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EDITORIAL

GEOSTRATEGIC CHANGES IN SOUTH ASIA

Currently there are important geostrategic changes taking place in South Asia. After decades of mistrust and hostility, Russia and Pakistan are now seeing the enormous strategic benefits of a bilateral relationship. In this fast-changing and evolving international scenario, Russian interests in Pakistan are beginning to unfold. Though President Putin could not visit Pakistan in early October, visits by Gen Kayani Pakistan Army chief to Moscow and Russian Foreign Minister to Islamabad will end the frostiness induced by the Cold War and kick-start Moscow's new assertiveness in South Asia where hitherto America enjoyed pre-eminence.

This region has paid a devastating price for the lack of understanding and coherence between the two countries. Russians could effectively achieve its strategic objectives in this region if they had given an option to Pakistan to work with them towards mutually beneficial ends in early 70's, 80's but the boundaries of the bipolar between the two super powers were too well defined and Pakistan had a strong US leanings. Soviets primary goal was to have an access to warm waters in the Arabian Sea and that could easily be achieved through the development of Gwadar port. Decades later, Chinese followed a friendly path to achieve the same. Pakistan sought security and the tilt of erstwhile USSR towards India pushed Pakistan into the Western camp and what followed is history.

A new era of bilateral relations between Russia and Pakistan is now taking shape in the wake of US retreat from Afghanistan in 2014 and the concern of both nations as to US imperialistic designs in the region. *In fact it is a geopolitical compulsion for both nations to charter a complimentary strategic alliance.*

Foreign minister of Russia referring to Drone Attacks in Pakistan stated, "It is not right to violate the sovereignty and integrity of any state. We fully support Pakistan's stance." On Afghanistan, he said the solution for settlement of the issue should come from within the country. He mentioned that all other proposals that emanated from abroad did not work. It is thus imperative that

neighbouring countries of Afghanistan in the region should come forward and help Afghans evolve an Afghan-based, Afghan-sponsored solution and in this venture role of Russia, Pakistan, Iran and Turkey is of particular importance and relevance. It is clear that Russia is keen to enhance its profile in the region following India's increased closeness to Washington and China is now ready to be a bit more assertive.

On Sept 6, China announced its decision to bypass the dollar for global oil customers and allow them make purchases in Yuan. Shockingly, this announcement was ignored by the Media in South Asia, though it can surely help nations in the subcontinent. Anyway, as the Yuan purchase catches on, the dollar will lose its place as the global reserve currency and Col. Muammar Gaddafi, who died a brutal death because of his determination to nix the dollar with an African gold dinar, will be vindicated in history.

China has been implementing bilateral trade agreements with a number of countries, whereby trade is not conducted in dollars, but in local currencies. Over the past few years, China and other emerging powers such as Russia have been making agreements to move away from the US dollar in international trade. Iran squeezed by the sanctions is already willing to barter and deal in local currency.

A new Sino-Russian alliance is fast developing. It will be in the interests of Pakistan and other nations seeking to be sovereign and independent, to adjust to the emerging realities

Already the neighbourhood is becoming more closely intertwined, with both Moscow and Beijing endorsing Tehran's right to nuclear technology and opposing American sanctions against Iran. *Pakistan, already close to China, will benefit from increased warmth with Moscow in the wake of growing hostility and drone attacks by America. Russia and China both support Pakistan's desire to join the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)*

Russia and China have woken up to the dangers and the neighbours of China have an important role to play. Pakistan is in the eye of the storm and in fact so is India because it is central to US plans to contain China.

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad stressed that both religious and geographical factors call for closer ties between Pakistan and his country. Mr Ahmadinejad

saw the separate nature of the two countries as mere “geopolitical divisions” since, he argued, the two peoples have common culture emanating from the same source and origin and common values. It is hard to dispute his contention that the stronger the ties the better for both. Adding force to his argument is the reality of today, which demands the defence of common interests. LISA has consistently maintained that Iran - Pakistan alliance is imperative for stability in the region. *With support and understanding from China and Russia time is Pakistan’s side to develop strategic understanding with Iran*

LISA ANNUAL SEMINAR 2012

The London Institute of South Asia (LISA) annual seminar was held in London on 23 August 2012. Papers were read by eminent scholars from India, Pakistan, Canada and the United Kingdom on the subject of “Roots and Realities of Terrorism in the Subcontinent”

The director of LISA and Editor of LISA Journal in his opening remarks said, “At LISA we do not seek assistance or support from any foundation, government, or mainstream media since they are driven by their corporate masters or their specific agendas. We are an independent voice determined to speak the truth and provide an alternative source of information and ideas for our readers. Intrinsic to our mission is our dedication to humanity in general and for betterment of the people of South Asia in particular. Our ideological perspective is based on commitment to integrity, fairness, equal opportunity, human rights in intra -state and inter-state relationships. We shall be a voice for the freedom and rights of South Asian communities devoted to elimination of discrimination based on religion, caste, tribes, language, race or nationalities.”

“LISA started as a dream about six years ago. The person who envisioned this dream is right amongst us today. It is my proud privilege to present Usman Khalid . LISA under his guidance and enlightened vision has come of age. We would also like to extend our gratitude and thanks to all the role players that have made it possible for the dream to become a reality.”

“I would now take a few moments to introduce our Chairman of the Seminar Mr Alan Hart a role model of note, a man of distinction. He has been engaged with the events in the Middle East and there global consequences and terrifying implications – the possibility of a Clash of Civilizations.

Alan Hart is a fiercely independent thinker. He hates all labels and isms and has never been a member of any political party or group. He prefers to judge issues on their merit. As a researcher and author, his first book "*Arafat, Terrorist or Peacemaker?*" was published in 1984 and subsequently in several updated editions over a decade

He was actively involved in covert diplomacy or call it backdoor diplomacy to bring about a resolution of Palestinian problem. His mediation was based on Truth Telling as he believes that peacemaking is not possible without it. A decade later the process that he had initiated became to be known as Oslo Process.

His latest book "*Zionism: The Real Enemy of Jews*" shows that countdown to Armageddon is on and how it can be stopped.

The Seminar was chaired by Mr Alan Hart a role model of note and a man of distinction.

.LISA Annual Book Award 2012

A simple and impressive ceremony was held at the end of the Seminar. Noted Indian freelance journalist and human rights activist Oliver D'Souza won the prestigious London Institute of South Asia (LISA) Book of the Year Award for for his book 'Truth about Dalits'.

Drawing from a short-list of global entries for the award, the award committee narrowed down on 'Truth about Dalits' as the winner for the award.

Commenting on the criteria for conferring the award at LISA's annual seminar, Saeed Ismat Director of LISA said "Oliver D'Souza has done a commendable job writing such an analytical and unbiased book on the Dalits. The institution considers the book of great value." He added, "The Truth about Dalits' is an eye opener and a remarkable research work. The author has spoken the truth with no prejudice, favour or fear."

In his foreword, Dr Kancha Ilaiah said "The book 'Truth about Dalits' is a different kind of book that so far exists on Dalits in the market. Oliver D'Souza has collected very relevant information quite laboriously to write this book. So far the exploitation, suppression and oppression of Dalitbahujans have not been understood by the Western world. Nobody has written a book on caste and

untouchability keeping the Western readers in mind. This is first of its kind with details that normally are not available at one place with a reasoned argument about their status, predicament and struggles.”

“D’Souza’ book does that job with good expertise and gives us a graphic picture of how it (caste discrimination) is actually practiced within the Hindu fold. The insertion of photographs at important places makes the book not only more creative, but makes it more readable and understandable,” he adds.

The author Mr Oliver D’Souza could not attend as he was held up in India and the award was received on his behalf by Mrs Rosemary Morris. She is the Liaison Officer for Dalit Freedom Network (DFN) (The network of people fighting for Dalit Freedom since in 2002.

The Director LISA announced the award and read the citation. Chairman Alan Hart presented the certificate.

Pakistan and its Airspace

Tellingly, Pakistan has never even threatened to close the crucial air corridor across Pakistan that allows U.S. and NATO aircraft to fly into Afghanistan. One can get a sense of how important this air corridor is from the fact that Kandahar Air Field near the Pakistan border in southern Afghanistan is reported to have the busiest runway in the world with some 700 flights landing or taking off there every day.

As the Taliban marched three years ago as close as 60 miles to Islamabad, the army launched major military operations in the northern region of Swat and the western area of South Waziristan to end the Taliban's control of these areas. Pakistani officials are swift to point out, correctly, that as a result, more Pakistani soldiers have died fighting the Taliban than the servicemen of the U.S. and other NATO countries combined.

Pakistan has a myriad of well-known problems, but it also has some residual strengths that often get obscured by rhetoric about the "world's most dangerous country." While Pakistan's institutions are slowly maturing, its political class remains largely moribund. *John White UK*

Roots and Realities of Terrorism in the Subcontinent

Alan Hart

(Alan Hart Chaired LISA Annual Seminar 2012 and read this paper)

Though I covered events in the Subcontinent for many years, my area of real expertise is, as some of you know, the Middle East. I describe the conflict in and over Palestine that became Israel as the cancer at the heart of international affairs and which on present course may well consume us all. What do I mean by “consume us all”? The shortest answer to that question is a statement made to me by Prime Minister Golda Meir in an interview I did with her for the BBC’s Panorama programme. She said that in a doomsday situation Israel “would be prepared to take the region and the world down with it.”..... Less than an hour after that interview was transmitted on a Monday evening, The Times of London, then a seriously good newspaper, had changed its lead editorial to quote what Golda had said to me. It then added its own opinion - “We had better believe her.” I did. And still do.

On the subject of The Roots and Realities of Terrorism in the Subcontinent, the distinguished speakers who will be addressing you are far greater experts than me, so my purpose in taking a few minutes of your time now is to offer some general thoughts about terrorism in the hope of providing some context for their contributions.

The problem for any discussion about terrorism is that there is no agreement about WHAT IT IS; and therefore no agreement on when the use of violence to press a claim for justice is, or even may be, legitimate.

In my opinion the main reason why there is no agreement can be simply stated. Governments do not want to admit, cannot admit, that there are **two kinds** of terrorism - **state terrorism** and **non-state** terrorism.

State terrorism can be defined, I say, as the use of force by governments to impose their will on others, even when the others are the victims of injustice and have right on their side. I imagine there are few if any in this room who would challenge the statement that in recent decades the two leading

practitioners of state terrorism were, as they still are, *governments of the United States of America and the Zionist (not Jewish) state of Israel.*

To me the most fascinating thing about state terrorism is that it is almost always counter-productive in the longer term. As evidence for that we have only to consider how the “war-against-terrorism” policies of President George “Dubya” Bush and Prime Minister Tony Blair became the best recruiting sergeants for violent Islamic fundamentalism. (In verbal parenthesis I’ll add that because of his escalation of killing by drones, there’s a case for saying that President Obama is every bit as much of a state terrorist leader as Bush and Blair were).

On the subject of the counter-productive nature of American foreign policy, a most informed and explicit statement was made a day or two ago by Denis Kucinich, one of Ohio’s representatives in Congress. He’s also one of the few in that den of corrupted democracy who tell it like it is. He said:

“After more than 10 years of war against al Qaeda and the accompanying global ‘war on terrorism,’ *we have failed to learn that our actions create reactions.* Our presence creates destabilization, then radicalization. Occupations create insurgencies. *In Afghanistan, we have fuelled the very insurgency we struggle to fight....* Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Syria - al Qaeda surfs instability created or supported by U.S. interventions. Al Qaeda is ready to exploit resentment toward the U.S. while capitalizing on the openings created by U.S. interventionism. *As a result our U.S. tax dollars are being used to fuel the rise of extremism.”*

It is not so with non-state terrorism. It can be effective provided its practitioners are ruthless enough and can sustain their campaigns. Two examples are sufficient to make the point.

Zionist terrorism drove first the occupying British out of Palestine and then about three-quarters of its indigenous Arab people. Without Zionist terrorism and the ethnic cleansing of Palestine it made possible, there would be no Israel.

That said I must tell you very briefly one of my favourite stories. (It does have a point). In 1980 I was acting as the linkman in a secret and exploratory dialogue between Yasser Arafat and Shimon Peres, then the leader of Israel’s main opposition Labour Party and hoping to become prime minister and deny Begin

a second term in office. One of the two men advising Peres in our little conspiracy for peace was Major General Shlomo Gazit, the best and the brightest of Israel's Directors of Israeli Military Intelligence. Over coffee one morning when we were alone, Shlomo said the following to me: "*If we had been the Palestinians, we would have had our mini-state a long time ago.*" He meant that if the Jews had been the Palestinians, they would have subjected Israel to a sustained and devastating terror campaign which would have obliged its government to end the occupation of the land grabbed in 1967, to make the space for a Palestinian state.

Gazit was, in fact, acknowledging a truth about why non-state terrorism can get results provided it is ruthless enough and sustained. Simply stated that truth is this. *In democracies there are limits to the amount of disruption, destruction and death the soft underbelly of public opinion will tolerate.* I mean that if terrorism is ruthless enough and sustained, there comes a point when public opinion says to government: "We can't take any more of this mayhem. Make whatever deal is necessary to stop it."

The Provisional IRA in Northern Ireland was a non-state terrorist organisation that understood this perfectly. And that's my second example.

It was the Provisional IRA's ruthless and sustained campaign of terror, particularly on the British mainland, that caused Westminster governments to confront Protestant (Zionist-like) supremacy in Northern Ireland by insisting on a power-sharing arrangement to give the Catholic minority a fair deal and open the door to peace.

There were, in fact, two reasons why successive British governments moved progressively but decisively in favour of risking the wrath of Northern Ireland's militant Protestant majority by engaging politically and positively with the Provisional IRA's terrorist leaders.

One reason, evident from conversations at the time with government ministers and their shadows, was an awareness that because of the failure by military means to defeat the Provisional IRA and bring its terrorism to an end, the limits to the amount of disruption, destruction and death the soft underbelly of mainland British public opinion was prepared to tolerate were being reached. In England, for example, there was growing support for the idea that Britain

should let Northern Ireland go - pull the British army out and leave the Protestants and Catholics to go to hell if they wished.

The other reason was fear in government and other Establishment circles of the economic damage that could be done to the UK if the Provisional IRA continued and escalated its terror campaign. My own understanding of this particular aspect of the matter was assisted by a former Director of British Military Intelligence who said to me: "There was real fear that the Provisional IRA could blow the heart out of financial London and bring our economy to its knees."

There really is no mystery about how non-state terrorism **can be defeated**. In my book *Zionism: The Real Enemy of the Jews* I give a summary explanation of how in 147 words which, as I noted, are clear enough for understanding by an averagely intelligent child. I will now read those 147 words to you. (I think I did read them to a LISA audience two or three years ago but they bear repeating).

Terrorists cannot operate, not for long, without the cover and the practical, emotional and moral support of the community of which they are a part. ***When that community perceives itself to be the victim of a massive injustice, and if that injustice is not addressed by political means, the community will cover, condone and even applaud the activities of those of its own who resort to terror as the only means of drawing attention to the injustice, to cause it to be addressed.*** It follows that the way to defeat terrorism - the only successful and actually proven way - is by *addressing the genuine and legitimate grievances of the host community*. The community will then withdraw its cover and support for its terrorists; and if they continue to try to operate, the community will oppose them by exposing them - reporting them to the authorities if reasoning fails.

That is precisely what happened in Northern Ireland.

The terrorists called off their campaign WHEN THEY HAD NO CHOICE - because the Catholic host community would not cover and support them any longer. And that happened because the British government summoned up the will, about half a century later than it should have done, to risk the wrath of militant Protestantism by insisting that THE LEGITIMATE GRIEVANCES of the Catholics of Northern Ireland be addressed.

I'll close with a comment on what I call the ***INEVITABILITY of non-state terrorism.***

Generally speaking, and at the risk of over-simplifying to make a point, I say that much non-state terrorism is a form of *public relations* to draw attention to injustice of one kind or another. The Palestinians, for example, turned to terror because they believed it was the only way they could bring their cause to the attention of the world and prevent Zionism closing the Palestine file for ever.

And that, sadly, was how it had and still has to be because of the way our world is managed. What I mean is this.

To have a good chance of getting their claims for justice addressed, non-state groups and parties need the support of a major power. (In the Cold War days they needed the support of either the U.S. or the Soviet Union). But the major powers are not concerned with justice for its own sake. In effect they say to those who want and need their grievances to be addressed, "*Unless you can serve or threaten our interests, we don't care about you.*"

That being so, it ought not to surprise anybody that non-state groups and parties with legitimate grievances say in effect to the major powers, "*Okay, we'll play the game by your rules and we'll MAKE you care*" (by turning to terror).

It follows, or so it seems to me, that non-state terrorism is inevitable and will remain a fact of life on Planet Earth, probably escalating in the Subcontinent, unless and until the major powers, the one in Washington DC especially, decide that the best way to protect their own interests is by supporting movements for justice-based change everywhere.

Essentially there are two ways to run the world. One is in accordance with *jungle law*. The other is in accordance with *international law* which respects the human and political rights of all. We've had enough of the former. *It's time for the latter to be applied universally and not selectively as is the case today.*

Why Partition?

Perry Anderson

Perry Anderson's analysis of the disastrous process and poisonous legacy of decolonisation and partition in India merits credit. His focus on the personal shortcomings of Gandhi, Mountbatten and Nehru are indeed very interesting.

