of all the previous governments in respect of foreign policy, especially the Nawaz



**Muzammil Aslam**  
Economist

The PTI government has completed two years in power, and the worst challenge it was confronted by, was the external account. It inherited a \$19 billion deficit, coupled with imminent high debt payments and shrinking forex reserves. This government's biggest achievement so far is that not only has it managed to turn the situation around by getting rid of the deficit, but also managed to hike the reserves back to the 2017 peak position.

Although the exchange rate dropped 25 to 30 percent in the past two years, the last 12 months have seen it remain stable. Inflation, under this government, jumped to a whopping 13 percent from 60 or 70, but that too has now been brought back to an 80 percent level. Current State Bank policy rates are 70 percent, but the lending made to commercial banks, businesses and traders, in the name of many schemes laid out to counteract adverse Covid-19 effects, have been at an average of 50 percent. This has encouraged many businesses to expand and prosper. There is another indicator of the government

Sharif dispensation during which our Kashmir policy was pummeled, pales in comparison to what the incumbent government has done on the foreign and defence fronts. However, there are three key challenges:

1. Khan's PTI made tall promises which it failed to deliver on to date. The masses don't understand how long it takes for such promises to materialise, so the government needs to make the people realise that it needs time.

2. The Opposition, has from day one, loudly proclaimed that this government is incompetent. The government has to prove them wrong by not merely getting the job done, but demonstrating to friends and foes alike that they have got it done.

3. Imran needs to understand that in order for the government to run, the opposition and treasury are both critical to success, and there has to be a functioning working relationship between the two. For some reason, however, his ego seems to be guiding him to continuing conflict rather than consensus. For the interest of the state, even if one has to bow down, one should not think twice. Imran needs to adopt such a policy of expedience when dealing with the opposition, or he will never be able to see any legislation materialise. This year, however, as the key indicators in defence and foreign policy suggest, will end better than the last few years.

policies' influence on the Pakistan Stock Exchange. When Imran Khan took the reins as PM, the stock market benchmark was floating at 42000 points, but slipped abysmally to the 27000-level. However, as he grew into his rule, the PSX rebounded to the same level, in fact, the recent quarter has proved the Pakistani bourse to be among the globe's best performing markets. So there are expectations of an even better performance in the days to come.

The challenge for this government is tax revenue, which has not seen notable growth, coupled with our GDP, which has contracted. This can be largely attributed to Covid-19. The IMF programme Pakistan signed up for, has also been suspended for the past six months, as we have yet to follow their condition of hiking power tariffs. However, the tariffs will soon be jacked up as per policy. This year the biggest challenge for the government is to surmount the circular debt and work out its exports, as the latter have not been good lately. I think the growth target of 20 percent, suggested by reports, will actually be in the 40 to 50 percent range, surpassing expectations. All in all, I believe we are looking at a better year economically, as compared to the last two years. ■



**Huma Baqai**  
Academic

The Imran Khan government has, in the face of so many challenges, proven its mettle and worked out each affair that previous governments were reluctant to touch. Whether it is the global pandemic, Covid-19, in regard to which Khan took the lead with a 'smart' lockdown which the world is now taking cues from, the realm of foreign affairs where we panicked earlier, but are now making friends and are increasingly assuming a laid-back role, or matters at home where the opposition irks him non-stop, his government seems to be

braving it with grit.

It certainly hasn't been an easy ride. All the problems Pakistan faced when the PTI assumed power just multiplied thanks to Covid-19, even though the government responded