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EDITORIAL

U.S. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta suggested last week that the United States could wrap up combat operations in Afghanistan by the end of 2013, well before the longstanding 2014 deadline when full control is to be ceded to Kabul. Troops would remain in Afghanistan until 2014, as agreed upon at the 2010 Lisbon Summit, and would be engaged in two roles until at least 2014 and perhaps even later. One role would be continuing the training of Afghan security forces. The other would involve special operations troops carrying out capture or kill operations against high-value targets.

Contrary to official coalition optimism and the increased captures and killings of Taliban operatives, Taliban has risen as a phenomenon confident of victory. And this is now a war in which perception of relative strength is becoming increasingly important as well. The planned withdrawal of foreign forces by 2014 obviously had something to do with this, and Mr Panetta's announcement to withdraw in 2013 will only strengthen the Taliban's perception that coming into power is simply a matter of time.

It is noteworthy that since attack by NATO/US forces that killed 24 Pakistani soldiers in November last year, U.S. operations have become less aggressive both in Afghanistan and Pakistan. This in part reflects a realization of the limits of U.S. military power in Afghanistan. Regardless of the motive, the Taliban interpret it as a signal -- and it is understood in Washington as a signal, too. US relationship with Pakistan has been seriously damaged and a counterterrorism alliance can survive only in a limited form, thus the need for US to withdraw from Afghanistan earlier than planned. We feel it shall suit all and sundry.

It has become a bit too common that West takes pot shot at Pakistan's "agenda". Ikram Sehgal a brilliant journalist and strategist of international repute says "Every country has an agenda about its core interests; anybody who claims otherwise is a hypocrite. Our "agenda" is real, the 3 million

refugees on our soil and the long difficult border we share with Afghanistan. The US can walk away at will whenever they are militarily and/or economically and/or emotionally exhausted and the US public cannot bear further loss of US lives fighting a war with no crucial interest or strategic meaning for the US. To quote then US Senator (and now) President Barack Obama in an anti-war rally in Chicago in 2002, “I am not opposed to wars, I am opposed to a dumb war,” a decade later his Presidency is bogged down trying to extricate the US military with honour from a really dumb war. The US can still “declare victory and go home”, Pakistan does not have the luxury of walking away, we will have to cope with the bloody aftermath and clear their mess like we have done previously.

Many Pakistani feel that Pakistan has not done enough and it needs to do more to make the US realize that Pakistan shall not in future compromise on its national interest and its sovereignty. Drone attacks have restarted after Pakistan reacted to 24 soldiers being killed by her strategic partners NATO/US well in side Pakistan border. Though the US has restricted drone strikes, the closure of land route to supplies is also beginning to bite. It is simply too expensive for the US to use alternative routes and with the threat of closure from Russia as well, sustaining operations in Afghanistan by NATO and US has become a nightmare. In fact this could be a contributing factor to the announcement of revised date of US withdraw in 2013.

The overwhelming public perception is that Pakistan must ease its dependence on the US. It must review and re-evaluate the entire relationship with US realistically but with some rather unusual courage and resolve. Not the hawks but pragmatic strategist have told LISA that Pakistan should not only close the use of land route for logistic supplies to the forces of occupation in Afghanistan for well over 10 years but should not permit its soil or airspace to be used for such purposes. They contend that it is not in the national interest of both Pakistan and Afghanistan to support the occupational forces. It is a geopolitical compulsion for Pakistan to have good relations with Afghan people and Afghan government that truly represents Afghans. Pakistan has no need to fall once again into the bait of economic assistance, threat of closure of all economic assistance or be unduly intimidated and must look into long term abiding core interest of their country.

Pakistan needs to show some spine to ask US to withdraw all its CIA/ intelligence operatives and members of Special Forces to leave Pakistan. Their presence has in no way helped Pakistan and in fact has added to the destabilization of this hapless country currently being ruled by the most corrupt regime that is totally subservient to the wishes of the US. Many consider it as a puppet of the US that would do their bidding at all costs. This regime is at war with its own people, its superior judiciary, its armed forces and its intelligence service, ISI.

The Memogate scandal, contempt of court by the unworthy Prime minister, flagrant disobedience of the orders of the Supreme Court and openly insulting and defying the Supreme Court on national media reflect that it is hell bent upon destroying all institutions. Before it is too late the Supreme Court of Pakistan has to show some spine to have its order implemented since it has the total support of the people and the armed forces. There are those who see the prevalent political impasse in Pakistan as deliberate. They think it is part of an evolving US foreign policy agenda, which favours disruption and disarray in the structures of the Pakistani State. Indirect rule by the Pakistani military and intelligence apparatus is to be replaced by more direct forms of US interference, including an expanded US military presence inside Pakistan and totally subservient stooges at the helm of affairs in Pakistan.

STOP PRESS

Our readers shall be pleased to know that a new interactive LISA Website is now operational. We shall be delighted to have your feed back to improve the quality of LISA Journal and LISA Website. Editor

Pakistan, Russia and The Threat to the Afghan War

George Friedman

Days after the Pakistanis *closed their borders* to the passage of fuel and supplies for the NATO-led war effort in Afghanistan, for very different reasons the Russians threatened to close the alternative Russia-controlled *Northern Distribution Network (NDN)*. The dual threats are significant even if they don't materialize. If both routes are cut, supplying Western forces operating in Afghanistan becomes impossible. Simply raising the possibility of cutting supply lines forces NATO and the United States to recalculate their position in Afghanistan.

The possibility of insufficient lines of supply puts NATO's current course in Afghanistan in even more jeopardy. It also could make Western troops more vulnerable by possibly requiring significant alterations to operations in a supply-constrained scenario. While the supply lines in Pakistan most likely will reopen eventually and the NDN likely will remain open, the gap between likely and certain is vast.

The Pakistani Outpost Attack

The Pakistani decision to close the border crossings at Torkham near the Khyber Pass and Chaman followed a U.S. attack on a Pakistani position inside Pakistan's tribal areas near the Afghan border that killed some two-dozen Pakistani soldiers. The Pakistanis have been increasingly opposed to U.S. operations inside Pakistani territory. This most recent incident took an unprecedented toll, and triggered an extreme response. The precise circumstances of the attack are unclear, with details few, contradictory and disputed. The Pakistanis have insisted it was an unprovoked attack and a violation of their sovereign territory. In response, Islamabad closed the border to NATO; ordered the United States out of Shamsi air base in Balochistan, used by the CIA; and is reviewing military and intelligence cooperation with the United States and NATO.

The proximate reason for the reaction is obvious; the ultimate reason for the suspension also is relatively simple. The Pakistani government believes NATO, and the United States in particular, will *fail to bring the war in Afghanistan to a successful conclusion*. It follows that the United States and other NATO countries at some point will withdraw.

Some in Afghanistan have claimed that the United States has been defeated, but that is not the case. The United States may have failed to win the war, but it has not been defeated in the sense of being compelled to leave by superior force. It could remain there indefinitely, particular as the American public is not overly hostile to the war and is not generating substantial pressure to end operations. Nevertheless, if the war cannot be brought to some sort of conclusion, at some point Washington's calculations or public pressure, or both, will shift and the United States and its allies will leave Afghanistan.

Given that eventual outcome, Pakistan must prepare to deal with the consequences. It has no qualms about the Taliban running Afghanistan and it certainly does not intend to continue to prosecute the United States' war against the Taliban once its forces depart. To do so would intensify Taliban attacks on the Pakistani state, and could trigger an *even more intense civil war in Pakistan*. The Pakistanis have no interest in such an outcome even were the United States to remain in Afghanistan forever. Instead, given that a U.S. victory is implausible and its withdrawal inevitable and that Pakistan's western border is with Afghanistan, Islamabad will have to live with -- and possibly manage -- the consequences of the re-emergence of a Taliban-dominated government.

Under these circumstances, it makes little sense for Pakistan to collaborate excessively with the United States, as this increases Pakistan's domestic dangers and imperils its relationship with the Taliban. Pakistan was prepared to cooperate with the United States and NATO while the United States was in an aggressive and unpredictable phase. The Pakistanis could not risk more aggressive U.S. attacks on Pakistani territory at that point, and feared a U.S.-Indian entente. But the United States, while not leaving Afghanistan, has lost its appetite for a wider war and lacks the resources for one. It is therefore in Pakistan's interest to reduce its collaboration with the United States in preparation for what it sees as the inevitable outcome. This will

strengthen Pakistan's relations with the Afghan Taliban and minimize the threat of internal Pakistani conflict.

Despite apologies by U.S. and NATO commanders, the Nov. 26 incident provided the Pakistanis the opportunity -- and in their mind the necessity -- of an exceptional response. The *suspension of the supply line* without any commitment to reopening it and the closure of the U.S. air base from which unmanned aerial vehicle operations were carried out (though Pakistani airspace reportedly remains open to operations) was useful to Pakistan. It allowed Islamabad to reposition itself as hostile to the United States because of American actions. It also allowed Islamabad to appear less pro-American, a powerful domestic political issue.

Pakistan has closed supply lines as a punitive measure before. Torkham was closed for 10 straight days in October 2010 in response to a U.S. airstrike that killed several Pakistani soldiers, and trucks at the southern Chaman crossing were "administratively delayed," according to the Pakistanis. This time, however, Pakistan is signalling that matters are more serious. Uncertainty over these supply lines is what drove the United States to expend considerable political capital to arrange the alternative NDN.

The NDN Alternative and BMD

This alternative *depends on Russia*. It transits Russian territory and airspace and much of the former Soviet sphere, stretching as far as the Baltic Sea -- at great additional expense compared to the Pakistani supply route. This alternative is viable, as it would allow sufficient supplies to flow to support NATO operations. Indeed, over recent months it has become the primary line of supply, and reliance upon it is set to expand. At present, 48 percent of NATO supplies still go through Pakistan; 52 percent of NATO supplies come through NDN (non-lethal); 60 percent of all fuel comes through the NDN; and by the end of the year, the objective is for 75 percent of all non-lethal supplies to transit the NDN.

Separating the United States yields a different breakdown: Only 30 percent of U.S. supplies traverse Pakistan; 30 percent of U.S. supplies come in by air (some of it linked to the Karakoram-Torkham route, probably including the bulk of lethal weapons); and 40 percent of U.S. supplies come in from the NDN land route.

Therefore, Dmitri Rogozin's threat that Russia might suspend these supply lines threatens the viability of all Western operations in Afghanistan. Rogozin, the Russian envoy to NATO, has been known to make extreme statements. But when he makes those statements, he makes them with the full knowledge and authorization of the Russian leadership. Though he is used to making statements that the leadership might want to back away from, it is not unusual for him to signal new directions in Russian policy. This means the U.S. and NATO militaries responsible for sustaining operations in Afghanistan cannot afford to dismiss the threat. No matter how small the probability, it places more than 100,000 U.S. and allied troops in a vulnerable position.

For the Russians, the issue is the development and deployment of *U.S. ballistic missile defences* in Europe. The Russians oppose the deployment, arguing it represents a threat to the Russian nuclear deterrent and therefore threatens the nuclear balance. This was certainly the reason the Soviets opposed the initial Strategic Defence Initiative in the 1980s. Carrying it forward to the 2010s, however, and the reasoning appears faulty. First, there is no nuclear balance at the moment, as there is no political foundation for nuclear war. Second, the U.S.-European BMD scheme is not designed to stop a massive launch of nuclear missiles such as the Russians could execute, but only the threat posed by a very small number of missiles such as might be launched from Iran. Finally, it is not clear that the system would work very well, though it has certainly proven far more capable than the *turn-of-the-century predecessor systems*.

Nevertheless, the Russians vehemently opposed the system, threatening to deploy Iskander short-range ballistic missiles and even *tactical nuclear weapons in Kaliningrad* and other locations in response. The Russian concern is obviously real, but it is difficult to believe it is the nuclear balance they are concerned about. Rather, it is the geopolitical implications of placing BMD infrastructure in Central Europe.

Opposition to a Second Containment

Elements of the weapons, particularly radars and interceptors, are being deployed around the periphery of Russia -- in Poland, Romania, Turkey and Israel. From the Russian point of view, the deployment of radars and other systems is a precursor to the deployment of other military capabilities. They are extremely valuable installations that must be protected. Troops therefore

will be deployed along with air defences, and so on. In other words, the deployment of the BMD infrastructure itself may have no practical impact on the Russians, but the indirect consequences would be to set the stage for more expansive military deployments. The Russians must assume this could entail a return to containment, the principle employed by the United States during the Cold War to limit Soviet power.

The Russians see the inclusion of other military forces at the locations of the interceptor and radar deployment as creating a belt of nations designed to contain Russia. Given the uncertain future of Europe and the increasing relative power of Russia in the region, the United States has an interest in making certain any disruption in Europe doesn't give the Russians *opportunities to extend their political influence*. While the extent to which American planners chose the sites with the containment of Russia in mind isn't clear, from the Russian point of view the motive doesn't matter. Planning is done based on capability, not intent. Whatever the U.S. intent, the move opens the door for containment if and when U.S. policy planners notice the opportunity.

The Russians have threatened actions for years, and in the past few weeks they have become increasingly vocal on the subject of BMD and on threats. Rogozin obviously was ordered to seize on the vulnerability created by the Pakistani move and introduced the now-indispensable NDN as a point where the Russians could bring pressure, knowing it is the one move the United States cannot tolerate at the moment. Whether they intend to shut down the supply line is questionable. Doing so would cause a huge breach with the United States, and to this point the Russians have been relatively cautious in challenging fundamental U.S. interests. Moreover, the Russians are worried about any instability in Afghanistan that might *threaten their sphere of influence in Central Asia*. However, the Russians are serious about not permitting a new containment line to be created, and therefore may be shifting their own calculations.

It is a rule of war that secure strategic supply lines are the basis of warfare. If you cannot be certain of supplying your troops, it is necessary to redeploy to more favourable positions. The loss of supply lines at some point creates a vulnerability that in military history leads to the annihilation of forces. It is something that can be risked when major strategic interests require it, but it is a dangerous manoeuvre. The Russians are raising the possibility that U.S.

forces could be isolated in Afghanistan. Supply lines into the landlocked country *never have been under U.S. or NATO control*. All supplies must come in through third countries (less than a third of American supplies come by air, and those mostly through Russian airspace), and their willingness to permit transit is the foundation of U.S. strategy.

The United States and NATO have been exposed as waging a war that depended on the willingness of first Pakistan and now increasingly Russia to permit the movement of supplies through their respective territories. Were they both to suspend that privilege, the United States would face the choice of going to war to seize supply lines -- something well beyond U.S. conventional capacity at this time -- or to concede the war. Anytime a force depends on the cooperation of parties not under its control to sustain its force, it is in danger.

The issue is not whether the threats are carried out. The issue is whether the strategic interest the United States has in Afghanistan justifies the risk that the Russians may not be bluffing and the Pakistanis will become even less reliable in allowing passage. In the event of strategic necessity, such risks can be taken. But the lower the strategic necessity, the less risk is tolerable. This does not change the strategic reality in Afghanistan. It simply makes that reality much clearer and the threats to that reality more serious. Washington, of course, hopes the Pakistanis will reconsider and that the Russians are simply blowing off steam. Hope, however, is not a strategy.

Negotiating with Taliban

To get negotiations going, the United States has to reach two important conclusions. The first is that meaningful negotiations cannot happen without Pakistan's direct and official involvement. U.S. assumption that Pakistan throughout maintained close ties with the Taliban undoubtedly is true. Conversely, this meant Pakistan represented a clear channel the United States could use to reach the Taliban. That channel permitted the Obama administration must also conclude that it has no hope of meaningfully dividing the Taliban an effort that has been persistent since the occupation of Afghanistan

The Afghan Dust is Settling

Eric Walberg

Yes, it really is another Vietnam, and just as in 1972, presidential elections in 2012 will make no difference,

Scarcely a word is heard about foreign affairs amid US election talk, despite the many fires around the world that the US military is either stoking or trying to douse -- depending on your point of view. Other than Republican contender Ron Paul -- not a probable candidate for the mainstream -- no one questions the plans for war on Iran, Israel's continued expansion in the Occupied Territories, or US plans to end the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.