Perry Anderson says that Kashmir became part of India in 1947 'with a forged declaration of accession', and that the document then disappeared for 'over half a century'. Was the maharajah of Kashmir coerced to sign the instrument of succession? However there is little doubt that it was forged. Andrew Whitehead from London wrote, "there is certainly something fishy about the circumstances of the accession. The evidence is compelling that the maharajah signed on 27 October, but was told to record the date as 26 October. In other words, he put his name to the document a few hours after India began an airlift of troops to the Kashmir valley (the beginning of a military presence that continues to this day)." This is a condensed version of Perry Anderson's article that first appeared in LRB London Review of Books. (Editor)

By 1945, the era of Gandhi was over, and that of Nehru had begun. It is conventional to dwell on the contrasts between the two, but the bearing of these on the outcome of the struggle for independence has remained by and large in the shadows. Nor are the contrasts themselves always well captured. Nehru was a generation younger; of handsome appearance; came from a much higher social class; had an elite education in the West; lacked religious beliefs; enjoyed many an affair. So much is well known. Politically more relevant was the peculiar nature of his relationship to Gandhi. Inducted into the national movement by his wealthy father, a pillar of Congress since the 1890s, he fell under Gandhi's spell in his late twenties, at a time when he had few political ideas of his own. A decade later, when he had acquired notions of independence and socialism Gandhi did not share, and was nearly forty, he was still writing to him: 'Am I not your child in politics, though perhaps a truant and errant child?' The note of infantilism was not misplaced; the truancy, in practice, little more than coquetry. Like so many others, dismayed by Gandhi's scuttling of Non-Cooperation in 1922, in despair at his fast against the introduction of Untouchable electorates in 1932, baffled by his reasons for suspending civil

disobedience in 1934, he nevertheless each time abased himself before his patron's judgment.

Nehru had enjoyed the higher education Gandhi didn't have, and an intellectual development not arrested by intense religious belief. But these advantages yielded less than might be thought. He seems to have learned very little at Cambridge, scraping a mediocre degree in natural sciences that left no trace thereafter, did poorly in his bar exams, and was not much of a success when he returned to practise law in his father's footsteps. The contrast with Subhas Chandra Bose, a brilliant student of philosophy at Cambridge, who was the first native to pass the exams into the elite ranks of the Indian civil service and then decline entry to it on patriotic grounds, is striking. But an indifferent beginning is no obstacle to subsequent flowering, and in due course Nehru became a competent orator and prolific writer. What he never acquired, however, was a modicum of literary taste or mental discipline. His most ambitious work, *The Discovery of India*, which appeared in 1946, is a steam bath of *Schwärmerei*. It would be unfair to compare Nehru to Ambedkar, the leader of the Untouchables, intellectually head and shoulders above most of the Congress leaders, owing in part to far more serious training at the LSE and Columbia. To read Ambedkar is to enter a different world. *The Discovery of India* – not to speak of its predecessor *The Unity of India* – illustrates not just Nehru's lack of formal scholarship and addiction to romantic myth, but something deeper, not so much an intellectual as a psychological limitation: a capacity for self-deception with far-reaching political consequences.

When Gandhi was blackmailing Ambedkar to submit to the demand that Untouchables be treated as loyal Hindus within the caste system, rather than pariahs excluded from it, Nehru uttered not a word in solidarity or support for Ambedkar. Gandhi was fasting, and even though the lot of the Untouchables was a 'side-issue', as Nehru significantly dismissed it, that was enough. More was involved here, however, than simple unwillingness to differ with Gandhi on any issue on which he chose to take a political stand. Nehru, as he often confessed, was no believer: the doctrines of Hinduism meant little or nothing to him. But, in much the same artless way as Gandhi, he identified the religion with the nation, explaining that 'Hinduism became the symbol of nationalism. It was indeed a national religion, with its appeal to all those deep instincts, racial and cultural, which form the basis everywhere of nationalism today.' By contrast Buddhism, though born in India, had lost out there because it was

‘essentially international’. Islam, not even born in India, was inevitably even less national.

Nehru announced there were now only two political forces that mattered in India: Congress and the British government. There is little doubt that, with fateful self-deception, he believed this. In fact, it was a confessional victory. By this time, the membership of Congress was 97 per cent Hindu. It could not even find candidates to run in close to 90 per cent of Muslim constituencies across India. In Nehru’s own province, Uttar Pradesh, then as now the most populous in India, Congress had swept the board of Hindu seats. But it had not won a single Muslim seat. Still, relations between the Muslim League and Congress had not been bad in the electoral campaign itself, and when the results were in, the League sought a coalition between the two parties that would give it some representation in the ministry now to be formed in Lucknow. At Nehru’s behest – ‘I am personally convinced that any kind of pact or coalition between us and the Muslim League will be highly injurious’ – it was curtly told to dissolve itself into Congress if it wished any such thing. Ambedkar would describe the mentality of high caste Hindus as monopolist. Whatever the validity of such a generalisation, obviously questionable, there could be no doubt that the central ideological tenet of Congress was its claim to a monopoly of legitimacy in the struggle for independence.

Why then had ordinary Muslims, unlike all other Indians, failed to vote for it in sufficient numbers? Nehru’s answer was that they had been misled by a handful of Muslim feudatories, and would rally to Congress once they had understood the social interests they shared with their Hindu brethren. Under his leadership, a ‘mass contact’ campaign was launched to convince them of these. But unlike Bose, Nehru had little intuitive contact with the masses, and the effort soon fizzled out. It was the last time he would engage in an attempt at mobilisation from below. Two years later, no longer president, he colluded with the ousting of Bose, in theory a fellow fighter on the left of the party, but unlike Nehru immune to the spell of Gandhi, and a rival capable of denying him the succession. Bose ascribed Nehru’s desertion not to political ambition but to weakness of character. He was still not an independent actor, remaining, in the matter-of-fact judgment of Judith Brown, in her biography of Nehru, an ‘utterly reliable’ prop of the old guard within the party.

At the outbreak of the Second World War, the Congress high command instructed all its provincial governments to resign in protest at the viceroy's declaration of war on Germany without consultation with the people of India. The immediate result was to create a political vacuum, into which Jinnah, aware that London badly needed some show of loyalty in its major imperial possession, stepped with assurance. Declaring the end of Congress ministries a 'day of deliverance', he lost no time in expressing support for Britain in its hour of need, and winning in exchange its wartime favour. But he faced a difficult task. He was by now uncontested leader of the Muslim League. But the widely scattered Muslim populations of the subcontinent were far from united. Rather they resembled a jigsaw puzzle whose pieces could never be got to fit together.

Historically, the cultural and political heartland of the Muslim elite lay in Uttar Pradesh, where the League was strongest, even though only a third of the population answered the call of the muezzin. Far away to the west, Sindh, Baluchistan and the North-West Frontier were overwhelmingly Muslim. But, conquered late by Britain, they were a rural backwater dominated by local notables who did not speak Urdu and felt no allegiance to the League, which had scarcely any organisational presence in them. In two of the richest provinces of India, widely separated from each other, Punjab and Bengal, Muslims formed a majority – narrow in the former, and more substantial in the latter. In neither was the League a dominant force. In Punjab, it was insignificant. The Unionist Party that controlled the province was a coalition of big Muslim landlords and rich Hindu Jat farmers, both with strong ties to the army, and loyal to the Raj. In Bengal, where the League was led by aristocratic landowners owning huge estates in the east of the province, it was a mass peasant-based party, the KPP that made the political running. Thus wherever observers looked at provincial level, the Muslim League was weak, either locked out of power by Congress in Hindu-majority areas, or bypassed by rival formations in Muslim-majority zones. What saved it was Jinnah's standing as the only Muslim politician capable of operating with sufficient skill and brio at an all-India level to make the Unionist, KPP and other leaderships willing to let him represent them in negotiations with the British at the centre, while they held onto their provincial fiefs. This fragmented and disarticulated landscape was one of the reasons for the hubris of Congress after the 1937 elections. To its high command, the League looked like a spent force that might be ignored while the various local Muslim parties were co-opted or picked off at leisure.

The war would rapidly alter this configuration. The British, who in the aftermath of the Mutiny had regarded Muslims as the most dangerous of their subject populations in India, had by the turn of the century come to view them as the safest counterweight to the rise of Hindu nationalism, granting them separate electorates to ensure they would not automatically form a bloc with the Hindus in a common struggle against the Raj. On the other hand, they did not want communal violence to upset their claim to have brought law and order to the subcontinent, or to antagonise unduly the more powerful Hindu community, with its own numerous friendly landlords and traders. So they were careful not to be too one-sided in their favours. But once the Congress governments had abdicated, and the League was offering public support to the war effort, Jinnah became the viceroy's interlocutor of choice.

Hitherto, aware of the weakness of his base and unwilling to be pinned down by it, Jinnah had avoided formulating any too specific demands of the Raj. Now, emboldened by the turn of events, he unveiled a new programme. At Lahore in 1940, he announced that there were two nations, not one, in the subcontinent, and that independence would have to accommodate their coexistence in a form that gave autonomy and sovereignty to those areas where there was a Muslim majority. The wording of the resolution adopted at his behest by the League was deliberately ambiguous: it spoke of constituent 'states' in the plural and did not mention the word 'Pakistan' – which Jinnah subsequently complained was being pinned on him by Congress. Behind the vagueness of the phrasing lay the insoluble dilemma he faced. More or less homogeneously Muslim majority areas might be plausible candidates for the formation of an independent state. But did areas with less overwhelming majorities have the same potential? Above all, if majority areas seceded from a putative India, what would happen to the minorities – Jinnah's own political base – they left behind? Would these not need the shelter of an encompassing union of some kind, in which the Muslim majorities could protect them from arbitrary exercises of Hindu will? Given all these thorns, might not Jinnah himself be bluffing – floating unrealistic demands as bargaining counters, to get a realistic maximum? Many thought so at the time, and not a few since.

Whatever gloss might be put on the Lahore Resolution, it was now clear that independence was not in itself going to be a guarantee of that ageless unity of the nation on which the ideologues of Congress had so often dwelt. The threat to this posed by the rivalry between Hindu and Muslim political identities was

immediate and unmistakable. What was Nehru's reaction? In 1935 in a characteristic passage of his *Autobiography*, he had dismissed any possibility of a Muslim nation in India: 'Politically, the idea is absurd, economically it is fantastic; it is hardly worth considering.' 'There is no religious or cultural conflict in India,' he informed an American audience in 1938. 'The tremendous and fundamental fact of India is her essential unity through the ages.' Republishing his essay in 1941, after Lahore, he saw no reason to revise his claim that 'the forces working for Indian unity are formidable and overwhelming, and it is difficult to conceive of any separatist tendency' – it was staring him in the face – 'which can break up this unity.'

By 1945 Wavell – commander-in-chief in India during the war – was viceroy and knew the imperial game was up, remarking: '*Our present position in India is analogous to that of a military force compelled to withdraw in the face of greatly superior numbers.*' In June, Nehru and his colleagues were released from imprisonment for the Quit India campaign during the war, and in the winter provincial and central elections were held, still on the suffrage of 1935. The result was, or should have been, a cold douche for Congress. The Muslim League had not dwindled or vanished. Jinnah had used the war to build up its organisation, increase its membership, create its own daily, and gain a foothold in provincial governments from which it had hitherto been excluded. Dismissed as a busted flush in 1937, it won a landslide in 1945-46, taking every single Muslim seat in the central elections and 89 per cent of them in provincial elections. Its position in the Muslim community now approached that of Congress in the Hindu.

From London, the Labour government despatched a cabinet mission to negotiate a constitutional framework for independence acceptable to all parties. The federal scheme it eventually proposed bore some resemblance to the arrangements vaguely evoked by Jinnah at Lahore. But though by this time the position of the League had stiffened considerably, both parties at first consented to the plan. Two weeks later, Nehru repudiated it, declaring Congress free to act as it pleased. It was his first purely individual decision as a political leader. Even his hardliner colleague Vallabh bhai Patel described it as 'emotional insanity', but once launched the torpedo could not be called back. In retaliation, Jinnah – who had always denounced street protests as a reckless appeal to the mob – declared a 'day of direct action' to demonstrate that Muslim patience with a constitutional road was now over. A politician skilled in manoeuvre at

elite level, he had no experience of mass action or any idea of how to direct or control it.

At his wits' end, Wavell called an interim government into being, headed by Nehru as Prime Minister, Patel as interior minister and – after an initial League boycott – Jinnah's deputy, Liaquat Ali Khan, as finance minister. Each party was determined to thwart the other. The League boycotted a constituent assembly composed of delegates nominated on the basis of the provincial election results, so dominated by Congress, to which the government was in principle to be responsible; Congress blocked Liaquat's proposal for a wealth tax on the grounds that since most businessmen were Hindu, the measure would be an act of religious discrimination. Such was the situation when in February 1947, the Attlee government announced that India would have independence by June 1948, and dispatched Mountbatten to take over as viceroy in charge of the handover.

With Mountbatten's arrival, imperial policy towards the religious divide in India came full circle. *In the second half of the 19th century, Muslims were suspect to the Raj as first movers of the Mutiny, Hindus regarded as more dependable. In the first half of the 20th, favours were reversed, as Hindu nationalism became the more assertive and Muslim aspirations were encouraged as a check on it. Now, on the last lap, London lurched violently back towards the majority community as its privileged interlocutor.* In 1947, the emotional intensity of the switch came from a sudden confluence of ideology, strategy and personality. The Labour regime in Britain viewed Congress as the Indian party closest to its own outlook; Fabian links with Nehru were longstanding. To sentimental affinity was joined national amour-propre. Britain had made of a dispersed subcontinent a single political realm for the first time in its history. For it to fissure at the moment of withdrawal would be to put a question-mark over what all right-thinking patriots, not least such products of an imperial education as Attlee, must regard with pride as the most remarkable creative achievement of their empire. If Britain had to leave India, India should be as Britain had forged it. Alongside such ideological investments in the unity of the subcontinent were considerations of a more material nature. Britain still had valuable possessions in Asia, not least in Malaya, the most profitable of its colonies and soon to be the theatre of a communist insurgency, which it was in no hurry to relinquish; while a short distance away from the North-West Frontier lay the traditional bugbear of the Raj, now in the far more

fearsome guise of the Soviet Union. Division of the subcontinent – the chiefs of staff were unanimous – could only play into the hands of the Russians. If the gates of South Asia were to be barred securely against communism, the strategic interests not only of Britain, but also the West, required the bulwark of a united India.

We owe an indelible portrait of Mountbatten – that ‘mendacious, intellectually limited hustler’ – to Andrew Roberts. Full of imaginary exploits from the back seat of his Cadillac in Colombo, as figurehead commander of Allied Forces in South-East Asia, he arrived in Delhi overjoyed to be ‘endowed with an almost heavenly power. I realised that I had been made into the most powerful man on earth.’ A grotesque of sartorial and ceremonial vanity – obsession with flags and floggings regularly displacing matters of state – Mountbatten had two overriding concerns: to cut a figure fit for Hollywood as the last ruler of the Raj and, above all, to ensure India would remain a dominion within the Commonwealth: ‘The value to the United Kingdom both in terms of world prestige and strategy would be enormous.’

In Nehru, Mountbatten found delightful company, a social equal with a touch of the same temperament. Gandhi, who had always sought to remain on good terms with the British, had picked Nehru as his successor partly on the grounds that he was culturally equipped to get on well with them, as Patel or other candidates were not. Within weeks, not only was Nehru fast friends with the viceroy, but soon thereafter in bed with his wife, to the satisfaction of all concerned.

Affairs of the heart rarely affect affairs of state. But in this case the erotic ties of the triangle were, at the least, unlikely to tilt British policy towards the Muslim League. Diplomats are dismissed for less.

Even so, the language with which Mountbatten and Nehru, echoed by Attlee, regularly described Jinnah, at a time when Britain was ostensibly still seeking to bring the parties in India together, and Congress to lead a united country to independence, is arresting. For Mountbatten, Jinnah was a ‘lunatic’, a ‘clot’, a ‘psychopathic case’; for Nehru, a ‘paranoid’ heading a party of ‘Hitlerian leadership and policies’; for Attlee, ‘that twister’.

Communal riots were raging in Punjab as Mountbatten arrived. Within a month he had decided that since the deadlock between Congress and the League could

not be overcome, partition was inevitable. But how was the realm to be divided? Essentially, this came down to five questions. What was to happen to the two key provinces of Bengal and Punjab, where there was a Muslim majority but not of an overwhelming magnitude? How were the zones of princely rule, where neither Congress nor the League had any computable presence, to be allocated? Would there be any popular consultation, either about the principle of partition, or where its lines should lie? Who would superintend the process of division? Over what time period it would be implemented?

At this point, the reckonings of Congress and the League changed places. The credibility of Congress's claim to represent the whole nation, the centrepiece of its ideology since the 1920s, had crashed with the demonstration of the League's command of the Muslim electorate. But what was the League to do with its new-found strength? Six years after Lahore, Jinnah had still not found a way to square the circle of sovereignty for Muslim-majority provinces with safeguards for Muslim minorities in Hindu-majority provinces. All that had happened was that the slogan of Pakistan, which he had rejected in 1943, had proved so popular among Muslims that, without clarifying it, Jinnah had made it his own, now claiming that the word 'states' in the Lahore Resolution had been a misprint for 'state'. He seems to have calculated that the British, confronted with the incompatibility of the aims of League and Congress, would ultimately, taking their time about it, impose a confederation to their liking on the two parties, in which the Muslim-majority zones of the subcontinent would be self-governing, with a central authority weak enough not to impinge on them, but strong enough to protect Muslim minorities in self-governing Hindu-majority zones. In the event, the cabinet mission produced a plan close enough to this vision.

