

LISA JOURNAL

Issue No: 22

Editor: Saeed Ismat

April – June 2012

CONTENTS

Editorial	2
Obama Does the Right Thing <i>Eric S. Margolis</i>	7
Multi-layered web woven around Pakistan <i>Brig. (Retd) Asif Haroon Raja</i>	10
India's Military Spending <i>Asif Ezdi</i>	14
Ever Suffering Dalits <i>Rahul Kumar Balley</i>	18
Press freedom stifled in India's Naxal areas <i>Gayatri Parameswaran</i>	21
How Russia Plays the Great Game <i>Richard Weitz</i>	24
Myth of Different Nations in Pakistan <i>Khalid Hussain Zia</i>	29
The Next War on Washington's Agenda <i>Paul Craig Roberts</i>	32
The Politics of Knowledge and Caste <i>Braj Ranjan Mani</i>	36
Afghanistan and the Long War <i>George Friedman</i>	45
Fact Sheet Balochistan <i>Agha Gul</i>	50
Afghanistan: 450 Bases And It's Not Over Yet <i>Nick Turse</i>	51
Balochistan in Historical Perspective <i>Naveed Tajammal</i>	57
The Politics of Foreign Hand <i>Asit Das</i>	61
From Agartala to Ajmer <i>Usman Khalid</i>	69

EDITORIAL

US- Afghanistan-Pakistan

The war in Af- Pak did not progress as planned by the US. The US – Pakistan standoff over a range of issues worsened the situation where Pakistan is well placed to extract maximum leverage from US towards a Taliban friendly dispensation backed and dominated by Pakistan. However this may not be forthcoming because of weakened establishment and a corrupt and pliant government in Pakistan. The dirty picture emerging in Af- Pak has US fighting for influence with major stakeholders such as China backed Pakistan and Iran. Both these countries can be instrumental in finding a face saving formula for the US to resolve the crisis and affect a graceful exit.

In his article ‘The Lost War’ Patrick Cockburn writes that it is an extraordinary turn-around that in a decade the Americans are departing and the Taliban are back in business. A leaked NATO report on interrogations of 4,000 captured Taliban, Al-Qaeda, foreign fighters and civilian shows that Taliban prisoners are in a confident mood. They believe their popular support is growing, Afghan government officials secretly collaborate with them, and, once foreign troops are gone, they believe they are going to win.

Afghans like to bet on winners, and the US action will convince many that these are increasingly likely to be the Taliban and Pakistan rather than the Afghan government. No wonder NATO officials looked as anxious as they pretended that the US action had not come as a nasty surprise.

The US has failed in Afghanistan and the Taliban will become stronger. But it is unlikely they can win a total victory. The non-Pashtun communities, a majority of the population, will resist them. Reconciliation will be very difficult in a country as deeply divided as Afghanistan. In the foreseeable future the war may soon be over for the Americans, but not for Pakistanis and certainly not for the Afghans.

India Getting Trapped

In the new Cold War between US and China, India is being groomed to play the role Pakistan played as a US ally in the cold war with Russia. (And look what happened to Pakistan.) Many of those columnists and “strategic analysts” who are playing up the hostilities between India and China, can be traced back directly or indirectly to the Indo-American think-tanks and foundations. India must understand and learn from Pakistan’s case that being a “strategic partner” of the US means collaboration (interference) at every level. It means hosting US Special Forces on Indian soil (a Pentagon Commander recently confirmed this to the BBC). It means sharing intelligence, altering agriculture and energy policies, opening up the health and education sectors to global investment. It means opening up retail. It means an unequal partnership in which India is being held close in a bear hug and waltzed around the floor by a partner who will dump her the moment she refuses to dance.

There is certainly more of the smell of war in the air around the Persian Gulf this year than any other year in recent times. This is driven by fear that Iran is inching ever closer to actually getting its hands on the bomb and that its window of vulnerability to an Israeli attack may be closing rapidly. The prospect of an Iranian nuclear bomb is not so much an existential threat to Israel as an end to Israeli nuclear hegemony and full-spectrum dominance over all other countries in the Middle East.

India has good relations with Iran based on shared trade and security interests. Iran supplies about 12 percent of India's oil imports. Delhi has also had a long-standing interest in building a gas pipeline from Iran to India, but that would have to run through Pakistan. US pressure on India to cut its reliance on Iran oil and gas has created a complex situation for India. India has to balance a complex array of interests in

the region. Some Indian independent strategists are of the view that there has been an equally long-standing convergence of strategic interests with Iran in Afghanistan and Pakistan that will outlast the Western military involvement in Afghanistan.

Pakistan Media Corrupted

Starting 2010 the Obama administration made plans to spend nearly \$50 million on Pakistani media to reverse anti-American sentiments. This has done wonders as one sees the erstwhile hostile (anti US policy)TV anchors changed like chameleon changes its colours. In the perception of many Pakistanis, the card being played right now by US establishment and its allied media is to weaken the only institution left intact in Pakistan; its military. The military-bashing campaign is being reinforced by Pakistani media that has immature anchors and some of the opportunist politicians who are trying to settle their score with the military establishment

Farrukh Saleem wrote in the News that Inter-Services Intelligence Agency (ISI) is under an asymmetric attack of a unique kind. ISI, the eyes and ears of Pakistan, is in the midst of a 'war of the mind'. The weapon is one of the oldest in the Central Intelligence Agency's (CIA) stockpile. It is non-lethal but a definite combat multiplier. The weapon is all about 'sight and sound' and is dispersed for sacking their inefficient and corrupt government either by the media, newspapers, magazines, diplomats, courts or by face-to-face interactions. They need to understand the new game plan; this involves tarnishing the image of Pakistan's military in order to destabilize and eventually disintegrate the country for a larger scheme of reshaping the world to the advantage of the sole super power.

Only in Pakistan do the media champion the cause and lionize traitors and terrorists that act against their country. Would the British media have acted in the same way in the case of IRA or the Spanish for ETA or the Indians for the Kashmiris, Sikhs and Naxalite?

The media is ideally perceived as the fourth pillar of the state (alongside the judicial, legislative and executive powers), but in Pakistan, most people have come to distrust the media and those who practise journalism. Presently, Pakistanis are demanding that star anchors of various current affairs programmes and other journalists be held accountable for their actions.

Supreme Court a Forlorn hope of hapless Pakistanis

It appears that the Supreme Court of Pakistan has inadvertently fallen prey to these schemes as the timings of hearing the Mehran Bank scandal suggests. Since the hearing of this case was commenced by the Supreme Court the media went berserk in a relentless attack on the institution of the Army and ISI. Never in the history of Pakistan or for that matter any nation in the world, the local media and politicians have maligned, humiliated and insulted their own armed forces with no holds barred.

An independent judiciary would pose a threat to the corrupt. The picture looked promising when an independent judiciary (Supreme Court) was reinstated after a truly memorable struggle and thus the expectations were high. In the perception of many its judgments are slow and it has failed to enforce its own judgments. Ikram Sehgal, a journalist with high integrity and repute writes: All cases are pending for unknown reasons! The nation is losing confidence in the judiciary."Justice delayed is justice denied "

Agreed, The Supreme Court did not have guns or armoured divisions or special service group to force subservience to its edicts. But, it had a surfeit of moral authority and the active public support to back it if the need for that ever arose. Ikram Sehgal goes to the extent of saying that the Supreme Court should have been able to call on all institutions including the instrument of last resort, the armed forces. Pakistan government and its Prime Minister and The President take pride in its open and wilful defiance /disobedience of the judiciary. Most Pakistanis subscribe to the view that there were countless opportunities for the judiciary to assert its authority through a combination of issuing expeditious judgments and following up on their implementation through the use of constitutional powers vested in it.

It is on both these fronts that the judiciary has been found wanting. As a consequence of this failing, the proponents of the corrupt status quo have become more daunting in their misdemeanours, thus adding to the woes of a beleaguered people most of whom are incessantly fighting for a few miserly morsels every day.

When President Zardari and his son Balawal openly attacked the Supreme Court (specifically the Chief Justice of Pakistan) and the Army, only then perhaps His Lordship understood the game plan and stated that he shall not allow anyone to defame the Armed Forces or the Judiciary of Pakistan. Too late too little My Lord, the damage has been done and may we have the audacity to suggest that such comments are unnecessary and meaningless coming from the highest judicial officer unless they are translated in appropriate timely judgment that court has the will and wherewithal to implement

Pakistan- Besieged or Held on Ransom?

Raof Hasan befittingly remarks in his article in the News International that Pakistan is a besieged country in the hands of its leadership and their crude machinations solely crafted for their vile advancement.

Pakistan's misery can be traced to the incompetence, woeful lack of sincerity, an inherent defiance of the rule of law and deep-rooted corruption of its rulers who have adorned its throne playing out a ghastly sequence of masquerades. Exploiting an economically-captive electorate is rather easy to bring forth a coterie of people who control their purse strings. Is this democracy by any stretch of imagination? Crimes are being perpetrated in the name of democracy and religion while the relatively clean higher judiciary and the Army are sitting placidly watching this sordid drama of plunder and loot.

A Ray of Hope

Imran Khan has emerged in Pakistan as a light at the end of tunnel. A survey conducted by the institution in the urban centre revealed that 80% of educated elite would support him in future election. However, well over 55% conceded that winning at polls is different ball game. Whereas the current rulers PPP along with a very friendly opposition of PML (N) would easily exploit an economically captive electorate in towns and rural areas fully supported by the feudal lords in Punjab and Sindh and the warlords /Sardars of Balochistan would capture enough seats. *Many suggest the only way out for Pakistanis is to come out in the streets and launch a people's movement to Islamabad to topple the masquerading plunderers of this hapless country.* Imran has the ability and charisma to start this movement for restoration of true democracy in Pakistan. He need not worry about the establishment. This time around there is little chance of telephone call from General Kayani to call off the march to Islamabad as he did during the long march (for restoration of the superior judiciary).

Obama Does the Right Thing

Eric S. Margolis

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

*“Far-called our navies melt away,
On dune and headland sinks the fire,
Lo, all our pomp of yesterday,
Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!”*

Rudyard Kipling 1897 “Recessional”

The poet laureate of British imperialism might write the same stanzas today about its successor, the American Empire, which, having reached its high water mark in the bleak mountains of Afghanistan is set to begin receding.

America’s Secretary of Defence Leon Panetta announced that all US combat troops would withdraw from Afghanistan by mid-2013. Of the 90,000 US Afghan garrison, 22,000 will depart this fall. Some sort of training mission will remain.

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

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

The United States had hoped to pound or bribe the Pashtun fighters that comprise Taliban and its allies into submission, or split them by selective peace talks.

Such tactics, backed by massive air power and ethnic cleansing of some three million Sunnis, worked for a time in Iraq.

They have failed in Afghanistan. Every sort of modern weapon save nuclear devices was used against the Afghan resistance: Carpet bombing, laser-guided bombs, fuel-air explosives, cluster munitions dispending blizzards of steel shards, mines, helicopter gunships, tanks and giant armoured trucks, swarms of drones, satellites, and aircraft that disable roadside bombs. Deadly AC-130 gunships bristling with guns and 20mm cannon. Death squads attacking at night to kill Taliban sympathisers with heavy artillery and rocket batteries.

Tethered blimps laden with sensors that looked like the gigantic killer robots from H.G. Well’s War of the Worlds. In fact, the Afghan war has been a one-sided conflict between a backward people living in the 12th century and the high-tech military might of 21st century America.

Soon after 9/11, I wrote an article in a US newspaper that America’s intervention in Afghanistan would be a disaster for all concerned. I’d joined Pashtun mujahideen, first against the Soviets, then the Taliban battling the Afghan Communists. These Pashtun mountain warriors were the bravest men I had seen, while covering 14 wars.

All the Western propaganda about “terrorism” and abused women in hijabs could not fully conceal that Afghanistan was a neo-colonial war being waged for strategic geography, minerals, and pipeline routes.

The last fig leaf fell when then CIA Chief Panetta admitted that there were no more than 25-50 Al-Qaeda members in Afghanistan. That and the assassination of Osama bin Laden left Washington no more excuse for occupying Afghanistan. A majority of Americans turned against the endless Afghan war. Even the US-installed Hamid Karzai stated that the NATO’s only achievement had been killing large numbers of Afghan civilians.

Even if US combat troops leave next year, as in Iraq, America will still exercise influence through drones, air strikes, commando raids and a vast fortified Embassy (“Crusader Castles” bin Laden called them) with its own little mercenary army.

Still, quitting the Afghan fiasco will boost Obama’s electoral chances. Hopefully, it will also lessen or end America’s semi-occupation of Pakistan, which has been forced to support a war against its natural ally, Taliban.

As a result, nuclear-armed Pakistan has become dangerously destabilised and a hotbed of anti-Western hatred. Ending the Afghan war is urgent before Pakistan blows up and draws India into the maelstrom. This should be America’s primary strategic interest.

The writer is an award-winning, internationally syndicated columnist. His articles appear in the New York Times, International Herald Tribune, Los Angeles Times, Times of London, Gulf Times, Khaleej Times and other news sites in Asia. He is a regular contributor to The Huffington Post, Lew Rockwell and Big Eye. He appears as an expert on foreign affairs on CNN, BBC, France 2, France 24, Fox News, CTV and CBC.

Has Obama Finally Thrown the Towel?