The problem is that decisions about these vital American policies are not for mere presidents or presidential hopefuls to mull over. The one principled decision that US President Barack Obama made, his first upon coming to office, was to announce that he would close Guantanamo Bay prison within a year. After all, he had voted against his predecessor's ill-fated invasion of Iraq, and it was on this basis that he was able to energise an otherwise disillusioned Democratic base and surge past the more acceptable white alternatives Hillary Clinton and John McCain.

Obama's record on foreign policy has been shocking in retrospect. His call from Cairo for a new dispensation in the Middle East soon after his vow to close Guantanamo, along with this vow, are now in history's dustbin. His enthusiastic embrace of the worst of Bush's policies, from drones, assassinations and mercenaries to Orwellian police-state security are frightening proof of the helplessness of US politicians these days.

No better evidence that this paralysis will make the next four years the most perilous in US history is found in the bloody news dripping out of Afghanistan. NATO soldiers, Afghan soldiers and police, resistance fighters, and, of course, women and children continue to be killed at alarming rates, even as the Taliban open an office in Qatar (originally denied by all parties). Peace negotiations came to a standstill last year after the assassination of High Peace Council chief Burhanudin Rabbani (Afghan president 1992-96) by a visitor posing as a peace messenger from the Taliban.

A total of 560 NATO soldiers, most of them Americans, were killed in Afghanistan in 2011, the second highest number in the 10-year war, down from a high of 711 in 2010 after the start of Obama's surge, still higher than the 521 in 2009.

But according to UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, "security-related events" were up by 21 per cent in 2011 compared to 2010. By this he meant attacks such as the car bombing of an International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) convoy in Kabul last October which killed 17, the shooting down of a helicopter in Wardak south of the capital last August in which 30 US troops perished, and the explosion that killed at least 80 people in a shrine in Kabul on the Shia holy day of Ashura in early December. Many ISAF deaths are at the hands of Afghan soldiers. The recent Abu Ghraib-type scandal of US soldiers defiling Afghan dead merely ups this perverse ante.

Gung-ho military types like John Nagl, a retired lieutenant-colonel who co-wrote the US army's field manual on countering guerrilla warfare, push counterinsurgency, where the occupiers "protect" the civilians against violence from the rebels. This was the logic of the surge which Obama grudgingly (who cares what he thinks anymore?) approved last year.

The counterinsurgency hurt the Taliban if only because the occupiers killed thousands of them. It no doubt caused splintering of Taliban forces, and contributed to the seemingly random violence. But it did little to endear the occupiers to the native population, and, according to a WikiLeaks from former chairman of the US National Intelligence Council Peter Lavoy, seems to have prompted a new, less benign strategy. "The international community should put intense pressure on the Taliban to bring out their more violent and ideologically radical tendencies," he argues, the logic being to prevent Afghans from giving up entirely on their occupiers.

Nagl and the boys are not pleased by such candour. Aghast, he told the Guardian: "It just goes completely against the ethos of the American military not to take more risks in order to protect civilians. I find it hard to believe elements of the US military would want to deliberately put more risk on to civilians."

But he does admit the Taliban are effectively being forced by the occupiers to engage mostly in crude terrorism, stage one of Mao Zedong's famous three phases of revolutionary warfare (phase two is larger teams of rebels taking on government forces, leading to full-blown conventional war in phase three). Still, he sees no nefarious intrigue on the occupiers' part. "The

Taliban have been knocked down to phase one and you see what you would expect to see, with the resulting risk of alienating the civilian population. If we can get the civilian population on our side in the south, in their heartlands, we can knock them back to phase zero,” enthuses Eagle Scout Nagl.

Such clever reading of Maoist tactics cannot hide the fact that US plans for Central Asia continue to stumble, stuck in the imperial groove. Looming large is Pakistan’s *remarkable* closure of the US drone base and its refusal to reopen supply routes after NATO killed 28 Pakistani soldiers last month. But equally foreboding is tiny Kyrgyzstan’s President Almazbek Atambayev’s quiet insistence that *2014 is the final date for US control of the Manas airbase*, a key transfer point for Western troops and supplies to Afghanistan.

Just as Bush was boasting in 2008 of permanent US bases in Iraq, the recent Strategic Partnership agreement with the Afghan government to place permanent joint military bases in Afghanistan beyond 2024 is not a serious proposition.

Nor is the latest magic bullet -- the Iron Man -- being forged in NATO headquarters. The idea is to whip into shape an Afghan security force/ army and hand over nominal power by the end of 2014. But this force will be predominantly Northern *Tajik-speaking Afghans who make up only 28 per cent of the population* and form the backbone of the current government. *Less than 10 per cent of officers are Pashtun (vs. 42 per cent of Afghans)*, and in any case the army attrition rate is 30 per cent, not to mention the infiltration rate of Taliban suicide martyrs.

Just as in 2012 in Iraq, we can expect some kind of handover in 2014 -- the US people and economy simply cannot bear much more, but it will be to a chaotic police state, headed by the weak, discredited Hamid Karzai, with a confusing mix of army, police and mercenaries, much like the situation Afghanistan faced in 1993, at the end of the last US-Afghan love-in, in the 1980s. *By 1996 a violent civil war had brought the country to a stand-still and the Taliban was the only way out. This scenario is about to repeat itself.*

The Taliban are not the Vietnamese, with a clear, proven economic system and a powerful socialist sponsor able to help them heal. Once the Americans leave it is unlikely that they would expect sympathetic economic help.

Eric Walberg writes for *Al-Ahram Weekly* <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/> He can be reached at <http://ericwalberg.com/>

Chronicling The Hindutva Threat

Ram Puniyani

The phenomenon of rise of Hindutva politics, the politics of RSS and its affiliates, has posed a severe threat to the democratic polity of India, to the rights of Minorities and dalits. This politics becomes grossly visible in the form of outbursts of violence. But that's just the superficial part of the phenomenon of Hindutva or for that matter of any politics in the name of religion. Its invisible part is creeping communalization of our system, bureaucratic, judicial, media and education. There is an onslaught on our liberal plural values and cultural ethos as they emerged through the freedom movement. Subhash Gatade in this compilation of his articles, written over a period of time takes this threat head. He begins with the superficially visible phenomenon of a violence and then takes us deeper to the real politics which is the agenda of Hindu right. He warns us time and over again that Hindutva is a reaction of section of society to the rise of democratic values, to the rights of minorities and dalits in particular.

Popularly it is perceived that RSS came up to counter the Muslim communalism. The book tells us that its anti Muslim stance is just a face of RSS politics. When one digs deeper one sees that formation of RSS is a reaction to the rising dalit assertion against the Brahmin hegemony which in turn was the accompaniment of our feudal land relations. This is the point of crucial importance. To see RSS politics just as anti minority one, leaves out the core part of the deeper agenda of Hindutva formation. The core part of this agenda relates to suppress the rights of dalits, to suppress the concept of 'rights' as such. This point comes over and over again in the book as Gatade deals with contemporary issues related to the dalits on one hand to the issues like state harassing the Human rights activists like Dr. Binayak Sen. So unless the anti-communal, secular movement takes these points into consideration the struggle for a secular-democratic society will remain an impossible dream. The point that RSS-Hindutva politics is a Brahminic

counter revolution needs to be kept in mind, while outlining the strategies for plural democratic society, is the major undercurrent of the book.

One can point out that while this analysis has its merit, we also need to explain as to why a large section of middle classes form the fulcrum of this counter revolution. The explanation of this lies in the neo liberal economic phase of the country. In this phase the middle classes suffer from an 'existential anxiety', making them embrace the Hindutva ideology as this ideology or of any political ideologies basing themselves on religious identity. Such politics stands for status quo at various levels. The books' emphasis on the rise of Hindutva politics in the neo liberal era deserves appreciation, as unless we focus on deeper process of society and nation we will not succeed in deciphering the nature of divisive politics in the name of religion. The book also tells us the import of judgments like the 'Hindutva as a way of life' and the Ayodhya verdict going off tangents from legal angel and basing itself on the faith, assertively imposed on the society. The essays in the book elaborate that the 'Right' has become 'centre' and that's where the crux of the matters lies. So the issue just does not remain whether BJP, the political child of RSS, is occupying the seat of power at the centre or not, the issue becomes the all round percolation of the right wing ideology becoming a part of communal common sense.

Gatade also takes up the Soft Hindutva of Congress, which has been a supporting factor for the rise of RSS politics. Congress supposedly secular is hardly able to uphold the secular values, leading many to think that it is other side of the coin of communalism. While conceding that Congress, particularly after Gandhi-Nehru has committed blunders after blunder while dealing with threats posed by communal politics, its nature has to be properly understood. While theoretically a secular party, it has compromised time and over again when the crunch comes. Still, no party in India can be equated or compared to the BJP, the political child of RSS. BJP as the upholder of Hindutva agenda has been pro actively promoting Hindutva, while Congress has not been able to protect the secular ethos in a forthright manner. It is a matter of conjecture whether it will be able to gather strength to stand up more strongly against the communal forces. The themes relate to Saffronization of Neo Liberal state, Logic of caste and state of Human rights, The book is a compilation of the prolific writings of the author who seems to have been burning the mid night oil to keep our consciousness

alive to the threats and challenges faced by our republic. It is a must for the scholars and concerned citizens.

Ram Puniyani was a professor in biomedical engineering at the Indian Institute of Technology Bombay, and took voluntary retirement in December 2004 to work full time for communal harmony in India. He is involved with human rights activities from last two decades. He is associated with various secular and democratic initiatives like All India Secular Forum, Centre for Study of Society and Secularism and ANHAD.

Indian Republic Day Celebrations

Srinagar, MTT News Desk:

Complete strike was observed in Jammu & Kashmir as Kashmiris on both sides of the Cease Fire Line (CFL) and across the world marked India's Republic Day as Black Day.

The day was observed to convey to the international community that India's continued denial of Kashmiris' right of self-determination belied its claim of being a democratic republic.

The call for observance of the Day was given by the Chairman of All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) and the President of Jammu.

US Probe of Border Attack Hardened Pakistani Suspicions

Gareth Porter

The Pakistani military leadership's response to the U.S. report on its helicopter attack on two Pakistani border posts Nov. 26 assailed the credibility of the investigation by Air Force Brig. Gen. Steven Clark and expressed doubt that the attack could have been "accidental."

The long-expected rejoinder, made public Monday, charged that 28 of its soldiers at two border bases were killed one by one long after the U.S. military had been told about the attack on a Pakistani base.

The Pakistani critique questions the claims that the U.S. did not know about the Pakistani border posts, that the combined U.S.-Afghan Special Forces unit believed it was under attack from insurgents when it called in air strikes against the two border posts, and that a series of miscommunications prevented higher echelons from stopping the attacks on the border posts.

Revelations in the Clark report — as well as what it omits — support the Pakistani contention that the U.S. investigation covered up what actually occurred before and during the attack. *Information in the report suggests that the planners of the Special Forces operation the night of Nov. 25-26 may have known about the two Pakistani border posts that were attacked while feigning ignorance to the commander who had to approve the operation.*

It also portrays a military organization that was not really interested in stopping the attack on the border posts even after it had been told that Pakistani military positions were under fire.

The Pakistani analysis does not repeat the assertion made by Gen. Ashfaq Nadeem, the director general for operations, in the aftermath of the attack that the coordinates of the two Pakistani border posts had been given to the U.S. military well before the incident of Nov. 25-26. The analysis leaves no doubt, however, that the Pakistani military believed the United States was well aware of the two posts. It said each of the posts had five or six bunkers

built above ground on the top of a ridge and clearly visible from Maya village about 1.5 kilometers away. The Pakistani critique asserts that two or three U.S. aircraft had been operating in the area daily, and that U.S. intelligence had questioned Pakistani officials in the past even about changes in weaponry in its border posts.

The Pakistani military document highlights the revelation in the Clark report that Maj. Gen. James Laster, the commander of the “battlespace” in which Operation SAYAQA was to take place, had demanded that the planners of the operation “confirm the location of Pakistan’s border checkpoints.”

The most recent map of Pakistani border positions available at the time, according to the Clark report, was dated February 2011. The obvious intent of the demand by Gen. Laster was that the planners find out if there were any new border checkpoints that needed to be added to update the map.

The Clark report reveals that “pre-mission intelligence analysis” had indicated “possible border posts North and South of the Operation SAYAQA target areas...” That intelligence was obviously relevant to Gen. Laster’s order, but those border posts did not show up on the map produced Nov. 23. The planners had decided not to check on those “possible border posts” by asking a Pakistani border liaison officer or investigating unilaterally.

The Clark report tiptoes carefully around the implications of that fact, saying the operation’s planners “did not identify any known border posts in the area of Operational SAYAQA.” The point of requiring confirmation of a new map would presumably have been to go beyond border posts that were on the available map. Air crews planning for the operation also knew about the “possible border posts,” according to the report, but didn’t include them in their “pre-mission planning packages,” because “they were data points outside the Operation SAYAQA area.”

U.S. investigators showed no apparent curiosity about what appears to have been the deliberate exclusion of the two new border posts from the map given to Gen. Laster. *The Pakistani critique charges that it is “not possible” that the failure to check on the Pakistani posts was “an innocent omission.”*

A second point made by the Pakistani military is that the U.S. attack on its “Volcano” base by U.S. helicopter gunships continued for “as long as one hour and 24 minutes” after the U.S. side had been informed of the attack on its post.

Despite the fact that U.S. and ISAF officials had already been informed about the assault on the Pakistani bases “at multiple levels by the Pakistan side,” the Pakistani analysis charges, “every soldier in and around the posts...was individually targeted.”

The Clark report’s account of U.S. responses to being informed by Pakistani officials that their bases were under attack does nothing to allay Pakistani suspicions about the claim that the attack was unintentional.

It confirms the earlier Pakistani claim that its border liaison officer at the ISAF Regional Command East (RC-E) had informed the U.S. officers in charge of “deconfliction” with Pakistani positions on the border minutes after the attack had begun at 23:40 hours that Pakistani Frontier Force soldiers were being “engaged” by U.S.- coalition forces coming from Afghanistan.

The exchange over the news from the Pakistani officer was testy. Gen. Clark recalled in his press briefing on the report Dec. 22 that the Pakistani liaison officer had been asked where the border posts were located, and had not given the coordinates, but had responded, “Well, you know where it is because you’re shooting at them.”

Clark suggested that there was “confusion” about where the attack was taking place, but there was only one place where U.S. forces were firing at positions inside Pakistan that night, and RC-E’s border confliction cell could have easily identified that place quickly enough with one or two calls.

Neither the text of the report nor the detailed timeline in an annex show any effort to contact the Special Forces Task Force or Task Force BRONCO, which had approved the operation, about the report that they were attacking Pakistani border posts. The report offers no explanation for the absence of any action on that report, saying only that it “could not be immediately confirmed.”

Twenty minutes before the information had arrived, according to the Clark report, Task Force BRONCO told the Special Operations Task Force in the region it was still waiting to get confirmation from the Border Coordination Center for the area that there were no Pakistani troops near the operation. It added that RC-E was not tracking any PAKMIL border posts on its computerized map of the area.

The Special Operations Task Force then sent out a message system saying, “PAKMIL has been notified and confirmed no positions in area.”

The misdirection of the Pakistani liaison officer, which ensured the response that there were no Pakistani troops in the area, is explained in the Clark report as having been caused by a "misconfigured electronic map overlay." Asked in his press briefing why the RC-E had refused to provide precise grid coordinates under circumstances in which it was supposed to be determining whether U.S. forces were firing at Pakistani forces, Clark cited "the overarching lack of trust."

Nearly 40 minutes after the attack on border post "Volcano" began, according to a timeline in the report, the U.S. Liaison officer to Pakistan's 11th Corps reported to the Special Operations Task Force that U.S. helicopters and a drone had been firing on a Pakistani military post. But the Task Force waited for at least 10 more minutes, according to the timeline, before informing the Special Forces Unit.

Meanwhile Pakistani troops were being hunted down one by one.

U.S. Wants To Incorporate India into Global Missile Shield

Washington: Weeks after offering to sell its F-35 fifth generation fighter jets, the US said on Wednesday it was open to work with India on joint development of a ballistic missile shield.

The offer was made by deputy assistant secretary of defence Robert Scher who said that the Indo-US defence ties were valuable and critical not only for the security and stability of the region, but globally.

"We are really open to it. And this is something we ask to and ask them if they are interested in it," Scher said on collaboration on the missile shield project, emphasising that US "is and will be a dependable weapons supplier to India."