But for Nehru, such a scheme was worse than partition, since it would deprive his party of the powerful centralised state to which it had always aspired, and he believed essential to preserve Indian unity. Congress had insisted on its monopoly of national legitimacy from the start. That claim could no longer be sustained. But if the worst came to the worst, it was better to enjoy an unimpeded monopoly of power in the larger part of India than to be shackled by having to share it in an undivided one. So while the League talked of partition, Jinnah contemplated confederation; and while Congress spoke of union, Nehru prepared for scission. The cabinet mission plan was duly scuppered.

The answer came from the Father Joseph of the moment, V.P. Menon, a Hindu functionary from Kerala in the upper ranks of the imperial bureaucracy, working on Mountbatten's personal staff and a close confederate of Patel, the organisational strongman of Congress. Why not offer Indian entry into the Commonwealth to Mountbatten in exchange for a partition so point-blank that it would leave Congress not only in control of the far larger territory and population to which it was entitled by religion, but also in swift command of the capital and the lion's share of the military and bureaucratic machinery of the Raj? As a final sweetener, Menon suggested throwing the princely states – hitherto left inviolate by Congress and nearly equal in size and population to any future Pakistan – into the pot, as compensation for what would be foregone to Jinnah. Patel and Nehru needed little persuasion. If these assets were handed over within two months, the deal would be done. Informed of this breakthrough, Mountbatten was overjoyed, later writing to Menon: 'It was indeed fortunate that you were reforms commissioner on my staff, and that thus we were brought together into close association with one another at a very early stage, for you were the first person I met who entirely agreed with the idea of dominion status, and you found the solution which I had not thought of, of making it acceptable by a very early transfer of power. History must always rate that decision very high, and I owe it to your advice.' History would be less admiring than he supposed.

There was one last-minute hiccup. Due to present London's finalised plan for independence and partition to leaders of all the interested parties at Simla, Mountbatten had a 'hunch' that he must show it in confidence to Nehru before any of the others saw it. Nehru's reaction was furious: the plan did not adequately acknowledge that the Indian Union would be the successor state to the Raj, with all that went with such a position, and Pakistan a secession from it. The two were not to be put on the same footing. The viceroy thanked his lucky stars for his intuition. Without it, he said, he and his men would have 'looked complete fools with the government at home, having led them up the garden path to believe that Nehru would accept the plan', and 'Dickie Mountbatten would have been finished and could have packed his bag.' The invaluable Menon was to hand, and the day was saved when he redrafted the plan to Nehru's satisfaction. In the first week of June, Mountbatten announced that Britain would transfer power at what he himself would describe as 'the ludicrously early date' of 14 August. The logic of such a rush was plain, and in speaking of it Mountbatten did not beat about the bush. 'What are we doing?

Administratively it is the difference between putting up a permanent building, and a Nissen hut or a tent. As far as Pakistan is concerned we are putting up a tent. We can do no more.'

Muslims should be more Tolerant

Ramzy Baroud

When Israeli soldiers dragged Ghassan out of his house and ordered him to curse at Allah and to insult the Prophet Mohammed - otherwise they would have beaten him senseless - he obstinately refused. It's not that the man would not compromise, for he had already walked on all fours, barked like a dog and spit grudgingly at a poster of Yasser Arafat. But Allah and the Prophet is where he drew the line. Ghassan retold the story many times, even long after the scars on his face healed, and his broken arm was once again useful.

When I saw Pakistani, Afghani, Yemeni, Lebanese and other protesters rallying against the constant provocation emanating from western countries, I couldn't help but think of Ghassan. Demanding Muslims to become more 'tolerant' as their most sacred symbols are being desecrated, while the smoke of NATO bombs continues to fill the Afghani-Pakistani horizon, is not much different than demanding an unemployed, broken and despairing man to sit on all fours, bark like a dog and repeat slurs targeting Prophet Mohammed. As irreverent to religion as Ghassan was, that moment defined his very humanity. He refused to obey the soldiers, and the beating commenced.

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Vicious Cycle of Islamophobia

Ram Puniyani

“—when black people are attacked, they call it Racism. When Jewish people are attacked, they call it anti-Semitism. When Women are attacked, they call it Gender Discrimination. When Homosexuals are attacked, they call it Intolerance. When they attack your Country, they call it Counter- Terrorism. When a Religious Sect is attacked, they call it Hate Speech. But when they attack the dignity of the Prophet of Islam, Prophet MUHAMMAD (P.B.U.H), they call it “Freedom of Expression”—.Samuel Huntington’s “The clash of Civilizations” planted the thought that Christianity and Islam may be headed for a clash. His idea probably was that thinking minds would work to avert such a catastrophic confrontation but unfortunately there were those who considered such a clash desirable and began work to bring it about

Questioning Holocaust and anti Semitism are offences punishable by law in several western nation and it's embedded in their law but defaming the holy prophet of a religion which has spent comfort and solace to billions of Muslims is ignored under the pretence of "freedom of speech"

We are going through strange times. While the science, technology and rationalism has given us physical and intellectual tools to better the lot of humanity, we are witnessing the production of provocative material, literature and film in particular, which demonize the particular religion, Islam to be precise, and the prophet of Islam. On the other hand there is a section of community, feeling threatened and insecure coming to the streets to protest against such humiliation and insult of their religion. There are debates on freedom of expression, but how come the freedom of expression always goes to humiliate and demonize one particular religion only?

Currently (September 2012), there are massive protests in different countries against the American embassies, resulting in death of four from the US staff, including Ambassador Chris Stevens, in Benghazi. Different countries are asking Google, the owner of YouTube, which is hosting this provocative and insulting video clip, ‘Innocence of Muslims’, to withdraw the film clip. At places the video clip has been withdrawn and blocked. US

sticks to its 'Freedom of Expression' stance and the many protesters are still on the streets.

The film clip, of around 14 minutes duration is part of the full length feature film made by Nakoula Basseley, a US based Christian. The film is very insulting to Islam. In this film large number of modern day mob of bearded Muslims is shown to be attacking Christians. It also takes the audience back in time to show a distorted life of Prophet Mohammad with negative and aggressive traits of personality. It is crude film, made in extremely poor taste and has generated strong reaction amongst large section of Muslims. It must be pointed out that this is not the only type of reaction to this film. There are sections of clerics who have asked the Muslims to keep restrain. Quoting the moral precepts from Islam, Quran, they said that Islam is a religion of peace and no violent protests should be held. The best response to this despicable film has been from a section of Muslims distributing the book on life of Prophet Mohammad, the prophet of peace.

During last several years, it has become a sort of standard pattern by many in the West and some here in India to demonize Islam. We remember the Danish cartoon of Prophet, where he is shown as a terrorist, with a bomb tucked in his turban. A Florida Pastor went on to burn this holy book, Koran, saying that Koran teaches violence. Some US soldiers in Afghanistan also burnt copies of Koran, on the ground that the terrorist elements had written messages on those copies.

The demonization of Islam and Muslims has a pattern and agenda. The cartons and films are the outcome of the deeper political processes, which aim to control the oil wells in West Asia. The imperialist greed of United States marshalled the flag of "Islam the New threat" since Ayatollah Khomeini came to power in Iran, overthrowing the US stooge Raza Shah Pahlavi. Later the slogan was worsened with US setting up Madrassas in Pakistan to train Al Qaeda-Taliban to initiate the Muslim youth to fight against the occupying Russian armies in Afghanistan. The word, Jihad and Kafir were distorted to indoctrinate the Muslim youth in these Madrassas. With later trajectories and the event of 9/11, World Trade Centre attack, the US media with all its guile, popularized the phrase 'Islamic Terrorism'. The phrase was picked up by the media all over the World and later became part

of the social common sense. This is a major abuse of religion for political goals by the imperialist power. One can understand this demonization of Islam as a part of US policy, a cover to hide its agenda to control the oil. To understand it in the way Noam Chomsky 'coined the phrase' Manufacturing Consent', the coining of the word Islamic terrorism is part of the US mechanism of manufacturing consent of the world to give assent to the US attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq.

This US policy has given rise to twin processes. On one hand the phenomenon like a Florida Pastor Terry Jones burning Koran or the Danish cartoonist drawing Prophet Mohammad as terrorist or the present film has been the outcome of the intense propaganda against Islam. This US propaganda has been backed up by the US sponsored ideology of 'Clash of Civilizations', according to which the current era of World History is the era of assault of backward Islamic civilization on the advanced Western civilization. This distorted perception, this ideology was used as a cover for US agenda in West Asia. The other process which got unleashed was that the psyche of global Muslim community started being affected. The perception came up that Muslims (Afghanistan and Iraq) are being attacked, they are under threat. In India the added aspect was the rise of RSS type politics, bringing up Ram Temple issue and starting hatred for Muslims. A large section of Muslims started feeling intimidated and besieged. It became easy for mobilizing them around identity issues. Any community which feels besieged, section of it becomes vulnerable to easy provocation and identity based mobilization.

It is a vicious circle, the Islamophobia on one side and besieged community on the other. In this scenario the Muslim clerics who are asking for peace are the beacon lights of hope for the community. The Muslims who are distributing the books on life of prophet need to be complimented. This is what the sane response from the community has to be. What about US, imperialist designs and its mighty propaganda machinery doing all the mischief in the world? Can there be a process of controlling that? Under Kofi Annan, when he was Secretary General of United Nations, a high level committee produced a report, 'Alliance of Civilizations'. This report got lost under the barrage of Islamophobia. It is time the world as such takes note of the deeper humane values which have developed by humanity over a period

of time, the values which have led to the reports of type of ‘Alliance of civilizations’, the UN conventions which have conceptualized the Human rights for all.

The trigger which has incited and demonization process of religion and films like this one are provoking these insane reactions from a section of Muslims. Can United Nations be revived as a global platform for monitoring the norms for Nations, media and other aspects of our global life evolved to ensure that democratization and human dignity is promoted. Can the World come forward to check the aggressions of ‘The Super Power’? That’s when such films will cease to act as factors promoting violent reactions. And even such crude attempts at insulting others’ religion will come down. May be with such norms and restraints on US policies we can hope that such incidents will come down.

Syrian War of Lies and Hypocrisy

Robert Fisk

Has there ever been a Middle Eastern war of such hypocrisy? A war of such cowardice and such mean morality, of such false rhetoric and such public humiliation? I’m not talking about the physical victims of the Syrian tragedy. I’m referring to the utter lies and mendacity of our masters and our own public opinion – eastern as well as western – in response to the slaughter, a vicious pantomime.

While Qatar and Saudi Arabia arm and fund the rebels of Syria to overthrow Bashar al-Assad's Alawite/Shia-Baathist dictatorship, Washington mutters not a word of criticism against them. They say they want a democracy in Syria. But Qatar is an autocracy and Saudi Arabia is among the most pernicious of caliphate-kingly-dictatorships in the Arab world. Rulers of both states inherit power from their families – just as Bashar has done – and Saudi Arabia is an ally of the Salafist-Wahabi rebels in Syria

The Government of Violence: A Massacre in Dandakarany

Kamal K.M

'Dandakarany' is a stretch of forest in India that runs through the states of Chhattisgarh, Orissa, Maharashtra, and Andhra Pradesh. Roughly translated in Sanskrit, the word means 'Jungle of Punishment'.

When you enter the village of Kottaguda, located in Bijapur district of Chhattisgarh, the first impression is one of serenity. The vestiges of the Salwa Judum pillage from a few years ago still remain as a burnt scar. The houses have stood starkly against these acts of aggression.

We couldn't see any trace of massacre from ten days ago.

We were a group of thirty people from different parts of India, people of different professions and academic backgrounds. There were some people in the group who had been to similar kind of fact finding report missions, like Advocate Tharakam, Prasanth Haldar, V.S Krishna, Advocate Raghunath, C Chandrasekhar, R Shiva Shankar, and Ashish Gupta. Some of them were official members of different human rights organizations under the umbrella of Coordination of Democratic Rights Organisations (CDRO). We - advocates, teachers, government employees, students, former trade union activists and media professionals - were united by a single objective – to unearth the truth about what had actually happened on the night of June 28 th .

When we entered the village there was a solemn air about it. The only humans we saw there were some heavily armed paramilitary forces inside the bushes - they might have been from Cobra force or CRPF.

The men in arms averted our gaze. They couldn't meet our eye with the shadow of the dastardly act of a few days ago looming large over them.

There was a meeting being held to discuss the upcoming seed festival - Beeja Pondum. It was a wet monsoon night. Some people from other villages, like Sarkeguda and Rajpenta, were also attending the meeting. A few children

loitered around playfully. At 10pm, the COBRA force and CRPF cordoned off the villages and started firing indiscriminately and without any warning.

The first attack came from the west, and instantly killed three Adivasis. This was quickly followed by firing from three other directions. Terrified villagers started running – some tried to take shelter, some ran towards their respective villages. Yet, the bullets continued to spray for another 30 minutes. Then, as if to survey the dead, the CRPF forces fired two flare guns that lit up the area. They languidly ambled through the scene and collected the dead bodies that remained.

The national Media duly reported the incident following the government version. But by the next morning it slowly emerged that those killed were actually villagers. It was in fact a massacre. It was clear that the victims were tribal villagers, who were randomly killed. Some news papers and TV channels corrected their mistake and reported the truth. Some still have not corrected their mistake.

After that news report, there was no reaction at the National level. The Governments at the State and the Centre indicated that the massacre was actually Maoist encounter, thus relegating the blame to victims. A day later, Mr. Chidambaram expressed regret over the massacre taking place in a BJP-led state. The blame was passed around in this way. One would have thought that as Home Minister, he could have walked into the village, and expressed regret in a more palpable way.

The Tribals in this area have had to suffer violence at the hands of various aggressors in the past. Feudal lords, in a lust for power, terrorised the villages with rape and pillage. Being a tribal belt, the post-industrialisation Government also ignored the well-being of the people there. In reaction to this injustice, the Maoists emerged as revolutionaries to liberate the people from this aggression.

Beginning June 2005, the Chhattisgarh government encouraged a criminal vigilante movement titled Salwa Judum that pitted tribal against tribal—a 'divide and rule lesson learnt from the Raj. Adivasis in the former united Dantewada district received weapon and training support from the Chhattisgarh State Government. They ran amuck terrorising Tribals perceived of being the support base of the Maoists. Over 600 villages were torched, over a hundred Adivasis killed and a lot of sexual violence took place. Thousands of Adivasis

were forced into camps, even as upwards of 70,000 Tribals fled to neighbouring Andhra Pradesh, which has a fairly long border with Dantewada.

The Maoists came together from different parts Andhra Pradesh, and started working with village folk – protecting them from the intruders, organizing their farming techniques, empowering their women, teaching them to wear clothes. All in all, the Tribals of Dantewada forests felt safe with the Maoists.

The group implies no membership and there's no levy to the Party. It is a non-organized political presence in the State. In fact, there is no other political presence in the area, as the moneyless Tribals don't find a place of significance with other political parties.

The proceedings that terrible night of June 28 were nothing but a routine meeting in the village to discuss several community issues. Nobody was conspiring against the Indian Government, as our Home Minister, Mr. Chidambaram insinuates. Dismissed by NGOs and Corporate Charities as “Maoist infested” areas, the tribal of Dantewada have little hope as relief for their circumstance. Yet, those thirty minutes plunged them into a profound, grieving silence – a silence that they are still trying to come to terms with.

As our fact-finding team entered the open ground between the villages of Sarkeguda and Kottaguda, we could hear a mournful singing. The women of the village were gathered around a house. The first women who saw us, started crying, as though they had seen some distant relatives come to offer condolence.

The village folk started gathering around us. Men, women, and children – each had their story to tell, each one desperate to be heard. Mothers who had lost their sons wept inconsolably. Widows and children looked on hopelessly. Several relatives showed us photos of their deceased loved ones, wearing them like badges of fortitude. Many didn't even have such a relic to display.

Six of the dead were minors, including a 12-year old girl, Kaka Saraswati, daughter of K Rama. She was hit while fleeing towards her house in Kottaguda. Of the other five minors, two -- Kaka Rahul (16) and Madkam Ramvilas (16) -- were studying in class 10 at a school in Basaguda. Both stayed at a hostel in Basaguda and were visiting home during the summer vacations.

Several victims showed us their injuries – bullets that had penetrated their flesh. The landscape too had been tainted. Bullets, which had been randomly sprayed at the villagers, were found lodged in nearby trees.

A loitering bull had also been injured. Apparently several other cattle had also been killed that night. This particular bull had a bullet lodged in his leg. He could not put his foot down, because of the deep pain he felt. His resilient balancing act on three legs spoke volumes for the people who tended to him. My question about any veterinary help for the ailing bull was dismissed as facile. There was no doctor to tend to the injured people here in these distant villages.