*It appears that President Obama has decided that the US must cut its losses and withdraw from Afghanistan. What will it leave behind? A civil war? A clandestine war between India and Pakistan? Both? The USA does not have much time or many options. A lot depends on the terms on which Pakistan facilitates a smooth exit and protects residual US presence after exit. The Obama administration, facing a tough election this year, has taken **the fiscally, militarily and politically correct decision to end the no-win, \$1 trillion Afghan war** begun by George W. Bush. The withdrawal dates for roughly 40,000 NATO troops is uncertain, though France just announced an accelerated pull out. The fate of an estimated 80,000 US-paid mercenaries in Afghanistan is also uncertain. The US will continue strikes by drones, warplanes, and attacks by Special Forces from a small number of fortress bases. Pakistan will be cajoled or bribed by Washington to keep its forces active against Pashtun tribal fighters. Washington and London will keep issuing cheery claims about the success of the Afghan war. But the hard truth cannot be avoided.*

Multi-layered web woven around Pakistan

Brig. (Retd) Asif Haroon Raja

After 9/11, a treacherous plan was collectively conceived by USA, Israel, India, UK and Germany to trap Pakistan. The conniving partners decided not only to occupy Afghanistan and make it permanent military base of USA for the pursuit of multiple strategic and economic objectives in the region, but also to denuclearize, de-Islamize and Balkanize Pakistan through a sustained covert war using Afghan soil

It was decided that the objectives set for Pakistan would be achieved by cunningly posing as friends and then stabbing it at the opportune time when it had been sufficiently enfeebled from within. Economically weak Pakistan was to be lured with an attractive offer of \$ 1 billion and pumped up by making it the frontline state to fight global war on terror to defeat terrorism.

Latter was a ruse to embroil bulk of Pak Army in fighting its own people on its soil. Pakistan was given additional incentives by way of rescheduling all its foreign debts and offering greater investments and breaking its isolation.

The plan of action envisaged taking Gen Musharraf into confidence by pretending that Pakistan was the most important strategic partner among the coalition and all had common objective of defeating common enemy that had become a danger to world security.

Once he was taken on board and Pakistan provided all out assistance to bring down friendly Taliban regime, India made the first move in December 2002 by stage-managing a terrorist attack on Lok Sabha building in New Delhi and making it an excuse to deploy its whole military strength along its western border.

Ten months military standoff was meant to pressure Pakistan to allow India to fence the Line of Control in Kashmir (LoC); ban six Jihadi outfits engaged in supporting Kashmir armed freedom movement and thus deflate the resistance movement in Indian Occupied Kashmir (IOK). This coercive distraction or deception was also undertaken to allow CIA and FBI to consolidate their outposts in FATA and Balochistan in that timeframe

Once this objective was achieved, India then established Pakistan specific consulates in southern and eastern Afghanistan and also opened up dozens of training camps to trigger the planned covert war. Bulk of RAW assets were shifted to Afghanistan, which was mandated to foment unrest in two extreme flanks of Pakistan – FATA and Balochistan, and through Washington forcing Pak Army to jump into the inferno of turbulent regions.

Flames of terrorism were then gradually spread from FATA to PATA and other parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and later toward Punjab and Karachi. While Pakistan was constantly pressed to do more against extremists, the terrorist groups in FATA and Balochistan were secretly funded, trained, equipped and guided to create anarchic conditions and to bog down sizeable portion of Pak Army in fighting the faceless enemy. Purpose was to bleed both sides but not allowing any side to win and terminate the war.

In order to conceal clandestine operations as well as to silence Pakistan protesting against India's human rights violations in occupied Kashmir, India entered into a peace treaty in early 2004. To gain Pakistan's confidence India agreed to cease hostilities along the eastern border and the LoC and promised to resolve core issues including Kashmir. Another purpose was to buy time to complete illegal construction of dozens of dams over three rivers flowing into Pakistan.

By 2008, centre of gravity of terrorism had shifted from Afghanistan to Pakistan. Peshawar, Rawalpindi, Islamabad and Lahore suffered violent group attacks and suicide attacks. Over 100,000 troops got irreversibly entangled in FATA and Swat region.

This figure jumped to 1,47,000 in 2009 when three major operations had to be launched in Bajaur, Swat and South Waziristan (SW) in quick succession to push back the surging tide of militancy which had reached Buner. Dismantlement of the three heavily fortified strongholds of the militants at heavy cost and forcing them to flee to other parts of FATA and Kunar and Nuristan in Afghanistan didn't please the US and its strategic partners since it went against their plans.

The band of six including Afghanistan reappraised the obtaining situation and concluded that Pak Army and Frontier Corps were too strong to be defeated by the militants and the ISI was too professional and vigilant to be hoodwinked by six agencies. They agreed that until and unless these two organizations were discredited and put on the back foot, laid down objectives couldn't be achieved. An effort had been made in August 2008 when the newly elected democratic government at the behest of Washington had tried to cut the ISI to size by placing it under US-UK chosen man. It backfired since Gen Kayani put his foot down and PM Gilani had to take back his executive order. The second attempt against the ISI was made in the aftermath of Mumbai attacks by blaming it. Plan was to get it declared as a rogue outfit.

Propaganda war against the Army and ISI was stepped up from 2009 onward and tone of the US officials became more officious and haughty. Af-Pak policy was framed to convert eastern-southern Afghanistan, FATA and northern belt of Balochistan into a single battle zone so as to allow CIA to carry out drone strikes and ISAF air strikes and hot pursuits across the Durand Line unobtrusively. Kerry-Lugar aid bill was yet another snare to enable foreign paid NGOs to work on assigned projects more vigorously, expand American Embassy in Islamabad, establish extensive CIA network, consolidate Blackwater, facilitate thousands of CIA contractors and Marines to sneak in and prepare for the final round. Ironically, the interior minister and our ambassador in Washington facilitated the preparatory work of the decisive round.

Another layer of web was woven around Pakistan by heating up Karachi through the militant wings of regional political parties so as to destabilize the main economic hub centre. Spate of target killings by unknown gunmen were unleashed in 2009 which is still continuing and claimed well over 3000 lives of innocent people. Balochistan was also heated up through target killers and the wrath of foreign paid Baloch rebels fell upon non-locals, particularly Punjabis and Persian speaking Hazara community. Lahore saw series of group attacks by terrorists in 2009. GHQ and ISI setups were attacked. Making so many regions turbulent at a time was designed to maximize pressure and render law enforcement agencies ineffective. Simultaneous thrusts enabled the adversaries to tighten the noose around Pakistan's neck, and reaching a stage wherein they could tug the rope of the multi-layered web at an opportune moment.

When the schemers failed to trap the Army in the snares of Swat and SW, they laid out another trap in North Waziristan (NW). After drumming up that al-Qaeda top leadership was based in NW and then overplaying Haqqani network that it was the chief headache, the US started applying heavy pressure on Pakistan to mount a major operation to liquidate safe havens and ignored GHQ's limitations. When Gen Kayani didn't make any move in NW, the US decided to hit Pak Army/ ISI below the belt by reincarnating the ghost of Osama bin Laden and striking the phantom in Abbotabad. The wicked act further steeled Gen Kayani and Gen Pasha and the two speeded up actions to curb American influence inside Pakistan.

Counter measures further angered the Americans and in retaliation instigated runaway militants from Swat and SW housed in safe havens of Kunar to conduct acts of terror in Dir, Mohmand Agency and Chitral and also multiplied frequency of drone strikes in NW. Orakzai, Kurram and Khyber Agencies were also heated up. When the new fronts were also successfully deactivated, the US in frustration rebounded by initiating memo scandal to create civil-military rift and then launched brazen attack on military posts in Salala and brutally killed 24 Pak officers and men standing guard to check infiltration. This hostile act dipped Pak-US relations to lowest ebb. Four months have elapsed since that unfortunate incident occurred but relations between the two so-called allies are still strained. NATO supply routes are still blocked which is hurting ISAF the most and ISI-CIA intelligence cooperation has almost ceased.

Over ten years have gone past during which the people have suffered a great deal, but thank goodness despite weaving multi-layered web around Pakistan, so far the US and its allied partners have been unsuccessful in denuclearizing, de-Islamizing and Balkanizing Pakistan. Rather all the evil-doers are in trouble and have got entangled in the web of Afghanistan. While the web was being secretly woven at a feverish pace, the ISI had also girded up its loins after the accidental arrest of Raymond Davis and initiated several counter measures to break the CIA network.

I must compliment Lt Gen Ahmad Shuja Pasha for playing his inning as DG ISI estimably. He faced the maximum brunt from the very beginning of his stint and couldn't enjoy even a single day to relax. A man of steel nerves, no amount of American and Indian pressure could flag his tenacity. It is no mean job to face the combined strength of CIA-MI-6-RAW-Mossad-BND-RAAM single-handed. The ISI under him confronted multiple challenges squarely and succeeded in providing effective first line defense. He became an eyesore for USA and India since he thwarted their thrusts towards our vital ground. *He boldly faced the wrath of our foreign-paid media which left no stone unturned to damage his reputation. Undoubtedly he was the best DG ISI after Gen Akhtar Abdur Rahman.*

Fact Sheet Balochistan

Agha Gul

There are more Baloch living in Sindh and Punjab than in so called Balochistan. This fact also needs to be widely circulated to ignorant people, which now include US Congress also.

The original Balochistan comprised the 4 states of Brahuis/Baloch known as Turan till 1700 AD. In 1754, Ahmad Shah Durrani, king of Afghanistan, named a man Nasir Khan, who was a Brahui, KHAN OF KALAT and allowed him to rule, basically Kalat area. Later other Brahui/Baloch sardars were also brought under control. In 1854, all these 4 states went under British suzerainty through a pact for Rs. 50,000 a year. In 1896, the British who had captured Afghanistan in 1876, carved out a part by drawing Durand Line, took over Marri Bugti areas, Sindh down to Jacobabad, named it British Balochistan and ruled it directly through a Agent to Governor General as a Commisionerate. The Baloch/Brahui states were allowed to be run as a loose federation by the Khan of Kalat, with a British Major as Resident in Kalat. The Western Boundary of these states with Iran was also marked by the British and Persia made to accept. Some coastal area stayed under Sultan of Muscat. This and the border with Iran were revised during Pres Ayub Khan's rule.

In 1947, Old Balochistan was designated as Kalat Division and the British Balochistan where Pashtun lived and was under the British and a part of Sindh, were designated as Quetta Division, and ruled as part of West Pakistan.

The present day Balochistan came into being in 1970 with demolishing of One Unit. The Quetta and Kalat Divisions were merged to name them, of course wrongly, Balochistan

. To judge the sparse population, please remember while the area of Old Balochistan was huge, some 200,000 sq Km, population in 1854 estimated by the British, of old Balochistan was 254,000 only.

Today, population of old and British Balochistan merged with a sliver of Sindh, Nasirabad, collectively, are about 7 million.

India's Military Spending

Asif Ezdi

Presenting the country's annual budget for 2012-13 in the Indian parliament earlier this month, Indian Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee announced a massive 17 percent increase in spending on defence services, raising it to 1.93 trillion Indian rupees (\$40 or 38.6 billion). Of this outlay, 41 percent would be spent on procuring modern weapons systems and military hardware. This year's rise follows a 12 percent increase in the previous year's budget. Mukherjee offered little explanation for this massive boost in military expenditure, apart from stating that the allocation was "based on present needs" and that "any further requirement will be met." India's actual military budget is even higher, as the figure for "defence services" does not include spending on its nuclear weapons programme, military pensions and the paramilitary forces.

Three days after India's budget was presented, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), a reputed think tank, released a study on global arms transfers according to which India has now overtaken China as the world's biggest importer of weapons. India purchased some \$12.7 billion in weaponry during 2007-2011 from foreign countries and accounted for 10 percent of all arms imports during this period.

India's future arms acquisitions plans, as it goes on a major military spending spree to expand and modernise its armed forces, are even more staggering. In a report published last month, Jane's Defence Weekly estimated that India will spend \$100 billion on defence procurement between 2011 and 2015.

In the past, India bought most of its advanced weaponry from Russia. This is changing now, as India increasingly looks to western countries in building up a modern arsenal. The US and other western countries have not only been aggressively marketing their military hardware, they have also feverishly been wooing Delhi politically in order to get a share of the Indian market for fighter jets, tanks, artillery, small arms, transport planes, submarines and a range of naval vessels. According to a Pentagon report, India was the third largest purchaser of US arms during fiscal 2011 – after Afghanistan and Taiwan – with contracts worth \$4.5 billion.

In the largest-ever bilateral defence deal between India and the US, Delhi last year ordered 10 C-17 Globemaster-III strategic airlift aircraft for \$4.1 billion. Together with the 12 C-130J Super Hercules India has ordered from the US, these aircraft will greatly enhance India's capability to swiftly move troops and equipment to forward areas. The Kargil airstrip is being extended to enable these large transport planes to operate from there.

The biggest prize in the Indian arms market that for the supply of 126 multi-role fighter aircraft to replace the Soviet-era fleet of MiGs has been won by Dassault Aviation of France, manufacturer of Rafale warplanes. The contract has an estimated worth of \$12-15 billion. The addition of another 63 probably at a later stage would take the overall cost to over \$20 billion.

Delhi's plans for a blue-water navy are also on track. India already has an old aircraft carrier, the Viraat, which will remain operational for some years to come. The refurbished Russian aircraft carrier Admiral Gorshkov, rechristened as the Vikramaditya, is expected to be delivered by the end of 2012. In addition, an indigenous aircraft carrier which is being built at the Cochin Shipyard is expected to become operational in 2015. The Indian navy is confident that it will have two full-fledged aircraft carrier battle groups by 2015 or so.