The top Pentagon official disclosed that Washington and New Delhi had been involved in crucial discussion on the ballistic missile shield, adding that the US was looking forward to "restart" the dialogue. Scher added that Washington was still awaiting India's response.

Press trust of India

The Realist Prism: The End of the Obama Bounce?

Nikolas Gvosdev

The Obama administration entered office three years ago with high hopes that it could repair America's relationships with other key powers in the world. While some successes were achieved in 2009 and 2010, Washington closes out 2011 facing the sobering reality of simultaneously deteriorating relationships with China, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Russia. At the same time, Washington can expect only limited support from its major Western allies in managing a host of global hotspots, as the ongoing Euro zone crisis has, in a matter of months, turned European attention away from a more activist and interventionist approach to the world toward trying to patch up and hold together a fraying union.

The late-November fire fight between NATO and Pakistani forces that left 24 Pakistani soldiers dead on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border has further damaged a U.S.-Pakistan relationship *already under serious strain* in the aftermath of the operation that killed Osama bin Laden. In response to latest incident, Pakistan closed overland supply routes to Afghanistan and ordered U.S. personnel to vacate the strategic Shamsi base, which had been a key facility for directing the ongoing drone campaign that has so decimated al-Qaida's leadership in the past year. Indeed, officials on both sides *now acknowledge* that "the relationship is the worst it has ever been."

The recent rapid decline in U.S.-Russia relations has displayed yet again the fragility of the reset and how Moscow and Washington still lack the ballast needed to keep the relationship on course *when inevitable disagreements arise*. Even before the recent war of words between U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin broke out in the aftermath of last week's contested Duma elections, President Dmitry Medvedev's open threat to target future U.S. missile defence installations in Europe had cast a chill over bilateral ties. Disagreements over the past year on Libya, Syria and Iran have also strained the reset. While the Northern Distribution Network is increasingly becoming the lifeline to sustaining the NATO mission in Afghanistan as relations with Pakistan worsen, *the very*

real cooperation it is generating has yet to spill over into other areas of the U.S.-Russia relationship.

The Obama administration came into office with a determination to engage China and to try to build a new strategic dialogue with Beijing. Indeed, back in 2009, some were talking about a "G-2" model for the U.S.-China relationship -- talk that was nervously monitored by a New Delhi concerned that the U.S.-India strategic opening was being put on the back burner. But here, too, over the past year, we have seen an intensification of mutual strategic distrust between China and the United States, fuelled by such matters as Google's departure from the Chinese market, heightened U.S. involvement in addressing China's bilateral territorial disputes in the South China Sea, and the recent announcement that U.S. Marines will be based in Darwin, Australia.

Finally, at a time when the entire U.S. position in the Middle East is being affected by the unpredictable nature of the Arab Spring, the longstanding U.S.-Saudi relationship is being challenged. Traditionally, as Gregory Gause notes in a recent *Council on Foreign Relations* report, Riyadh played an important role in underwriting Washington's "checkbook security" by helping to maintain regional stability, moderate the global oil market and pursue terrorists. But now, the Saudis are less sanguine about relations with Washington, leading Gause to warn that "the two countries can no longer expect to act in close concert under such conditions."

The problem is not that these powers might somehow form a major anti-U.S. axis, but rather that U.S. success in the greater Middle East and broader Central Asian theatres depends on cooperation with these countries. As a result, 2012 could end up being a difficult year for U.S. foreign policy. The simultaneously deteriorated relationships could have a major impact on President Barack Obama's hopes to begin the initial phases of the U.S. drawdown in Afghanistan in advance of the 2012 elections, to cite just one example. Extricating the West from the Afghan mission -- and leaving in place a regime in Kabul that can, at a minimum, guarantee a certain degree of stability to prevent al-Qaida and other extremists from returning -- requires the active participation of all the aforementioned powers, each of which could wreak havoc with U.S. plans simply by withholding cooperation.

As a result, the State Department wants to concentrate on "staunching the bleeding" in these key relationships, but the White House does not have carte blanche to do this, limiting the administration's freedom of action to cut deals to secure key U.S. interests. For instance, in November, in an effort to head off the clash with the Russians over missile defence, Obama

indicated he might be willing to share details of the system's performance with Moscow to show that it would not be a threat to Russia's nuclear deterrent. In passing the defence appropriations bill, however, Congress put restrictions on the president's ability to do this, requiring that any such briefing be cleared with Congress. A further provision requiring that the president be able to certify that Russia would not share this information with third parties would, in effect, *prevent any such sharing from occurring*.

The problem is exacerbated by the European Union's ongoing crisis, which is likely to occupy Europe's attention and resources for the foreseeable future, thereby limiting its ability to meaningfully support the U.S. as it did during the Libyan intervention. Some might argue that the U.S. can secure its objectives by turning to alternate partners. For instance, one idea that has been gaining currency is to develop new security ties with a range of rising and middle powers, such as Indonesia, Australia or Brazil. But it will take time and a commitment of resources to bring such a shift about, and *significant differences in both values and interests* remain. Meanwhile, concerns that the U.S. is not serious in its efforts to tackle its deficits, highlighted by the recent failure of the debt "super committee" to reach a deal, may lead potential U.S. partners to question Washington's staying power. *David Lampton recently observed* that a number of Asian states, monitoring the state of budget negotiations inside the Beltway, wonder about the disconnect between rhetoric and reality and question whether U.S. promises vis-à-vis China can be guaranteed, risking Washington's credibility.

Because we are now entering what Matthew Rojansky of the Carnegie Endowment *refers to as the "silly season" of the election cycle*, politics most definitely will not be stopping at the water's edge. U.S. foreign policy will increasingly be "on hold" until it becomes clear who will be occupying the White House come January 2013. And given the recent trends in these key U.S. relationships that can only be cause for concern.

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Dirty Little Secrets, Duplicity in Afghanistan

(What our Military Leaders only say Behind Closed)

Gordon Duff

Open today's newspaper and get a map of the battle zones in Afghanistan and Pakistan. You say they aren't there? Open today's newspaper and find out how many troops our enemies have, who their leaders are. Can't find that either? Look in the paper to find out why we are fighting at all. Not there too? This isn't half of it, we aren't just being kept in the dark. It goes much further. Lets look at some things that just don't add up.

Blaming Pakistan

America loves blaming Pakistan. Their side of the border has all the bad people and they do nothing about it. Do you know why Pakistan can't catch their Taliban terrorists? Simple. They aren't in Pakistan, they were moved to Afghanistan and are being kept safe and warm. Who would do this? Who would protect these terrorists who are killing so many Pakistanis and Americans?

They were moved by American military contractors, contractors who are helping guard them inside Afghanistan.

Why doesn't Pakistan take their huge army and go after the Taliban? Well, the Taliban would simply cross the border like they have been doing for hundreds of years. Nobody on the other side can stop them. The entire border area is in chaos, nobody is in control at all. We love calling our enemies "Taliban" but they are little more than gangsters and for some reason the United States is actually helping its own enemies?

Why Would They Do That

Pakistan may be our military ally, but our real allies are Israel and India. We could care less if Pakistan burned to the ground. Israel and India are

going to rule Asia, hold off China and help American business make billions in gas and oil profits.

OK, it gets better: Afghanistan and India are allies. India has bases in Afghanistan arming Taliban to attack Pakistan (and American troops too). The CIA helps them do this, Israel helps organize it and billions in drug money finance all of it.

Our private mercenary armies inside Afghanistan and Pakistan act as “enforcers” to keep it all going, accountable to no government, only there to keep the drugs flowing, the weapons moving to the Taliban and the war going as long as possible. Why keep the war going, you ask? Simple. If the war stops, the drug money stops. We are talking tens of billions here.

OK, What are We supposed to Do?

Much of Afghanistan and Pakistan are tribal areas controlled by the same people who live on either side of a line drawn by Britain in 1893, the Durand Line. People used to travel back and forth, moving herds, some grew crops, wheat, not opium, and families lived on both sides of the border, a border that barely existed.

Then came the Russian occupation. Russians dismembered the tribal structure and put land mines everywhere. Nothing could move. A war went on for years run out of Pakistan by the CIA who put the nastiest and crookedest people possible in power in Afghanistan and simply turned away, leaving a total wreck.

Then came the Taliban who ran flight schools in the US to train airline pilots to crash into buildings. OK, this doesn't make sense, but there was a Taliban and maybe some terrorists but we will never know for sure. Too much lying has gone on. I thought they were all in Iraq building WMDs but that didn't work out either. Is it possible almost everything we are told is a bit, well, imaginary? Think about it. We are going to touch on this in a bit.

Then Came 9/11

The US came in, overthrew the Taliban with the help of war lords in the north who are not very popular with most of the people of the country and we began rebuilding Afghanistan.

You like this story? It should have had a happy ending except George W. Bush was president and the companies hired to rebuild Afghanistan stole all the money and did nothing. Instead of stabilizing Afghanistan and rebuilding their VERY VERY SMALL economy, we attack Iraq and waited for Afghanistan to turn around and bite us.

Then, Afghanistan turned around and bit us, Pakistan too. They are still biting us and don't plan on stopping anytime soon. We are planning a "surge" to take care of the problem. We can ask our British friends how this is going to work out. They "surged" for 2 hundred years and eventually left.

How did America respond? Abandoned by our own government, up to our neck in corruption, Washington and Kabul, we did the best we could with almost no troops, fighting an enemy that was never our enemy when, instead, we could have honestly done what we had promised years before: rebuild the Afghan economy.

So, How Do We Get This Mess, with Americans on both Sides, India and Israel Involved, Pakistan and No Hope in Sight

Pakistan is in over their heads. Their yearly military budget is less than the Pentagon spends on golf courses alone, literally. (the Pentagon runs 168 golf courses worldwide)

India and Pakistan have hated each other for 63 years. This war has allowed India with the help of Israel, to literally take Pakistan apart. India can arm terrorists in Pakistan, in Afghanistan and work with American mercenaries against Pakistan. Many inside Pakistan are extremely corrupt and have made it almost impossible to govern the country. The president of Pakistan is accused of stealing millions and many members of government face prosecution.

India and Israel both have huge intelligence agencies, the RAW and MOSSAD, that specialize in planning terrorist attacks and blaming others. Some we catch, like the Christmas bombing (Crotch Bomber) in Detroit. Others are blamed on Islamic extremists. Since Israel controls most of the worlds newspapers and TV networks, only one side gets out.

Long ago, a free press was important as a way of protecting our democracy. Am I clear?

Drugs

50 billion dollars in drugs and nobody sees anything. 50 billion dollars in drugs and more poppy fields are planted every day, especially in US controlled areas.

This kind of money buys intelligence agencies, military leaders, high ranking elected members of the US government and more influence in Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and Israel than anyone will ever admit.

No matter what anyone does, the drug business will work to keep the war going and has the money and power to do exactly that. Ask yourself why you see photographs of troops in poppy fields? These drugs are destroying the lives of millions worldwide, corrupting governments and destroying economies. It is the duty of every police, military and international agency to stop this drug business first but nobody is doing anything. *Everyone is involved.*

Moving Forward

We have some simple solutions to enact. We can stop fighting, at least with responsible tribal leaders in Pakistan and Afghanistan and help them rebuild their country. We can negotiate an end to the presence of any foreign terrorists and guarantee the rights of all, especially the women who suffered so much under the old Taliban. We have reason to believe that the majority of tribal leaders in Afghanistan are ready for a government that respects individual freedoms and will, with help, be able to maintain law and order instead of chaos, the real breeding ground for terrorism.

We can identify the criminals and go after them, criminals only, not the entire nation as we are now. First we talk and earn trust. Then we build and work together, then we fight.

It doesn't work the other way around. Right now, we look like invaders.

Yes, there are bad people. People are going to have to die to save Pakistan and Afghanistan. Others are going to have to learn to trust, do business, trade, talk, listen and work together.

Regional Solution

This problem involves Iran. It also involves Israel. China is involved as is Russia. Nobody can be ignored. Afghanistan and Pakistan need to be stabilized. This is a humanitarian effort. Too many are dying.

Regionally, India, Pakistan, Iran and Israel have to come to an understanding. Behind the scenes, much has been done already, more than any American knows. However, fear and hatred runs deep. There are people of good will in each of these countries, more like this than anyone imagines. War and terrorism, war and threat of war, war and arms buildups have taken over from business, trade and common sense.

This is not survivable for anyone. It will only head one direction, nuclear war, maybe not this year but five years from now, maybe less. It is inevitable. It is also unacceptable and unnecessary.

America and Reality

Whether it is our phony corporate news, spineless politicians or gutless military leaders, its time we stopped misrepresenting the facts. Every day what I hear sounds more and more like General Westmoreland in Vietnam telling me about the “light at the end of the tunnel.” We found that light, a fast moving freight that ran us over. All the “drones” in the world and hundreds of thousands of troops aren’t going to have any lasting effect on the lives of tribesmen living as they did a thousand years ago.

Billions of dollars, cluster bombs and American advisors talking capitalism and Evangelical Christianity under threat of torture and imprisonment hasn’t worked out so well. Our repackaged “more of the same” solution will leave us 80 billion more in debt, hundreds of Americans dead, another 20,000 PTSD disability claims to deny and another decade of war.

Fighting Phantoms in India

Aijaz Zaka Syed

When I first heard of Salman Rushdie I was at university. The Satanic Verses had set off a perfect storm in India and around the world. The book was banned in India following fiery protests by Muslims. Many died in Mumbai when police opened fire on angry protesters. Then came Ayatollah Khomeini's fatwa sanctioning the novelist's death, sparking a global debate on free speech and "excessive" Muslim sensitivity.

One day, discussing artistic freedom in one of his lectures, Prof Isaac Sequiera, who headed the English department at Osmania University and taught us American literature, launched a blistering broadside against Khomeini's fatwa and attempts by "some people" to curtail free speech. Prof Sequiera was one of those brilliant teachers who would draw you to the class day after day. Yet it wasn't easy to stomach his critique of the Muslim response to Rushdie's book, comparing it to the infamous Spanish Inquisition. Was it the same thing?

The church burnt 'heretics' on mere hearsay – and everyone who didn't subscribe to its worldview – at stake. When Galileo suggested that the earth was round, rather than flat as the Church insisted, he was given a chance to reconsider his opinion while he spent the rest of his life behind bars.

Rushdie, on the other hand, has repeatedly abused his creative license, and the divine gift of creativity, to assail a billion people's revered icons. As someone born in a Muslim family, he knew what he was doing and its possible consequences.

No freedom is absolute – not even in the anything-goes West. Blasphemy is a serious crime in many European nations including in Denmark. Every freedom is qualified. Every right comes with responsibility. You can't go around happily waving your big stick and hitting people in the name of freedom. The freedom of your stick ends where my nose begins. And if you think you have a right to offend, well, others have an equal right to take offense. If Rushdie is free to exercise his creative freedom to attack people's

sacred icons, shouldn't his victims too have a right to exercise their freedom of action to deal with him?

Of course, I couldn't say all this to my teacher. Blame it on my moral timidity or the fact that I was painfully shy and the only Muslim in the whole class. That was nearly two decades ago. Today, as this row over Rushdie's participation in the Jaipur literary festival rages on, I am amazed by the fact how little has changed in this whole debate over the past two decades.

The Muslims are upset over the invitation being extended to someone whose name has become a curse word for them. On the other hand, the increasingly shrill voices in the media are crying themselves hoarse as they invoke India's fabled tolerance while ignoring the sentiments of the minority community.

Indeed, more than their concern for the nation's secular ethos, it's their intolerance of all things Muslim that has them batting for Rushdie. They defend his right to visit his 'motherland' oblivious of the fact that the man has repeatedly heaped abuse and scorn on the same motherland and its icons in his books, from *Midnight's Children* to *Shame* to *The Moor's Last Sigh*.

The late premier Indira Gandhi took Rushdie to court over *Midnight's Children* which describes her as a 'black widow'. He was forced to expunge parts of the book that had Sanjay Gandhi accusing his mother of killing his father, Feroz Gandhi, by neglecting him. Rushdie argued in court that it was only fiction, only to be snubbed by the judge who pointed out that Indira and Sanjay Gandhi were real people.

In the case of *Satanic Verses* too he hid behind the same fig leaf launching cheap attacks on the noble Prophet, peace be upon him, and his blessed household, outraging his billion plus believers. As a Persian line goes, you could take liberties with God but not with His Prophet. And Rushdie knew it.