As each person spoke, we started to patchwork the facts of the incident together. On the morning of the 29 Th, CRPF killed the last victim when he came out his house to check on the silence outside. Then the CRPF men dragged two women to the fields nearby, and tore at their clothes. Three other women were also abused, beaten up and threatened with rape – all this, to no end.

In fact, flouting standard norms, the CRPF men not only carried away the bodies but also scooped away the bloodstained ground beneath the bodies. According to the Bijapur superintendent of police, “proper post mortem was conducted by a team of doctors at the Basaguda police station and a report is being prepared”. This is hogwash, as a post mortem has to be conducted at a hospital properly equipped for the routine and not a police station. Significantly, the villagers are unanimous that no post mortem was carried out, a fact corroborated by several reporters who saw none of the tell-tale marks that show on the body after a post mortem procedure.

The CRPF now says that seven of the deceased -- Madkam Suresh, Madkam Nagesh, Madvi Ayatu, Kaka Sammayya, Korsu Bijje, Madkam Dilip and Irpa Narayana are Maoists and that there are various cases of violence of a serious nature lodged against them in various police stations across Chhattisgarh State. The killing was actually arbitrary. For the CRPF to now find some validation of it is astonishing. If what they say is to be taken at face value, then it is clear that it is extra judicial killing in prima facie.

Ten days after the massacre, the first governmental action was taken. A truckload of compensation arrived, escorted by R. A. Kuruvanshi, the Revenue

Sub-Divisional Magistrate of Bhoopalapatnam. Rice, daal, clothes, utensils – this was the value of seventeen lives. The villagers vociferously refused it. Their anger screamed, but with dignity. They did not abuse or curse. They didn't set ablaze the truck – an epitome of the insult rendered to them by the Government.

If we are Maoists, then why do you bring us this rice? Why did you do this to us?

The Revenue officer listened dumbfounded. He didn't have any real response in front of the lamenting people. He returned with a shiver in soul. Everyone watched silently as the truck made its way back through the jungle path.

In the recent past, encounters between Maoists and members of the police and Special Forces have only drawn attention when it is the latter that are injured or killed. In 2010, the Prime Minister demanded a report from the Home Minister about the incident of April 6, 2010, when 74 troopers of the CRPF were shot dead by the Maoists near Chintalar in what is now Sukma district. The massacre of tribal villagers in Kottaguda didn't illicit such a response. It is convenient to believe the official version – that the massacre was an encounter between Maoist and State forces, and that the villagers were used as a human shield.

The National Human Rights Commission didn't consider visiting the villages with an official fact finding team, and scouring for the truth of what happened that night. They asked for a report from CRPF Director General after 12 days of the incident. One can only imagine what kind of report will be drawn out.

An expert group of the Planning Commission of India had declared that the Maoist insurgency is to be viewed not merely as a law and order problem, but as one with roots in material deprivation, lack of freedom and social oppression that have over many decades remained unaddressed by the Indian State. It stated that though the Maoists employed a fair amount of violence towards their ends, it was essentially a political movement. This implied that the resolution necessarily required negotiations with the Maoists. It was also reiterated that legislation which protect the rights of Adivasis and Dalits should be implemented properly. Despite this, the scenario hasn't changed. The Government all but consigned this precious document to the dustbin and persists with thoughtless decisions of indiscriminate killing.

It is only the Government of Violence that is the ever-present demon in these Forests of Dandakarany.

Kamal K.M is a Mumbai based film maker. He was part of the fact finding team that visited the villages where the massacre took place. He can be reached at snehapoorvamkamal@gmail.com

A French Revelation, or the Burning Bush

James A. Haught

Incredible but true, President George W. Bush told French President Jacques Chirac in early 2003 that Iraq must be invaded to thwart Gog and Magog, the Bible's satanic agents of the Apocalypse.

Honest. This isn't a joke. The president of the United States, in a top-secret phone call to a major European ally, asked for French troops to join American soldiers in attacking Iraq as a mission from God.

Now out of office, Chirac recounts that the American leader appealed to their "common faith" (Christianity) and told him: "Gog and Magog are at work in the Middle East.... The biblical prophecies are being fulfilled.... This confrontation is willed by God, who wants to use this conflict to erase his people's enemies before a New Age begins."

This bizarre episode occurred while the White House was assembling its "coalition of the willing" to unleash the Iraq invasion. Chirac says he was boggled by Bush's call and "wondered how someone could be so superficial and fanatical in their beliefs."

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The Roots of Muslim Discontent

FB Ali

The recent protests in the Muslim world against the United States (including many violent ones) on account of an amateur film have once again raised the issue of the causes behind such strong reactions, and what can be done to avoid them. While such deliberations are doubtless occurring behind the closed doors of policy-making chambers, comment has also proliferated in the media and in think-tanks. The actions recommended range all the way from acting tough to being more sensitive to the sensibilities of other cultures. However, the first step in any sensible policy-making or intelligent debate and comment should be to understand the causes underlying the problem.

There are some 1.7 billion Muslims in the world. Their homelands stretch all the way from the Atlantic across Central and North Africa to the Middle East, Central Asia, South Asia, and on to the Indonesian islands in the Pacific. They encompass many different races and nationalities, and speak many languages. But beneath this vast diversity they share certain common features that make them a single community, especially in their own view.

The first of these common features among the world's Muslims is their allegiance to Islam. The religion Muslims practice in different regions often varies in details of ritual and even of dogma, but what is common to them all is their commitment to the ideal of Islam, as well as their avowal of the fundamental tenets of the faith that include certain core beliefs and practices.

A second common feature is their shared cultural base. While the culture of Muslims in different parts of the world varies based on their historical environment and the way it has developed, all these cultures share the same bedrock of certain traits derived from what might be called Muslim culture. This has descended from the earliest Muslims and is heavily tinged with their Bedouin culture, fostering such personal traits as individualism, self-respect bordering on touchiness, courage and fortitude, endurance, generosity and hospitality. This basic culture also encourages such collective values as loyalty to the group, sacrifice to preserve the group and its honour, and conservatism.

A third common feature is their recognition of Muslims throughout the world as one community (the *Ummah*). For them this is not just a figure of speech, or even an intellectual position, but a deeply felt belief. Every Muslim feels himself to be part of this community, and thus connected to each of its members, wherever they may live. Good or ill fortune befalling any part of the community is felt by other Muslims as if it had happened to them or their family.

A fourth common feature among Muslims worldwide is their antipathy to the West. This has nothing to do with the dictates of their religion (as some with vested interests would like people to believe), but is rooted in their history, specifically their feeling of having always been at war with, or under attack by, the West. These wars began soon after the rise of Islam with the conflict with the Byzantine Empire that lasted from the 7th to the 11th centuries. There followed the successive Crusades against the Muslims during the 12th and 13th centuries, while the destruction of the Muslim states in Spain in the Reconquista went on from the 8th to the 15th centuries. The 14th and 15th centuries saw the wars between Europe and the Ottoman Empire. From the 17th century the era of European colonialism bloomed and most of the Muslim world was taken over and brought under Western rule, remaining under subjugation well into the 20th century.

While the details of these earlier conflicts are known only to the educated, they reside in the collective memory that colours the attitudes of succeeding generations. However, several generations of Muslims now living have personally experienced the eras of colonialism and/or post-colonialism. Those who lived through the former not only experienced the humiliation of living under foreign Western rule but also felt their culture to be under attack. The ending of colonial rule often exacerbated old wounds. The botched handover of power by the British in the partitioned Indian subcontinent led to horrendous killings and displacements. In Algeria about a million Algerians died in the war to oust the French. After the Second World War the Dutch waged war for several years against the people of Indonesia in an attempt to re-establish their colonial rule.

In the post-colonial era Muslim countries found themselves caught up in the Cold War, unwilling pawns in what they saw as a Western conflict. Their leaders were often manipulated by the West to serve its own interests, while

they neglected the welfare of their own people. The few who tried to assert their independence were slapped down (like Nasser in Egypt and Mossadeq in Iran). Meanwhile, Muslims were still under attack. The Israelis, with Western backing, took over Palestinian lands, and then defeated the Arabs in successive wars, taking over more of their lands. The Soviet Union decimated Afghanistan (and, later, Chechnya). Then came George Bush's Great War on Terror which destroyed Iraq and Afghanistan (again!) with the death and displacement of hundreds of thousands of innocent Muslims. In addition, the recent development of worldwide communications has unleashed what many Muslims regard as an assault on their culture and its values by Western culture, a battle in which they are losing many of their young people.

It is this sense of conflict with the West and aggression by it against Muslims for centuries that underlies the almost universal antipathy felt towards it by Muslims. The United States, as the current leader of the Western world, now attracts to itself this suspicion and animosity, solidified by its wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen, Somalia and Pakistan's tribal areas, and its military and economic dominance of many Muslim lands. (Many Americans who have had dealings with Muslims might be surprised to read of this general sense of animosity because they have not encountered it in their interactions with individual Muslims. The reason for this is that the average Muslim that Americans is likely to encounter is usually discerning enough not to blame individual Americans for the policies and actions of their country, and interacts with them mainly on the basis of their personal attributes and attitudes).

This latent hostility makes it easy for political and religious leaders in the Muslim world, if it serves some purpose of theirs, to arouse people against the US and the West. They can do these using even relatively flimsy reasons, but need no excuse when the triggering event is an attack, actual or alleged, against the Prophet of Islam; in fact, in such cases, they have to line up behind the aroused populace to avoid being accused of indifference. People in the West are generally puzzled by the extreme sensitivity displayed by Muslims on this particular issue, and it is worth explaining.

The Prophet plays a special role in Muslim consciousness. Since the laws and details of their religion, as well as the essentials of their culture, are largely based on the Hadith (the reported actions and sayings of the Prophet), he plays

a pivotal role in their sense of the religion, personifying it as its perfect practitioner. To attack him is to attack the foundation of their religion.

Islam is an austere religion and so is its culture; it has no ‘pegs’ to which its followers can attach their emotions. Unlike other religions it has no revered saints and martyrs, no resplendent popes and bishops, no ornate churches and temples, no elaborate rituals and services, no hymns and sacred music, no pomp and ceremony, nothing that can engage the emotions of its followers. The one exception is the Prophet. He is the only entity in Islam that evokes an emotional response in all Muslims. The uniqueness of this emotion adds to its power. To demean and ridicule the Prophet is to strike at the emotional core of being of every Muslim. It is an attack on their sense of identity, on who they are, on the very basis of their existence. (The dynamics at work here are similar to those that cause denial of the Holocaust to be such an extremely sensitive issue for Jewish people. Both are existential issues).

The United States, as the principal power in the world, with its global interests and reach, needs to develop a viable policy of dealing with the Muslim world. Its policy makers (and their supporting cast of numerous advisors, think-tank ‘specialists and experts’, and media commentators) need to first understand what they are dealing with, how the vast majority of Muslims think and feel, what matters to them and why. Without policies based on such a sound understanding the US will continue to encounter the problems and crises that have so far marked its dealings with the Muslim world.

Emerging Realities

The world’s second largest economy, with an annual defense budget of \$142 billion, China has spent the last five years modernizing its armed forces, and is expected to achieve military parity with the U.S. by the year 2020..The only option left to the Chinese under these circumstances is to continue their economic and military growth, with a \$3 trillion reserve in the Central Bank, and to try to bolster their alliance with Russia .

The time has come to define a strategic relationship between Russia and China so that together they could shield the world from a wave of “preemptive wars,” “color revolutions,” and “controlled chaos.” around the globe are now rising up against militarism because they want to live in peace. (*LISA*)

South Asia's Water Woes

Reuters

KANZALWAN, India-Pakistan Line of Control (AlertNet): As the silver waters of the Kishanganga rush through this north Kashmir valley, Indian labourers are hard at work on a hydropower project that will dam the river just before it flows across one of the world's most heavily militarised borders into Pakistan.

The hum of excavators echoes through the pine-covered valley, clearing masses of soil and boulders, while army trucks crawl through the steep Himalayan mountain passes.

The 330-MW dam is a symbol of India's growing focus on hydropower but also highlights how water is a growing source of tension with downstream Pakistan, which depends on the snow-fed Himalayan rivers for everything from drinking water to agriculture.

Islamabad has complained to an international court that the dam in the Gurez valley, one of dozens planned by India, will affect river flows and is illegal. The court has halted any permanent work on the river for the moment, although India can still continue tunnelling and other associated projects.

"There is definitely potential for conflict based on water, particularly if we are looking to the year 2050, when there could be considerable water scarcity in India and Pakistan," says Michael Kugelman, South Asia Associate at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington.

"Populations will continue to grow. There will be more pressure on supply. Factor in climate change and faster glacial melt ... That means much more will be at stake. So you could have a perfect storm which conceivably could be some sort of trigger."

It's not just South Asia – water disputes are a global phenomenon, sparked by growing populations, rapid urbanisation, increased irrigation and a rising demand for alternative power such as hydroelectricity.

Turkey, Syria, Iran and Iraq quarrel over the waters of the Tigris and Euphrates.

The Jordan River divides Israel, Jordan, Lebanon and the West Bank. Ten African countries begrudgingly share the Nile.

In Southeast Asia, China and Laos are building dams over the mighty Mekong, raising tensions with downstream nations.

A US intelligence report in February warned fresh water supplies are unlikely to keep up with global demand by 2040, increasing political instability, hobbling economic growth and endangering world food markets.

A “water war” is unlikely in the next decade, it said, but beyond that rising demand and scarcities due to climate change and poor management will increase the risk of conflict.

MAJOR THREAT

That threat is possibly nowhere more apparent than in South Asia, home to a fifth of humanity and rife with historical tensions, mistrust and regional rivalries.

The region’s three major river systems – the Indus, the Ganges and the Brahmaputra – sustain India and Pakistan’s breadbasket states and many of their major cities including New Delhi and Islamabad, as well as Bangladesh.

“South Asia is symbolic of what we are seeing in terms of water stress and tensions across the world,” says B.G. Verghese, author and analyst at New Delhi’s Centre for Policy Research.

The region is one of the world’s most water-stressed, yet the population is adding an extra 25 million people a year – South Asia’s per capita water availability has dropped by 70 percent since 1950, says the Asian Development Bank.

The effect of climate change on glaciers and rainfall patterns may be crucial. “Most of the water that is used in Pakistan comes from glacial melt or the monsoon,” says Rafay Alam, an environmental lawyer and coordinator of the water program at Lahore University of Management Sciences.

The dry months of June-July offer a snapshot of the extreme water crisis in the region.

Hospitals in New Delhi this year cancelled surgeries because they had no water to sterilize instruments, clean operating theatres or even wash hands. Swanky malls selling luxury brands were forced to switch off air conditioners and shut toilets.

In Pakistan, the port town of Gwadar ran out of water entirely, forcing the government to send two naval water tankers. Some government flats in the garrison city of Rawalpindi have not had water for weeks, said the local press.

India, as both an upper and lower riparian nation, finds itself at the centre of water disputes with its eastern and western downstream neighbours – Bangladesh and Pakistan – which accuse New Delhi of monopolising water flows.

To the north and northeast, India fears the same of upstream China, with which it fought a brief border war in 1962. Beijing plans a series of dams over the Tsangpo River, called the Brahmaputra as it flows into eastern India.

DAM DISPUTES

For India, damming its Himalayan rivers is key to generating electricity, as well as managing irrigation and flood control. Hydropower is a critical part of India's energy security strategy and New Delhi plans to use part of it to reach about 40 percent of people who are currently off the grid.

A severe power shortage is hitting factory output and rolling outages are routine, further stifling an economy which is growing at its slowest in years.

India's plans have riled Bangladesh, which it helped gain freedom from Pakistan in 1971. Relations cooled partly over the construction of the Farakka Barrage (dam) on the Ganges River which Dhaka complained to the United Nations about in 1976. The issue remains a sore point even now. More recently, Bangladesh has opposed India's plans to dam the Teesta and Barak rivers in its remote northeast.

But India's hydropower plans are most worrying for Pakistan.

Water has long been a source of stress between the two countries. The line that divided them in 1947 also cleaved the province of Punjab, literally the land of five rivers – the Sutlej, Beas, Ravi, Chenab and Jhelum, all tributaries of the

Indus – breaking up millenniums-old irrigation systems. India’s latest hydro plans have fanned new tensions.

“Pakistan is extremely worried that India is planning to build a whole sequence of projects on both the Chenab and Jhelum rivers ... and the extent to which India then becomes capable of controlling water flows,” says Feisal Naqvi, a lawyer who works on water issues.

In recent years, political rhetoric over water has been on the rise in Islamabad, and militant groups such as the Lashkar-e-Taiba have sought to use the issue to whip up anti-India sentiments – accusing New Delhi of “stealing water”.

India conveniently brushes off such fears as paranoia and argues the dams won’t consume or store water but just delay flows, in line with a 1960 treaty that governs the sharing of Indus waters between the two countries.

SINK OR SWIM

South Asia’s water woes may have little to do with cross-border disputes, however. Shortages appear to be rooted in wasteful and inefficient water management practices, with India and Pakistan the worst culprits, experts say.

“All these countries are badly managing their water resources, yet they are experts in blaming other countries outside,” says Sundeep Waslekar, president of Strategic Foresight Group, a Mumbai-based think-tank. “It would be more constructive if they looked at what they are doing at home, than across their borders.”

Their water infrastructure systems, such as canals and pipes used to irrigate farm lands, are falling apart from neglect. Millions of gallons of water are lost to leakages every day.