India is also going ahead with the development of its own nuclear-powered submarine. In December last year, it took delivery of an Akula II class nuclear-powered attack submarine on a 10-year lease from Russia.

It is remarkable that there has been little public debate in India on the purpose or justification for the country's hugely ambitious military build-up plans. Anyone who questions the programme immediately risks being labelled as unpatriotic. Nor has the Indian Government ever clearly articulated the strategic priorities that drive its military expansion and modernisation programme or given a coherent rationale for its costly investment in military hardware.

In May last year, Defence Minister A K Antony expressed "serious concern" over growing defence ties between Pakistan and China and said that India would have to bolster its own military capabilities to meet the challenge. "The main thing," he said, "is we have to increase our capability. That is the only answer." Antony made these comments following reports China planned to accelerate the supply of 50 new JF-17 Thunder multi-role combat jets to Pakistan. Delhi's claim of a "challenge" from Pakistan is of course nothing but fiction in view of India's overwhelming conventional superiority over Pakistan, on land, in the air and on sea.

In testimony before the US Senate last January, James Clapper, Director of US National Intelligence, expressed the view that the Indian military was strengthening its forces "in preparation to fight a limited conflict along the disputed border, and is working to balance Chinese power projection in the Indian Ocean." Yet the fact is that the chances of even a "limited" military conflict between China and India are zero.

The People's Daily, mouthpiece of the Communist Party of China, came nearer to the truth in a commentary on December 18 last year titled "Risks behind India's military build-up". India, the newspaper said, had strategic ambitions and was strengthening its military clout to match its status as a major power. The newspaper advised India that instead of being hostile to its neighbouring countries, it should reduce its own "persecution mania".

The main reason for India's splurge on modern military hardware is that it wants to flex its military muscles to gain recognition as a major regional or even global power. India is particularly unhappy at Chinese influence in the Indian Ocean region and is having to play catch-up in what it likes to think is its own strategic backyard. To assert this claim, Delhi has gone into overdrive cultivating relations with countries up and down the length and breadth of the Indian Ocean. Last month, it hosted naval exercises with 14 Indian Ocean countries on the Andaman Islands. Pakistan and China were not invited. India is also spending \$2 billion to set up a military command on Andaman Islands.

On a visit to India last year, Hillary Clinton publicly urged India to turn its "Look East" policy into one of "Act East." With Washington's encouragement, Delhi is now hoping to carve out a role for itself not only in the Indian Ocean but also in the South China Sea and the Western Pacific. For this purpose, India has struck a strategic partnership with Vietnam, a country which has historically been distrustful of China. India's first foray into South China Sea did not end very happily though. An amphibious assault vessel, INS Airavat that sailed from the Andamans to Vietnam last July on a goodwill visit was challenged in the South China Sea by the Chinese navy which asked the Indian vessel to leave Chinese waters. Both sides later played down the incident but the message seems to have been registered.

One of the widely circulated myths about our defence expenditure is that we spend a far bigger portion of our GDP on our military than India does. The data published by SIPRI tell a different story. Pakistan's defence expenditure as a share of GDP for 2009, the latest for which data has been published by SIPRI, was 2.8 percent. India's defence expenditure was also 2.8 percent of the GDP for that year.

The long-term trend in Pakistan is downwards. Defence expenditure fell from 6.2 percent of the GDP in 1988 to 2.8 percent in 2009. In India it has remained more or less constant. It was 3.6 percent in 1988 and 2.8 percent in 2009.

The writer is a former member of the Pakistan Foreign Service. Email: asifezdi@yahoo.com

Water the lifeline of National Existence

General Mirza Aslam Beg

Indian 'water hegemony plans' seriously threaten Pakistan's economy and agriculture. On 27 February 2012, the Indian Supreme Court ordered the government to implement the 2002 project to link major rivers in India, 'in a time-bound manner'. The over \$100 billion project will link around 30 rivers. The project is split into the Himalayan component, with 14 linkages and the peninsular component, with 16 linkages. It is the Himalayan component which will dry-up the rivers flowing into Pakistan. India, continues building 300 small and major dams, linking the rivers to contain Pakistan's water share, has allocated \$212 billion for turning the water courses of Chenab, Jhelum and Indus from North to South. These include 24 projects on River Chenab, 52 on River Jhelum and 18 on River Indus. Thus India will deprive Pakistan of its share of water and establish Indian water hegemony – an all-encompassing strategy to ruin Pakistan's agriculture affecting seven million acres of fertile land. According to articles 3, 4 and 7 of Indus Water Treaty, India could not construct water reservoirs, over western rivers of Chenab, Jhelum and Sindh nor could it divert the catchment areas of tributary canals of these rivers. New Delhi is also bound to notify Pakistan in advance about the water schemes but so far it has failed to do so.

The writer is a former Army Chief of Pakistan

Ever Suffering Dalits

Rahul Kumar Balley

No doubt ,India is making progress by leaps and bounds in every sector but the condition of the Dalits in India is deteriorating day by day in the society .Development of any nation has no meaning when a particular section of the society such as the downtrodden are socially & economically segregated from the mainstream . The situation is critical when we measure the overall development of the country in absence of equal opportunity for the minorities. Article 17 of the Indian constitution forbids the practice of untouchability .It runs as "Untouchability is abolished & its practice in any form is forbidden .The enforcement of any disability arising out of: untouchability shall be an offence punishable in accordance with law .Dalits are barred from temple entry in many states of the country even after independence .The District officers ignore the sufferings of the Dalits. Caste discrimination has made the life of the Dalits miserable and intolerable. They are ill treated by the upper caste officers in each department of the government .Dr B.R.Ambedkar was of the view that "caste has ruined the Hindus ***the reorganisation of the Hindu society on the basis of *Chaturvarna* is impossible because the *varna Vyavastha* is like a leaky pot or like a man running at the nose (Ambedkar ,B,R. *Annihilation of Caste ;Appendix –II:A* reply to the Mahatma ;Jalandhar ,Bheem Patrika Publications ,1987 P144)

It has been observed that successive governments at the centre as well as at the state largely ruled by the upper caste Brahmins are to be blamed for their worsening condition on all fronts. Data given by the Ministry of Home Affairs says that the country is on the rise in the crime against Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes .The report says ,in the recent years 40,000 cases were registered during 2008 about 3600 more than the previous year .Uttar Pradesh has the highest registered cases in the country followed by Madhya Pradesh and Bihar .The data by the National Crime records Bureau (NCRB) , a nodal agency

under the Ministry of Home Affairs indicates a total of 49,810 people were convicted out of 1,90,857 arrested between 2006-08 under various sections of the Act .

There has also been an alarming increase of violence against women. A study of 500 Dalit women's cases of violence across AP, Bihar, Tamil Nadu and UP between 1999 and 2004 revealed that the majority of the women faced several forms of violence from either or both perpetrators in the general community and the family . The most frequent forms of violence were verbal abuse (62.4%), physical assault (54.8%), sexual harassment and assault (46.8%), domestic violence (43.0%) and rape (23.2%).

Thousands of cases of atrocities against the Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes are found to be unreported & unregistered due to political clout of the upper caste Brahmins who exercise money power as well as muscle power to nip such cases in the bud. In the existing atmosphere of deep rooted prejudice I am of the opinion that even a Dalit Prime Minister can not prevent atrocities against the Dalits in India unless or until mentality of the larger section of the people is not changed in favour of the Dalits in India . The Dalits have rightly nursed serious apprehensions and insist that Hinduism played a role in their social oppression. Sections of the secular lobby have rejected Hinduism as irrational and unscientific. The cultural nationalists have given it a bad image through their strident advocacy of a militant and aggressive Hindutva. Many feminists are shocked by patriarchal texts like the Manu Shastras. These are enough reasons for the liberal intellectual to consider throwing the baby out with the bath water. With all these serious anomalies would it not be better that Hinduism is at least ignored, insofar as that is possible, since it is unlikely to die a natural death in the near future ? Dr Ambedkar embraced Buddhism, a religion of peace and prosperity and advised millions of so called Dalits to follow suit to lead a dignified life.

On Nov 2, 2006, addressing the annual conference of the minorities commissions, the Prime Minister of India Dr Manmohan Singh had said "It is essential that communal peace and harmony should be maintained and the minorities get a fair share in Central and State Government and private sector jobs". He also stated that the minority youth should be trained with skills which will enable them to get their legitimate share both in public and private sector. It seems these are talks and talks only nothing substantial is being done to ameliorate the worsening condition of the Dalits.

Congress party having ruled the country for larger period has not made sincere efforts to ameliorate the conditions of the Dalits in India. Welfare schemes launched by the central government as well as the state governments proved to be ineffective to improve the pathetic conditions of the Dalits since a large chunk of the funds earmarked for the welfare of the poor Dalits are eaten away by the upper caste Brahmins who control the government machinery. It has also been observed that some unscrupulous Dalits in connivance with the corrupt officials of the government are also involved in looting the welfare funds meant for the needy, poor Dalits .Fake NGOs in the name of the Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes being run by greedy Dalits need to be exposed .A new trend has been witnessed in the coming days that some of the upper caste Brahmins found to be running such NGOs and getting funds from different government ministries. The central as well as the state government should bar such fake NGOs running across the country and stop the loot.

Eminent social scientists have been warning the respective governments to take care of the minorities before a volcano of discontentment engulfs the country .Abraham Lincoln said **You may fool all the people some of the time; you can even fool some of the people all the time; but you can't fool all of the people all the time.**

Rahul Kumar Balley is Director of Buddha Education Foundation

The Saga of Tragedy

Ravi Sinha

“We on the sub-continent, too, have suffered grievously and felt the heat form far too close. Afghanistan is a continuing saga of tragedy; Pakistan has been made to pay too heavy a price; and India too has not managed to steer clear of catastrophe. And we know very well that when we count the countries that have suffered, the loss is borne invariably by the people and not by their rulers. [See Ravi Sinha's ‘Three Formidable Barriers to the Advance of Democracy’ keynote address at the joint convention of Pakistan-India Peoples' Forum for Peace and Democracy (PIPFDP) at Allahabad from 29 to 31 December 2011].

Press freedom stifled in India’s Naxal areas

Gayatri Parameswaran

It might be the world’s largest democracy but India is struggling to defend its democratic status in the ‘red corridor’ – areas troubled by Naxalite or Maoist insurgency. Expectedly, press freedom is taking a beating. Some activists say the government is controlling information to hide its bad human rights track record.

“I can’t meet you openly. Let’s get into your car and drive away from here. We’ll talk in the car,” Satish Naik* tells me over the phone. Naik is a local TV journalist in Dantewada district of Chhattisgarh state in India’s Naxalite belt.

Epicentre

One of the least developed areas in the country, Dantewada has been at the epicentre of the conflict between the Indian government and the Naxalite in the past few years. Government reports suggest that in 2011, over 500 people have died in the violence. A recent Human Rights Watch report condemned India for its handling of the security situation in the Naxalite war zone. It said, “Impunity for abuses committed by security forces remains a pressing concern.”

The Naxalite movement began in West Bengal in 1960s and spread to central India in the 70s and 80s as a popular armed revolt. The Naxalite claim to be fighting on behalf of adivasis (indigenous tribal), the main victims of the land grabs sponsored by multinationals with the help of the Indian government. The tribals are living on land rich in minerals and forest resources and there are fortunes to be made from the exploitation of the natural wealth.

Surreptitious

Naik is justifiably cautious about being seen to be helping an outside journalist. In recent years, the police has arrested and beaten tribals and local journalists who tried to tell the story of official repression in the

region's remote rural communities. "They [police forces] might get curious about who you are and what you are trying to find out. They might follow us," he warns just before the phone line is cut.

Mobile lines in Dantewada and other Naxal areas are notoriously unreliable, and journalists and activists are conscious that they could be bugged. When I arrive to pick him up, Naik dives quickly into the car and urges us to leave immediately. At the frequent police check points on the road, he hides his face and at times ducks away.

Self-censorship

Naik says that the authorities believe that most 'outsiders' come looking for 'human rights-type' stories that would put them in a bad light. "I don't want to be seen as assisting outside journalists. I have to be careful, because I could get into trouble," he stresses.

Naik tells me that the war has challenged India's democratic character: "It's not like rest of India here. There's no freedom of movement or expression." Journalists bucking the local system can lead to trouble, so many journalists subscribe to self-censorship. This has led to a blackout of important information.

Vengeance

Recently, Naik received a notice from the local authorities ordering him to vacate his house. He had written a story "about how a local collector abused his local labourer." He says, "A few days later I got the notice."

Naik was accused of illegally occupying forest land, but he says, "This is a tactic to bully me. The house isn't registered on my name, but the notice was served under my name."

Attacks

Human rights activist Himanshu Kumar says there have been cases of independent journalists being attacked, threatened, intimidated and even killed. He recounts the recent case of Lingaram Kodopi, an adivasi from Dantewada district.

Kodopi was the first tribal to be enrolled for a journalism course in Delhi. Last year, he filmed testimonies from villagers after a police raid where houses were burnt and several people were killed. After the film was released to the Indian media, Kodopi was arrested, and while he was in custody, he was brutally beaten. When his aunt, Soni Sori, filed a protest, she too was arrested and beaten. Both are now in prison, accused of being Naxalite.