The outrage was deliberate – just as most of his books have been deliberately offensive and provocative. He loves to provoke and offend because it sells in the West. And Islam and its icons and followers have been fair game for centuries. Free speech? Gimme a break! Freedom and free speech have nothing to do with it. Even the so-called liberals and Hindutva

fanatics cheering for the author and lecturing Muslims on tolerance know it. They love him because the Muslims loathe him.

That said, the way this whole issue has been handled by the Muslim leadership – if there's such a thing as Muslim leadership – makes one extremely uncomfortable. Except for Asaduddin Owaisi, the young leader of MIM who saved the day once again, not one Muslim talking head could survive the likes of Arnab Goswami of Times Now, India's answer to Fox News. Once again the bumbling lot did not merely fail to present their case explaining why Rushdie isn't welcome; they managed to make a laughing stock of the whole community.

This week CNN IBN's Sagarika Ghose had two Muslim 'leaders' pitted against two 'liberals' on the panel. One gentleman, an eminent lawyer associated with the Babri Masjid case, had one hand on his earpiece the whole time as he struggled to make sense of the brutal attacks by the anchor and her guests. And studio guests and audience couldn't understand half the things the other gentleman, a former Maharashtra MLA, kept muttering in a chaotic mix of Urdu and English talking of an 'international conspiracy' against Muslims. With friends like these, who needs enemies?

Do these guys really represent and speak for a 200-million strong, diverse community? More important, why do we get repeatedly bogged down in the same old, festering issues when we have far more serious challenges and problems staring us in the face?

As much as I am repelled by the 'satanic' Rushdie, I can't help being intrigued by the question that has been raised by others too – why now? Rushdie has apparently been quietly and frequently visiting India over the past few years. Does it have something to do with the assembly elections in five states, including Uttar Pradesh, next month as some suggest? Given the propensity of political parties to raise such issues to excite the easily excitable Muslim public opinion so they could soothe it later, the possibility cannot be dismissed.

Rushdie will remain unwelcome as long as he remains unrepentant. By protesting against his abuse, Muslims are only exercising their democratic rights and the suggestion that they're undermining India's future is ridiculous. We cannot however allow characters like Rushdie and

controversies like these to define us and our agenda forever. We must choose our battles wisely. For we have far bigger wars ahead.

From our political and economic dispossession to our situation in education and employment sectors, the level of our deprivation is simply overwhelming. A TV documentary this week, again on CNN IBN, on the legendary weavers of Benares, literally fighting for survival with their emaciated, starving children, should be a must-watch for every Muslim.

It's the same story with the once famous artisan communities in UP, from Aligarh to Moradabad to Bareilly and Kanpur, and the general state of affairs across the Gangetic belt. Indeed, the condition of Muslims in north India, once the power centre, is today worst in the country. When will Muslim leaders and those who claim to champion the community take up these real issues? When will we stop expending all our time and energy on fighting phantoms and chasing chimeras?

Pipeline from Iran

While previously relying on relatively mild signalling and posturing in trying to lure Pakistan away from the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project, the United States has now come right out and said it: it wants Pakistan to drop the project altogether.

Pakistan also needs to draw a very clear distinction between UN sanctions and those imposed by the US. Pakistan is bearing heavy losses due to the energy crisis and needs to go ahead and explore all its options. It cannot be bullied into giving up on its own interests. And the US would also do well to desist from its diplomatic blitz and the ensuing tensions it is creating in the region; tensions that have the potential to reset a number of geopolitical calculations – an unwanted outcome in a part of the world that has no need for more problems.

If India and China and continue buying fuel from Iran despite the US sanctions why Pakistan should capitulate to such demands.

India's Strategic Footprint in Central Asia: Part I

Saurav Jha

Editor's note: This is the first in a two-part series on India's strategic engagement in Central Asia. Part one examines ties with Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Part two will examine ties with Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.

India's engagement with Central Asia on strategic military concerns is gathering pace, with visits by high-ranking Indian defence officials and security cooperation deals underscoring the immense value New Delhi attaches to its growing military relationship with the region. The strengthened Indian presence in the area is driven by New Delhi's desire not only to protect its emerging investments in Central Asia, but also its interests in Afghanistan after NATO withdraws in 2014.

In both Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, India is stepping in to resurrect former Soviet sectors -- military as well as civilian -- in addition to providing much-needed training to organically grow a military presence beyond its borders just north of Kashmir. The centrepiece of India's power-projection activities in Central Asia is the Ayni airbase, just south of the Tajik capital, Dushanbe. India began to modernize the base beginning in 2002, but its status since the renovations were completed in 2010 has remained the subject of confusion. Russia reportedly objected to India's use of the former Soviet base and had entered into negotiations with Tajikistan to use the base itself. Official statements out of Dushanbe seemed to rule out use of the base by India. However, an Indian official directly involved in renovating the airfield told *World Politics Review* that an Indian air force contingent, including Indian Mi-17 helicopters and leased Russian fighter jets, is currently deployed to the base under joint Indo-Tajik control. The Russian equipment will be maintained by Russian contractors, creating "a sort of joint control over these assets." His comments *echo recent reports of negotiations* between the three parties for joint use of the base.

India has spent almost \$70 million, including equipment costs, to completely repave and extend the runway at Ayni, set up air traffic control and perimeter fencing and builds three hardened shelters -- all, the Indian official confirmed, with an eye to supporting fighter-jet operations. That might be the real reason behind Tajikistan's reticence to officially clarify the status of the base. While Ayni will allow India to watch over northern Afghanistan in the aftermath of a NATO withdrawal, it can also provide coverage for Indian fighter aircraft over northern Pakistan and western China, areas that lack robust air defence networks. Tajik officials might be downplaying their involvement in the base out of deference to Beijing and Islamabad's sensitivities.

Anticipation of conditions in Afghanistan following the U.S. and NATO withdrawal also explains the Indian army's desire to reopen its former 25-bed military hospital at Farkhor on the Tajik-Afghan border. Talks with Tajikistan on the hospital, which served Northern Alliance fighters during the Taliban period, have gathered pace. The hospital will add to the existing personnel-oriented aid that India currently extends to the Tajik army, which includes language and IT training. Tajikistan is also one of the biggest beneficiaries of the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Program, which has seen a steady stream of Tajik officers graduate from Indian military academies. India's experience with counterinsurgency, in particular, is valuable to the Tajik military, which faces terrorist activities that increasingly resemble the civil war of the 1990s. For India, preventing the radicalization of the Tajik army and ensuring stability in the Ferghana Valley are prime considerations. India also wants to ensure the safety of the power-transmission infrastructure that Indian companies are setting up in Tajikistan, which will enable Tajikistan to export hydroelectric power.

Even as India establishes its first military outposts in Tajikistan, it is simultaneously looking to set up a major defence R&D presence in Kyrgyzstan. The former Soviet torpedo-testing facility at Karakol in the eastern corner of Issyk Kul Lake seems set for a big upgrade as part of these plans. According to the chief controller of India's Defence Research and Development Organization, "An Indian delegation would be visiting Kyrgyzstan soon to make an assessment of investment needed for the project and the terms and conditions for co-developing it." India has tested torpedoes in this facility since 1997 and now wants to make it a major station for developing next-generation unmanned underwater systems.

The Kyrgyz-Indian Mountain Biomedical Research Centre was also inaugurated in July. The joint venture will initially focus on researching the high-altitude acclimatization of various ethnic groups, but its findings can be applied to enhancing soldier performance at high altitudes and the remediation of mountain diseases -- areas in which India has expended considerable effort since the 1962 Himalayan War with China. Over time the centre may also facilitate the transfer of Indian knowhow in animal husbandry and high-altitude agriculture.

As in Tajikistan, India is also helping the cash-strapped Kyrgyz military with training support. For now, India is set to help prepare Kyrgyz conscripts for U.N. peacekeeping operations by introducing English-language proficiency. But during Kyrgyz Defence Minister Gen. Abibilla Kudaberdiyev's visit to India this year, officials announced that India *was willing to further support Kyrgyzstan* in strengthening its defence and security capabilities.

Significantly, many of India's defence-led initiatives clearly go beyond the military realm, aiming to create advanced if modest human-resource pools in both Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. India's service-oriented and technologically superior capabilities are highly sought after by many developing countries that find India's expertise uniquely suited to their own development goals. Rather than initially focusing on big-ticket resource projects, India offers the promise of helping countries incubate modern, technology-intensive sectors and enabling them to bridge the digital divide. Indeed, this capacity has often allowed India to carve out a major domain for itself in the face of China's greater monetary muscle, as evidenced by developments in Africa, Latin America and even Afghanistan.

India ultimately approaches strategic military cooperation as a corollary to strategic economic cooperation, not as an end in itself. In Central Asia, that approach seems to be bearing fruit.

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State within a State in Pakistan

Usman Khalid

The Pakistan Army has been reviled as 'State within a State' in the Indian political folklore. Now the PM of Pakistan has joined them. A modern country has several power centres that compete or co-operate but none is considered a 'State within the State'. The intelligence organisations do operate as if they were a 'state within the state' but this is deliberate – to underpin 'deniability'. But political persons and parties in Pakistan are allowed to have contacts with foreign embassies and intelligence organisations which allow them to operate as Mafias to promote or protect foreign interests. The state often does have intelligence but not evidence of their treasonous conduct. Pakistan failed to stop the subversion and later invasion of East Pakistan. Sheikh Mujib was apprehended and indicted for Agartalla Conspiracy but was released in consequence of massive internal pressure. It is apparent that treasonous politicians can undermine the entire edifice of the state. What does the state do in such a situation? Pakistan is once again faced with the top leadership of Pakistan acting as 'state within the state' to serve foreign interests.

The statements of Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani provide much fun and amusement in entertainment starved Pakistan. His being thick skinned impervious to ridicule and even public disclosure of serious corruption may well be good for him. Despite being condemned as the most corrupt and inept government in the history of Pakistan, there is no countrywide political movement on the lines of Arab spring. Mr Gilani has never been taken seriously as the Chief Executive; his fall has always appeared imminent; he is the ever ready 'fall guy' if one was needed to take the flak for his boss – President Asif Ali Zardari. However, in the last three months the Zardari-Gilani Administration has become embroiled in something much more serious – a case of alleged treachery known commonly as the 'Memo-gate'.

The 'Memo-gate' conspiracy came to light through an article of 20 October 2011 in the FT of London written by Mansoor Ijaz – a US citizen of Pakistani descent. He revealed that he had written a Memorandum to Admiral Mullen, the then Chief of Joint Staff of the USA, conveying an offer by President Asif Zardari to replace the present 'national security team' in Pakistan with persons acceptable to the USA who would yield to

US pressure on issues like nuclear assets of Pakistan and the conduct of war in Af-pak. Admiral Mullen at first 'did not remember' having received the Memo but later did recall having seen it but said that it was ignored. The link between President Asif Zardari and Mansoor Ijaz was Hussain Haqqani – Pakistan's Ambassador in Washington DC. Mansoor Ijaz released a number of Blackberry messages etc between himself and Ambassador Haqqani that confirmed that the contents of the Memo were dictated by Ambassador Hussain Haqqani.

The revelation in the FT created uproar in Pakistan forcing the Government to recall Ambassador Haqqani and ask him to resign to permit an 'impartial inquiry'. But the Prime Minister began to backtrack almost immediately saying that the Memo was merely a 'piece of paper'. The resolve for 'impartial' inquiry turned out to be bogus as Hussain Haqqani has been lodged as an honoured guest first in the Presidency and later the PM House. The PM ordered an inquiry by the National Security Committee of the Parliament in which the PPP and its coalition partners are in majority. The opposition, alarmed by the Government efforts to preclude a proper inquiry, took the matter to the Supreme Court (SC). The SC asked for written sworn statements by, among others, the COAS, the DG ISI and the Defence Secretary. The Prime Minister was alarmed when the Defence Secretary refused to change the 'sworn statement' to the Supreme Court to fall in line with the PM's public stand. The Prime Minister sacked the Defence Secretary and accused the Army leadership to be a 'state within a state' on the floor of the house. He went further in an interview with Beijing News Agency when he said that General Kayani (COAS) and General Pasha (DG ISI) had violated the law and the Constitution by not obtaining prior approval of the Government for the sworn statements they had sent to the Supreme Court. He, thus, accused the military leadership of misconduct. The reaction of the military was to call for the PM to withdraw his statement. He did that two weeks later but he has not reinstated Defence Secretary who has since presented his case to Islamabad High court.

State within the State

The PM continues to insist that his statements were the result of the 'misconduct' of the Defence Secretary who he has removed. The matter is before the Supreme Court who has appointed a Commission to find the facts about the origin and authorship of the 'Memo'. The Commission comprising three Chief Justices of the Karachi, Peshawar and Baluchistan High Courts has received written statements from potential witnesses but Mansoor Ijaz has refused to appear before the court for security reasons as Interior Minister Rehman Malik threatened him with being charged for past offences against Pakistan. The Prime Minister made his own attitude clear saying that

the assurances of security by the courts were meaningless because it was 'he' who was to appoint the Police Inspector in charge of the security of the witness. The Government evidently does not want Mansoor Ijaz to appear before the Commission because he is in possession of a number of cans of worms and no one can say which ones he would open. Even those eager to find the facts would rather have it done without undue reliance on the testimony of Mansoor Ijaz. It is becoming increasingly obvious that there is indeed a 'State within the State' in Pakistan at the heart of which is a gang of five which includes Zardari, Gilani, Farooqi, Haqqani, and Rehman Malik. They are steadfastly maligning the judiciary and the armed forces that they see as prime obstacles in the pursuit of their agenda.

There are several centres of power in a modern state which is founded on 'rule of law'. The Legislature, the Judiciary and the Executive are the three pillars of the state whose independence from each other is guaranteed by the Constitution. That provides the structure of 'checks and balance' which is the basis of 'good governance' in a democracy. The media is not a pillar of the state as such but its independence further underpins the independence of the judiciary as proved so often in the last five years in Pakistan. The operational independence of the military and the police is an additional prop for the robustness of the state. Both are indeed under the command of the Executive which gives them their 'mission and objectives' within the law but the military and the police also have statutory roles and responsibilities that the Executive cannot revoke, change or modify. Besides, all authority is subject to 'due processes. Every official of the state - a civil or military officer to the Prime Minister - has specific powers and authority in order to maintain discipline and ensure team work. But all such authority is subject to rules and 'due processes. The current Prime Minister does not appear to understand that. He thinks that a paper titled 'summary' becomes a legal document because it carries the signatures of a minister. That is not correct; all authority comes with responsibility. He and his ministers have a duty that they give only lawful orders and authorise legitimate expenditure. They are personally liable for failure to act within the law and in accordance with the rules.

At this time, the intelligence agencies – particularly the ISI Directorate – appear to be in the dock accused of acting as a 'state within the state'. The basis of the allegation is the large number of 'disappeared persons' who were taken into custody by intelligence agencies but were never charged of any crime. Some of them have since been found dead but most continue to be either held in unlawful custody or are believed to be members of unlawful militias. Their case has been taken up by the Supreme Court who called Intelligence officials to give evidence. In the face of claim of 'no knowledge' by intelligence agencies and the absence of evidence of their

fate or whereabouts, the courts have been powerless to provide redress. It is widely believed that the state is complicit in disappearances. On the other hand, state officials – soldiers as well as civilians – have been killed in large numbers all over Pakistan by militias or mafias whose identity is common knowledge. Since most of the disappeared persons or extra-judicial deaths are of persons believed to belong to one or the other mafia or militia, it is evident that the intelligence agencies are violating the law. How do they get away with it year after year? This is an important question.

The intelligence agencies have a statutory role. Their primary role is to collect intelligence about the internal and external enemies of Pakistan and their second role is ‘counter-intelligence’ which involves apprehending or liquidating enemy agents. In the first role the intelligence agencies recruit agents and pay them for obtaining information and engaging in wide variety of activities that are criminal or treasonous. Counter-intelligence entails apprehension of enemy agents. Those against whom adequate evidence to secure conviction can be obtained, are tried by civil or military courts. Those beyond the pale are often liquidated. The political control over intelligence agencies is often lax because of the nature of their work. Politicians who have administrative control wisely keep their distance from operational matters because much of intelligence work is itself criminal activity. All intelligence agencies keep their work secret not merely from the public but also from other government departments. Their method of operation is underlined by the vital need for ‘deniability’. While that explains why the ISI etc. are so quiet in the face of wide public criticism of unexplained deaths in Baluchistan it does excuse the government who have the responsibility to explain as well as to prevent such deaths. That notwithstanding, the ISI is not a ‘state within a state’ in Pakistan; it is perhaps overzealous in the performance of its statutory role.