The strain on groundwater is the most disturbing. In India, more than 60 percent of irrigated agriculture and 85 percent of drinking water depend on it, says the World Bank. Yet in 20 years, most of its aquifers will be in a critical condition.

Countries must improve water management, say experts, and share information such as river flows as well as joint ventures on dam projects such as those India is doing with Bhutan.

“Populations are growing, demand is increasing, climate change is taking its toll and we are getting into deeper and deeper waters,” says Verghese, author of ‘Waters of Hope: Himalayan-Ganga cooperation for a billion people’. “You can’t wait and watch. You have to get savvy and do something about it. Why get locked into rhetoric? We need to cooperate. *Unless you learn to swim, you are dead.*”

Pakistan Army should Supervise next Elections

Transparency International

ISLAMABAD: *The Transparency International*, the worldwide anti-corruption and human rights watchdog institution, has demanded that Pakistan Army should supervise the coming general elections in which electronic voting systems like those used in India and Brazil should be used.

In a letter to new Chief Election Commissioner Fakhurddin G Ebrahim, the Transparency International said on Monday the EC should install 140,000 web cameras in all 68,000 polling booths throughout the 272 constituencies which would cost about one billion rupees which could be easily raised through donations or a charge on candidates.

The letter to the CEC says electoral rolls with photographs of voters should be given to all polling agents like in Bangladesh, and electronic voting like India and Brazil should be introduced.

But the most important of the six recommendations made says the CEC should call upon the Pakistan Army as needed to be present both inside and outside the polling stations. It says the assets declared by all present parliamentarians and candidates in the next elections should be posted on the EC website.

India is part of an upside-down world

Gideon Rachman

The highway leading out of Delhi is lined with adverts for new housing developments with names such as “Exotica Dreamville”. A typical hoarding shows a smiling young couple, standing on a manicured lawn, under the slogan: “Lifestyle is here.”

Keep driving; however, deep into the neighbouring state of Uttar Pradesh, and you will find lifestyles that are neither exotic nor the stuff of dreams. On the outskirts of the city of Budaun, many of the children show signs of malnourishment. Goats, buffalo, cows and camels roam the filthy streets. Unicef, the UN agency for children, is running a campaign to equip all the houses in the district with a modern toilet. It is also trying to find new work for the “manual scavengers (Dalits), who make their living by cleaning dry latrines by hand.

In Budaun itself, the sanitation project is making slow but steady progress. But for Uttar Pradesh – whose population is more than 200m, larger than that of Brazil – the task is still dauntingly big. UNICEF estimates that only 21 per cent of the state’s inhabitants have access to a proper toilet. In India as a whole about 600m people – out of a total population of 1.2bn – still practice “open defecation”, either in fields or urban wasteland.

India’s sanitation problems are a public health disaster that helps explain other grim statistics. Last year, according to UNICEF, 1.7m children under the age of five died in India – just under a quarter of the worldwide total – while 42 per cent of the country’s children are officially categorised as underweight. Although *India is often bracketed with China as a rising superpower*, it is a significantly poorer nation – with a per-capita income less than a third of the Chinese level.

Statistics such as these are sometimes used to pour scorn on the idea that India is an emerging great power. The truth, of course, is more complicated. After 20 years of strong economic growth, India is simultaneously a rich and a poor

country. Its sheer size means that India is the 10th largest economy in the world – and it could well be the third largest by 2030.

The country's consumer market is growing rapidly. It now has more mobile phones than toilets. India has more absolutely poor people than Africa, and more billionaires than Britain. It is magnet both for the world's aid agencies and for its multinationals. Corporate India is so wealthy that it is going on an international buying spree – snapping up well-known western marques such as Jaguar Land Rover. A country that almost ran out of money during the economic crisis of 1991 now has foreign reserves that stand at a healthy \$300bn. India has nuclear weapons and a space programme; it recently announced a plan for a mission to Mars. It is now also the world's largest importer of weapons, and recently said it would spend \$10bn buying *new fighter jets* from France.

Some regard all these contrasts as evidence that the Indian government has scandalously misplaced priorities. The reality is less clear-cut. The central government has a great many poverty alleviation programmes and spends a lot of money. The story is not so much one of outright government neglect as one of corruption, maladministration and rigid social structures. A decade ago the central government allocated about \$300m to improve sanitation in Uttar Pradesh alone – but the money somehow disappeared between Delhi and places such as Budaun. Local residents tell stories of the small tragedies that blight lives and thwart official policy – such as government ration cards that are stolen by local officials.

Yet the numbers suggest that, even in rural areas, things are improving. Rural wages are said to have doubled over the past decade in India. Amid all the poverty in Budaun, there is plenty of commerce – from small workshops to roadside stalls. People are moving off the farms into rural industries or towards the cities.

It is this migration from rural to urban areas that brings together the stories of the two Indias. One senior official in Delhi says that his main reason for confidence about his country's future is that the move to the cities will drive economic growth for the next 20-30 years, as it has in many societies in the past – from Britain in the 18th century to China today. “You stay sane in India by looking at the medium-term,” he remarks.

The fact that India is simultaneously a rich and a poor country is not just baffling for Indians – it is also a puzzle for outsiders. In Britain at the moment, there is a lively debate about whether the *UK should continue to send foreign aid to India*. If the idea is to help the world's poorest people, then there are more of them in India than in any other country in the world. And yet India also has a smaller budget deficit and larger foreign reserves than Britain.

Indians could have their own version of this debate about aid and equity. For even as European countries send aid to India, India will be indirectly funding the bailouts in the euro zone – through its contributions to the IMF. Yet living standards in Greece or Ireland remain unimaginably lavish by the standards of rural India.

These kinds of paradox crop up in debates about everything from arms sales to climate change. They are characteristics of a world in which notions of “rich” and “poor” nations are being turned upside down.

West Braces for Clash of Cultures

There are abortive attempts by western analysts to interpret the two baneful incidents in the light of freedom of expression and thereby explain away the emotional hurt of the Muslim world. However, to an intellectually trained mind, this seems more than just an insult to Islam and the Muslims.

The calculated move of the French magazine in publishing the insulting cartoons immediately after the blasphemous film indicates a united front forming against Islam in the West. On the one hand, the move can be seen as an attempt to help escalate the crisis in the Middle East region and on the other hand to plunge the world into a vortex where a clash of civilizations is imminent. *Ismail Salami*

Extending the Empire to New Frontiers

Deepak Tripathi

Recent wars from Libya to Afghanistan and Pakistan in a region of vast natural wealth and strategic importance highlight a phenomenon as old as humanity. Iraq and Libya had oil, but their leaders were long-time foes of the United States, now the world's lone hegemon. Saddam Hussein allied with the Soviet Union before its demise, so did Muammar Gaddafi. They both displayed stubbornness. They were ready to drop the American dollar as the oil currency before bigger players like China and India dared. Saddam and Gaddafi ruled with an iron hand state systems that were brittle. They were too independent for their own good.

Saudi Arabia and tiny Arab emirates such as Bahrain and Qatar, on the other hand, are punching above their weight. Wealthy and dictatorial, their rulers accommodate the hegemon's interests. These rulers sell their oil and amass petrodollars which they spend in vast quantities on weapons and consumer goods from the industrialized world led by the hegemon. It is far more agreeable relationship.

The hegemon is thus left with states of two more categories of significant kind. In one category is Iran since the 1979 Revolution, Syria since the 1963 Ba'athist coup, and Sudan. The hegemon intervenes seeking to overthrow uncooperative regimes by diplomatic, economic and military means. In the second category are China, Russia and, to a lesser degree, India, where even the world's lone hegemon has limits. Beyond these categories are the discarded—completely failed entities like Somalia, Ethiopia, and Mali, where utterly poor and miserable people live.

The hegemon and satellites have not a care in the world for the welfare of such people, except sending drones or troops from neighbouring client states to kill those described as “terrorists.” What desperate poverty and misery lead to have no space within the realm of this thinking.

Plato's *Republic*, written around 380 BC, has a dialogue between Socrates and Glaucon about civilized society. They discuss how a society develops from primitive to higher levels of civilization. Trades and occupations multiply and population grows. The next stage of development, according to Socrates, is an increase in wealth that results in war, because an enlarged society wants even more for consumption. Plato's explanation is fundamental to understanding the causes of war. This is how empires rise, military and economic power being essential to further their aims. A relevant section in the *Republic* reads:

We shall have to enlarge our state again. Our healthy state is no longer big enough; its size must be enlarged to make room for a multitude of occupations none of which is concerned with necessities. There will be hunters and fishermen, and there will be artists, sculptors, painters and musicians. There will be poets with their following of actors, chorus-trainers, and producers; there will be manufacturers of domestic equipment of all sorts, especially those concerned with women's dress and make-up.

Nearly two and a half millennia after Plato, Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt offered a Marxist vision of the twenty-first century in their *book Empire*. Their core argument in the book published in 2001 was that globalization did not mean erosion of sovereignty, but a set of new power relationships in the form of national and supranational institutions like the United Nations, the European Union and the World Trade Organization. According to Negri and Hardt, unlike European imperialism based on the notions of national sovereignty and territorial cohesion, empire now is a concept in the garb of globalization of production, trade and communication. It has no definitive political centre and no territorial limits. The concept is all pervading, so the "enemy" must now be someone who poses a threat to the entire system—a "terrorist" entity to be dealt with by force. Written in the mid-1990s, *Empire* got it right, as subsequent events testify.

The United States occupied "a privileged position in Empire" depicted by Negri and Hardt. Its privileges did not necessarily arise from its "similarities to the old European imperialist powers." They derived from the assertion of "American exceptionalism." From the early days of its formal constitution, the founders of the United States had believed that they were creating "a new Empire with open, expanding frontiers," where power would be distributed in networks. More than two centuries later, the idea had become global. The presidency of George W. Bush was a powerful militaristic expression of America's will.

Like terrorism, the term “empire” is often used disparagingly by those on the left and the right. The emergence of the United States and the Soviet Union as the two greatest powers after the Second World War offered contrasting models. Advocates of each accused the other of being an empire, meaning a large population comprising many nationalities in distant territories living under subjugation or exploitation.

Different concepts of empire have existed through history. For centuries, the term referred to states that considered themselves successors to the Roman Empire, but later it came to be applied to non-European monarchies such as the Empire of China or the Moghul Empire. Most empires in history came into being as a result of a militarily strong state taking control of weaker ones. The result in each case was an enlarged, more powerful political union, before its eventual decline.

The dissolution of the Soviet bloc in the late 1980s and early 1990s was a blow against the idea of ruling an empire by brute force. Suddenly, the floodgates opened for rapid globalization and expansion of the markets to places that had previously been in the Soviet domain. Capitalism could reach where it had not been before, from newly independent countries in Eastern Europe to Soviet-style economies in Asia and Africa. Two decades later, the West was to hit the most serious crisis since the Great Depression. It was brought about by a combination of impudence after the West’s Cold War triumph, false sense of moral superiority and belief in its power to destroy and recreate nations at will. Norwegian scholar Johan Galtung, regarded as the father of conflict and peace studies, said in 2004 something that is a fitting definition of the term “empire.” He described it as “a system of unequal exchanges between the centre and the periphery.” An empire “legitimizes relationships between exploiters and exploited economically, killers and victims militarily, dominators and dominated politically and alienators and alienated culturally.”

The de facto role of the United States Armed Forces will be to keep the world safe for our economy and open to our cultural assault. To those ends, we will do a fair amount of killing. (*Fighting for the Future: Will America Triumph?*)

India: Linchpin of the Pivot?

Ninan Koshy

The January 2012 Pentagon document on Strategic Guidance, entitled “Sustaining Global Leadership: Priorities for Twenty First Century,” has inaugurated a new cold war in the Asia-Pacific region between the United States and China. The document affirms that the United States will of necessity *rebalance*, or “pivot,” towards the Asia-Pacific region. The goal of the rebalancing—American “global leadership”—is a fancy name for empire, maintained by military superiority.

The document gives a prominent place for India in the U.S. strategy, which came as a surprise to many observers. While India is singled out with specific reference to strategic partnership, long-standing allies such as Japan, Australia, and South Korea are clubbed together under “existing alliances.” In his maiden visit to India in the first week of May, U.S. Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta piled on, calling defense cooperation with India “a linchpin in U.S. strategy” in Asia.

In what may be called cartographic diplomacy, the United States is keen to show that there is geostrategic and even territorial convergence between the United States and India in the region. The January Strategic Guidance document, for example, refers specifically to “the arc extending from the Western Pacific and East Asia into the Indian Ocean and South Asia.” In a November 2011 article for *Foreign Policy*, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton defined the Asia-Pacific as stretching “from the Indian subcontinent to the Western shores of the Americas. The region spans two oceans – the Pacific and the Indian—that are increasingly linked by shipping and strategy.” It is interesting to note the inclusion of South Asia in the geographic area of the Asia-Pacific pivot. South Asia has generally been considered a distinct strategic sub-region of Asia, one the United States apparently intends to integrate into its strategy for the broader continent.

The United States has been exhorting India to move from its “*Look East*” policy to an “Act East” policy. Washington expects India to go beyond forging bilateral relations with countries in the region and to get involved in their

critical issues. This, the United States believes, is essential for the integration of the Asia-Pacific region under a U.S. umbrella.

Towards a Military Alliance

While India has provided assistance to the United States in Afghanistan and continued defense cooperation on other fronts, the two countries have operated under a formal framework only since 2005. An agreement signed that year proclaimed that the two countries were entering a new era and transforming their relationship to reflect their “common principles and shared national interests.” It underlined that the countries’ defense relationship was the most important component of the larger strategic partnership, entailing new joint military exercises, exchanges, and multinational operations. The major component is an expansion of “defense transactions, not as ends in and of themselves but as a means to strengthen our security, reinforce our strategic partnership, [and] achieve greater interaction between our defense establishments.”

From the outset of this new stage, it was evident that what the United States wanted was a military alliance. Ambassador Robert D. Blackwill, at the end of his New Delhi assignment in May 2003, said that the ultimate strategic objective was to have an Indian military that was capable of operating effectively alongside its American counterpart in future joint operations.

This framework was the basis of the nuclear deal between India and the United States that gave India de facto recognition as a nuclear-armed state, which was announced just weeks afterward. A series of defense-related agreements followed in 2007.

Although India remains unwilling at this juncture to sign pending defense agreements that might be construed as opening the door for an official military alliance with the United States, there has been considerable progress on U.S.-India arms transactions. The United States has bagged the largest number of arms contracts—about \$8 billion worth in the last five years—despite its stringent and intrusive end use monitoring requirements. India has fundamentally reoriented its defense procurement, moving away from its

traditional reliance on Russia. In fact, nearly half the value of all Indian defense deals in recent years has been in U.S. transactions alone.

Naval Cooperation

In addition to a booming arms trade, India and the United States have conducted more than 50 joint military exercises in the last seven years. Against this, India's joint exercises with other countries appear to be mere tokens.

Military-to-military relations have especially deepened in the realm of naval cooperation. The U.S. and Indian navies have cooperated operationally on four separate occasions: in the Strait of Malacca after 9/11, in disaster relief efforts after the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004-2005, in a non-combative evacuation operation in Lebanon in 2006, and counter-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden since 2008.

In December 2001, the two countries reached an agreement on naval cooperation to secure the maritime routes between the Suez Canal and the Malacca Straits known as "chokepoints." During the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, naval ships were provided by India to safeguard U.S. non-combatant and merchant ships transiting the Straits of Malacca, which freed U.S. naval ships for service off the coast of Pakistan. This has been officially acknowledged by Washington as a contribution by India to the "war on terror."

India was also one of the very few countries to join the "core group" set up by Washington in the wake of the 2004-2005 Indian Ocean tsunamis. The "core group" was actually a Pentagon plan to assess the geo-strategic implications of the tsunami and to gain the U.S. military access to areas where it had not previously been permitted. It was disbanded because of sharp criticism from the United Nations and European nations like France.

But India is apparently not the only South Asian nation being courted by the United States. The *Times of India* reported in June that Washington is in the process of stationing a naval base in Chittagong, Bangladesh. "Worried by the increasing presence of Chinese naval bases in the South China Sea," the paper reported, "America now eyes a counter-strategy as it wants an overall presence

in Asia – right from Japan to the Diego Garcia base in the Indian Ocean.” The Bangladeshi government has denied the report, but if it’s true, it could cast a shadow on India’s own security strategy and on U.S.-Indian naval cooperation.

Problems in the Neighbourhood

Although Obama administration officials have often stated that the so-called “pivot” is not aimed at any particular country, the Strategic Guidance document admits that it concerns at least in part the growing influence of China. Happy to avail itself of U.S. military technology but reluctant to raise tensions with its sometime rival, India is understandably cautious about aligning too closely with the United States against China.

That is why, in response to Panetta’s overtures, Indian Defense Minister A. K. Antony emphasized “the need to strengthen multilateral security architecture in Asia and move to a pace comfortable to all countries concerned.” It did not go unnoticed that on exactly the same dates Panetta was in New Delhi, India’s Foreign Minister S.M. Krishna was in China affirming the Sino-Indian bilateral relationship as a priority for India’s foreign policy and expressing India’s desire to expand strategic cooperation with China. Likewise, several statements have appeared with claims by U.S. and Chinese leaders that they are committed to collaborating on security in South Asia.