Semi-hiding

Himanshu Kumar, who worked among tribal people in Chhattisgarh for nearly two decades, was himself persecuted in Dantewada. The ashram and school he established with his wife was burnt down and his family was forced to leave the state.

He now lives a life of semi-hiding in Delhi, and is still banned from returning to Chhattisgarh. "The motive behind creating panic and fear among people is that any voice of dissent, any protest against forceful land acquisition is silenced," he says in a phone interview from Delhi.

'Dark situation'

Kumar says the government has cordoned off the Naxal areas to independent journalists to prevent news of human rights abuses leaking out. Recently, an employee of Tehelka, an independent news magazine, was refused accommodation in Dantewada's only guesthouse after acknowledging that he was a journalist.

“In such a dark situation, information gathering has become quite impossible. The government claims that the Naxalite are bad people and that the government is doing good work there. Then what is the government trying to hide?” he asks.

Partly free

India is widely touted as the world’s largest democracy with a feted “free press” however, the Freedom House, an independent organisation that monitors freedom across the world, has rated the Indian press as only “partly free.”

Kumar remains pessimistic. “Sadly, I believe the situation is just going to get worse with the government tightening control over the land and resources there. It’s the poor adivasis who are suffering and there’s no one to give them a voice.”

How Russia Plays the Great Game

Richard Weitz

Russia is playing a careful balancing game in Central Asia – stirring up worries about the U.S. military presence is just part of the game.

America’s Russia policy is still very much driven by Cold War thinking and overthrowing regimes for being too “pro-Russian” is still one of its primary goals. The ill-fated colour revolutions are not forgotten. No Russian is fooled by the missile shield either – it is clearly a measure that is primarily aimed at Russia.

So it is very understandable that containment is an import element of Russia’s foreign policy when it comes to American involvement in Central Asia. But rather than focus on Russia – that doesn’t have much choice – the article would have done better to focus on the US that leaves Russia no choice.

In keeping with their post-Soviet realpolitik, Russian officials consistently voice support for NATO’s Afghanistan mission. After all, they do not want NATO forces to withdraw from Afghanistan too soon for fear that the Afghan War burden will be dumped on them. But should the alliance’s stabilization effort succeed, Russians will be the first to demand the departure of Western troops. And in the meantime, Russian officials are determined to constrain NATO’s military presence in Eurasia by making it dependent on Moscow’s goodwill.

Until recently, most NATO non-lethal supplies bound for Afghanistan were routed through Karachi. But with the closure of the Pakistani route since late November 2011, almost all NATO supplies now enter Afghanistan via the so-called Northern Distribution Network (NDN). The NDN, which is used primarily for non-lethal supplies and equipment, connects Baltic and Caspian ports with Afghanistan via Russia, Central Asia, and the Caucasus. This 5,000 kilometre transportation network involves the delivery of supplies to European ports, where they are loaded onto railway carriages or airplanes and sent through Russia to Kazakhstan or Uzbekistan. From there, the cargo is placed on trucks or trains for shipment into Afghanistan.

Only the most important items are sent by air to Afghanistan, such as weapons, ammunition, critical equipment, and U.S. soldiers, who enter and leave Afghanistan via the Manas Transit Centre in

Kyrgyzstan. Although not formally part of the NDN, almost all NATO forces in Afghanistan transit through this air base, which also provides aerial refuelling, emergency evacuation, and other essential services.

U.S. Defence Secretary Leon Panetta travelled to Kyrgyzstan this month to emphasize to the new Kyrgyz government the importance of the base for the Afghan war effort, which the Pentagon has used to support U.S. military operations in Afghanistan since late 2001. Its importance grew after the Pentagon was expelled from Uzbekistan in 2005, following a dispute over the Uzbek government's human rights policies.

The Pentagon currently pays some \$60 million each year for use of the facility, up from the \$17 million before the lease was renewed in 2009. The 1,500 American troops and private contractors also buy goods and services from the local economy. Lacking the oil and gas resources found in other Central Asian countries, this landlocked former Soviet republic of 5.5 million people has few other sources of income. Kyrgyz officials have therefore indicated that, even if the U.S. can no longer use the facility for military operations, they could still use it to move non-lethal supplies.

Crucially, though, the NDN can't function without access to Russian territory or in the face of Russian opposition given Moscow's decisive influence in the former Soviet republics. Moscow has therefore found itself in a pivotal position from the perspective of meeting NATO's logistical needs in Eurasia. Although Russia wants NATO forces to remain in Afghanistan for the time being, it also wants to keep Iran alienated from the United States, deepen Central Asian fears about supporting an enduring U.S. military presence in their region, and remind Washington that the Kremlin still considers the former Soviet Union as a zone where Moscow should exercise strategic primacy.

As a result, Russian officials have sought to play up fears of a confrontation involving Iran by warning Central Asians that the United States could exploit any basing and other military privileges (such as over flight rights) to entangle them in a war. Russia's state-controlled media has, for its part, supported Iranian claims that the Americans use military facilities in Central Asia not to defend local governments against the Taliban and al-Qaeda (their stated aim), but to wage a covert war against the Iranian government. For example, in 2010, Russia's English-language RT television cited Kyrgyz political analyst Toktogul Kakchekeev as saying: "It's sad that the U.S. air base has now become a transit corridor for pro-American militants from Sunni insurgent groups which organize attacks in Iran."

More recently, Russian officials have exploited current expectations of possible Israeli or U.S. military action against Iran to warn Central Asian states that providing access to military facilities or over flight rights could entangle them in a conflict with Iran. In February of this year, for example, Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman Alexander Lukashevich cautioned that, "It can't be excluded that this site [Manas] could be used in a potential conflict with Iran," which he said would violate the Pentagon's lease agreement with Bishkek.

"The worries are shared not just by Kyrgyzstan, where a debate has erupted about the risk of a retaliatory strike from Iran," he added.

The Russian Foreign Ministry has also claimed that Western powers have been exploiting the Iranian nuclear issue to "re-carve the geopolitical map of the large hydrocarbon-rich region that includes Central Asia." Such remarks came in the context of Kyrgyz President Almazbek Atambayev's February 24 visit to Moscow. Throughout his election campaign, Atambayev insisted that he wouldn't renew the Pentagon's lease to the facility when it expires in July 2014. Although Kyrgyz authorities insist that the United States can't use the base for military operations against Iran or for any other purpose except to support NATO operations in Afghanistan, Atambayev has also expressed alarm that Iran would retaliate for any U.S. military strike by retaliating against Manas.

This tactic of sowing fear among Central Asian states over being dragged into a war with Iran complements Moscow's efforts at securing an agreement last December among the leaders of Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan under which all member

governments of the Collective Security Treaty Organization have to consent to the establishment of a foreign military base in any member's country. The intent of these measures is to constrain the U.S. military presence in Eurasia and also make it dependent on Moscow's good will, further enhancing Russian leverage.

When he met Atambayev in Moscow last month, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev extended Lukashевич's warning to encompass Western pressure on Syria. He claimed that developments related to "the Middle East (around Iran and Syria, and certain other countries) has direct influence on the situation in our region." Medvedev called on these governments to cooperate closely with Russia to address this threat.

Are Central Asian governments' worries about a U.S. attack on Iran justified? Probably not – it's very unlikely that the United States would attack Iran, Syria, or any other Middle Eastern country from Central Asia given the superior and better-situated U.S. military facilities and platforms in the Persian Gulf, both on land and at sea. For example, U.S. Navy carrier-based aircraft could bomb Iranian nuclear targets without needing to fly through any other countries' airspace.

But this won't stop Russian officials focusing on the Iranian threat, not least because they want to distract Central Asian states from their own gripes with Moscow. It's important to recall, for example, that before visiting Moscow, Atambayev had focused his remarks on Russia's failure to provide sufficient compensation to Kyrgyzstan for hosting Russian military facilities, including an air base at Kant, Russia's largest military facility in Central Asia. In an interview with *Kommersant*, Atambayev said that the base should be closed since it doesn't enhance regional security and does nothing except "flatter the vanity of Russian generals."

Of course, as well as seeking to secure more payments for Kyrgyzstan, Atambayev may also be seeking to demonstrate to Kyrgyz his tough nationalist stance and his ability to stand up to, and even manipulate, the great powers. (Kyrgyzstan has the most democratic political system in Central Asia, and politicians need to pay more attention to their popularity to secure re-election than in other Central Asian states).

The Russian Defence Ministry for its part says that its lease terms don't require rent for Kant, which Moscow has defined as coming under the framework of the Collective Security Treaty Organization rather than as a Russian base. (It did, though, acknowledge to *Kommersant* that Russia hadn't paid rent due on its three other military facilities, and that it had ceased fulfilling its 1993 contract to provide Kyrgyzstan with military training and weapons in exchange for the base).

But while Russia's manoeuvrings with Kyrgyzstan have generally bubbled under the surface of international headlines, another of Moscow's relationships has been very much in the news – ties with Tehran.

Russia and Iran share important interests in Central Asia, including promoting the region's energy and economic development as an alternative to Western markets, countering Sunni-inspired terrorism, and balancing American influence in the region. Russia therefore supports the Iranian objective of limiting the U.S. military presence in Central Asia and neighbouring regions, including territory, airspace, or military facilities in Central Asia that could be used to attack Iran.

And traditionally, Tehran has respected Moscow's primacy when dealing with Central Asia. For example, Iran endorsed Russia's military intervention during the Tajikistan civil war – Iran's bilateral ties with Russia remain more important than its still limited relations with the Central Asian states. Also, since Iran hopes to expand its commercial relations with Central Asia, and because it fears the advent of another burdensome civil war such as that in Afghanistan, which flooded Iran with millions of refugees, Tehran views Russia's stabilizing military presence with favour.

So, does this mean that the West is contending with a Moscow-Tehran alliance? Not necessarily – despite some shared interests, it's important not to exaggerate the degree of alignment between Russia and Iran. Tehran's links with international terrorism movements, its support for anti-government groups in Lebanon

and other countries, and above all its controversial nuclear energy program, have all made Moscow keep its distance from Tehran.

Ultimately, the reality is that Moscow's support for Tehran's goals in Central Asia, like those of Washington and its NATO's allies, is about advancing Russia's own goals.

Corrupt Pakistan Media

Malik Ayub Sumbal

The rise of sensationalist media and yellow journalism in Pakistan has led to the emergence of a debate in various circles in the country about the accountability of the media and the journalistic profession.

Corruption has become an integral part of Pakistani journalism. The monopoly corrupt journalists exercise over the profession constitutes a challenge for all media practitioners, because their influential positions make it hard for others to do their jobs properly.

The media is ideally perceived as the fourth pillar of the state (alongside the judicial, legislative and executive powers), but in Pakistan, most people have come to distrust the media and those who practise journalism.

It is a well known fact that Pakistan journalists are paid by non Pakistani's to promote their agenda.

Myth of Different Nations in Pakistan

Khalid Hussain Zia

All Pakistanis descend from the Aryan stock except for two small Groups - Brahvis and Mekranis – and the life line of all provinces is River Indus. There are very few countries in the world with more racial and religious homogeneity than Pakistan. Yet, because of subversive influences a perception exists that ours in a country of many nations. A small group of secessionists are being given hype, a wide coverage, by out pseudo intellectuals and vested interest media, jeopardizing the national security of Pakistan Sailor scholar K. H. Zia debunks the propaganda.

Like so many other notions based on questionable motives, parochial politicians in Pakistan from time to time claim nationhood based on provincial boundaries but not as Pakistanis as such. The provinces were created by the British for administrative convenience. NWFP was traditionally a part of Punjab until the turn of the last century. The Pathans are a proud people, intensely tribal in nature and very far from becoming a separate unified nation. Sind did not become a separate province until 1935, when it was detached from the Bombay Presidency.

The father of Sindhi nationalism G. M. Syed, as the name implies has to be the descendant of immigrants and could not claim to be pure ethnic Sindhi in the strict sense. It may come as a shock to some but well-known and proud Sindhis like the Shar, Magassi, Kulachi, Dodai, Chandio, Kaisarani, Jaskani, Gurchani, Shambani, Leghari, Bhutto, Nutkani, Khoso, Mahr, Gopang, Khoro, Quraishi, Punwar, Buladhi, Hasani, Lund, Lashari, Korai, Bhatti, Mirrani, Parihar, Almani, Umarani, Gabol, Jakhrani, Rind, Pitafi, Talpur, Jatoi, Bozdar, Mazari, Bijarani, to name a few originated from Punjab and their parent tribes can still be found there (please see the three volumes of Sir Denzil Ibbetson's and the Honourable Mr. E. D Maclegan's census reports of 1883 and 1892 entitled ' Tribes and Castes of the Punjab and North-West Frontier Province'.

Apart from sharing the same piece of land and a rudimentary language, there is not very much else common among the people of Punjab either. Even the Hindus and Sikhs across the border stake the claim to being Punjabi. Living in the same proximity does not make a nation nor does speaking the same language. The north-western reaches of the province are mostly inhabited by ethnic Pathans. A large part of the population in the cities of Sialkot, Gujranwala and parts of Gujarat and Lahore is Kashmiri. The south-west is composed of mainly Baluchi and Seraiki speaking people that overlap into Sind.