The Supreme Court of Pakistan is also about to hear a case of the then DG ISI (General Durrani) having distributed money among politicians and members of the press to secure the defeat of the PPP in 1992 Elections. I do not know if any law has been violated but it is certainly a victimless crime. The contributor of funds – Mehran Bank – did not complain nor did the recipients. But DG of ISI did commit professional misconduct by giving a signed statement with regards to a clandestine operation he was bound to keep secret. While acting as a ‘go between’ is at worst a misdemeanour, this is not something that can be or should be swept under the carpet. Now that it has come out that the ISI has been paying politicians, the issue of political persons and parties receiving funds from foreign – often hostile - sources should also be dealt with. The Army, particularly the ISI, have been used by Late Prime Minister Bhutto, his opponents as well as his successors to manipulate election results. The justification often given was, “If we cannot

prevent money flowing to anti-state forces from the enemies of Pakistan we can at least help the patriotic forces". Benazir Bhutto was widely reviled as a 'security risk' before the 'funding fiasco' now being looked into. The judicial review of the money distributed by General Durrani provides an opportunity to make unlawful not just payments by the ISI to politicians but also by the CIA, RAW and other foreign intelligence agencies to ANP, MQM, stalwarts of the PPP and to Sindhi, Seraiki and Baluch groups engaged in insurrection. The ISI does know all about the foreign links and funds received by many eminent politicians but it has done little to stop them or prosecute them. Is the law inadequate or the role of the counter-intelligence ill defined? The Supreme Court must look into both.

Memo-gate

Neither the disappearances in Baluchistan or elsewhere, nor the ISI trying to influence the result of elections in the past constitute a 'State within the State'. At worst that was overzealousness in dealing with the enemies of the Pakistan. The case for 'state within the state' can be made only when an individuals or groups act against the interest or the law of the state. Since the intelligence agencies operate on the edges of law a case can be made against them for unlawful actions but not for being a state within a state. But a 'state within the state' does indeed exist in Pakistan. This comprises a coterie of top leaders – the gang of five. They relentlessly pursue the well-known agenda of the enemies of Pakistan i.e. economic collapse; ethnic, sectarian and inter-province strife; civil insurrection; international war; and balkanisation. Zardari-Gilani Administration may not have enough time to execute the entire enemy plan but in conjunction with the ANP and MQM they would continue their 'work' from the opposition benches of a fledgling democracy that Pakistan is.

The present civil leadership in the country sees the USA and India as their natural allies. This Administration has always given priority to wishes of India and America over the wishes and interests of Pakistan, whether it is dispute over Kashmir, or river water flowing from Kashmir into Pakistan, MFN status to India, transit route to India for Afghanistan and beyond, and free access to Indian TV channels without reciprocation, Pakistan is always the one to acquiesce. The Railways, the national airlines the PIA, the Steel Mills, which used to make a profit, are all bankrupt. The economy is collapsing and the industry is closing down because of shortage of electricity and gas. The irony is that the country is not short of generation capacity or of gas; the shortages are entirely the result of appointment of saboteurs as heads of state enterprises, the policies, and theft and misappropriation of funds. Economic collapse of Pakistan, as the Indian politicians and pundits have been saying, is the cheapest method of securing

a victory over Pakistan. That President Zardari knows what he is doing was revealed when he addressed the Baluch secessionist leaders and said ‘they were going about achieving their objective the wrong way; they should do what he was doing’. That explains what he (and his son Bilawal) means when they say ‘democracy is the best revenge’. It is democracy that has brought Zardari-Gilani into power and it is democracy that sustains them in power despite having the support of less than 10% of the population.

Conclusion

After having failed to prevent the restoration of the judges dismissed by General Musharraf, President Zardari has focussed attention on defying and humiliating the Supreme Court. He has ignored the ruling by Lahore High Court that he cannot hold the office of the President and Party leader at the same time. Memo-gate reveals the attempt to impose such leadership on the military which is also unmindful of compulsions of national security and is willing to advance the Indo-US agenda. With the refusal of Mansoor Ijaz to appear as a witness, the work of the Commission to find facts has been sidelined. But the Supreme Court has already indicted the Prime Minister for ‘contempt of court’ in the NRO case for having defied its orders. It must assert its authority in the face of prolonged defiance of the SC over more than two years. The Prime Minister should be given a custodial sentence and barred from holding an elective office. The Supreme Court may also order early election – Option 6 in the NRO Case Judgement. Anything less would be a huge disappointment with uncertain consequences. The most probable result of failure to remove the Prime Minister and ordering early elections would be collapse of governance. ++

Military Solutions

The U.S. has proven on multiple occasions that military solutions solve nothing, having torn asunder the social fabric of Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya , Pakistan and now going for Iran and Syria The working people of Syria and Iran do not desire "help" from the U.S. government and its allies to prevent bloodshed. The working people of these countries could liberate themselves from their authoritarian governments, as did the Tunisians and Egyptians, which is precisely the point: the U.S. is intervening militarily to re-gain control over a region that slipped out of its hands during the Arab Spring. This military approach serves to push the working people of the targeted country into the hands of their government while creating a humanitarian catastrophe for the invaded nation. The working people of the United States have no interest in aggressive war and have a responsibility to learn about U.S. government propaganda so that they can demand its end in the streets.

Shamus Cooke

The March to War: Iran and the Strategic Encirclement of Syria and Lebanon

Mahdi Darius Nazemroaya

The encirclement of Syria and Lebanon has long been in the works. Since 2001, Washington and NATO have started the process of cordoning off Lebanon and Syria. The permanent NATO presence in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Syrian Accountability Act are part of this initiative. It appears that this roadmap is based on a 1996 Israeli document aimed at controlling Syria. The document's name is A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm.

The 1996 Israeli document, which included prominent U.S. policy figures as authors, calls for “rolling back Syria” in 2000 or afterward. The roadmap outlines pushing the Syrians out of Lebanon, diverting the attention of Damascus by using an anti-Syrian opposition in Lebanon, and then destabilizing Syria with the help of both Jordan and Turkey. This has all respectively occurred from 2005 to 2011. This is also why the anti-Syrian March 14 Alliance and the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) were created in Lebanon.

As a first step towards all this the 1996 document even calls for the removal of President Saddam Hussein from power in Baghdad and even alludes to the balkanization of Iraq and forging a strategic regional alliance against Damascus that includes a Sunni Muslim Arab “Central Iraq.” The sectarian nature of this project is very obvious as are its ties to opposing a so-called “Shiite Crescent.” The roadmap seeks to foment sectarian divisions as a means of conquering Syria and creating a Shiite-Sunni rift that will oppose Iran and keep the Arab monarchs in power.

The U.S. has now initiated a naval build-up off the Syrian and Lebanese coasts. This is part of Washington’s standard scare tactics that it has used as a form of intimidation and psychological warfare against Iran, Syria, and the Resistance Bloc. While Washington is engaged in its naval build-up, the

mainstream media networks controlled by the Saudis and Arab clients of the U.S. are focusing on the deployment of Russian naval vessels to Syria, which can be seen as a counter-move to NATO.

Al-Ramtha in Jordan is being used to launch attacks into Daraa and Syrian territory. The Jordanian Minister of State for Media Affairs and Communications, Rakan Al-Majali, has even publicly admitted this and dismissed it as weapons smuggling. For years, Jordanian forces have successfully prevented weapons from reaching the Palestinians in the Israeli-occupied West Bank from Jordanian territory. In reality, Amman is sending weapons into Syria and working to destabilize Syria. Jordanian forces work as a frontline to protect Israel and the Jordanian intelligence services are an extension of the C.I.A. and Mossad.

According to the Turkish media, France has sent its military trainers into Turkey and Lebanon to prepare conscripts against Syria. The Lebanese media also suggests the same. The so-called Free Syrian Army and other NATO-GCC front organizations are also using Turkish and Jordanian territory to stage raids into Syria. Lebanon is also being used to smuggle weapon shipments into Syria. Many of these weapons were actually arms that the Pentagon had secretly re-directed into Lebanon from Anglo-American occupied Iraq during the George W. Bush Jr. presidency.

The French Foreign Minister, Alain Juppé, has promised the Syrian National Council, that a so-called “humanitarian corridor” will be imposed on Syria. Once again, the Syrian National Council is not an independent entity and therefore Juppé did not really make a promise; he really made a declaration.

Along with the U.S. and its NATO allies, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is imposing sanctions that include an end to all flights to Syria. The GCC states and Turkey have joined the foreign ministries of NATO states in asking their citizens to leave Syria. Since the U.N. Security Council is no longer a viable route against Syria, the GCC may also try to impose a no-fly zone over Syria through the Arab League.

Turkey: NATO's Trojan Horse and Gateway into the Middle East

Turkey was present at the Arab League meeting in Morocco, which demanded regime change in Damascus. Ankara has been playing a dirty game. Initially, during the start of NATO's war against Libya, Ankara pretended to be neutral while it was helping the Transitional Council in Benghazi. The Turkish government does not care about the Syrian population. On the contrary, the demands that Turkish officials have made to the Syrians spell out that realpolitik is at play. In tune with the GCC, Turkey has demanded that Damascus re-orient its foreign policy and submit to Washington's demands as a new satellite. Through a NATO initiative, the Turks have also been responsible for recruiting fighters against the Libyan and Syrian governments.

For several years Ankara has been silently trying to de-link Syria from Iran and to displace Iranian influence in the Middle East. Turkey has been working to promote itself and its image amongst the Arabs, but all along it has been a key component of the plans of Washington and NATO. At the same time, it has been upgrading its military capabilities in the Black Sea and on its borders with Iran and Syria. Its military research and development body, TUBITAK-SAGE, has also announced that Ankara will also start mass-production of cruise-missiles in 2012 that will be fitted for its navy and forthcoming deliveries of U.S. military jets that could be used in future regional wars. Turkey and NATO have also agreed to upgrade Turkish bases for NATO troops.

In September 2011, Ankara joined Washington's missile shield project, which upset both Moscow and Tehran. The Kremlin has reserved the right to attack NATO's missile shield facilities in Eastern Europe, while Tehran has reserved the right to attack NATO's missile shield facilities in Turkey or in the case of a regional war. There have also been discussions about the Kremlin deploying Iskander missiles to Syria.

Since June 2011, Ankara has been talking about invading Syria. It has presented the invasion plans as a humanitarian mission to establish a "buffer zone" and "humanitarian corridor" under R2P, while it has also claimed that the protests in Syria are a regional issue and not a domestic issue. In July 2011, despite the close Irano-Turkish economic ties, the Iranian

Revolutionary Guard made it clear that Tehran would support the Syrians and choose Damascus over Ankara. In August 2011, Ankara started deploying retired soldiers and its military reserve units to the Turkish-Syrian border. It is in this context, that the Russian military presence has also been beefing up in the port of Tartus.

From Damascus to Tehran

It is also no mere coincidence that Senator Joseph Lieberman started demanding at the start of 2011 that the Pentagon and NATO attack Syria and Iran. Nor is it a coincidence that Tehran has been included in the recent Obama Administration sanctions imposed against Damascus. Damascus is being targeted as a means of targeting Iran and, in broader terms, weakening Tehran, Moscow, and Beijing in the struggle for control over the Eurasian landmass. The U.S. and its remaining allies are about to reduce their forces in Iraq, but they do not want to leave the region or allow Iran to create a bridge between itself and the Eastern Mediterranean using Iraq.

Once the U.S. leaves Iraq, there will be a direct corridor between Lebanon and Syria with Iran. This will be a nightmare for Washington and Tel Aviv. It will entrench Iranian regional dominance and cement the Resistance Bloc, which will pin Iran, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, and the Palestinians together. Israel and the U.S. will both be struck with major strategic blows.

The pressure on Syria is directly tied to this American withdrawal from Iraq and Washington's efforts to block Tehran from making any further geopolitical gains. By removing Damascus from the equation, Washington and its allies are hoping to create a geo-strategic setback for Iran.

Everything that Washington is doing is in preparation for the new geopolitical reality and an attempt to preserve its regional standing. U.S. military forces from Iraq will actually be redeployed to the GCC countries in the Persian Gulf. Kuwait will host new combat units that have been designated to re-enter Iraq should security collapse, such as in the case of a regional war, or to confront Iran and its allies in a future conflict. The U.S. is now activating the so-called "Coalition of the Moderate" that it created under George W. Bush Jr. and directing it against Iran, Syria, and their regional allies.

On November 23, 2011 the Turks signed a military agreement with Britain to establish a strategic partnership and closer Anglo-Turkish military ties. During an important state visit by Abdullah Gül to London, the agreement was signed by Defence Secretary Phillip Hammond and the Deputy Chief of the Turkish General Staff, Hulusi Akar. The Anglo-Turkish agreement comes into play within the framework of the meetings that the British Chief of Defence Staff, General David Richards, and Liam Fox, the former scandal-ridden British defence minister, had with Israeli officials in Tel Aviv. After the visit of General Richards to Israel, Ehud Barak would visit Britain and later Canada for talks concerning Syria and its strategic ally Iran. Within this timeframe the British and Canadian governments would declare that they were prepared for war with both Syria and Iran.

London has announced that military plans were also drawn for war with Syria and Iran. On the other side of the Atlantic, Canada's Defence Minister, Peter MacKay, created shockwaves in Canada when he made belligerent announcements about war with Syria and Iran. He also announced that Canada was buying a new series of military jets through a major arms purchase. Days later, both Canada and Britain would also cut their banking and financial ties with Iran. In reality, these steps have largely been symbolic, because Tehran was deliberately curbing its ties with Britain and Canada. For months the Iranians have also openly been evaluating cutting their ties with Britain and several other E.U. members.

The events surrounding Syria have much more to do with the geo-politics of the Middle East than just Syria alone. In the Israeli Knesset, the events in Syria were naturally tied to reducing Iranian power in the Middle East. Tel Aviv has been preparing itself for a major conflict for several years. This includes its long distance military flights to Greece that simulated an attack on Iran and its deployment of nuclear-armed submarines to the Persian Gulf. It has also conducted the "Turning Point" exercises, which seek to insure the continuation of the Israeli government through the evacuation and relocation of the Israeli cabinet and officials, including the Israeli finance ministry, to secret bunkers in the case of a war.

For half a decade Washington has been directing a military arms build-up in the Middle East aimed at Iran and the Resistance Bloc. It has sent massive arms shipments to Saudi Arabia. It has sent deliveries of bunker busters to the U.A.E. and Israel, amongst others, while it has upgraded its own deadly

arsenal. U.S. officials have also started to openly discuss murdering Iranian leaders and military officials through covert operations. What the world is facing is a pathway towards possible military escalation that could go far beyond the boundaries of the Middle East and suck in Russia, China, and their allies. The Revolutionary Guard have also made it clear that if conflict is ignited with Iran that Lebanon, Iraq, and the Palestinians would all be drawn in as Iranian allies.

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Afghanistan: The Graveyard of Empires

The US will continue strikes by drones, warplanes, and attacks by Special Forces from a small number of fortress bases. Pakistan will be cajoled or bribed by Washington to keep its forces active against Pashtun tribal fighters. Washington and London will keep issuing cheery claims about the success of the Afghan war. But the hard truth cannot be avoided.

All the concentrated military-technological might of the United States and its allies has been defeated by fierce Pashtun tribesmen whose primary weapons are courage, patience and legendary determination to drive out foreign invaders.

Afghanistan has once more earned the title, "Graveyard of Empires".

Eric S. Margolis

US Must Accommodate Pakistan's Interests in Afghanistan

Michael A. Cohen

At the heart of the U.S. war in Afghanistan lies a striking and unresolved contradiction. While the U.S. has sent approximately 100,000 troops to this impoverished, landlocked country to combat a fearsome local insurgency, the actual focal point of U.S. policy in the region largely revolves around protecting and stabilizing a country *just across Afghanistan's eastern border*: Pakistan.