India has a host of problems with China in South Asia. These include increasingly strident Chinese claims on Indian territory, the lack of any progress in border negotiations, China’s nuclear links with Pakistan, and China’s support for the Pakistani position on Kashmir. The United States’ silence on these matters has given the impression, albeit indirectly, that it supports the Chinese positions.

Against this background, a strong case can be made for India to remain non-aligned in the new cold war. But there is perceptible resistance from the establishment to such an idea. Although India may not want to be described as the “linchpin” of the U.S. pivot, the present leadership will nonetheless reassure Washington that it broadly supports U.S. policies abroad, including in the Asia-Pacific.

Moscow beckons Pakistan's Kayani

M K Bhadrakumar

The phrase coined by the 17th-century English philosopher Francis Bacon is: "If the mountain won't come to Mohammed, then Mohammed must go to the mountain." So, if Russian President Vladimir Putin won't come to Islamabad on Tuesday, then Pakistani army chief Ashfaq Parvez Kayani will still go to Moscow.

The Pakistani military spokesman has confirmed the "historic" visit will take place on Wednesday. The spokesman said Kayani is expected to meet top Russian military and civilian leaders to discuss possibilities of military-to-military cooperation between the two countries.

Russian sources explain that when Putin never really scheduled an Islamabad visit and none was announced, and the excitement was all on the Pakistani side, so how could it be deemed that the Kremlin cancelled the visit? It's a fair contention.

According to Moscow sources quoted by the media, there simply wasn't enough meat for a Putin visit at this point of time in the Russian-Pakistan normalization, since economic ties are languishing and there was nothing much in the pipeline except a couple of memorandums of understanding that could have been initialled. But having said that, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov is arriving in Islamabad on Wednesday on an unscheduled visit, presumably to assuage any sense of hurt in the Pakistani civilian leadership over the abrupt cancellation of Putin's visit.

The enemy's enemy...

Meanwhile, even as Lavrov heads for Islamabad, Kayani will have set out for Moscow. To be sure, Moscow's priority will be to sit across the table with Kayani, as he is the fountainhead of authority in Pakistan on major foreign and security policy issues. Also, he is an unusual Pakistani general, having run into difficulties with the United States, while pushing for Pakistan's "strategic autonomy" on the geopolitical chessboard.

Indeed, the present moment is pregnant with possibilities. Russia and Pakistan in varying measure - for different reasons though - have come under US pressure. Both appreciate that the US has "lost" the war in Afghanistan, is pulling out of it and would have little choice but to negotiate with the Taliban; both sense a power vacuum could develop in Afghanistan but also feel uneasy that the US is yet keeping strategic ambiguity about its future military presence in the region.

Meanwhile, Russia-Pakistan normalization through the recent years has reached a point where it is possible for the two countries to cooperate on a practical plane. In short, adversities and opportunities are compelling Russia and Pakistan to explore if they can swim together.

A core area of cooperation relates to the transit routes that supply the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) forces in Afghanistan, which both Russia and Pakistan are providing for the Western alliance. The Northern Distribution Network via Russia becomes vital, in principle, for the US because of the imponderables over the Pakistani routes. But Washington is also chary of overtly depending on Russian goodwill. Again, Russia has supplied helicopters for the Afghan army and is maintaining them - they are paid for by the US, apart from training Afghan security personnel.

Evidently, Moscow has tenaciously finessed an Afghan "trump card" to play in the bigger game of the US-Russia reset. Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko was quoted as saying last week that Moscow is ready to expand its joint projects with NATO concerning Afghanistan and "bring other players into them, too", but strictly within the framework of a mandate from the UN Security Council. However, the US is easing itself out of the straitjacket of the UN Security Council mandate to conduct its activities without the Russians holding a veto over them. In reality, the US has all along been cherry picking, taking help from Moscow on a case-by-case basis but consistently keeping Russia at arm's length from the Hindu Kush. The US has repeatedly rebuffed the Russian attempts to insert the Collective Security Treaty Organization [CSTO] even remotely as a provider of security for Afghanistan.

Washington's obduracy has only helped deepen the Russian suspicions regarding the US' long-term intentions, especially the establishment of permanent American military presence in Afghanistan. Grushko articulated the Russian angst:

One may suppose NATO will be turning to the Security Council for permission to train the Afghan cadres for the interior agencies and the armed forces. There should be no other military functions and everything that spreads beyond the task of facilitating the Afghan stabilization will undermine regional security and generate an even greater uncertainty.

The plain truth is that among the regional powers, it is only Pakistan - aside of course Iran - which would feel genuine empathy for the Russian angst. Beijing may have reservations over a long-term US military presence but then it also has its well-honed methods (with Chinese characteristics) of harmonizing with the US (and NATO). To speak of the Central Asian elites, they have been beneficiaries of the lucrative war contracts and could be loathe seeing the US forces depart.

As for India, it positively views a long-term US military presence as a factor of regional security and stability. It is Pakistan that feels threatened, like Russia, given the tense state of its relations with the US (and India). Both Russia and Pakistan have reason to worry about the deployment of a US missile defense system in Afghanistan.

A slap on the face

Clearly, the backdrop cannot be overlooked - the US-Russia relationship has run into headwinds. Writing for the official Novosti agency, its weekly columnist Konstantin von Eggert assessed Moscow's recent decision to shut down USAID activities in Russia:

This week, Vladimir Putin laid to rest the reset policy ... The reasons given by the [Russian foreign] ministry's spokesman were couched in language reminiscent of the Brezhnev era. In a nutshell, USAID was kicked out because, in the Kremlin's view, it tried to influence Russian politics ... The Russian president seems to have decided that it is time for the era of niceties in US-Russian relations to end. This is surely the first time since Gorbachev came to power that official Russia has slapped official America on the face so hard.

He [Putin] is irritated by President Barack Obama's stance on ballistic missile defense deployment in Europe ... What this show of force testifies to is the utter shallowness of US-Russian political relations. In the last ten years it has

whittled down to just a few perennial topics ... Russia became an irrelevant second-tier policy issue for the Americans quite some time ago. Until fairly recently, the Russian leadership had responded by using the so-called nuisance factor - i.e. making life difficult for the US without crossing any red lines that might prompt an unpredictable US reaction. No more.

The point is Washington is hitting hard at Russia's first circle of strategic interests in the so-called post-Soviet space. A telltale sign of the enormous loss of Russian influence in the Central Asian region surfaced over the weekend when Moscow admitted the failure of its protracted diplomacy in wrapping up an agreement with Tajikistan for the extension of the lease of the Russian military base in time for Putin's visit to Dushanbe slated for Friday.

Only 10 days back, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Igor Shuvalov, who was deputed to Dushanbe to prepare for Putin's visit, had exuded optimism that the two countries were "very close" to signing an agreement. However, the commander of the Russian Ground Forces, General Vladimir Chirkin, retracted on Saturday that the negotiations may continue for months

. "I believe the countries' leaders will sign the deal on the base's continuing stay [in Tajikistan] in the first half of next year," Chirkin said.

He admitted that Moscow is having problem persuading Dushanbe to agree to a 49-year lease and that the Tajiks are demanding US\$100 million in an annual fee for the base (which used to be provided without fee). The Kommersant newspaper reported that Dushanbe is demanding \$250 million as the annual fee.

Afghan strategy will be thrown into disarray in the post-2014 period. To be sure, Dushanbe feels encouraged that the US is interested in having a base of its own in Tajikistan. Indeed, there is a perceptible stepping up of the US diplomatic activities in Dushanbe, Tashkent and Ashgabat - key regional capitals across the Afghan border - in the past year. These capitals have a major role to play in any post-2014 scenario.

Water, water everywhere

The US has toyed with the idea of opening a transit route to Afghanistan via the Caspian, altogether bypassing Russian territory. The Western calculus is as follows: if NATO establishes a viable route from Turkey across the Caucasus

and the Caspian region leading to the northern Afghanistan regions (via Georgia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan), Russia's capacity to dictate terms to the Western alliance would sharply diminish and the viability of long-term US military bases in Afghanistan will also be firmly ensured.

Things seem to be moving in this direction - although neither side talks about it openly. This is one reason why the parliamentary election in Georgia on Monday has become a high-stakes game: if President Mikhail Saakashvili loses to the opposition led by Bidzina Ivanishvili, Tbilisi may opt for a course correction in its close relationship with the US.

Meanwhile, in Central Asia itself, Uzbekistan has edged close to the Turkmen ideology of "positive neutrality" after suspending its membership of the Moscow-led Collective Treaty Organization (CSTO) in June. Tashkent is making a determined effort to build up its ties with Turkmenistan. The Western countries are actively encouraging an Uzbek-Turkmen axis to develop (which would also have ramifications for energy security).

The Uzbek national news agency disclosed last week that Uzbek President Islam Karimov would pay a two-day visit to Ashgabat early this week. The report said, "The agenda of the summit includes the talks [with Turkmen president Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow] and exchanging views on the development of multifaceted Uzbek-Turkmen cooperation and important regional and international issues."

The report noted that Tashkent and Ashgabat have similar views on strengthening regional security and stability, creating "new effective mechanisms to intensify the negotiation process to resolve the Afghan crisis" with the participation of international organizations, joint fight against threats such as international terrorism and extremism, drug trafficking and transnational organized crime.

Above all, what may cement a Turkmen-Uzbek understanding is that the two countries share a common position on water and energy issues in Central Asia. Specifically, they are opposed to the present Russian plans to assist the construction of the Kambarata and Rogun dams in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

The European Union, the World Bank and the US back the Uzbek-Turkmen stance on this issue. Thus, amidst the tense Uzbek-Tajik standoff in recent months, the results of "expert studies" in the US have just added fuel to the fire by counselling Tashkent that if Dushanbe goes ahead with the Rogun hydropower project, Uzbekistan's annual "loss" would be \$600 million in terms of shortage of water for irrigation, unemployment in the agriculture sector and so forth.

Waiting for the Taliban

Clearly, the Russians are on the horns of a dilemma. On the one hand, Moscow is keen to ensure a long-term military presence in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. But Bishkek and Dushanbe are demanding in return financial concessions and Russian assistance in building and managing their hydroelectric projects, which are central to their economic development.

On the other hand, if Russia gets involved in the construction of these projects, it will annoy Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan and push these key regional states into the Western embrace.

As things stand, the US is systematically elbowing Russia out of the entire southern tier of the Central Asian region bordering Afghanistan - Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. Nor is the US showing any sense of hurry to vacate its air base in Manas, Kyrgyzstan.

Of course, Washington will not seek a UN Security Council mandate for its future plans in Afghanistan and will prefer to enter into bilateral agreements with Kabul. This is where the post-2014 political alignments within Afghanistan and the calculus of power in Kabul become a matter of great concern to Moscow.

But Russia's capacity to influence the ebb and flow of Afghan politics in its favour is virtually nil. The spectre that is haunting Moscow (and Pakistan) is that the US might at some point decide to come to terms with a Taliban takeover in Afghanistan. The mainstream opinion within the US strategic community is veering round to the view that the Taliban as such do not pose any threats to America's national security interests and therefore Washington must differentiate the al-Qaeda and its affiliates.

A Carnegie study last month titled "Waiting for the Taliban in Afghanistan", in fact, recommended a bold policy option for Washington:

After 2014, the level of US support for the Afghan regime will be limited and, after a new phase in the civil war, a Taliban victory will likely follow ... Even a (relatively) hostile new Taliban force in Kabul will be easier to deal with because, since they will have established their control on the Afghan side of the border, they will be directly responsible for key security issues.

The desirable endgame should be a stabilization of Afghanistan, probably with the Taliban in Kabul. There would have to be a measure of political or economic support from the United States because a difficult relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan is very likely whatever the regime in Kabul. That is essentially the best situation from a US point of view. A difficult relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan will give the United States more leverage on both.

At the present juncture, therefore, from the Russian viewpoint, Kayani becomes an extremely valuable interlocutor. As Moscow would see it, the Pakistani military leadership's interest also lies in forestalling the US efforts to perpetuate a regime in Afghanistan in the post-2014 period that attaches primacy to American interests. Moscow apprehends - and, rightly so - that an Islamist regime in Kabul that comes under American influence could herald an Arab Spring in the region and pose existential threats to the political order in Central Asia and North Caucasus.

In short, Moscow is betting that the Pakistani military will play a crucial role in the shaping up of the future Afghan polity and given the commonality of interests between Pakistan and Russia, the two countries need to cooperate and coordinate their approaches to the evolving Afghan situation. Suffice to say, the reining in of the US influence in Kabul in the post-2014 period has become a shared Russian-Pakistani strategic objective. Kayani's visit to Moscow is timely. It is taking place even as the US-Afghan negotiations for the conclusion of agreements relating to long-term NATO/US military presence are due to begin within the coming three weeks. Also, both Russia and Pakistan anticipate that President Barack Obama will revisit the Afghan strategy no sooner than the November election in the US is over.

Of course, it is possible to argue that Moscow could be skating on thin ice. Its dalliance with the Pakistani military leadership will complicate Washington's sustained attempts to get Rawalpindi to cooperate in the Afghan endgame. The negative fallouts on the US-Russia reset could be serious, since Moscow is audaciously challenging the first circle of the US' regional strategy. This is an area where even China has treaded softly, notwithstanding its "all-weather friendship" with Pakistan. Far more consequential would be the reliability of the Pakistani military leadership as Moscow's newfound ally in Afghanistan. The former US ambassador, Cameron Munter, who concluded his tour in Islamabad recently, said last week in a speech that Pakistan is a country with a strong society but a weak state. Russian policy is in sync with the spirit of our times insofar as Pakistani society is virulently "anti-American". However, the heart of the matter is that the Pakistani state is also simultaneously cooking many broths in its Rawalpindi kitchen and Grandma's Russian Borsch cannot be the main course there.

Ambassador M K Bhadrakumar was a career diplomat in the Indian Foreign Service.

Chaotic Struggle for Afghanistan

Despite the incredible hard work, bravery and suffering of our troops, despite the massive Afghan civilian casualties, despite the hundreds of billions spent, we have not achieved our goals in Afghanistan.

It's a hard pill to swallow, but I've been told countless times that locals prefer the Taliban to foreign forces and the Afghan government, particularly the police. I should point out that I've spent most of time in Afghanistan in Helmand and Kandahar, where the war has always been fiercest.

In the rush to get to Iraq, we handed control of the army, police and intelligence agency to the **Northern Alliance**, and the same old warlords whose behavior had led to the Taliban's rise to power in 1996. **I think we were doomed to fail from that moment on.** Southern Pashtuns often see the security forces we're supporting as being almost as foreign as us and there for vengeance

(Ben Anderson is a documentary filmmaker and a writer. *No Worse Enemy: The Inside Story of the Chaotic Struggle for Afghanistan*. The book offers a gritty – and grim — assessment of the war) Editor

Independence in the Pocket of the US: "Mera Pyara Bharat?"

Colin Todhunter

With a population of 1.2 billion people, many believe that India is the arena where the future direction of humanity is being played out. Mired in poverty and still bound by tradition, it is on an insatiable quest for modernity. With 17 per cent of the global population, the route to development chosen by India will impact the people living here and elsewhere throughout the planet. However, the future of humanity may not be determined in India, but by events in a much smaller country – Syria.

When the Soviet Union (USSR) fell apart, there was much talk from the US of a multi-polar world, where Washington would be just one influential player among many – a world where an autonomous India would play a vital role. It was nice sounding talk. But that's all it was – talk. In the wake of the collapse of the USSR, the US has been hell-bent on achieving global superiority.

The US's orbit of influence has extended throughout Eastern Europe and into many of the former Soviet states in central Asia. While Bush senior was mouthing media-friendly words about multi-polarity, Dick Cheney was at the same time stating that the US sought world domination. Look no further to see the US track record by casting your mind back to events in Yugoslavia, Libya and Iraq. Look no further to see its role currently in Yemen, Afghanistan, Syria and Pakistan. To date, the US has been responsible for millions of deaths and maiming in its quest for superiority, but its project now appears to be reaching a critical point.

Unfortunately for the Obama regime, it's no longer the early 1990s when the US believed it reigned supreme and Russia was in disarray and China still relatively weak. China has emerged as a genuine global player and Russia has a new-found confidence under Putin. If China and Russia thought Libya was a pawn worth sacrificing, they regard the more significant Syria as a different matter entirely.

A former Soviet ally that still has strong links with Russia, Syria plays host to Russia's only naval base outside of the former USSR. That in itself is something the Russians think is worth defending, given their build up of naval forces in the eastern Mediterranean and their military hardware supplies to Syria. Both Russia and China know that if the US, its allies and its proxy Free Syrian Army topple the Assad government, all roads then lead to oil rich Tehran.

Controlling Iran's oil would serve many purposes, not least strengthening the value of the faltering dollar and US economy by ensuring the dollar remains in high demand as the global currency for oil trade – a situation threatened by various countries, including Iran, that have moved off the dollar.

But the US will not stop with Iran. Moscow and Beijing are also firmly in Washington's plans for destabilization too via exploiting political and ethnic divisions, especially in the border regions of Russia and China.

Syria is to all intents and purposes the scene of a cold war between the US and its allies and Russia and China. It's a high-stakes game because some within the Pentagon think it's better to draw China into a military conflict now, when it can still be defeated, rather than later. Syria or Iran could be the powder keg that achieves this goal.