Majority of the people of Sind belong to Baluchi tribes that migrated from Punjab and Balochistan. The boundaries of Balochistan were not drawn along ethnic lines by the British either. It consisted of two separate political and administrative entities - the princely states Kalat, Mekran, Kharan and Lasbella and a British administered zone in the north and east inhabited by various Pashtoon and other tribes. Baluchis do not constitute the majority of the population of the province (3 million out of the total of 7 million). It is also true that there are as many, if not more, Pathans as Baluchis living in the province today. Certainly, there are more ethnic Baluchis living in Punjab (8 million) and Sind (6 million) than there are in Balochistan.

To cap it all, a separate nation has also been claimed in the name of immigrants from various parts of India (Mohajir) now living in different areas of Pakistan. It makes one wonder considering that some, if not most, of the outfits now staking claims to separate nationhood inside Pakistan were quite happy to merge their identity with a united India before independence and in the last case, as late as 2004 (see report by Amrit Baruah in *The Hindu*, 7th November 2004).

Much of the confusion results from translating the word 'nation' into Urdu as '*kaum*'. The two are not the same. The latter is simply an ethnic identification not tied to a common territorial location or political ideal. There is no precise equivalent of the word 'nation' in the vernacular because the institution itself is alien to it. The British in India often equated *kaum* with 'caste' in Hinduism, although the latter is better described as '*zaat*'.

Having said this, the people in Pakistan have a lot more in common with each other when compared with the inhabitants of most of the other countries in the area. The country is unified and rendered indivisible economically by the River Indus and its tributaries that help sustain its life. There is a common history extending back more than five thousand years to the days of the Indus Valley Civilisation.

With the exception of one or two small groups, like the Brahvis and Makranis, almost all of the people are descended from the same Aryan stock. They are culturally very similar; the vast majority of them have the same religion and a common language they all understand. There are few social taboos and they readily intermarry. These are the primary attributes that form the basis of a nation. The rest is only a matter of time.

People often differ in their views, politicians more than most. It is healthy as long as the basic principles and common aim are not compromised. It was the exaggeration and exploitation of differences carried too far by myopic and unscrupulous politicians that snow-balled and led to the alienation of East Pakistan. They seem to have learnt nothing from the tragedy and continue to create divisions where none need exist, even fanning the flames of religious and sectarian fires ---- a sin if there was one (Holy Koran, 2:62; 2:256; 29:46 and 42:15).

Divisions in any country, be they religious, ethnic or linguistic can be exploited by those who do not wish her well. This is evident from the study entitled, 'US Strategy in the Muslim World After 9/11', carried out by the Rand Corporation for the US Air Force that recommended ways to 'identify' the key cleavages and fault lines among sectarian, ethnic, regional and national lines (among the Muslims) and to assess how these cleavages generate challenges and opportunities for the United States'.

A country or a nation can be likened to a tree. From time to time it may be necessary to prune the dead wood to maintain its health. However, digging at the roots will almost certainly kill the tree itself. Sadly, there are many politicians who have yet to realize that we are all in the same boat and stand to sink together if they kept drilling holes in the bottom of the ship that is Pakistan .++

The Next War on Washington's Agenda

Paul Craig Roberts

Only the blind do not see that the US government is preparing to attack Iran. Washington has deployed missiles directed at Iran in its oil emirate puppet states, Oman and the UAE, and little doubt in the other US puppet states in the Middle East. Washington has beefed up Saudi Arabia's jet fighter force. Most recently, Washington has deployed 9,000 US troops to Israel to participate in "war games" designed to test the US/Israeli air defence system. As Iran represents no threat unless attacked, Washington's war preparations signal Washington's intention to attack Iran.

Another signal that Washington has a new war on its agenda is the raised level of Washington's rhetoric and demonization of Iran. Judging by polls Washington's propaganda that Iran is threatening the US by developing a nuclear weapon has met with success. Half of the American public support a military attack on Iran in order to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear capability. Those of us who are trying to awaken our fellow citizens start from a deficit that the minds of half of the US population are under Big Brother's control.

As the International Atomic Energy Agency's reports from its inspectors on the ground in Iran have made clear for years, there is no evidence that Iran has diverted any enriched uranium from its nuclear energy program. The shrill hype coming from Washington and from the neoconservative media is groundless. It is the same level of lie as Washington's claim that Saddam Hussein in Iraq had weapons of mass destruction. Every US soldier who died in that war died in behalf of a lie.

It could not be more obvious that Washington's war preparations against Iran have nothing to do with deterring Iran from a nuclear weapon. So, what are the war preparations about?

In my judgment, the US government's war preparations are driven by three factors.

One is the neoconservative ideology, adopted by the US government, which calls for the US to use its superior military and economic position to achieve world hegemony. This goal appeals to American hubris and to the power and profit that it serves.

A second factor is Israel's desire to eliminate all support for the Palestinians and for Hezbollah in southern Lebanon. Israel's goal is to seize all of Palestine and the water resources of southern Lebanon. Eliminating Iran removes all obstacles to Israel's expansion.

A third factor is to deter or slow China's rise as a military and economic power by controlling China's access to energy. It was China's oil investments in eastern Libya that led to the sudden move against Libya by the US and its NATO puppets, and it is China's oil investments elsewhere in Africa that resulted in the Bush regime's creation of the United States Africa Command, designed to counter China's economic influence with US military influence. China has significant energy investments in Iran, and a substantial percentage of China's oil imports are from Iran. Depriving China of independent access to oil is Washington's way of restraining and boxing in China.

What we are witnessing is a replay of Washington's policy toward Japan in the 1930s that provoked the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour. Japan's bank balances in the West were seized, and Japan's access to oil and raw materials was restricted. The purpose was to prevent or to slow Japan's rise. The result was war.

Despite the hubris in which it wallows, Washington understands the vulnerability of its Fifth Fleet in the Persian Gulf and would not risk losing a fleet and 20,000 US naval personnel unless it was to gain an excuse for a nuclear attack on Iran. A nuclear attack on Iran would alert both China and Russia that they could suffer the same fate. The consequence would be that the world would face a higher risk of nuclear Armageddon than existed in the mutually assured destruction of the US-Soviet standoff.

Washington is getting all of us in over our heads. Washington has declared the “Asia-Pacific” and the South China Sea to be areas of “America’s national interest.” What sense does this make? It makes the same sense as if China declared the Gulf of Mexico and the Mediterranean Sea to be areas of China’s national interest.

Washington has deployed 2,500 Marines, promising more to come, to Australia in order to do what? Protect Australia from China or occupy Australia? Encircle China with 2,500 Marines? It would not mean anything to China if Washington deployed 25,000 Marines in Australia.

When you get right down to it, Washington’s tough talk is nothing but a silly pointless provocation of Washington’s largest creditor. What if Washington’s idiocy causes China to worry that Washington and its UK and European puppets will seize its bank balances and refuse to honour China’s holdings of \$1 trillion in US Treasury bonds? Will China pull its balances from the weak US, UK, and European banks? Will China decide to strike first, not with nuclear weapons, but by selling its \$1 trillion in Treasury bonds all at once?

It would be cheaper than war.

The Federal Reserve would have to quickly print another \$1 trillion dollars with which to buy the bonds, or US interest rates would shoot up. What would China do with the \$1 trillion in newly printed paper? In my opinion, China would dump it all at once in the currency market, because the Federal Reserve cannot print euros, UK pounds, Japanese yen, Swiss francs, Russian rubles, and Chinese Yuan with which to buy up its newly printed currency.

The US dollar would take a beating. US import prices—which now include, thanks to off shoring, almost everything Americans consume—would rise. The hard-pressed 90% would take a further beating, endearing their Washington oppressors to them to an even greater extent. The rest of the world, anticipating nuclear war, would flee the dollar, as Washington would be a primary attack target.

If the missiles aren’t launched, Americans would wake up the next day a bankrupt third world country. If the missiles were launched, few Americans would wake up.

We, as Americans, need to ask ourselves what all this is about. Why is our government so provocative toward Islam, Russia, China, and Iran? What purpose, whose purpose is being served? Certainly not ours.

Who benefits from our bankrupt government starting yet more wars, picking this time not on defenceless countries like Iraq and Libya, but on China and Russia? Do the idiots in Washington think the Russian government does not know why Russia is being surrounded with missile bases and radar systems? Do they really believe that the Russian government will fall for its lie that the missiles are directed against Iran? Only American idiots who sit in front of Fox “news” could possibly believe that the real issue is an Iranian nuclear weapon.

How much longer will the Russian government permit the US National Endowment for Democracy, a CIA front, to interfere in its elections by financing opposition parties led by the likes of Vladimir Kara-Murza, Boris Nemtsov, and Alexei Navalny, who organize protests of every election that Putin’s party wins, alleging without any evidence whatsoever, but providing propaganda for Washington, who no doubt pays well, that the election will be and was stolen?

In the US, such activists would be declared to be “domestic extremists” and be subjected to rough treatment. In America even anti-war activists are subjected to home invasions by the FBI and grand jury investigations.

What this means is that “the criminal state of Russia” is a more tolerant democracy than the US, or for that matter, America’s puppet states in Europe and the UK.

Where do we go from here? If not to nuclear destruction, Americans must wake up. Football games, porn, and shopping malls are one thing. Survival of human life is another. Washington, that is, “representative government,” consists only of a few powerful vested interests. These private interests, not the American people, control the US government.

That is why nothing that the US government does benefits the American people.

The current crop of presidential contenders, except for Ron Paul, represents the controlling interests. War and financial fraud are the only remaining American Values. Will Americans again give the sheen of “democracy” to rule by a few by participating in the coming rigged elections? If you have to vote, vote for Ron Paul or for a more extreme third party candidate. Show that you do not support the lie that is the system.

Stop watching television. Stop reading newspapers. Stop spending money. When you do any of these things, you are supporting evil.

PAUL CRAIG ROBERTS was an editor of the *Wall Street Journal* and an Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Treasury. His latest book, *HOW THE ECONOMY WAS LOST*, has just been published by CounterPunch/AK Press.

The Politics of Knowledge and Caste

Braj Ranjan Mani

In the pre-modern world, the predominant form of asset to production was land; capital became paramount with the Industrial Revolution; today the main asset is increasingly seen to be knowledge, information and technology. This trend which is pervasive today carries the connotation that rights, status, privileges and power that were earlier based on birth and the *will of God* have now been replaced by the secular provenance of talent, technology and knowledge.

It is said an individual's status and worth is determined no longer by membership in a family, caste, or class but by sheer talent, gifts and capacities. That today's global society is so beautifully organised that no power on earth can keep good and gifted men, women and children down. Such a rosy understanding of the contemporary world is part of a bigger Bourgeois-Brahmanic propaganda that with the liberal—(read) corporate—democracy and free market economy we are witnessing a great civilisational movement from darkness to light, from the closed, conservative society of the past to the open-ended globalisation of today. Pop philosophers of the new regime are singing hosannas on how humanity and society is reaching, or has already reached, the end of history, the end of politics, the end of ideology. In this context, one often hears that knowledge, not weapons, is the currency of power today. And we often hear terms like *knowledge society*, *knowledge economy* and *knowledge industry* to underline inclusiveness, justice and fairness of the brave new world. With the triumph of knowledge and market forces, they say, the world has become free, fair and just, and there is no greater foolishness than raking up old and dead issues like caste, class, and patriarchy.

Although Bacon gave it a compelling intellectual articulation (which caught the postmodernist imagination in the last 50 years or so), this understanding was not original to Bacon; many intellectual-writers in fact had pointed this out in one way or another in earlier centuries. The Brahman in ancient India, for example, not only rapturously chanted the mantra of *shabda brahma hai* (word is the supreme power) but also went

on to put it into practice. They monopolised *shabda-shakti* as their *brahma-astra* (the ultimate weapon) to subjugate the whole society in a caste mould in which everything was rigged in their favour. The dharma they envisioned was the cosmic order maintained by the correct performance of the sacrifice, which in turn was dependent on the maintaining of the requisite social hierarchy. In other words, the Brahman would not establish dharma (which implied righteousness as well as justice) unless the Brahman himself presided over it, unless dharma upheld caste hierarchy, unless righteousness was bound to caste order, unless righteousness was bound to political power, unless justice was one with *danadaniti* (rule of force) and *matsyanyaya* (the law of big fish swallowing small ones). All this was done on the strength of knowledge power—the knowledge which blurred the boundary between faith and reason, hierarchy and harmony and whose sole goal was power, by hook or by crook.

Today, the corrupting nature of power is well-known, well-theorised, and widely accepted, but the understanding of knowledge-power nexus still remains obscure and by and large hidden from the public view. *Sorely missing, from the viewpoint of the oppressed, is a public debate on the politics of knowledge, and how it has been a tool of social and political control in the hands of the ruling forces, from the very beginning of civilisation.* Instead, there is a dominant tendency to accept even closed and conservative education as good and desirable, and knowledge is, by and large, still mistaken as wisdom and virtue, without realising that “all knowledge that is divorced from justice must be called cunning,” as Socrates warned.

It is this more or less intact goodwill in favour of *received* education and knowledge that makes the most reactionary and oppressive forces sing the hosannas of knowledge in order to hide massive discriminations and disparities in today's world. *There is need to debate afresh and vigorously the dark side of knowledge, and how this side—the abuse of knowledge—has been a constant in human history. There is need to hammer home the point how some of the world's leading knowledge-makers invoked the laws of nature, the hand of providence, the ruse of reason in a variety of ways, and did whatever they could to institutionalise human hierarchy.* It is notable that the word *hierarchy* by its very etymology (in Greek) associates two ideas: “ruling” and “the sacred.” But even a cursory glance at history will reveal that ruling, or power, has been far more aligned with the profane than the sacred. In other words, the hierarchy of high and low was created by the powerful few to perch themselves atop the social pyramid and divide, rule and exploit the many who were pushed down to the bottom. This exploitation was material and mental, real and symbolic. The violence was not just social and economic but also moral and intellectual, and in fact there was a symbiosis between them. The construction of caste and its consequences is a living example of this epistemic violence. But before we come to the nexus of knowledge with caste, let's first understand, in broad brushstrokes, the duality and politics of knowledge.