It's an ironic but not altogether surprising strategy. After all, Pakistan remains home to Osama bin Laden, his key lieutenants and other terrorist organizations intent on striking American targets. The country maintains a significant nuclear capability, and its ongoing conflict with India has the potential to spark a regional conflagration.

Yet, for a policy that is so apparently solicitous of Pakistani needs, it is quite disconnected from actual *Pakistani interests*, particularly with regard to Afghanistan. In fact, the campaign to coax the Pakistani military into turning against its Afghan Taliban allies as well as the U.S. military strategy in Afghanistan that seeks to defeat the Taliban and strengthen the government of Afghan President Hamid Karzai undermines rather than furthers Pakistan's interests. In essence, U.S. policy consists of political and diplomatic efforts to convince Pakistan *to act against its perceived interests*. Instead, the United States needs to more seriously address Pakistani concerns about Afghanistan's future.

To be sure, it can be difficult to decipher Pakistan's true intentions because the country has so many power centres -- the civilian leadership, the military and of course the Directorate for Inter-Services Intelligence, which has long played an active and forward role in Afghan strategic planning. But if there is one area of consensus among Pakistani policymakers, it is the inclination to view the country's national-security challenges through the prism of its longstanding *enmity with India*.

That perspective explains why Islamabad has long supported jihadist groups that could provide Pakistan with shock troops to use in a proxy war against India. It explains the reluctance to divert the military's focus from India by sending the Pakistani army into North Waziristan. And, above all, it explains why Pakistan actively supports Taliban guerrillas in Afghanistan and provides safe haven to them on Pakistani soil, a policy that allows Islamabad to further its geopolitical interests in Afghanistan while countering Indian influence there.

One can certainly argue that notwithstanding Pakistan's *fear of India*, the jihadist terrorist groups in Pakistan's midst pose a more-pressing threat to the country's future. This certainly seems to be the dominant view among U.S. policymakers. President Barack Obama, for one, noted in his 2009 West Point speech that "there is no doubt that the United States and Pakistan share a common enemy."

But this perception appears to more accurately reflect a U.S. view of what Pakistan's national-security orientation should be, rather than Pakistan's actual view of its strategic reality. For Pakistan's leaders, the real perceived threat still comes from India. And the key for U.S. policymakers intent on improving ties with Pakistan is to accept this reality and respond accordingly.

Yet, more than nine years after Sept. 11, this still is not happening. According to *a recent Washington Post report* detailing Obama administration efforts to improve relations with Pakistan, "the strategy . . . amounts to an intensifying of existing efforts to overcome widespread suspicion and anti-American sentiment in Pakistan, and build trust and stability."

The problem is that building trust with Pakistan will not change Islamabad's essential strategic calculus, and it almost certainly will not convince Pakistan to turn against its Afghan Taliban proxies. Making matters worse, the U.S. military strategy of seeking to defeat the Taliban insurgency, strengthening the Karzai government and, for now, rejecting high-level political reconciliation that would provide the Taliban with a dominant role in Afghanistan's political future will have the practical impact of encouraging Pakistan to be more -- not less -- supportive of the Afghan insurgents.

Trying to convince Pakistan that it should crack down on the various Afghan Taliban that find safe haven in their country -- at the same time that the U.S. is actively seeking to marginalize the Taliban's role in Afghanistan's political future -- makes virtually no sense from a Pakistani perspective, no matter how obvious it might seem in Washington.

It is small wonder that, despite years of American cajoling and demands that Pakistan break ties with the Afghan Taliban, the Pakistanis refuse to do so. *Why should they?* There is no incentive for them to take the steps that the U.S. wants them to, especially since they can be fairly confident that the United States will not cut off aid to Pakistan anytime soon. After all, considering how many NATO supply trucks wind their way across the Pakistani border to Afghanistan, the *U.S. needs Pakistan just as much as Pakistan needs the U.S.* And since the Pakistanis are no doubt aware that at some point in the near future the United States and NATO will leave Afghanistan, they have even less reason to be compliant with U.S. demands.

So what would be a better approach? It begins with recognizing that, to be effective, U.S. policy in Afghanistan must work in concert with and not in opposition to Pakistan's interests. Instead of seeking to marginalize or even eliminate the Taliban in Afghanistan, the United States and NATO should adopt a political strategy that ensures that the Taliban -- and in turn Pakistan -- have a political voice in Afghanistan's future. This is not necessarily an ideal solution, but it's certainly a more realistic one. Adopting such an approach, might also pay dividends for the U.S. in getting Islamabad to devote resources to taking on jihadist groups like Lashkar-e-Taiba, the Haqqani network and, of course, remnants of al-Qaida. Continuing the current strategy will only ensure that U.S. and Pakistani policymakers will remain at loggerheads and that progress in Afghanistan will remain uncertain.

Back in December 2009, Obama said that the U.S. needed "a strategy that works on both sides of the border." Increasingly, it seems that the U.S. has neither.

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Bangladesh:

An Islamist Military Coup?

Summary

A Bangladeshi military spokesman on Jan. 19 discusses the failed coup attempt against the government

In late December 2011, the Bangladeshi military foiled a coup plot by junior officers with Islamist ties. Coups are nothing new for Bangladesh, which has been plagued by them practically since the South Asian country was founded in 1971. However, this plot was different: it involved low-ranking officers instead of the military's top brass, and those officers had ties to the banned Islamist organization Hizb al-Tahrir. Recent years have seen the growth of Islamism in Bangladesh, and coupled with the deep public dissatisfaction with the country's two main political parties, this coup attempt could be an ominous sign for the Bangladeshi political establishment.

Analysis

The Bangladeshi military announced Jan. 19 that it had foiled a coup plot in December 2011 by several lower- and mid ranking officers. The exact number of would-be coup participants has not yet been determined -- unnamed military sources have reportedly said the investigation is expanding -- but several of the up to 16 current and former officers under investigation have already been taken into custody, including a retired lieutenant colonel and major. The suspected ringleader of the plot, Maj. Mohammad Ziaul Haq, went AWOL after the other officers were arrested and is still at large.

Though Bangladesh has a long history of military coups and this particular plot does not appear to have been very sophisticated, it is notable for other reasons. First, it was led by relatively low-ranking officers, while past coups have been led by the military's top leadership. Second, the officers in question reportedly have close ties to banned Islamist group Hizb al-Tahrir.

Bangladesh has a burgeoning Islamist movement as well as a sclerotic political system in which two parties -- viewed as equally corrupt by the public -- alternate in power. Hizb al-Tahrir's role in the plot, if it indeed was involved, has not been established, but it has been known to court elements in the militaries of several Muslim-majority countries to overthrow incumbent governments in order to establish an Islamic caliphate in the country. The foiled plot highlights the underlying societal shifts in Bangladesh due to Islamism's growing influence, including apparently within the military, which the country's two main political parties will likely view with deep concern.

A History of Coups

It is not unusual for countries to experience political instability in the years immediately after their founding, but Bangladesh's formative years were exceptionally turbulent, and its own military was the biggest source of instability. The Bangladeshi armed forces had been hurriedly created out of a reorganization of the troops that were either part of the Bengali rank-and-file Pakistani army stationed in East Pakistan at the time of the war for independence in 1971 or the Indian-backed armed secessionist forces popularly known as Mukti Bahini. Thus the nascent institution lacked coherence and discipline, which explains the fractures within the armed forces that rattled the nation in its early years.

Shortly after the country broke away from Pakistan in 1971, its founder, president and leader of the Awami League party, Sheikh Mujib ur Rahman, and several of his family members were killed in August 1975 by a group of officers. The officers behind his assassination, along with that of his successor, Syed Nazrul Islam, were then ousted from power three months later in a counter-coup led by prominent military commander Maj. Gen. Khaled Mosharraf on Nov. 3, 1975. Mosharraf forced the head of the prior junta, army chief Maj. Gen. Ziaur Rahman (no relation to the country's assassinated president), to resign and imprisoned him.

Four days later, leftist-leaning officers and soldiers led by socialist ex-army officer Abu Taher organized a putsch in which Mosharraf was killed. Abu Taher released Ziaur Rahman and reappointed him army chief. Within months, however, Rahman had Taher arrested and began to consolidate

power. In April 1977, Rahman assumed the presidency and appointed Hossain Mohammad Ershad as army chief.

Ziaur Rahman's regime remained in power for another four years, during which multiparty democracy was reintroduced. He founded the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), which, along with the Awami League, is one of the country's two main political parties today.

In May 1981, Ziaur Rahman was assassinated by a group of army officers led by Maj. Gen. Abul Manzoor. There was speculation that the real force behind the assassination was army chief Lt. Gen. Hossain Mohammad Ershad, but Ershad remained loyal to the government and had Manzoor and his associates eliminated or purged from the military. A year later, Ershad assumed the presidency in what was the last coup in the country. Since then, the army has become a more professionalized institution and has not attempted to seize control of the government; rather it has worked behind the scenes to influence civilian governments.

An Islamist-Inspired Plot?

This latest plot is very different from most previous attempts, which have either been led by officers or commanders turning against the incumbent military leaderships or the army seizing political power. Even more significant, the recent plot involves officers affiliated with Islamist groups, especially Hizb al-Tahrir.

Given the rise of Islamist radicalism in the country in recent years, this development is not surprising. In addition to Bangladesh's Islamist political party, Jamaat-i-Islami, which has participated in mainstream electoral politics, a number of more radical groups have surfaced. These include banned jihadist groups like Jama'atul Mujahedeen Bangladesh, which has carried out numerous attacks, including the Aug. 17, 2005, countrywide bomb blasts, as well as Hizb al-Tahrir, which is a nonviolent but radical Islamist transnational party seeking to re-establish the caliphate. Hizb al-Tahrir's past activities lend credence to the government's claims that it was involved in the latest plot.

While Hizb al-Tahrir does not engage in violence as a means of seeking political power, it also rejects democracy and hence the route of electoral politics. Instead, it has followed a two-tiered approach. At one level it seeks

to expand its support base among the masses and hopes to gather enough followers to trigger a popular revolution. Concurrent with those efforts, it also seeks the support of militaries in Muslim-majority countries to oust the existing order via a coup and replace it with a caliphate.

This approach is not limited to other countries. It also seeks to infiltrate or win adherents within the Bangladeshi armed forces to the point that it has enough support among the officers and commanders to remove the incumbent regime and hand over power to the party. It could then impose its will on the country and ostensibly turn it into the seat of a new caliphate.

Founded in Jerusalem in 1952, Hizb al-Tahrir was involved in failed coup attempts in a number of Arab countries in the late 1960s through the 1990s. In recent decades, it has grown rapidly in South and Central Asian countries, mirroring the wider resurgence of Islamism in the region. It was banned in Bangladesh in 2009 and has also been banned in Turkey, Russia, Kazakhstan, Germany and Pakistan, where a brigadier was arrested in May 2011 for connections with the group.

The party has called on senior members of the Bangladeshi military to support a coup against the current Awami League-led government, but given the ability of the military to detect and foil the recent plot, Hizb al-Tahrir clearly has not yet reached the point where it is able to attract senior officers and commanders in large numbers. In fact, even in the junior and mid-ranks, it has not proved able to recruit more than a handful of individuals. Even a coup plotted from within by a general or two can fail because the institution is against it. Such a plot is very unlikely to go unnoticed within the army given that Bangladesh's Directorate General of Forces Intelligence is explicitly tasked with monitoring for signs of coups or the behaviour of potentially subversive elements within the military.

It is possible the recent coup plotters were not connected to Hizb al-Tahrir proper but rather a splinter group, many of which have formed stemming from frustration over the lack of action taken by the group against the Bangladeshi government. Some of these elements follow Hizb al-Tahrir's nonviolent ideology while others have taken certain ideas and mixed them with jihadist views and opted for an armed struggle. This would explain reports that Hizb al-Tahrir was working with other Islamist groups in an effort to overthrow the government through a coup -- Hizb al-Tahrir has a strict policy of not working with other groups, and therefore the reports were

likely failing to distinguish between the actual group and former members who formed their own factions and were involved in this latest plot.

In any case, the incident is the first sign of the country's growing Islamist movement taking hold within the army. Bangladesh's two main political parties -- the Awami League, which leads the current government (and is headed by Sheikh Hasina, the daughter of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman), and the opposition BNP (headed by Khaleda Zia, the widow of Ziaur Rahman) -- are held in increasing public disfavour over perceived corruption. Though the Islamist movement is not yet to the point where it could conceivably seize power, the political climate in Bangladesh is shifting. Neither party in the country's duopolistic political system wishes to deal with an Islamist-inspired coup stemming from the same institution that for years challenged the civilian government for control of the country

The Truth Behind the Coming "Regime Change" in Syria

Shamus Cook

The U.S. has proven on multiple occasions that military solutions solve nothing, having torn asunder the social fabric of Afghanistan, Iraq, and now Libya. The working people of Syria and Iran do not desire "help" from the U.S. government and its allies to prevent bloodshed. The working people of these countries could liberate themselves from their authoritarian governments, as did the Tunisians and Egyptians, which is precisely the point: the U.S. is intervening militarily to re-gain control over a region that slipped out of its hands during the Arab Spring.

This military approach serves to push the working people of the targeted country into the hands of their government while creating a humanitarian catastrophe for the invaded nation. The working people of the United States have no interest in aggressive war and have a responsibility to learn about U.S. government propaganda so that they can demand its end in the streets.

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To Ask or Not To Ask: A Few Thoughts On The Garhwa Landmine Blast

Ranjana Padhi

State repression is intensifying on all movements that stand opposed to corporate land grab and capitalist aggression, especially in the states of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Odisha. It is debatable amongst us whether the armed struggle of the Maoists is making the state more belligerent on all other resistance movements, albeit with other strategies. In Odisha, home to many mass movements against coercive land grab and mining projects of corporate giants, there have been movements with a range of ideological orientation from Sarvodaya and socialist to Marxist along with a growing Maoist presence in recent years. But the relentless assault on the Adivasis, dalits, fisherfolk and OBCs by the forces of capitalism and state has only strengthened the opposition to state repression. In common platforms and joint actions in different places, we assume solidarity as we stand opposed to the corporate plunder in all these states. But if a landmine blast is made to happen on the same day when another established party or mass organization is holding a mass protest on some issue, and a woman and three others are abducted, then surely something is amiss. Let us briefly recap the events in Garhwa district of Jharkhand.

On January 21, Sushma Mehta, elected Zila Parishad Chairperson from the CPI(ML) and Akhtar Ansari, a state committee member of the party were abducted by CPI (Maoist) along with Mehboob the driver of the car and Sunesh Ram, the security guard. Sunesh Ram continues to be held hostage by the Maoists. They were on their way to the protest of the villagers of Bargad in Bhandaria block in Garhwa district. The villagers were sitting in a road block and demanding that the site of the proposed primary health centre be decided by villagers rather than at the behest of contractors. The CPI (Maoist) triggers a landmine blast that takes the lives of 13 policemen who were accompanying the BDO on his way to the protest site. Not surprisingly the Jharkhand police come down heavily on the CPI (ML) activists with the allegation that the roadblock and the protest were designed to lure the

policemen. Several of those arrested during the protest were beaten and tortured in interrogations to establish links with the Maoists. Again, on 24 January, a vicious lathi charge takes place on a peaceful protest during a Garhwa bandh called by CPI(ML) against the state violence, where several people were beaten up. Some were hospitalized with fractured limbs. The Maoists who owned up the landmine blast, released three of the hostages on January 24.

The wife and mother of Sunesh Ram, who is still held hostage, attempted self-immolation outside the thana in Garhwa on January 28. In a TOI report (http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-01-29/ranchi/30675728_1_landmine-blast-rebels-bodyguard) we hear of the deep shock and trauma of their being held hostage for three days. Most recently, the police are implicating Sushma as part of the plot, and trying to get the guard's family to do dharna at Sushma's house demanding that she be booked for the conspiracy to perpetrate the blast and the abduction. Some of the arrested people were sent to jail but two of those arrested on January 21st, Budlal Kerketta and Mahfuz Ansari, were missing from custody. In the latest news today, they had been taken to Chhattisgarh and tortured severely, but are now with their family. While police say Ramdas Minz and Fida Husain are in jail, their families are not being allowed to meet them. So their presence in jail is not verified. The families have filed a case in court saying these two are missing and their whereabouts be revealed. According to Kavita Krishnan, a CC member of the CPI (ML), “the 'lathicharge' during the bandh on 24 Jan was no ordinary one, but a particularly vengeful and brutal assault. The DSP himself stamped with boots on Kalicharan Mehta, and similar brutal assaults resulted in severe injury and broken arm of 70-year-old Kishore Kumar, a broken leg for another comrade, and severe injuries for Comrade Rahina, another elected woman representative of Danda panchayat.” This repression has certainly been scaled up in reaction to the landmine blast and the death of the policemen.