Of course, Washington knows that if military confrontation can be avoided, even better. And, to this end, much US foreign policy is now directed towards undermining China's growth and outmanoeuvring it across the globe. While China lost ground in Libya, it is loathe doing so in the much more strategically important countries of Syria, Iran and Pakistan.

With a massive build up of NATO forces in the Mediterranean, what we are witnessing in Syria has all the ingredients that could lead to a third world war, especially given the Russian presence there as well. The tens of millions lost in the first two wars would be a fraction of the possible billions who would perish this time around, given that the three main protagonists – the US, China and Russia – all have nuclear arsenals.

As far as India is concerned, the US regards it as playing a key part in its geo-political aims by containing China and not as some equal, autonomous partner

in a mythological multi-polar world. And, unfortunately, India has been moving increasingly closer to the US in recent years and, by implication, complying with its hegemony. But imagine for a moment a world where India pursues a more independent path that would be strident in its rejection of predatory capitalism and US-led militarism in Syria and elsewhere.

Imagine a model of development that would in fact be inspired by particular policies adopted by the likes of Cuba, Bhutan, Venezuela, Costa Rica and Bolivia, which place strong emphasis on health, 'happiness', education and bio-diverse agriculture and not least on the rights of indigenous peoples, sustainability, respect for the environment and/or common ownership

As 15 August approaches when people will wrap themselves in the national flag and chant "Mera Pyara Bharat", India's role in the world is worth considering because, for some, 'independence' for India is almost becoming a euphemism for living in the pocket of the US. Depending on the nation's ability to switch track, however, it could yet positively influence the future of humanity after all.

Colin Todhunter: *Originally from the northwest of England, Colin Todhunter has spent many years in India. He has written extensively for the Deccan Herald (the Bangalore-based broadsheet), New Indian Express and Morning Star.*

Indians survive on 77cents a day.

NEW DELHI - The average household in rural India spends just Rs43 (77 US cents) per head a day, with their urban equivalents consuming almost double according to new government data. The latest study from the National Sample Survey Office, a huge undertaking every two years, shows that average monthly per capita expenditure for a rural household was just Rs1,281 compared with Rs2,401 in cities. The poorest 10 pc in rural areas - a grouping of about 80m people - get by on just Rs503 on average a month., or just 17 rupees a day, according to preliminary data from the survey. *(lisa these are official figures as released by the Indian government)*

Comrades in arms no more

Brijesh Pandey

There is something rotten in the state of the Indian Army. Brijesh Pandey decodes why soldiers are turning against their superiors and why soldiers are leaving in droves and why they committing suicide

VISHWAMOHANAN PILLAI was looking forward to welcoming his son home. Instead, what arrived at his doorstep was his son's coffin. On 8 August, Arun V, a soldier of the 16th Light Cavalry regiment in Samba district of Jammu & Kashmir, committed suicide with his service weapon. Arun, 30, wanted to visit his family in Thiruvananthapuram during the holiday season, but his leave application was denied approval by his superiors. A frustrated Arun ended up taking his own life. As soon as the news of his suicide broke, angry soldiers protested against the officers concerned. The stand-off lasted for several hours. Additional troops had to be rushed to the spot to keep a lid on the situation and all the officers were moved out of their living quarters.

The army ordered two courts of inquiry to probe the incident. This incident came close on the heels of what happened at Nyoma sub-station at Leh involving the 226 Field Artillery regiment on 11-12 May. An orderly allegedly misbehaved with the wife of a Major, who beat him up. Despite the soldier (*a Dalit/Untouchable*) being in a critical condition, the Major (*of superior caste*) refused to let him get any medical treatment. This led to an outrage among the fellow soldiers. When the news reached the Commanding Officer (CO), he rushed to the spot and took the Major to task. Infuriated with the public dressing down, the Major and his colleagues beat up the CO. (*This is the state of Discipline in the Indian Army*) Seeing this, the soldiers went berserk and thrashed the officers. Later, the General Officer Commanding in-charge was rushed to Leh to defuse the situation. The army downplayed the incident, calling it a "minor scuffle", adding that a court of inquiry had been ordered. When Army Chief Gen Bikram Singh was asked about the Samba incident, he termed the incident as an isolated one in the 1.13 million-strong Indian Army. He added that there was no connection between the suicide and the stand-off. "We are looking into the problems and trying to fix them," he said.

The army chief was being economical with the truth. On 3 September, Defence Minister AK Antony told Parliament that Pillai's suicide had led to "unrest" among the troops deployed in the Samba sector and that the suicide and the stand-off were not two different incidents. That was not all. Figures released by the defence minister revealed a scary picture, illustrating the level of disenchantment among the soldiers and the officers. According to Antony, more than 25,000 soldiers have opted for voluntary retirement in the past three years (10,315 in 2011, 7,249 in 2010 and 7,499 in 2009). He added that during the same period, more than 1,600 officers have either sought voluntary retirement or have resigned (this when the army is already reeling under a massive shortage of close to 12,000 officers).

He further revealed that since 2003, more than 1,000 Indian soldiers have committed suicide. So, what's ailing the Indian Army? Why are the soldiers and officers treating each other like enemies? Some experts believe it is caste system and its discriminatory attitudes that are at play. Some officers are blaming the shortage of officers coupled with the dwindling quality of the recruits. "The army has expanded a lot and there is a lack of quality due to it," says Maj Gen (retd) Afsir Karim. "There is a structural problem in the way officers are recruited. There is also a problem with the higher command. They indirectly affect things like how the men are treated, where they are deployed." Maj Gen (retd) GD Bakshi has a different take. He believes that strong bonds are rarely formed between soldiers and officers in a peacetime army. "Combat is the biggest glue," he says. "It is the combat stress that makes you face death together."

According to officers, there is a lack of communication between the commanding officers and subordinate soldiers. One of the reasons is that there are not enough officers and secondly, not enough responsibility is given to the Junior Commissioned Officer, the critical link between the soldier and the officers. There is also a class and caste bias.

All financial handlings, court of inquiry, etc. are handled by officers. While a combat battalion requires 21 officers, only one-third of posts are filled on the ground. So every officer is, in effect, doing the job of three officers. That does not give adequate time to an officer to interact with his men as it should have been.

According to Lt Gen (retd) Raj Kadyan, "In our time, we used to have a notebook that had the personal details of every soldier under us such as his likes, dislikes,

eccentricities, family, etc. Now, that kind of activity needs a lot of time because of the lopsided men-officer ratio.”

Officers also blame the lack of promotion options due to a highly pyramidical structure. According to a former commander, “Only 25 percent of the officers become Colonels; and only 0.05 percent gets the chance of becoming a General. My batch had 1,200 commissioned officers and I was the only one who became a commander. There is plenty of frustration among the officer corps.

After spending many years, everybody wants a good rank.”The bulk of the soldiers who used to join the army earlier came from villages, with little exposure. In the past 15-20 years, most of the soldiers have been coming from semi-urban and urban areas. They are more educated and have high aspirations. They are not keen on blindly following their superior’s orders.

IN 2007, Antony had asked the Defence Institute of Psychological Research (DIPR) to investigate suicides and fratricide in the army. The DIPR concluded that high workload, lack of adequate rest and leaves, no abundance of basic amenities and domestic concerns coupled with inadequate and insufficient support from the civil administration were the most prevalent factors causing stress among troops. According to Maj Gen (retd) GD Bakshi, “A lot has changed in the past 20 years. The reality is that there is lack of respect for the army. Earlier, it was a matter of pride to be in the army. People would look up to you with awe. Now, you are a fool, wasting your prime for nothing.”

Senior officers admit that the recent cases of corruption involving top generals have also not helped the cause. After his statement in Parliament, Antony met the three service chiefs and discussed the issues of suicides, retirements and fratricide. He asked the chiefs to ensure that officers should be liberal while granting leaves to soldiers. He also asked the defence ministry to get in touch with the railways to ensure that whenever a soldier goes on leave, he immediately gets a reservation. While the ministry is making all the right noises, it is for the army to do some serious introspection about effective man management skills that not only treats its soldiers well, but also takes into account the society’s changing aspirations.

Brijesh Pandey is a Special Correspondent with Tehelka.

Islamophobia and the Politics of Empire

Book Review

Deepa Kumar

Interview with Alex Kane

“Deepa Kumar's book ‘Islamophobia and the Politics of Empire’ could not be timelier. In this deftly argued book, Kumar unearths a genealogy of colonial construction that goes back to the earliest contacts between Muslims and Europeans. But the real power of her argument is when she grabs the politics of ideological domination by the throat and, with an astonishing moral and intellectual force, sets the record straight as to who and what the players are in turning a pathological fear of Muslims into a cornerstone of imperial hegemony. This is a must read on both sides of the Atlantic, where from mass murderers in Europe to military professors at the US military academies are in the business of manufacturing fictive enemies out of their fanciful delusions. Deepa Kumar has performed a vital public service.” An interview with Alex Kane is reproduced in parts to reflect her views on the subject.

Deepa Kumar: The book is about the image of the “Muslim enemy” and the way that it has been used by elites in the West to forward their interests. In the US, Islamophobia or anti-Muslim racism assumed a prominent place in the public sphere after the events of 9/11. But what I show is that this form of racism is not new. So what the book sets out to do is to locate this ideology within the context from which it emerges. This context, I argue, at the broadest level, is empire. That is, Islamophobia has always been useful to imperial societies. So, the book begins with the crusades and the ways in which the “Muslim enemy” image was mobilized in the 11th century in Europe to advance larger political goals, and goes right up to the Obama era. In the late 18th and 19th centuries, which were the high point of European colonization of the Middle East and North Africa, you see a new body of ideas come into being called “Orientalism” that became the basis from which to justify colonization. Many of these Orientalist myths still persist today. So, the point of the book is

to outline these continuities and to point to root causes and ways in which we can effectively fight back against Islamophobia.

AK: Reading the first chapter, I was struck by how, historically, Christian elites painted Islam as sexually deviant and perverse. That rhetoric is also heard today, with the “Muhammad is a pedophile” meme. I was also struck by Montesquieu writing that democracy is suited for the West and not for Muslims. Could you talk about these connections to modern day Islamophobia?

DK: Yes, this vilification of Islam and of the Prophet Muhammad has a long history. It goes back to the 11th century when the Papacy was trying to mobilize for the Crusades. The Vatican was horrified by the fact that Islam allowed men to take up to four wives, allowed for divorce, and even permitted divorced women to remarry! It was argued that it was this kind of promiscuity that allowed Islam to gain as many converts as it did (even among Christians). So the Church put forward the argument that Muhammad was a sexual deviant and therefore a false prophet preaching a false religion. These ideas have been resuscitated today by the far right.

An associated theme connected to sexuality, and one that gets taken up in 19th century Europe, is gender. Europeans circulated the notion that Muslim women are horribly oppressed (without actually consulting or talking to Muslim women) and that Muslim men are misogynistic. What followed from this was that Muslim women needed to be rescued by white men swooping in on their horses. And this is, of course, the justification that was given for the Afghan war—at least it was one of the justifications beyond the revenge motive.

And of course if you look at that narrative, it doesn't begin in 2001. For instance, Lord Cromer, who oversaw the occupation of Egypt in the 1880s, claimed that Islam has completely stultified the lives of women and that he was therefore going to emancipate them. British colonization of Egypt was therefore an enlightened project. In reality this is not how things worked out. If anything things got worse for Egyptian women. And it's not hard to tell why, because this supposed champion of Egyptian women's rights worked tirelessly to deny British women the right to vote as a founding member and president of the Men's League for Opposing Women's Suffrage. If this justification was used

by Cromer, an out and out sexist, over a century ago, George Bush who is no less of a sexist used the same argument again in the context of the Afghan war.

The other myth you mentioned was the idea that Arabs are incapable of self-rule and democracy and therefore it was the “white man’s burden” to bring democracy to these uncivilized people. Montesquieu explained why this was so by turning to the weather as an indicator of human temperament. He said that whereas in the West, which has cooler climates, men (and he meant men) were virile and active; in the hotter climates of the East the people were prone to being supine and servile. This is why, he said, they are better suited for despotism. This theory of “Oriental despotism” however is not unique to Montesquieu but was widely held by others. And this argument gets repeated in the early 20th century by Lord Balfour in relation to Egypt when he stated that the Egyptians are incapable of self-rule, and again by Theodore Roosevelt who said that the “Muslim fellaheen” are devoid of any traces of self-government in their entire history!

We find echoes of this again in the case of the 2003 war on Iraq. When weapons of mass destruction were not found in Iraq, the narrative then shifted to one of democracy. The US was going to bring democracy to Iraq and create a new Middle East. Sadly, even people on the left bought this “white man’s burden” argument. And I for one was ecstatic to see the Arab uprisings of 2011 because it showed quite concretely that Arabs are capable of taking down dictators and struggling for more democratic and politically (and economically) representative societies...despite the hot weather!

AK: Later in the book, in your discussions of Zionism, you note that Islamophobia is not necessarily embedded in Zionism. The early Zionist colonists spoke of Arabs and Muslims in derogatory terms. But it was more a general sense of disdain for non-Jews than specifically anti-Muslim sentiment. But that changed in the late 1970s. Could you expand on this?

DK: Israel saw the PLO and secular Arab nationalists as their main enemy, and the vocabulary of the “Arab terrorist” grew out of this context. But a couple of things happen in the late 1970s and 1980s that shifted the language from the “Arab terrorist” to the “Islamic terrorist.” Internally, this period saw the rise of

the far right in Israel and an electoral victory for the right wing Likud party; this would then orchestrate a shift rightward in public discussion. Externally, in 1979, the Iranian revolution destabilized the carefully cultivated pro-US and pro-Israeli status quo. In the 1980s, the birth of Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Palestine lead the Zionist right to conclude that its struggle was now one against “Islam.” This is the context in which the “Arab terrorist” gets morphed into the “Islamic terrorist.”

There are two important conferences that Benjamin Netanyahu organized that brought together political figures from around the world, one in 1979 in Jerusalem and the other in 1984 in Washington DC. At the first conference Benzion Netanyahu [Benjamin Netanyahu's father] in his opening speech tried to equate the enemies of Israel (the PLO) with the enemies of the West, saying that the “terrorists” are really like fascists, like Nazis even if they claim to be fighting for freedom. You see here one of the early sources of the development of a concept that would arrive much later-- “Islamofascism.”

At any rate, the changes I discussed earlier meant that at the second International Conference on Terrorism in 1984, there was an entire section on Islam and terror. Orientalists like Bernard Lewis, Elie Kedourie and others are invited to this conference, which then use the language of Orientalism and Islamophobia to now talk about this threat of “Islamic terrorism.” Now the enemy had morphed into the “Islamic terrorist” and Benjamin Netanyahu in his opening remarks argued that the two big threats faced by the West were the Soviet Union and Islamic (and Arab) terrorists, he puts “Arab” in brackets. And by the way the neocons in the US and the Likud right in Israel have shared this view and jointly developed and propagated it.

AK: Let’s move on to the Obama era. I hadn’t seen the term “liberal Islamophobia” before reading your book. Can you explain liberal Islamophobia and why you think the Obama era is characterized by it?

DK: I use the term “liberal Islamophobia” to make a distinction between the rhetoric of the right, which is more nakedly racist, and the rhetoric which emerges from the liberal establishment. At its core, liberal Islamophobia flows from the logic of liberal imperialism. As several scholars have argued liberal

imperialism is based upon using liberal ideas to justify empire, and spans the gamut from the narrative about rescuing women and children from brutal dictators to fostering democracy. Liberal Islamophobia flows from this logic.

Towards the end of Bush's second term the US had really sullied its image on the world stage, and particularly in the Middle East. It was clear to the elite in this country that the American image would have to be rehabilitated. The Democrats were ready with a plan. A leadership group on US-Muslim relations headed by Madeleine Albright (Clinton's secretary of state who presided over the era of "humanitarian imperialism" in the 1990s) put out a document that argued that the Bush rhetoric of the "clash of civilizations" was too harsh, and that the next US president needed to reject this thesis and start to patch things up with the Middle East. Obama has proved very effective at this. Rhetorically speaking he has indeed toned down the harsh rhetoric of the Bush era. So during his inaugural speech he actually acknowledged the presence of Muslims in this country, which I think is a first for an American president.

And then, at one of his first speeches abroad in Cairo--he rejected the ideology of the "clash of civilizations," which sees the East and West as polar opposites, and stressed the interconnections between the East and the West. He also went out of his way to acknowledge how scholars in the East laid the basis for astronomy, medicine and so on. This is a remarkable admission for an American president. But even while Obama has toned down the rhetoric from the Bush era, he hasn't rejected Bush's policies. If anything he adopted Bush's second term policy goals both externally and internally. What he has done quite effectively is to pursue the goals of US imperialism using language that is more palatable.

Towards the end of Bush's second term there was a shift towards the use of "soft power," that is the "winning of hearts and minds" and that is what Obama adopted whole heartedly. But despite all the talk of "mutual respect," Obama like every president before him has acted in the interests of the US on the international stage: extending the war in Afghanistan to Pakistan, dramatically increasing the number of drone strikes (and extending their use in Yemen and Somalia), participating in the NATO-led war on Libya, etc.