Double-Edged Sword of Knowledge and Social Darwinism

Knowledge can be both healing and oppressive, and more often than not a messy mixture of the two. Encompassing the potential for both the noble and the ignoble, knowledge can lead to good as well as evil consequences. For this reason, the history of knowledge, contrary to the popular perception, has had a rather messy, if not adversarial, relationship with the aspiration of human liberation. Even our objective knowledge, like other things in life, is what we make use of it. Very little depends upon our knowledge, and everything upon our practical and political demands or upon our will for framing principle or policy that we decide to adopt. One thing, however, stands out sharply: removal of false knowledge is necessary but not enough for human liberation; if our flawless knowledge does not enlarge our empathy, it does nothing morally, and detached from humane values and ethics, it acquires the potential to be dangerous.

People often extol the glories of knowledge but its politics has a much bloodier background than war. Take, for example, the case of a cunning concoction of knowledge and politics known as scientific determinism or Social Darwinism—and its various new and sophisticated variants that have sprung up in recent times—that openly or covertly justifies human hierarchies and oppression as *natural* and *scientific* because the human world, according to its enthusiasts, cannot, and should not, escape the hierarchies and cruelties in nature. The process of applying the rule of the jungle to the affairs of humanity, however, did not begin in the mid-nineteenth century with Charles Darwin's theory of evolution when it was turned into

a wonderful tool for justifying racism, imperialism and violence by the social reactionary. *The genesis of Social Darwinism may be seen much, much earlier when humans were still in some ways a part of the jungle. Its pioneers were the individuals who envisioned the philosophy of hierarchy, invented the dogmas of caste, race and patriarchy, and laid the intellectual-moral foundation of a vicious human civilisation, dividing the human world into castes or races like the different species of animal kingdom.* Under different guises and nomenclatures, Social Darwinism—its articulation, justification and promotion in theory and practice—began with the Vedic-Brahmanic philosophy of caste hierarchy in the ancient India and the Platonic-Aristotelian advocacy of slavery in the ancient Greece. Apparent differences in articulations apart, both caste and Brahmanism in India and slavery and racism in the West were founded on the caste-patriarchal matrix of grinding down the “weaker sex” and working class. *India's pundits* who glorified caste hierarchies on both natural and supernatural grounds *and the Greek philosophers* who justified slavery in their quest for “truth, beauty and good life” *had not only paved the way for a deceptive intellectual discourse* (which continues to flourish in various schools of scientific determinism, religious obscurantism, and neoconservative theories) *but also much of the dehumanisation and bloodshed in human history.* The Brahmanic-Platonic philosophy spearheaded a method—a cold-blooded intellectual device—of killing people without shedding blood.

A little knowledge is a dangerous thing, Alexander Pope famously said. But even a lot of knowledge, the veritable treasure house of knowledge, can be dangerous if it is seceded from ethics. *Knowledge becomes treacherous, not just inane and barren, when it insulates itself from justice and social responsibility.* Let the truth be told: *few intellectuals have displayed virtue to withstand the highest bidder. Examples of complicities of intellectuals with the powerful, and together invoking truth, reason, or morality to plunder, loot and murder are scattered all over history.* The East India Company (which turned many countries into colonies through its bloodstained politics—all in the name of commerce, and laid the foundations of the modern world's biggest empire) did not just manage to buy off the politicians back home but also recruited some of the country's leading intellectuals, such as Thomas Macaulay, Edward Strachey, Thomas Love Peacock, and both James and John Stuart Mill. Some eggheads are known to have sold their souls even for free. Else, how does one explain slavery and racist thought in Carlyle and colonialism in Ruskin? There is no dearth of the Rudyard Kipling's who extol empire-building as *white man's burden*, and its *savage wars of peace* as an enlargement of the horizon of intellect and experience. And there is no shortage of the Radhakrishnans, the modern Brahmanic woodsmiths, who see the highest values, theological openness, toleration and pluralism in caste and Brahmanism. (India celebrates the Teachers' Day on Radhakrishnans birthday.)

A lie is an allurements, a fabrication that can be embellished into a fantasy; it is much more interesting and profitable than uncomfortable and subversive truth. The educated elitist knows this, and contributes his or her mite in finding novel ways of avoiding, concealing, or distorting reality. One of the greatest *achievements* of the modern times, to borrow Jules Henry's phrase, is “the enormous variety of ways of compelling language to lie.”

The history of use and abuse of knowledge is yet to be fully assessed and written. There is no ambiguity, though, that words have played a deeply dual—constructive as well as destructive—role in human history. In Aldous Huxley's phrase, “Thanks to words, we have been able to rise above the brutes, and thanks to words, we have often sunk to the level of demons.” * [Cited in Gregory Bassham, et al., eds *Critical Thinking*, Second ed. (Boston: McGraw Hill, n.d.), p. 119.] *The dominant class has a long and shameful history of wielding words as a weapon to dehumanise children of the lesser gods. The sword is mightier with the pen.* Conquering and coercion of the supposedly *lesser* humans become much easier with cognition that validates the oppressive system. *This is not to say that good people have not used words for freedom, justice and human rights but to underline and bring home the point that knowledge has been a major tool of social control in the hands of the wily and the wealthy.*

False Knowledge Foundational to the Construction of Caste

The dark side of knowledge is clearly visible in the construction, institutionalisation and normalisation of caste, “a diabolical contrivance to suppress and enslave humanity,” as Ambedkar, one of the greatest anti-caste intellectuals, angrily but aptly put it. * [Ambedkar, in Vasant Moon, ed., *Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar:*

Writings and Speeches, vol. 7 (Bombay: Government of Maharashtra), p. 239.] *Our understanding of caste will remain forever incomplete without understanding the politics of knowledge that nurtured and normalised it from the dim and distant past to the present time.* Irrespective of its origin, no one can deny that caste as a system of organised and graded hierarchy—with “an ascending order of reverence and a descending order of contempt,” to quote Ambedkar again—was an elitist construction. Caste may or may not have pre-Brahmanic origin, as many social scientists quibble, but there is little doubt that caste as an archetype of social stratification was not the handiwork of those who were not its beneficiaries, namely the Shudras, tishudras, and Adivasis.

The Brahman conceived and institutionalised caste system and patriarchy, involving physical and psychological violence against the lowered castes and women, on the grounds that hierarchies represent an “integral part” of nature, reflected in the food chain in which the big fish devours the small one and this *matsya nyaya*, the natural order of things, they insisted, had a divine sanctity. * [For elaboration of this point, see my book *Debrahmanising History* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2005) Chapter I.] *Might was not just right but also marvellously moral. Thus, justice became inequality, and was made the bedrock of the Brahmanic religion and culture centred on caste.* The system of caste was basically a religious hierarchy that encompassed the economic and the political, as Dumont has demonstrated in his outstanding work, *Homo Hierarchic us*. * [Louis Dumont, *Homo Hierarchic us: The Caste System and Its Implications*, Revised English ed. (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998).] But what is often cast aside by the caste elite (who drive and dominate the academia and knowledge-construction, despite some democratic challenges from below in recent years) is the fact that caste is first and foremost an intellectual—and *moral*—construction, beginning with its cunning naturalisation-sac realisation in the Rig-Vedic Purusha-sukta.

In the Vedic myth, the wheel of civilisation comes into motion with the creation of a hierarchical Body Politic when the *cosmic Purusha*, the Primordial Person, split himself—and divided humanity—into four asymmetrical castes, in which Brahman is the head, Kshatriya the arms, Vaishya the thighs and Shudra the feet. It is notable that the word *Veda* itself means knowledge—from the root *vid*, “know.” To the ancient Brahman, Veda is knowledge, the divine knowledge whose testimony—*vedapramanyam*—is enough to separate truth from falsehood. Revered as *apaurusheya*, “not of human origin,” by its votaries, Vedas are eternal, imperishable and indestructible. The Vedic approval and disapproval is the ultimate test of good and bad, desirable and undesirable. So much so that anything, including violence can be resorted to uphold the Vedic injunctions. As the old Brahmanic saying goes, *Vaidiki hinsa na bhavati*—Vedic violence (epistemic violence) is no violence. Though this violent line of thinking did not go unchallenged, the Vedic-Brahmanic forces ultimately prevailed over contesting ideologies. What gave the Brahman a decisive edge over their critics—and challengers of caste—was the farmer’s no-holds-barred politics of knowledge. The Brahmanical caste order was achieved through, more than anything else, a ruthless and dirty politics of knowledge—a politics that continues to this day.

So fraudulently was fiction and myth-making interwoven with selective facts in the Brahmanic texts that the anti-caste and non-Brahmanic traditions, especially the contribution of the Buddhist-Samanic movements, was completely erased, suppressed, or at the best, grossly misrepresented in some fleeting references. For instance, a Puranic text depicts Ashoka, one of the most benevolent kings in history, as a hated Buddhist and a despised Shudra. * [Romila Thapar, *Ashoka and the Decline of the Maura’s* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999 [1961], p. 12.) In fact, the Brahmanic records completely ignore Ashoka until the time when, ten or twelve centuries afterwards, all danger from his influence had passed away. After a long and vicious campaign against Buddhism, Brahmanism almost succeeded in banishing Buddhism from India before the marauding Turks snuffed out its flickering existence in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

Not only did the Brahmins not keep any historical records, specific chronologies and sequence of events, but also destroyed the records and literature of their supposed adversaries. A group of fanatics led by Pushyamitra Shunga, a disciple of the famed grammarian Patanjali, hatched a plot and beheaded the last Mauryan king Brihadratha in 185 BC. The period following this regicide saw the rise of militant Brahmanism which indulged in large-scale vandalism and violence against their opponents, especially the Buddhists. It was also the period in which resurgent Brahmanism indulged in massive forgeries to recast Indian culture in the Brahmanic mould. They suppressed facts, changed names, confused places and periods, proffered false data, created fictitious dynastic pedigrees, frequently revaluated and tampered their

own Vedas and Puranas, Sanskritised the epics (the Mahabharata and the Ramayana), and above all, brutally censured all oppositional voices and events.

Language, Caste and Sublimation of Violence

All societies have traditionally been more or less stratified, suffering from various pathologies of hierarchy and exclusion. But no society or country can beat the caste culture of India in terms of verbal violence, or *vakparushyam*, as the ancient dharmic charlatans would call it. Sublimation of violence in language—that is, linguistic discrimination and violence—is the defining feature of some of the most ancient and sacred Sanskrit texts. Likewise, in the Brahmanic parlance, women are commonly referred to as *dhana* or *maal*, that is, property of the male. If someone works on the glossary of abusive words for *stree* (women) and *Shudra* (toiling castes) in the Brahmanic literature and orature (where they are assumed to be born in sin and slavery—*paapyoni*, to use the phrase in the *Bhagavad-Gita*), it will run into several hundred pages!

The epistemic-semantic mechanism that keeps the powerless in their place has never gone out of fashion. In many visible or invisible ways, our marketplace, schools and colleges alongside social and political institutions tend to teach us to listen to—and follow—social higher ups and people-in-power. People are encouraged to latch on to every word dripping from the mouth of powerful men or women (who speak the dominant language), and to ignore the “uniformed” and “unintelligent blabbering” of the poor and the powerless. Directly or indirectly, we are taught not to listen to common men, women and children, at least not to hear their talk as a valid language, as a valid discourse. The inheritance through language and other symbols begins in the home, and reinforced by institutionalised religion, educational system, the media and the market.

The oppressor has always wielded knowledge as a social and psychological weapon to colonise minds and bodies of the oppressed. The Brahman manufactured a vast body of religious literature to institutionalise a most vicious system of discrimination and dehumanisation. Words became their most effective weaponry to demoralise and divide the lowered castes. Proclaiming that knowledge is nectar (*gyanam amritam*) and *shabda brahma hai* (the word is the ultimate God, indestructible and sacred), and knowing that those who control the words—and their definitions—control the world, the Brahman positioned themselves to be in the exclusive custody of words and their meanings. Manu says, “Speech is the Brahman’s weapon, and with that he should slay his enemies.” * [Manusmriti XI. 33, see Patrick Olivelle, ed., *Manu’s Code of Law* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 216.] The Brahmanic texts vie with one another to stress the *sacred injunction* that Shudra and other toiling men and women ought to be strictly segregated from those who read and write; the former are polluting and should be completely excluded from the sacred, the world of knowledge.

The punishment to a Shudra for reading or hearing the Vedas, Smritis, and other “sacred” literature was brutal and barbaric. If a Shudra listens to a recitation of the Vedas his ears shall be filled with molten tin or lak. If he recites Vedic texts his tongue shall be cut out...He who tells [religious] law to a Shudra and he who teaches him religious observances, he indeed together with that Shudra sinks into the darkness of hell called Asamvritta. * [Such invectives are common in many Brahmanic texts such as Shankar’s *Brahma Sutra* (Chapter one), *Gautamdharmasutra* (12: 4), and *Manusmriti* (8: 270).]