Some crucial questions that come to the mind pertain to the timing of the landmine blast when the BDO accompanied by policemen is on his way to a protest organized by the CPI – ML members. Was the abduction of Sushma Mehta and three others a spontaneous act or preplanned? Or was it only to terrorize the state or CPI-ML or both? Can we simply leave it to be intra-party disputes since the territorial rights fought over by different streams of revolutionary groups are not new? Even as I attempted discussing these

questions with friends and fellow travellers on email, an extremely warped and poor substitute for passionate discussions in each other's physical presence (to which the state cannot not be privy to compared to today's online surveillance), I began to see how the parameters of the debate have been drastically pruned by the nature of events around us. Questioning the squad actions and military assertions of the Maoists is simplistically reduced to peace mongering. Or, the next common response is to be told how much worse and more systemic state violence can be. *In our continuous struggle against the state we now have to sit and hold our breath as there is someone calling the shots too. This is not the right time to ask these questions. We can only continue to send endless appeals to the state.*

Surely, we cannot run the risk of condoning something simply because we are pitted against the mightier enemy, which is the state of India. Or that to breathe any question now is to ruin the balance of the forces arraigned against each other. For the state, the label of 'maoist' is a sufficient and often legitimate ground to torture or kill somebody; and for the Maoists, it is 'police informer'. To question it is a blasphemy because they only know the truth, none else. What about other autonomous voices? *There have been centuries of domination where coercion and violence were systemically used in India to subjugate different oppressed sections and continue to do so.* Struggles of workers, women, lesbians and gays and dalits have made us all so clear that the state is a mighty force to reckon with but not the sole culprit. Till date, we struggle to broaden the canvas of issues though ideological assertion and logical persuasion. We can only seek to complicate our questions as the time demands; we have no choice there. But not to push these new parameters of the debate can be most counterproductive. Let us actually let a hundred flowers blossom.

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Hindutva And The Dalit Question

Bhanwar Meghvanshi

Of late, the RSS has been making a tremendous hue-and-cry about what it calls the 'social assimilation' (samarasta) of the various castes. The curious fact, however, is that it has no intention whatsoever of promoting the genuine 'assimilation' of, leave alone equality between, the various castes. A clear indication of its attitude to the caste question is that from the very beginning it has been strongly opposed to reservations or any other form of protective discrimination for Dalits, Adviasis, OBCs and religious minorities.

The truth is that 'samarasta' for the Hindutva camp means that the varna system should remain, as should the different castes and the hierarchies and inequalities that divide them. So, too, must untouchability, and poverty and the enormous differences between the rich and the poor. The Hindutva forces want that the present system, wherein some people continue to have a virtual monopoly over resources and power, while millions of others live in the most pathetic conditions, continues unscathed. It wants, in other words, that the status quo in terms of caste and class relations should continue and that no one should in any way revolt against this. This is what is meant by its jargon about 'samarasta', which Hindutva ideologues constantly harp about. So that the oppressed Dalits and others do not begin to assert themselves for their rights it is necessary for the Hindutva forces to keep talking about the mirage of 'samarasta'.

The Hindutva forces have always been opposed to social equality. When two brothers cannot be the same, Hindutva ideologues often argue, how can there be equality in society at large? That is why, they say, equality is impossible, and the most that one can seek is 'samarasta', as they understand the term. In other words, for them the 'high' and the rich must remain high and rich, the 'low' and the poor must remain low and poor, but society must somehow 'assimilate' the two categories harmoniously, as if this were possible.

It requires no great intelligence to understand that this defence of the status quo by Hindutva forces in the name of 'samarasta' brilliantly serves the interests of the exploiting classes, such as capitalists, the feudal class as well as the priestly class, and that is why these three classes are among their most staunch supporters. This trio of classes faces the greatest threat from social equality. The priests want that they should be left to monopolise their profession so that they can continue to fleece people, exploit their faith and comfortably live off their donations. The former rajas and maharajas still want to fancy themselves as rulers of this land and the rest of Indians as their subjects. The 'Banias' want to maintain their hegemony in the economic sphere, and they want no change in the system wherein a tiny class owns almost all the wealth, while the rest are landless, poverty-stricken labourers. For these three classes, the slogan of samarasta serves to maintain the iniquitous system that favours them. To maintain this grossly unequal system in the guise of samarasta, these days Hindutva forces are now trying to woo the Dalits and Adivasi and fool them by presenting themselves as committed to their welfare. Their activists tour Dalit and Adivasi localities, and try to win them over by eating with them or by setting up religious centres for them. In this way, they are trying to create and reinforce the completely fallacious notion that there is no one so committed to the Dalits and Adivasis as they themselves.

But the real face of the Hindutva forces, their true stance on Dalits and other oppressed castes, is easily understood from their position on reservations for these communities. This brutal reality strips the masks under which they seek to hide. From time to time, Hindutva leaders, including top bosses of the RSS, issue confusing statements about reservations for the oppressed castes, but, overall, these are calculated to negate their importance and seek to do away with them. Some years ago, Sudarshan, the then head of the RSS, issued a statement that such reservations had become a tool to mobilize votes. Indresh Kumar, another important RSS leader, declared that reservations on the basis of caste had divided India against itself and had even, so he had the gumption to claim, threatened its unity and integrity and the love and harmony between its different classes. Devendra Swaroop, a key RSS ideologue, also stridently opposed reservations as allegedly undermining democracy and as promoting advancement through greed and by means of crutches. Moreover, he condemned reservations as supposedly divisive and anti-national. He contended that students who believe in 'merit', 'all intellectuals', the media, the industrialist class, the judiciary and

other ‘Constitutional bodies’ ‘have stood up in opposition to this divisive and anti-national reservation policy. A massive movement [against the policy] is beginning to emerge throughout the country.’

Another top Hindutva boss, Pravin Togadia, General Secretary of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, once infamously declared that by providing reservations to the Backward Classes, the government was ‘fulfilling the incomplete task of Khilji and Ghazni’—this being an allusion to medieval supposedly anti-Hindu Muslim invaders, whom the Hindutva forces regard with horror. ‘Through reservations, a conspiracy is being carried out to divide the country’, he announced. Summing up the Hindutva stance on reservations for the oppressed castes, BJP leader Murli Manohar Joshi quipped, ‘It is wrong to provide reservations on the basis of caste.’ The Shiv Sena, a key member of the Hindutva combine, is notorious for its consistent opposition to reservations for the oppressed castes. It is said that the almost defunct Hindu Mahasabha, at one time in the recent past began showing signs of being revived in order to oppose such reservations. Himani Savarkar, top Mahasabha leader, and daughter-in-law of one of its key founders, VD Savarkar (she belongs to the Godse family), announced, ‘The Hindu Mahasabha has always been opposed to reservations. Even before Independence, the Mahasabha, at its Karnavati and Bhagalpur conventions, had opposed reservations based on caste and religion.’

The RSS keeps harping that ‘All Hindus are Brothers’, but when it comes to reservations for the oppressed castes, it turns, as these examples illustrate, against its supposed co-religionists—the oppressed castes. Hindutva forces are also said to be campaigning under the cover of various other outfits to end the system of reservations, sometimes hesitating to reveal their true intentions for fear of losing the support of the oppressed castes. So much for its claims of being committed to the ‘assimilation’ of the different castes and for its rhetoric about social ‘harmony’.

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(Translated in English by Yoginder Sikand)

The Global Worth of Human Life

Jahanzeb Hussain

I wonder how Europe and North America would react if the victims of 9/11, 7/7 and Madrid bombings were universally declared as nothing but “collateral damage”. It is simply unthinkable that victims who happen to be citizens of imperialist countries can be deprived of their humanity, the value of their life negated and their memories brushed under the rug. It would be totally wrong if we dismissed the lost lives as a mean to an end. Human life is an end in itself and its worth can never be diminished.

However, it is culturally accepted that when an innocent Iraqi, Palestinian, Kashmiri, Afghan and a Pakistani dies they are not automatically accorded the same human right that Westerners and whites are. They are not viewed as valuable lives, but they are looked down upon as “collateral damage”. They are not human beings, but they are objects and chattel. They are subordinates and secondary. There are no memorials for them. There are no events for them to mark their death anniversaries. Nobody cares about them. Why should anyone as they are just sorry people who are getting in our way as we “light up” the world with “freedom” and “democracy”? After all they are just “terrorists” by our interpretation of the world, therefore all these people should not be deserving of the rights that North America and Europe take for granted. They are less human than us, so it doesn’t matter what they go through as they don’t feel and breathe. They can be killed and it’s all right as long as we keep deriving self-satisfaction out of it, because we are doing something “good” and “noble”.

Here is what will happen if tomorrow morning if there is a bomb attack in London or Paris or NY or any other European or North American city vs. a drone attack in Pakistan: The citizens of imperialist nations will be remembered till the end of times, their personal stories will be told a million times over, their pictures will be all over the media, tears of their families will be broadcasted, leaders around the world will pay visits to the attacked sites, there will be compensations to the families, there will be fierce

rhetoric against the attackers and a promise of revenge. On the other hand, Pakistani women and children killed in a bomb attack will be a tool for an end, meaning their murder will be justified under the name of “fighting terrorism” and making the “world safe for democracy”. They will not be humans but tools and a means to some supposedly higher end. Moreover, the leaders and intellectuals of the “Free World” will preach to these barbarians that they actually don’t understand what a noble act America and her allies are undertaking. The immature children, as Pakistanis clearly are given the fact that they are Pakistanis, will be taught that they are incapable of seeing that what is being done is in reality good for them. American and her allies are angels who can’t commit sins and they will say to Pakistanis that they should be silent and let the masters carry on and not be ungrateful, and one day you will comprehend what an amazing service has been done to Pakistanis – or Iraqis, Afghans, and whoever else happens to be “benefiting” from Western “benevolence”.

According to the Western narrative, the lives lost of these people are not actually anything wrong, but a sacrifice. The divine European and North American men are busy in some grand project, which once completed, will reveal itself worthy of millions of lost lives of Pakistani, Afghani and Iraqi

Jahanzeb Hussain

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Corruption in India

Prashant Agrawal

From the start of 2011 to the year's end, corruption dominated India's headlines and enflamed public opinion like no other issue. Three developments in particular brought corruption to the fore. First, in late-2010, the office of India's comptroller and auditor general released a report stating that the Indian exchequer had lost more than \$20 billion in revenue in the auction process allocating 2G telecommunications airwaves. Second, a 70-year-old Gandhi-esque figure led an anti-corruption movement that captured the nation's attention and garnered global coverage. Third, an increasing number of India's powerful elite began calling the country's most famous prison, Tihar jail, home. All three developments, along with a few others, managed to keep the issue of corruption in the spotlight throughout the year.

Corruption in India

Few Indians are spared from the tentacles of corruption, which pervades the everyday life of everyone from the poorest farmer to the richest businessman. For the poor, access to government services comes at a price. Only a fraction of the government's direct disbursements for social welfare programs, including food subsidies and housing allowances, actually reach their intended recipients. The rest is siphoned off by a leaky distribution system in which bureaucrats and middlemen, such as distribution agents for food grains, take a piece of the pie.

India's middle class fares no better. It is often said that from birth to death, an Indian will have to pay off someone, if only to receive the certificates confirming both events. In between, the government takes its share as well. Public school students often resort to paying for private tutorial lessons from the very teachers who are supposed to be teaching them during the day. Meanwhile, getting into a good high school or college often involves a bribe to ensure admission.

Entering the work force, a young adult may want to seek employment in the public sector. To do so, a bribe will be needed to secure a job. Even the army, still among the most honest of India's institutions, has had issues with corruption involving its entrance exam. Postings in the public sector often

operate according to a capitalist efficiency, with the bribe needed to secure a position rising in proportion to the job's income. For the average citizen, whether it comes to receiving medical attention, learning at school, securing justice, applying for a passport, opening a landline or getting the electricity turned on, almost no part of the Indian system is immune to corruption.

But things are no better at the top of the socio-economic ladder. In January 2011, the *Hindustan Times* published an open letter bemoaning the state of corruption in India, in which the authors, a group of 14 individuals, stated that "Possibly, the biggest issue corroding the fabric of our nation is 'CORRUPTION.'" They went on to say that the issue must be addressed "with a sense of urgency, determination and on a war footing," before concluding that unless serious and drastic reform occurred, India was headed for disaster. The letter's authors were no ordinary group of Indian citizens, however. They included India's most powerful banker, a Supreme Court justice, the former governor of the Reserve Bank of India, the country's richest IT magnate and nearly half a dozen billionaires.

For many observers, the letter seemed to be an admission by India's most powerful men and women that they were, in fact, powerless when it comes to corruption. But if India's most powerful bureaucrats and richest corporate executives are powerless, common citizens would be justified in wondering who might do something about the problem.

The obvious place to look would be the government and the person leading it, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, by all accounts an honest man. In fact, perhaps the biggest irony surrounding the current scandals is that one of India's most honest prime ministers is presiding over what could be its most corrupt government. There is a widespread sentiment among the Indian public that many of the current government's ministers are corrupt

The 2G Scandal

That explains why the imprisonment in February 2011 of former Telecommunications Minister A. Raja over what came to be known as the 2G scandal came as such a welcome surprise to many. However, though Raja's arrest and imprisonment might suggest a new atmosphere of accountability, the truth is that it would have been hard for any government to withstand the public pressure to punish someone for the 2G scandal.

The scandal dates back to 2008, when the Indian government auctioned off airwave spectrums for second-generation telecommunications licenses. Instead of establishing an open auction, the Telecom Ministry implemented a convoluted process allowing a select few cronies to gather valuable

spectrum. The scandal came into the spotlight in late-2010, when India's controller and auditor general issued a report stating that the Indian government had lost out on more than \$20 billion as a result of the opaque auction process. To put it into perspective, given the relative sizes of the two country's economies, the equivalent loss to the U.S. Treasury would be more than \$100 billion.

The sum alone startled most Indians. While the country is no stranger to corruption, the 2G scandal made others pale in comparison. In 1989, for instance, then-Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's government was alleged to have accepted approximately \$100 million in bribes in relation to a Swedish arm deal. The subsequent Bofros Gun scandal cost Gandhi the 1989 general elections.

Fallout from the 2G scandal

After the 2G scandal came to light, the Indian opposition, media and public all called for action and justice. Raja was promptly arrested and sent to Tihar jail, along with several alleged beneficiaries of the rigged bidding process, including three billionaires. Following the scandal, the southern-based DMK party -- to which Raja belongs -- lost elections in its home state, Tamil Nadu, to its archrivals, despite the advantages of incumbency. While the billionaires were recently released after nearly six months in prison, Raja continues to languish in Tihar. None of the accused have been brought to trial yet.

In the midst of the 2G scandal, with popular frustration over government corruption rising, an anti-corruption movement coalesced in April 2011 around an unlikely hero, 74-year-old activist Anna Hazare, who went on a hunger strike to call attention to the issue. Hazare had first come to prominence following India's 1965 war with Pakistan, when he worked to rebuild the villages of Maharashtra. Some critics had questioned his methods, but never his probity.

As Hazare began calling people to join him in the streets, the Indian government began to fear him and his protest. In August, on the eve of a second threatened hunger strike, Indian authorities sent him to Tihar jail as a precautionary move that they claimed was for his own safety. In a bitterly ironic twist, India's corruption fighter was now sitting in the same jailhouse as India's most corrupt politician.

The media had a field day, and the government quickly realized that it had a public relations nightmare on its hands. It tried releasing Hazare from Tihar, but he initially refused to leave the prison in order to protest his jailing. The

standoff soon descended into a media circus, with which the Indian public quickly became enamored. Most did not closely follow the actual details of the Lokpal debate. Rather, they were simply gratified that someone was finally proposing to do something about the corruption they face at every level of government and at every moment of life. Though the government has still not passed the Lokpal bill, Hazare's obstinate position in the ongoing negotiations has led to a decline in his movement's popularity. Meanwhile, the opposition parties in New Delhi, which sided with Hazare's team, have come across as opportunistic, while the government has been thoroughly discredited. At the beginning of 2012, there seems to be little hope for progress on the issue.