At the end of the day, liberal imperialists, for all their talk of “speaking softly,” accept the logic that the US can and should intervene anywhere it wants to around the world to pursue its interests with no respect whatsoever for the right of self-determination of the people in the countries it targets. Liberal Islamophobia is still racist at its core.

Now, most people can see and detect rabid racism against Muslims. So when **Peter King holds his routine hearings** on Muslim American "radicalization," which smacks of McCarthyism, he is roundly criticized by civil rights groups and by liberals. However, when Obama does the same people don't recognize it as Islamophobia.

For instance, Obama released his own “counter-radicalization” strategy in 2011 which called for the formation of a McCarthyite type informant network involving Muslim American teachers, coaches, and other members of the community. No one said a peep. This is because if you read the document it is filled with praise for Muslim Americans who have cooperated with the government, and it lauds the US's multiculturalism and religious plurality. But it then goes on to target Muslims because like King the Obama document too views Muslims as “potential terrorists” who can become “radicalized” and must therefore be monitored and put under surveillance. It is not an aberration that **federal money was used for the infamous NYPD spying program**. And to the best of my knowledge Obama has neither spoken out against it nor has he tried to shut this (or other similar programs run by the FBI) down. The way liberal Islamophobia works is that it roundly criticizes Islam-bashing, thereby preempting charges of racism, but then it goes on to champion programs that target and vilify Muslims.

One more recent example is the Obama “kill lists” whose victims include not just people who are suspected of being “terrorists” but everyone in the vicinity as well. Without so much as a trial or any kind of charade of justice the Obama administration has given itself the power to execute people around the world, including US citizens. But he can get away with this because he doesn't use phrases like Bush's “wanted dead or alive” or words like “crusade.”

The Drawback of Nepal's Revolution: the NGO's Harvest

Saba Navalan

Nepal is one of those lands so very rich in natural resources that it constantly pricks the eyes of multi-national companies which dominate the world today. Nepal which is situated at the backyard of India had been treated over the years as its slave-land. The poor farmers and working class in Nepal is representing the 'neo-slaves' of the globe. In many villages there has never been any governance or State administration. The inhabitants of these villages have never had access to government medical facilities. The horror of slavery in the Feudalistic System of Governance in the last century remains dreadfully present trapped in a time capsule.

For a long time Nepal has remained so steep in enslavement and subjugation as if it was under the 'colonial rule' of India. Prior to Maoists, no one proposed an alternative system of politics against India's domination as well as revolutionary path against the feudal slavery system. In this milieu people were mobilised under the leadership of the Unified Communist Party which followed Maoism in letter and spirit.

Villages were freed. Within a span of ten years many villages came under the overall influence of the Maoists. People were trained in people's warfare. People were mobilised and organized through the Agricultural Labourers Organizations, trade unions and Workers' Forums at first and later through Students' Forums and Organizations which too became powerful. The Maoists maximised the conflicts and contradictions that existed between the King's battalion otherwise known as the Royal Nepal Army and the Police Forces, in the initial stages and had developed effective suitable military strategy.

In a similar vein, exploiting the contradiction that existed between the King and the Political Parties that were arguing the case of 'bourgeois parliamentary democracy' the Maoists began to launch their revolutionary initiatives in the urban areas as well amidst the lower rung of the middle-class. Around 75 districts had completely or partly, came under the Maoist administration just before 2000.

Having formed a strong and firm People's Political Front in Nepal, they led the first stage of revolutionary activities against the monarchy. The other capitalist parties too joined hands with the forces under the leadership of the Maoists in their effort to remove the system of monarchy. After the fall of monarchy the other parties came to an agreement with the Maoists on the issue of conducting general election for the formation of a Constitutional Assembly. At this stage the Maoists came forward to form a 'Capitalist Democratic National Government' in Nepal. At the same time the Unified Communist Party of Nepal – Maoists - had announced was only an interim period in the revolution.

By June 2006 the United Communist Party or the Maoists developed a 12 Point Compliance Plan in consultation with the other seven parties. On the 21st of November, 2006 an extended Peace Pact was signed between the Maoists and the Government of Nepal. *The reason why the Maoists, who with the support of a tremendous 'people's upsurge' had cordoned the Royal Palace in Kathmandu, instead of seizing 'the power to rule' in its totality had accepted a 'peace pact' still remains a mystery. Many agree that the November Peace Pact was the historic blunder of Nepal Revolution.*

The most alarming part of the pact which was considerably dangerous is the Clause whereby they would appeal to the United Nations Assembly, to be the watch-dog of the said Pact. As soon as the signatures were attested, an appeal was made seeking UN intervention.

At the close of 2006 the interviews of Prachanda, Baburam Bhattarai and such others and exaggerated praises and hyperboles about them found their way in the Western Media. At the time when the United Nations commenced its mission in Nepal on the 1st of January 2007, accurate information about the nature of work really aimed at and to be carried out were also surfacing. The real job entrusted in the hands of the Special Committee called The United Nations Mission in Nepal [UNMIN] was to supervise and affirm the disarming of the 'militants of Maoists' People Liberation Army.

The act of bringing in the United Nations in the picture, during the interim stage of Nepal's revolution is considered the second worst possible mistake. What made the Maoists consent to it still remains a mystery. Although the initial stage of the revolution in Nepal to dethrone the king and to remove monarchy and feudalism began in the right direction, the way its succeeding stages of

evolution were captured by the totalitarian institutions did start with the UN intervention.

At present a large number of Maoists accept the fact that within the Maoist Party the conflict between the progressive reaction, between right and wrong, between truth and lie had begun with the victory of the revolution itself. The revolutionary sections which are a minority today observe that not taking over monarchy in its totality and allowing UN to step in were two decisive mistakes made.

At that time Prachanda opined that disarming the militants couldn't be deemed as the ultimate surrender of the revolutionary forces and that People's Revolution was not entirely free. Thus he gave highly ambiguous and blurred statements and face-to-face sessions which however proved temporarily acceptable to the revolutionary forces. At the time the Communists sought refuge in an alluring conviction that 'This is Prachanda's revolutionary path'.

In establishing a meeting ground between the Maoists and the Parties advocating the system of Parliamentary Democracy, on a continuous basis, and later on, in disarming the People's Liberation Army and to wipe it out without a trace, the UNMIN played a crucial role. Following the election, a government with five Maoist Ministers and one Deputy Minister was formed in April 2007. Simultaneously, the Maoist leadership was forced to accept the DDR Programme tabled by the United Nations. The 'so-called' treacherous scheme DDR Programme [Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration] - of UN was accepted by the Maoist polite-bureau.

In return the United Nations agreed to help the Maoists in undertaking several reforms. Particularly, the UN agreed to work hand in hand with the Maoists in 'developing' the villages and to aid the caste-wise oppressed sections to enter into the political arena and to put an absolute end to monarchy. European countries such as Norway, France and the United States joined hands with the UN and feigned to have the interests of Nepal, its well-being, progress and development as their foremost concern. Upon the understanding arrived at with the Maoists on the issue of 'development-', as well as based on the recommendations of the United Nations, nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) began to march towards the villages in large numbers. By 2008 this invasion had reached a crescendo.

In the process of liberating the villages from the clutches of discrimination, the Maoists first created access to the basic services by establishing schools, hospitals and civil administrative structures at village level which were gradually devoured one by one by the NGOs.

The NGO named Nirdhan Utthan Bank Limited which came into existence with the help of the funds received from Asian Development Bank began commencing its destructive projects and programmes in the rural areas. Ms.Meena Acharya , the influential member of this Bank which had as its role-model the Grameen Bank that had changed Bangladesh so much as to be called NGO franchised country boasts that their bank had come into being with the specific purpose of providing redress to the people of Nepal and to retrieve them, having as role-model the Grameen Bank.

Meena Acharya further says that more funds are available for ‘welfare schemes in Nepal and that the sponsors are ever ready to give more funds. USA’s Rockefeller family is regarded as one of the topmost funders of Non-Governmental Organizations in the world. This leading exploitative family` of USA right has a past for providing funds to Hitler who was responsible for war , destruction and a genocide that set an example to many others yet to come. The very principle of Nirdhan Utthan Bank Limited is extorting exorbitant interest for the loans they give. But, they would use the refined expression ‘Micro Finance’ to refer to it. Bill Gates who is called the technically refined thief of the world takes pride in hailing it as ‘Creative Capitalism’.

The organization by name Centre for Micro-Finance in Nepal (CMF) too played a vital role in bringing the people and the rural economy within the purview of Totalitarian Organizational set-up. The NGO called Working for uplifting the socio-economic conditions of the rural poor and discriminated groups which run with the financial aid from Trickle up Program USA - COPPADES – and the United European Countries targeted those villages freed by the Maoists. Every nuke corner of the country is invaded by several NGOs such as ‘save the children’, ‘American Aid’, ‘Transparency international’ and so on. Under the agenda of uprooting poverty it geared up all activities for destroying the seeds of revolution.

The Nongovernmental Organization called Educate the Children began to take over the rural education. These Non-Governmental voluntary organizations which run with the help of funds from multi-national companies, instead of

revolution gave alms to the people. Following the United Nations Organisation these NGOs had two primary projects on the basis of which they continued their tryst with Nepal.

1. Alluring the educated middle class front-line militants amidst the Maoists with attractive salaries and with high-sounding slogans such as ‘helping the have-nots and Needy’ etc., and so enrolling them into their fold as staffs.
2. Destroying the mass Organizations bringing them under its control or by sabotaging.

As a result, for the first time an opportunist group which could exercise power and domination over the society emerged from within the Maoists. Secondly, organizations of mass mobilisation which proved the very foundation and driving force of revolution were destroyed. Thirdly, the Institutions of revolutionary administrative outfits became bourgeois forums. The house worth millions that Prashantha had acquired after the Peace pact. It is only as long as the Party remained under the constant vigil and surveillance of the working class people that it could remain as a revolutionary party, working for people’s cause.

In Nepal the systematic sabotage carried out against people’s organizations facilitated the formation of an opportunistic leadership to emerge. On the one hand the UN was bent on destroying the People’s Liberation Army and on the other, the freed lands once again fell into the hands of the landlords and the multinationals, thanks to the congenial climate for all these created by the NGOs. The way the People’s Organizations were sabotaged destroyed and came under the control of totalitarian Institutions proved to be the major setback of the revolution.

As a result Maoists who remained strong with people’s support began to weaken. And the opportunists and the compromising elements gained strength. Thus the bourgeois agenda was successfully carried out as planned. The revolution which the people had carried forward with their valour and sacrifice suffered a great setback.

Prachanda and Baburam Bhattarai were heading the opportunist groups that had gained strength. The revolutionary sect headed by Kiran seemed to be weak but at the same time having a firm political stand and perspective.

Welcome to Saigonistan

Pepe Escobar

For Pentagon Chief Leon Panetta, a recent wave of "green-on-blue" (or insider attacks) on US and NATO troops - i.e. the Afghan version of friendly fire - are just the "last gasp" of a bunch of frustrated Taliban.

That does remind one of Don Rumsfeld's "remnants" of Saddam's regime, who duly morphed into hardcore Sunni Iraqi guerrillas and gave hell to the US occupation.

Back to reality, even US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Martin Dempsey had to admit, "Something has to change". Only in 2012, Afghan security forces killed over 51 NATO soldiers - and counting.

That may not be much compared to scores of civilian victims, aka "collateral damage", of the shadowy CIA drone war against the Pakistani tribal areas. Not to mention the recent US raid that killed eight Afghan women and girls who were engaged in an extremely subversive plot to collect firewood.

Oh yes - but this is "them", not "us".

Anyway, something did change. NATO's new spin on "green-on-blue" is right up the scale down alley. From now on, joint patrols or any "interaction" with Afghans will only go on at least at battalion level (which group 500 or even 800 members).

It was - surprise! - A unilateral Pentagon decision. No NATO partners or even the Afghans themselves were consulted.

That's the abject failure of all elaborate Western plans to set up an Afghan fighting force by embedding them with Americans and Europeans - and then have them handle security by themselves. Even as it stands, very few Afghan units can independently engage in tactical operations.

That's the solemn erection of a far from figurative Wall of Mistrust between "us" and "them". That's the end of a massive PR campaign - sold to Western public opinion - that even boasted its own Dari slogan; shohna ba shohna

("shoulder by shoulder"), as in "good" Westerners side by side with Afghans fighting the "evil" Taliban.

Moreover, what this implies is there's no soft exit strategy for the US and NATO. Sooner rather than later - in this case December 2014 - a Saigon moment looms in the Hindu Kush.

Take the rifle and run

Predictably, tough guy NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen said the deadline towards total Afghan responsibility for national security by the end of 2014 remains; the scaling down is "prudent and temporary".

In terms of losing face, Rasmussen and NATO could not possibly accept ignominious defeat and rush for the exits. Especially after Taliban supremo Mullah Omar had stated over a month ago that the Taliban "cleverly infiltrated the ranks of the enemy according to the plan given to them last year".

Even without rampant Taliban infiltration, NATO would have never been able to vet all 352,000 members of Afghanistan's army and police forces anyway. Most are Tajiks, some are Hazaras and Uzbeks, but there are Pashtuns as well, who may or may not be Taliban sympathisers, and are simply enlisting because they can earn a steady pay check.

As for the Afghan police, it is widely despised as a bunch only good enough to set up roadblocks, search vehicles and extort cash.

The 11-year-old Afghan war is now virtually invisible in the US, even during a drawdown of 33,000 US troops ordered by President Obama by the end of the month (still 68,000 will remain). A majority of Americans want the war over by... yesterday - as in proclaim victory, cut our losses, and leave.

Now, with the new NATO dispensation, it's fair to assume most of the 150,000 Western troops - and fat cat contractors - will get out of Dodge by the end of next year.

As for the Pentagon's obsession in keeping Special Forces on the ground until at least 2024 - as a useful tool in monitoring both Russia and China - it depends on a Status of Force Agreement (SOFA) that the Pentagon must convince Hamid Karzai's government to sign.

Ten years ago, in Paris, I asked Hamid Karzai in person how could an Afghan army be configured with a sectarian bent - mostly Tajiks and not including the Pashtun majority. He cut me off - insisting it would be a success. Now Mullah Omar has answered my question.

After robbing the country blind for over a decade, along with his deceased brother Ahmed Wali, the most probable outcome is that Karzai has already booked his Saigon-style helicopter exit from a roof in Bagram base.

Or he might pull a Nouri al-Maliki in Iraq, not sign the SOFA, and thus pack the US and NATO bags home for good. As Karzai is no more than a US puppet, that's unlikely.

In Iraq - as part of a Machiavellian plan devised by Iranian Quds Force commander Qassem Suleimani - Maliki had the Pentagon believe it would enjoy a SOFA similar to South Korea's. But then, at the eleventh hour, Maliki added a clause to the treaty; US troops/contractors would have to abide by Iraqi law. The deal collapsed.

Without a SOFA, there's also the question of what to do with all the hardware. The US alone holds at least 100,000 containers in Afghanistan. A lot of the hardware will be sold - or "donated" - to allies. That unimpeachable democrat, Uzbekistan's dictator Islam Karimov, for instance, would love to lay his hands on most of the loot for his military.

When Washington cannot even trust the "natives" it is leaving behind to cover the exit - and that's not even counting the extended families of the women and children who became "collateral damage" to US/NATO air strikes - all conditions are in place for a Saigon remix.

Until recently the debate was whether the Taliban would agree not to attack US/NATO troops if a deadline for a total retreat was set in stone. Now the Taliban don't even need an agreement.

As historical ironies go, few beat Russia moving into the US/NATO vacuum - light years after the USSR retreated from Afghanistan along that fateful bridge over the Amu Darya (river) in February 1989.

Afghanistan won't be back to a murderous civil war as in the first part of the 1990s. This time, the most probable outcome is a partition of the country

between the Taliban and local warlords, with Pakistan, Iran, India and Russia positioning themselves as the ultimate arbiters.

There will always remain the dodgy angle of the West's latest Afghan adventure being all about heroin - which implies private banking's humongous money laundering profits. Talk about a bulky Western army providing security for global drug lords. Precedents abound - as in the Opium Wars.

But whatever angle is examined, the fact is the overwhelming majority of Afghans - no matter their ethnicity - just want the foreign invaders to leave. Their hearts and minds were never conquered in the first place; after all, the invaders have not even managed to speak Pashto or Dari.

Now consider this: A NATO commander? No; British army chaplain Rev GR Gleig, writing about the First Anglo-Afghan War. The year: 1843.

Talk about the graveyard of empires.

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad

“I have talked about the two conflicting outlooks prevailing in our world; one that is based on the predominance of its materialistic interests through spreading inequality and oppression, poverty and deprivation, aggression, occupation and deception, and tends to bring the entire world under its control and impose its will on other nations. This outlook has produced nothing but frustration, disappointment and a dark future for the entire humanity.

The other outlook is the one that spouses with the belief in the oneness of the Almighty God, follows the teaching of His messengers, respects human dignity and seeks to build a secure world for all members of the human community, in which everybody can equally enjoy the blessings of sustainable peace and spirituality. The latter is an outlook that respects all human beings, nations, and valuable cultures in defiance of all types of discrimination in the world, and commits itself into a constant fight to promote equality for all before the law on the basis of justice and fraternity, laying a solid foundation to guarantee equal access for all human beings in their quest to excel in knowledge and science.”