Hundreds of such violent utterances against Shudras are scattered through the Brahmanic socio-religious texts. Then there are instances in the texts like *Bhagavad-Gita* where hatred and antagonism against the commonality are better hidden, and one has to culturally decode them to grasp their underlying meaning. The *Gita* rationalises caste in the name of karma and killing in the name of dharma.

The Politics of Caste and Epistemic Violence

Today, as in the past, reproduction of culture and knowledge in India remains, by and large, the fiefdom of Brahmanic forces. The caste elites of different stripes—ranging from the liberal-democrats and secular-socialists to the critical traditionalists and Hindutva gladiators—either band together or indulge in friendly fight in the name of national interests, muffling the voices of the marginalised majority. Multiplicity of voices and competing visions of India apart, the politics of dominance brings the privileged groups

together either in the secular or the communal camp of political Brahmanism. The construction of two ideological poles and institutionalisation of the opposition between secularism and communalism (represented by the Congress and the BJP-RSS, respectively), like the earlier antagonism between colonialism and nationalism, has been done in such a way that this conflict subsumes or subordinates all other issues. Within this secular-communal divide, all other sources of oppression and exclusions are neglected to the point of giving a quiet burial to the interests of the common people. As both the camps share the hostility to the Phule-Ambedkarite Dalit-Bahujan visions of casteless reconstruction, the Brahmanic secularism of Congress—actually, a form of soft Hinduism—never fails to foster the rabid communalism—Hindutva—of the RSS variety.

In contemporary India, more than anything else, it is this Brahmanic division of labour between the so-called progressive-secular and the conservative-communal that has eroded and rendered ineffective the very core of the Constitution. *The essence and spirit of democracy, equality, freedom and secularism have been smothered by promoting the neo-Brahmanic politics of discrimination in every institution and structure* like governance, administration, legal and judicial system, economy, infrastructure, management of natural resources, education and culture, thereby denying life with dignity to the majority of Indians. *The reproduction of inequality is a fact.* One major reason for this is the fact that *the mainstream of academia and knowledge-production in India, despite some challenges from the margins in recent times, remains Brahmanic. The past and present of India has been represented largely by the Brahmanic mindset. This is a fact and this is the problem...* Exclusionary ideology and worldview can only be overcome by an inclusive ideology and worldview. *Brahmanism cannot be sent to jail; it can only be banished from our minds and hearts, replacing it with a better ideology.* We cannot ban or banish a bad idea; it can only be buried by a better idea. The way to defeat bad books is to write good books.

Braj Ranjan Mani is the author of *Debrahmanising History* (Manohar, 2005). This paper is based on Chapter Three of his forthcoming book, *Reconstructing Knowledge: Transforming the Self and Society*.

Capitalism: A Ghost Story

In India, the 300 million of us who belong to the new, post-IMF “reforms” middle class—the market—live side by side with spirits of the nether world, the poltergeists of dead rivers, dry wells, bald mountains and denuded forests; the ghosts of 2, 50,000 debt-ridden farmers who have killed themselves, and of the 800 million who have been impoverished and dispossessed to make way for us. And who survive on less than twenty rupees a day while India’s 100 richest people own assets equivalent to one-fourth 25% of GDP.

Extracts from Arundhati Roy’s article Capitalism: A Ghost Story. She is an Indian novelist and an outspoken political activist of international repute. She won the Booker Prize in 1997.

Afghanistan and the Long War

George Friedman

The United States does not trust the Taliban or many of those Pakistani officials speaking to and for the Taliban. But the United States also knows that the future of Afghanistan is of fundamental interest to Pakistan. Instability or Indian influence in Af-pak is not in Pakistan's interest. Therefore, the Pakistanis will play a leading role in Afghanistan as they did after the end of the Soviet occupation. Crafting a political path from the current situation will not be easy but it is important that the United States and Pakistan work together for an honourable exit and for peace and stability in the region.

The war in Afghanistan has been under way for more than 10 years. It has not been the only war fought during this time; for seven of those years another, larger war was waged in Iraq, and smaller conflicts were under way in a number of other countries as well. But the Afghanistan War is still the longest large-scale, multi-divisional war fought in American history. An American soldier's killing of 16 Afghan civilians, including nine children, on March 11 represents only a moment in this long war, but it is an important moment.

In the course of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, military strategists in the United States developed the concept of the long war. The theory was presented in many ways, but its core argument was this: The defeat of Taliban forces and the Iraqi resistance would take a long time, but success would not end the war because Islamist terrorism and its supporters would be a constantly shifting threat, both in the places and in the ways they would operate. Therefore, since it was essential to defeat terrorism, the United States was now engaging in a long war whose end was distant and course unknown.

Sometimes explicit but usually implicit in this argument was that other strategic issues faced by the United States should be set aside and that the long war ought to be the centrepiece of U.S. strategic policy until the threat of Islamist terrorism disappears or at least subsides. As a result, under this theory -- which very much influences U.S. strategy -- even if the war in Afghanistan ended, the war in the Islamic world would go on indefinitely. We need to consider the consequences of this strategy.

Staff Sgt. Robert Bales, who allegedly perpetrated the appalling slaughter in Afghanistan, was on his fourth tour of combat duty. He had served three tours in Iraq of nine, 15 and 12 months -- he had been at war for three years. His tour in Afghanistan was going to be his fourth year. The wars he fought in differed from prior wars. Fallujah and Tora Bora were not Stalingrad. Still, the hardship, fear and threat of death are ever-present. The probability of dying may be lower, but it is there, it is real, and there are comrades you can name whom you saw die.

In Vietnam, only volunteers served more than a single one-year tour. For Americans in World War II, the war lasted a little more than three years, and only a handful of U.S. troops were in combat for that long. U.S. involvement in World War I lasted less than two years, and most U.S. soldiers were deployed for a year or less. In U.S. history, only the Civil and Revolutionary wars lasted as long as Bales had served.

Atrocities occur in all wars. This is an observation, not an excuse. And they become more likely the longer a soldier is in combat. War is brutal and it brutalizes the souls of warriors. Some resist the brutalization better than others, but no one can see death that often and not be changed. Just as important, the enemy is dehumanized. You cannot fight and fear him for years and not come to see him as someone alien to you. Even worse, when the enemy and the population are difficult to distinguish, as is the case in a counterinsurgency, the fear and rage extends to everyone. In Bales' case, it extended even to children.

It is no different for the Taliban save two things. First, they are fighting for their homeland and in their homeland. Americans fight for the homeland in the sense that they are fighting terrorism, but that fight becomes abstract after a while. For the Taliban it is a reality. Americans can go home and may become

bitter at those who never shared the burden. The Taliban are at home, and their bitterness at those who did not share the burden outstrips the bitterness of the Americans. Second, it is a fact of war that Taliban atrocities are usually invisible to the Western media, but they are there, even if reporters are not. It could be said that the Taliban were brutalized by years of fighting before the Americans came, but in the end, the fact of brutalization is more important than the genesis.

It is important to remember that for the United States, the Afghanistan War is the first major war since the Civil War that did not involve a draft. Opposition to the draft during Vietnam gave rise to the volunteer army. One thing no one assumed after Vietnam was that the United States would attempt to fight a counterinsurgency on the mainland of Asia again, and therefore the conditions for reconstituting the draft were never considered.

When the war in Afghanistan began, there was no theory of the long war. It was assumed that the goal was the dislocation and destruction of al Qaeda, and grandiose notions of democratizing Afghanistan were not yet part of the policy. In Iraq, the assumption was that the defeat of Saddam Hussein's conventional forces would require neither significant cost nor time and that there would be no resistance to constructing a pro-American democracy there. It took time for the mission in Afghanistan to creep up to democratization, and it took a while to realize that not all Iraqis were cheering the American occupation.

But even while it became apparent that the United States was in a long war, neither the Bush nor the Obama administration ever grappled with the consequences of a force in which individuals could be in combat for four years and more. And we might include here the dangers for non-combatants and headquarters troops, who faced mortar and rocket fire at their desks. No one escaped the burden.

The result was a war that was seen on the home front as not requiring a massive effort but that required some volunteers to remain in combat for longer than many had in World War II. And while it was true that all of the soldiers had volunteered, the volunteers were no more ready than the government for the tempo of operations they would face. Additionally, they were not always free to leave. During the height of the war, some of those trying to leave service when their time was up were "stop-losses." For them, it became less of a volunteer army than a captive army.

The doctrine of the long war fought by the present force fails to take into account whether the force can sustain the war. Former Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld argued that you fight with the army you have. What he did not address was that while you begin fighting with the army you have, as the United States did in World War II, you do not continue fighting with that army, but move to mobilize the country. But Rumsfeld did not realize how long the war in Afghanistan would last, and in particular, he did not anticipate the cost that two multi-divisional wars would have. It is noteworthy that Bales began with three tours in Iraq. The war in Iraq might be over, but its consequences for the force remain.

What Bales is alleged to have done is inexcusable. There have been many atrocities, both recorded and not, both outright and ambiguous, and conducted by both NATO and the Taliban. It is unrealistic to imagine a war of this length devoid of atrocities. But in a counterinsurgency, in which the goal is not simply the defeat of an enemy force but also persuading the population that turning against that force is the safest course, a massacre like this can have strategic consequences. The Taliban's psychological warfare operations will focus on the killings as they did with the February *Koran-burning incident* at a U.S. base. In the meantime, American psychological warfare efforts will focus on U.S. troops, both making sure they remain restrained and -- after the Feb. 25 shooting of two U.S. officers in a Kabul ministry by an Afghan colleague -- reassuring them that they must not be afraid of Afghans, since training Afghans is their mission.

The long war, without a major readjustment of the American force structure, creates unintended strategic consequences. One consequence is a force that contains large numbers of troops at the limits of their endurance. Their potential actions undermine the strategic purpose of the counterinsurgency: winning over the populace. That opens the door to increased influence for the Taliban and reduces the Taliban's inclination to negotiate as the U.S. position deteriorates. Put differently, troops are not numbers on a table of organization. They wear out.

There are four strategic assumptions of the long war underlying all of this. The first is that the fight against Islamist terrorism can be won and that ultimately it is more than just a threat that has to be accepted. The second is that large-scale operations like those in Iraq and Afghanistan help achieve that goal. Third, that the United States is able to wage a long war such as this without massive adjustments to its domestic life. Fourth that this should continue to be the centrepiece of U.S. strategy indefinitely, regardless of other events in the world -- in other words, that this is the single most important challenge facing the United States.

The invasion of Afghanistan was strategically justifiable as a means of disrupting al Qaeda and preventing follow-on attacks against the United States. The invasion of Iraq was based on a false assumption that the Iraqis would not resist occupation. As the wars went further, the military situation became more difficult while the goals expanded. The ultimate expansion was the idea that the United States was committed to an indefinitely long war, with available forces, and that this would involve occupying large and hostile countries.

I argued in my last book, "The Next Decade," that the danger of empire was that it threatened the republic. After the fall of the Soviet Union, the United States became the world's only superpower, combining military, economic and political might on a global basis. Whether it wanted this power or not, it had it. Within a decade of the Soviet Union's collapse, 9/11 happened. Whatever its initial intentions, the United States found itself in a war that has lasted more than 10 years. That war has strained American resources. It has also strained the fabric of American life.

The threat to the republic comes from multiple directions, from creating systems for national defence that undermine republican principles to overestimating military capability and committing the republic to a war whose end state is unclear and where the means are insufficient. War transforms countries, and the long war transforms domestic life and creates an unbalanced foreign policy. Most of all, it creates a professional class that fights wars that are considered limitless while the rest of society, though paying the bills, does not see the war as being part of everyday life. The alienation between citizen and soldier in a nation struggling to reconcile global power with republican institutions is historically dangerous.

This is made all the more dangerous because the force is reaching its limits. Resisting terrorism is important. Eliminating it is an illusion. To continue with the long war with the forces available puts in motion processes that threaten the republic without securing U.S. interests. Leaving aside the threat to the republic, a force at its limits and left to fight a war on the margins of national consciousness will not be effective.

India Plays the Spoiler in Afghanistan

Robert Drefuss

As a major player in Afghan politics—especially as the chief backer of the old, anti-Taliban Northern Alliance—India has a critical role in that rebalancing. Getting both India and Pakistan, which supports the Taliban and its allies, to agree on a reshaped government in Afghanistan is absolutely essential to a US exit from the ten-year-old conflict. Yet, as President Hamid Karzai inches toward a deal with the Taliban, there are worrying signs that the Northern Alliance is rearming, fearing a renewed civil war, and that India and some Central Asian countries are assisting them. *From Robert Drefuss article in Diplomat*

Afghanistan: 450 Bases and It's not Over Yet

Nick Turse

In late December, the lot was just a big blank: a few burgundy metal shipping containers sitting in an expanse of crushed eggshell-coloured gravel inside a razor-wire-topped fence. The American military in Afghanistan doesn't want to talk about it, but one day soon, it will be a new hub for the American drone war in the Greater Middle East.

Next year, that empty lot will be a two-story concrete intelligence facility for America's drone war, brightly lit and filled with powerful computers kept in climate-controlled comfort in a country where most of the population has no access to electricity. It will boast almost 7,000 square feet of offices, briefing and conference rooms, and a large "processing, exploitation, and dissemination" operations centre -- and, of course, it will be built with American tax dollars.