Corruption has become ingrained in the Indian system. The final element in ending it will involve a change in culture. Few in India today would be able say that they lead a corruption-free life. Indeed, it would be a herculean task to even try to do so. But at some point, the Indian people will have to say no to corruption, even if it involves a bit of pain and effort. It may mean waiting in a longer line for a passport rather than paying a bribe for "expedited" service, or paying the full price of a speeding ticket rather than a less-expensive "gift" to have it disappear from the files. For their part, Indian businessman will have to learn to refuse to pay for licenses and resources, and instead rely on an impartial tender process. But that is the kind of effort that will be needed to end corruption.

The two largest sources of large-scale government corruption center on the allocation of natural resources and licenses and the procurement of goods and services. From coal to natural gas to iron ore, India is rich in natural resources, with its reserves ranking among the largest in the world. The allocation of these resources is rife with corruption, with mining and real estate the largest sectors affected.

The Indian government isn't going to disappear, so it needs to be more efficient. Taking a cue from the IT industry, it must hire and train the best, use technology, be transparent in its dealings and enable effective enforcement to end the scourge of corruption in India.

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Pakistan Must Stand Firm against American pressure

Asif Haroon Raja

War on terror initiated by USA was a ruse to denigrate Islam and crush Jihadis and anti-American Muslims, redraw boundaries of Middle East and to plunder the resources of the Muslim world. The US and its real allies have succeeded in installing puppet regimes in Kabul, Baghdad and Tripoli and in destroying these countries. Although the US and its allies have made several parts of Pakistan restive with the help of their intelligence agencies, they have so far not been able to achieve its core objective of denuclearizing it and making it its vassal.

The four airbases handed over by Musharraf regime to the US air force were used for carrying out overt and covert operations in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Shamsi airbase was used for employment of drones, where Blackwater elements were employed as missile loaders. The airbases became dens for CIA to trigger Baloch insurgency and destabilize Balochistan. Arms for 60 Farari camps established in interior Balochistan by rebels belonging to Bugti, Marri, Mengal tribes were also provided by NATO containers in addition to supply routes from Afghanistan and India. It has now come to light that 3400 NATO containers containing weaponry went missing in Pakistan. Shamsi base supported Jundullah group made up of runaway Sunni Iranians based in Balochistan to destabilize Sistan province of Iran.

Taking full advantage of limitless freedom of action given by Gen Musharraf, CIA and FBI cultivated militant and criminal groups to fight Pak security forces. By 2007, these agencies helped by RAW, RAAM, MI-6, Mossad and BND succeeded in destabilizing FATA, large parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan and in embroiling sizeable strength of Army and paramilitary forces in war on terror. Indo-US-Western propaganda machinery continued to spew venom to malign Pakistan's nuclear program and its premier institutions. The purpose was to declare nuclear program unsafe and ISI a rogue outfit.

On the cultural front, the west as well as India gained a lot from the enlightened moderation promoted by Musharraf to show soft face of Pakistan. It helped in demonizing Islamists and strengthening secularism and allowing Indian and western culture to seep into Pakistani society. Likewise, higher level of education in particular was secularized and school textbooks revised to dilute concept of Jihad. It sharpened secularists-Islamists divide and gave rise to obscenity as well as religious extremism.

Efforts of Pakistan's detractors to weaken the ISI and to disable nuclear program received a setback in 2007 when Gen Musharraf graph started declining after he committed the mistake of sacking chief justice Iftikhar. 12 May incident in which the MQM thugs gunned down over 50 workers of different political parties in Karachi further discredited the military regime. Failing to defuse the lawyer's movement, the ruling regime suffered another setback after it's botched up Lal Masjid operation in July 2007.

In order to redress the situation, the plot makers hatched another plan and decided to install PPP government under Benazir that was popular among the masses and completely loyal to Washington. Gen Musharraf was forced to strike a power sharing deal with Benazir and infamous NRO was issued which paved the way for Benazir and later for Sharif brothers to return home and participate in elections.

When Benazir started to veer away from her commitments made to USA, she was murdered on 27 December 2007. As a consequence to manipulated elections in February 2008, all pro-American liberal political parties PPP-MQM-ANP together with dubious JUI-F succeeded in forming a coalition government, which turned out to be the most corrupt and thoroughly incompetent. When Musharraf lost his utility value, the US got him replaced by most controversial person Zardari in September 2008. Additionally, certain handpicked America's puppets were awarded key appointments who helped the US in pursuing its agenda.

Notwithstanding the servility of new leadership to Washington's commands, it became upsetting for the US to find their chosen President helpless to cut the ISI to size, open up nuclear arsenal and to settle Kashmir dispute as per India's wishes. It was disconcerting for Obama administration and Pentagon to find that neither Zardari could rein in Gen Kayani and Lt Gen Pasha, nor GHQ or ISI was willing to play ball with USA. Irritated by their defiance, the US started twisting the arm of the government and Army in rotation and

at times simultaneously. The US aided by our Ambassador Haqqani then used Kerry Lugar aid bill (KLB) worth \$7.5 billion stretched over five years as an instrument to deprive Pakistan of its dignity and sovereignty. It was meant to yoke the military, ISI and nuclear program. While the government fell for it, the Army rightly expressed its serious reservations.

Expansion of the US Embassy in Islamabad was undertaken to accommodate 1000 Marines and greater number of staff and undercover operatives. Large numbers of private houses were hired in 2009 in Islamabad and provincial capitals to accommodate the assault brigade. In July 2010, visa policy was liberalized by the PM allowing US citizens to enter Pakistan without ISI and Foreign Office clearance. As a consequence, as many as 7000 undesirable CIA agents under different guises managed to slip in and they gave rise to drone attacks, suicide bombings and terrorist attacks. The US also stepped up pressure on Pakistan to launch a major operation in North Waziristan (NW), declared as the most dangerous place.

The year 2011 further accentuated the security situation and made Pak-US relations rocky. Arrest of Raymond was the first watershed which caused strains, but stealth helicopters assault in Abbottabad on 2 May severely impacted military and intelligence relations between the two allied countries. Resistance offered by Army and ISI and refusal to open another front in NW angered US-NATO so much that it gave vent to its pent up anger on 26 November by way of attacking Pak Army's two border check posts and killing 24 soldiers. Salala incident has brought Pak-US relations to near breaking point but unified the otherwise divided nation.

The civil and military leaders in Pakistan have for the first time jointly taken pro-active measures to express their displeasure. Intelligence sharing had already discontinued after 2 May. CIA had been firmly asked to repatriate all its under cover agents. Activities of diplomats had been kept under strict watch. After 26/11, military liaison officers at joint coordination centres were called back; GHQ refused to be part of NATO's inquest since NATO commander, Gen Allen and Gen Dempsey had categorically announced that the attack was unintentional; Bonn conference was boycotted; NATO supply line was stopped; all scheduled military visits to USA and western countries were cancelled; Shamsi airbase was got vacated by 11 December; air defence along western border was beefed up; troops deployed along the border were instructed to resist any future incursion with full force and to shoot down intruding drone. Pakistan has decided to revise terms of engagements with USA. In this connection a high level conference of our ambassadors held a meeting on 12 December. Anti-Americanism has scaled

new heights and protest marches to condemn NATO's brutal attack are continuing.

The US on its part is maintaining its arrogance and is refusing to offer an apology or to admit its fault. Gen Allan stated that he cannot guarantee if another Mohmand-like strike takes place. In the same breath, the US is pressing Pakistan to forget the incident and to recommence business as usual. It is surprised at the hard stance taken by Pakistan and cannot reconcile with it. Unless the US apologizes and agrees to reduce terms of engagement in writing, treat Pakistan as an ally rather than a target, stops its covert war and propaganda campaign, prevents India from this practice and grants Pakistan its due role in Afghanistan's political settlement, Pakistan must stand firm and push back US pressure.

Has Obama Finally Thrown the Towel

It appears that President Obama has decided that the US must cut its losses and withdraw from Afghanistan . What will it leave behind? A civil war? A clandestine war between India and Pakistan ? Both? The USA does not have much time or many options. A lot depends on the terms on which Pakistan facilitates a smooth exit and protect residual US presence after exit

The Obama administration, facing a tough election this year, has taken the fiscally, militarily and politically correct decision to end the no-win, \$1 trillion Afghan war begun by George W. Bush. The withdrawal dates for roughly 40,000 Nato troops is uncertain, though France just announced an accelerated pull out. The fate of an estimated 80,000 US-paid mercenaries in Afghanistan is also uncertain.

The US will continue strikes by drones, warplanes, and attacks by Special Forces from a small number of fortress bases. Pakistan will be cajoled or bribed by Washington to keep its forces active against Pashtun tribal fighters. Washington and London will keep issuing cheery claims about the success of the Afghan war. But the hard truth cannot be avoided.

Usman Khalid

Book Review

Dead Reckoning: Memories of the 1971 Bangladesh War. (Columbia/Hurst) Author Sarmila Bose.

Finally a balanced perspective. Most of Bangladesh war history has been written in a patriotic narrative which completely ignores the excesses committed by other sides. This war was fought between four sides, on one side were the Indian Army and the Bengali militants and on the other side were Pakistan Army and the nationalist comprising of Bengalis, Biharis and the west Pakistanis. Like any war, excesses were done on both sides. This book gives an impartial view on the excesses. The only thing missing in this book are the details of terrorism exercised by Indian army as a war tactic in their covert operations. As a witness to this war, I find this book fair and recommend it to all who want to get a balanced view of this historic event.

This ground-breaking book chronicles the 1971 war in South Asia by reconstituting the memories of those on opposing sides of the conflict. 1971 was marked by a bitter civil war within Pakistan and war between India and Pakistan, backed respectively by the Soviet Union and the United States. It was fought over the territory of East Pakistan, which seceded to become Bangladesh. Through a detailed investigation of events on the ground, Sarmila Bose contextualises and humanises the war while analysing what the events reveal about the nature of the conflict itself. The story of 1971 has so far been dominated by the narrative of the victorious side. All parties to the war are still largely imprisoned by wartime partisan mythologies. Bose reconstructs events via interviews conducted in Bangladesh and Pakistan, published and unpublished reminiscences in Bengali and English of participants on all sides, official documents, foreign media reports and other

sources. Her book challenges assumptions about the nature of the conflict, and exposes the ways in which the 1971 war is still playing out in the region.

Sarmila Bose is being vilified because she has dared to write the story of the West Pakistani side in the brutal and indeed, genocidal war of liberation of 1971. The stories she has written include many brutalities committed by the East Pakistani rebels (Bengalis) and also many committed by the West Pakistani Army. This is one of the rare times when the West Pakistani view has been related and it causes relief to many people of the Pakistan of today because atrocities of the Bengalis are also being highlighted.

Bose should be thanked for publishing her book, which does not detract from the crimes against humanity by the West Pakistanis. Her connection with General Subhash Chandra Bose is a mark of honour, rather than a stigma; General Bose and his followers were looking for any way at all, to be rid of British rule and were willing to side with the Germans and the Japanese on order to be free...whether they would have been allowed their freedom had the Axis won is an entirely different discussion. General Bose remains a hero among Indians and Pakistanis who struggled for freedom from the British Empire.

The cliché, "War is Hell" is everlasting; war is Hell. There is never a war where both sides do not commit atrocities, but there are plenty of times when atrocities committed by one side are overwhelmingly greater than those committed by the other side, the Bangladeshi war of liberation was one of them. The West Pakistani position appears to suggest that the atrocities committed by the Bengalis were enough to justify the atrocities committed by the West Pakistanis...certainly enough to "balance" out the atrocities equation.

The critics of Boses book appear to be outraged by the fact that anyone should dare to turn the light on to the atrocities committed by the Bengalis...how anyone dare seek to create a moral equivalence between the two!

East Pakistan had been treated fairly by the West Pakistan ever since independence when first the Urdu-speaking and then the Punjabi-speaking people took control of the entire country and exploited it to their advantage. It happened that speakers of both those languages, were from the West and therefore, to the Bengalis, it was a clear case of colonization and imperial exploitation by the West. The final straw was when Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto refused to allow Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to take over as the head of Pakistan (Mujib won the elections by a landslide) and the Bengalis realized that for them, equal treatment was a dream that was not to come true soon; the civil war began.

While the Bengalis were also responsible for atrocities, the bottom-line here is that the war was encouraged, instigated and planned by India. It was in military parlance India's "Grand Strategy" that cut Pakistan in half. I wish Bose had touched on the Indian deceit that culminated in outright invasion of East Pakistan. Has India not been involved in this tragic killing of Pakistanis? The differences of Bengali's and West Pakistani could have been resolved without firing bullets. This Indian game was facilitated by no one other than the legendary Pakistani leader Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto

Extracts from Sarmila Bose's Book: Dead Reckoning

In the terrible violence of a fratricidal war, the victims were from every ethnic and religious group and from both sides of the political divide and so were the perpetrators...

Both sides had legitimate political arguments and their idealistic followers, along with those who indulged in opportunism, expediency and inhumanity.

Many Bengalis - supposed to be fighting for freedom and dignity - committed appalling atrocities.

And many Pakistani army officers, carrying out a military action against a political rebellion, turned out to be fine men doing their best to fight an unconventional war within the conventions of warfare...

A long-standing theme is the state of denial in Pakistan: A refusal to confront what really happened in East Pakistan.

However the study revealed a greater state of denial in Bangladesh.

Shocking bestiality

Her book says the Bengali nationalist rebellion in what was then East Pakistan "turned into xenophobic violence against non-Bengalis" especially against West Pakistanis and mainly Urdu-speaking people who migrated to East Pakistan from India at the time of partition that were known as Biharis.

"In the ethnic violence unleashed in the name of Bengali nationalism, non-Bengali men, women and children were slaughtered," Dr Bose says, arguing such atrocities took place in the towns of Chittagong, Khulna, Santahar and Jessore during and after the 10-month war.

"Non-Bengali victims of ethnic killings by Bengalis numbered hundreds or even thousands per incident... men, women and children were massacred on the basis of ethnicity and the killings were executed with shocking bestiality."

Some of the worst brutalities were among Bengalis themselves, Dr Bose says, between those who were defending the unity of Pakistan and those who were fighting for the liberation of Bangladesh.

While "the killing of pro-liberation professionals by pro-regime death squads in the dying days of the war stands out as one of the worst crimes of the conflict... brutalisation and elimination of those with a different political viewpoint seemed to be the hallmark of nationalist Bengalis too".

There is clear evidence, Dr Bose says, of the violence suffered by "non-Bengali victims of Bengali ethnic hatred".

"Of the corpses reported littering the land and clogging up the rivers, many would have been Bihari... as Bengali mobs appear to have killed non-Bengalis indiscriminately while the Pakistani army appeared to target adult Bengali men."

In one notorious incident examined by the author in the south-western town of Khulna on 28 March 1971, Bengalis "slaughtered" large numbers of Biharis in the town's jute mills.

Gigantic rumour

Dr Bose also examines the widely reported suggestion that three million Bengalis were killed by the Pakistani army. These figures are sacrosanct in Bangladesh, where the overwhelming majority of people continue to honour and respect those who died in the liberation struggle.

The book's conclusions are likely to be vigorously contested in Bangladesh

Describing the three million figure as a "gigantic rumour", she says it is "not based on any accounting or survey on the ground".

"None of the popular assertions of three million Bengalis allegedly killed by the [Pakistani] army cites any official report," she says.

"Claims of the dead in various incidents wildly exceeding anything that can be reasonably supported by evidence on the ground - 'killing fields' and 'mass graves' were claimed to be everywhere, but none was forensically exhumed and examined in a transparent manner."

Dr Bose does not ignore atrocities carried out by Pakistan and its supporters - her book has several chapters on this subject - concluding its army committed political and extrajudicial killings that in some cases were "genocidal".

She says: "Ultimately neither the numbers nor the labels matter. What matters is the nature of the conflict, which was fundamentally a complex and violent struggle for power among several different parties with a terrible human toll."

This book is one of the first by a Western author to subject the war to thorough and independent scrutiny. Dr Bose went through published documentary evidence, travelled to remote areas of Bangladesh to interview elderly villagers and journeyed to Pakistan to question retired army officers.