Nor is it an anomaly. Despite all the talk of drawdown and withdrawals, there has been a years-long building boom in Afghanistan that shows little sign of abating. In early 2010, the U.S.-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) had nearly 400 bases in Afghanistan. Today, Lieutenant Lauren Rago of ISAF public affairs tells TomDispatch, the number tops 450.

The hush-hush, high-tech, super-secure facility at the massive air base in Kandahar is just one of many building projects the U.S. military currently has planned or underway in Afghanistan. While some U.S. bases are indeed closing up shop or being transferred to the Afghan government, and there's talk of combat operations slowing or ending next year, as well as a withdrawal of American combat forces from Afghanistan by 2014, the U.S. military is still preparing for a much longer haul at mega-bases like Kandahar and Bagram airfields. The same is true even of some smaller camps, forward operating bases (FOBs), and combat outposts (COPs) scattered through the country's backyards. "Bagram is going through a significant transition during the next year to two years," Air Force Lieutenant Colonel Daniel Gerdes of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Bagram Office recently told Freedom Builder, a Corps of Engineers publication. "We're transitioning... into a long-term, five-year, 10-year vision for the base."

Whether the U.S. military will still be in Afghanistan in five or 10 years remains to be seen, but steps are currently being taken to make that possible. U.S. military publications, plans and schematics, contracting documents, and other official data examined by TomDispatch catalogue hundreds of construction projects worth billions of dollars slated to begin, continue, or conclude in 2012.

While many of these efforts are geared toward structures for Afghan forces or civilian institutions, a considerable number involve U.S. facilities, some of the most significant being dedicated to the ascendant forms of American warfare: drone operations and missions by elite special operations units. The available plans for most of these projects suggest durability. "The structures that are going in are concrete and mortar, rather than plywood and tent skins," says Gerdes. As of last December, his office was involved in 30 Afghan construction projects for U.S. or international coalition partners worth almost \$427 million.

The Big Base Build-Up

Recently, the New York Times reported that President Obama is likely to approve a plan to shift much of the U.S. effort in Afghanistan to special operations forces. These elite troops would then conduct kill/capture missions and train local troops well beyond 2014. Recent building efforts in the country bear this out.

A major project at Bagram Air Base, for instance, involves the construction of a special operations forces complex, a clandestine base within a base that will afford America's black ops troops secrecy and near-absolute autonomy from other U.S. and coalition forces. Begun in 2010, the \$29 million project is slated to be completed this May and join roughly 90 locations around the country where troops from Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force-Afghanistan have been stationed.

Elsewhere on Bagram, tens of millions of dollars are being spent on projects that are less sexy but no less integral to the war effort, like paving dirt roads and upgrading drainage systems on the mega-base. In January, the U.S. military awarded a \$7 million contract to a Turkish construction company to build a 24,000-square-foot command-and-control facility. Plans are also in the works for a new operations centre to support tactical fighter jet missions, a new flight-line fire station, as well as more lighting and other improvements to support the American air war.

Last month, Afghan President Hamid Karzai ordered that the U.S.-run prison at Bagram be transferred to Afghan control. By the end of January, the U.S. had issued a \$36 million contract for the construction, within a year, of a new prison on the base. While details are sparse, plans for the detention centre indicate a thoroughly modern, high-security facility complete with guard towers, advanced surveillance systems, administrative facilities, and the capacity to house about 2,000 prisoners.

At Kandahar Air Field, that new intelligence facility for the drone war will be joined by a similarly-sized structure devoted to administrative operations and maintenance tasks associated with robotic aerial missions. It will be able to accommodate as many as 180 personnel at a time. With an estimated combined price tag of up to \$5 million, both buildings will be integral to Air Force and possibly CIA operations involving both the MQ-1 Predator drone and its more advanced and more heavily-armed progeny, the MQ-9 Reaper.

The military is keeping information about these drone facilities under extraordinarily tight wraps. They refused to answer questions about whether, for instance, the construction of these new centres for robotic warfare are in any way related to the loss of Shamsi Air Base in neighbouring Pakistan as a drone operations centre, or if they signal efforts to increase the tempo of drone missions in the years ahead. The International Joint Command's chief of Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) operations, aware that such questions were to be posed, backed out of a planned interview with TomDispatch.

"Unfortunately our ISR chief here in the International Joint Command is going to be unable to address your questions," Lieutenant Ryan Welsh of ISAF Joint Command Media Outreach explained by email just days before the scheduled interview. He also made it clear that any question involving drone operations in Pakistan was off limits. "The issues that you raise are outside the scope under which the IJC operates, therefore we are unable to facilitate this interview request."

Whether the construction at Kandahar is designed to free up facilities elsewhere for CIA drone operations across the border in Pakistan or is related only to missions within Afghanistan, it strongly suggests a ramping up of unmanned operations. It is, however, just one facet of the ongoing construction at the air field. This month, a \$26 million project to build 11 new structures devoted to tactical vehicle maintenance at Kandahar is scheduled for completion. With two large buildings for upkeep and repairs, one devoted strictly to fixing tires, another to painting vehicles, as well as an industrial-sized car wash, and administrative and storage facilities, the big base's building boom shows no sign of flickering out.

Construction and Reconstruction

This year, at Herat Air Base in the province of the same name bordering Turkmenistan and Iran, the U.S. has begun a multimillion-dollar project to enhance its special forces' air operations. Plans are in the works to expand apron space -- where aircraft can be parked, serviced, and loaded or unloaded -- for helicopters and airplanes, as well as to build new taxiways and aircraft shelters.

That project is just one of nearly 130, cumulatively valued at about \$1.5 billion, slated to be carried out in Herat, Helmand, and Kandahar provinces this year, according to Army Corps of Engineers documents examined by TomDispatch. These also include efforts at Camp Tombstone and Camp Dwyer, both in Helmand Province as well as Kandahar's FOB Hadrian and FOB Wilson. The U.S. military also recently

awarded a contract for more air field apron space at a base in Kunduz, a new secure entrance and new roads for FOB Delaram II, and new utilities and roads at FOB Shank, while the Marines recently built a new chapel at Camp Bastion.

Seven years ago, Forward Operating Base Sweeney, located a mile up in a mountain range in Zabul Province, was a well-outfitted, if remote, American base. After U.S. troops abandoned it, however, the base fell into disrepair. Last month, American troops returned in force and began rebuilding the outpost, constructing everything from new troop housing to a new storage facility. "We built a lot of buildings, we put up a lot of tents, we filled a lot of sandbags, and we increased our force protection significantly," Captain Joe Mickley, commanding officer of the soldiers taking up residence at the base, told a military reporter.

Decommission and Deconstruction

Hesco barriers are, in essence, big bags of dirt. Up to seven feet tall, made of canvas and heavy gauge wire mesh, they form protective walls around U.S. outposts all over Afghanistan. They'll take the worst of sniper rounds, rifle-propelled grenades, even mortar shells, but one thing can absolutely wreck them -- the Marines' 9th Engineer Support Battalion.

At the beginning of December, the 9th Engineers were building bases and filling up Hescos in Helmand Province. By the end of the month, they were tearing others down.

Wielding pickaxes, shovels, bolt-cutters, powerful rescue saws, and front-end loaders, they have begun "demilitarizing" bases, cutting countless Hescos -- which cost \$700 or more a pop -- into heaps of jagged scrap metal and bulldozing berms in advance of the announced American withdrawal from Afghanistan. At Firebase Saenz, for example, Marines were bathed in a sea of crimson sparks as they sawed their way through the metal mesh and let the dirt spill out; leaving a country already haunted by the ghosts of British and Russian bases with yet another defunct foreign outpost. After Saenz, it was on to another patrol base slated for destruction.

Not all rural outposts are being torn down, however. Some are being handed over to the Afghan Army or police. And new facilities are now being built for the indigenous forces at an increasing rate. "If current projections remain accurate, we will award 18 contracts in February," Bonnie Perry, the head of contracting for the Army Corps of Engineers' Afghanistan Engineering District-South, told military reporter Karla Marshall. "Next quarter we expect that awards will remain high, with the largest number of contract awards occurring in May." One of the projects underway is a large base near Herat, which will include barracks, dining facilities, office space, and other amenities for Afghan commandos.

Tell Me How This Ends

No one should be surprised that the U.S. military is building up and tearing down bases at the same time, nor that much of the new construction is going on at mega-bases, while small outposts in the countryside are being abandoned. This is exactly what you would expect of an occupation force looking to scale back its "footprint" and end major combat operations while maintaining an on-going presence in Afghanistan. Given the U.S. military's projected retreat to its giant bases and an increased reliance on kill/capture black-ops as well as unmanned air missions, it's also no surprise that its signature projects for 2012 include a new special operations forces compound, clandestine drone facilities, and a brand new military prison.

There's little doubt Bagram Air Base will exist in five or 10 years. Just who will be occupying it is, however, less clear. After all, in Iraq, the Obama administration negotiated for some way to station a significant military force -- 10,000 or more troops -- there beyond a withdrawal date that had been set in stone for years. While a token number of U.S. troops and a highly militarized State Department contingent

remain there, the Iraqi government largely thwarted the American efforts -- and now, even the State Department presence is being halved.

It's less likely this will be the case in Afghanistan, but it remains possible. Still, it's clear that the military is building in that country as if an enduring American presence were a given. Whatever the outcome, vestiges of the current base-building boom will endure and become part of America's Afghan legacy.

On Bagram's grounds stands a distinctive structure called the "Crow's Nest." It's an old control tower built by the Soviets to coordinate their military operations in Afghanistan. That foreign force left the country in 1989. The Soviet Union itself departed from the planet less than three years later. The tower remains.

America's new prison in Bagram will undoubtedly remain, too. Just who the jailers will be and who will be locked inside five years or 10 years from now is, of course, unknown. But given the history -- marked by torture and deaths -- of the appalling treatment of inmates at Bagram and, more generally, of the brutality toward prisoners by all parties to the conflict over the years, in no scenario are the results likely to be pretty.

Nick Turse is the associate editor of TomDispatch.com. An award-winning journalist, his work has appeared in the Los Angeles Times, the Nation, and regularly at TomDispatch. This article is the sixth in his new series on the changing face of American empire, which is being underwritten by Lannan Foundation. You can follow him on Twitter @NickTurse, on Tumblr.

Balochistan in Historical Perspective

Naveed Tajammal

Now days, the basic problem is that people are not aware of history, everyone goes by what the media feeds them and media is Zionist dominated. What the media is telling are what the Zionists want to achieve therefore they engineer the facts; in most cases the facts are removed or replaced by the people in between so that no linkages can be established.

Since past sometime, United States, the United Kingdom and one silent participant Australia are busy distorting the facts and presenting stories out of context. In this game, as admitted by Manmohan Singh, the Indian Prime Minister in a meeting with Yousaf Raza Gilani at Sharmul Shaikh that India has linkages with Baloch insurgency and dissidents. The role of Zionist Israel cannot be ruled out since it's behind everything that's happening in the world but more so in the Muslim World. In case of Pakistan Zino-Hindutva axis are very strong.

Our educationists and sociologists have failed to impart the education of history in its true perspective that is precisely the reason that today we are a lost nation. Everyone tends to believe what the West says and they go by it. Politicians are not aware of the history as most people in the assemblies consists of those who either are not aware of their own history or are in the process of taking new identities to de-link from their past. With this sort of people in the parliaments, one can never expect anything good but what suits them the best.

In 1910, a Scottish-American, Andrew Carnegie, who had made, his fortune in 'Steel Industry', left a \$10 million Endowment for international peace-which is the fore-runner of other Carnegie related ventures, however, what his intentions had been, and what the endowment has created are two different aspects. The Carnegie Journalist program was launched in 1974, though with an outward image to anticipate, 'Near-Horizon' problems, in reality it was to induct journalists from world over, to create a hype, to keep a check

on, the soviets (USSR) global moves. The journalists went for superficial, which an average reader could co-relate with. So, started the 'Awareness of the Balochistan issue.'

An insurgency was very much so on ground, however no one bothered to find the reason why? The British legacy had left their created Sardars, who while retaining their feudalistic powers, wanted to gain, the political legitimacy as well. They followed the policy of what is mine is mine, and what is yours (of the people of their tribes) is also mine!

The royalties taken on concessions, were technically for the welfare of the people, within the tribal setups, but spent by the Sardars as their own bounty, while the poor people, had no recourse but move in an exodus, from the regions, as is seen, in the last over 100 years, to seek a living elsewhere.

The tribes of the Sindh valley over the past 1600 years or so have been constantly on the move; as one study and discover, natural calamities, plagues, and wars all took their toll. The transformation from one major tribal setup to another had been a question of survival or escape from the domination of the strong and the cruel. Our Social mores, are based on an egalitarian society, and people of the area have always hated the feudal system to the core of their hearts, and hence the refuge in the wilderness or the remote valleys, But the intruders have from time to time imposed on us their lackeys or the willing amongst us who sold their souls, for a gain.

The geographic boundaries, which Pakistan was thrust with were legacy of our past rulers, though with reference to region under study its bulk area came, affiliated with either old Alor or Multan, Administrative, boundaries, Even in the Jam Nizam ud din Nandah period, (1461-1508) In the west, Till Bolan, inclusive of the Kaachi plains, was the part of, throne of Sindh. As were the Tal-chotiali, chacha, and barkhan regions, wherein are the present Mari and Bugti areas. It was in Akbar's time that Kandahar provinces, limits were extended till Duki. Rest being part of Multan Suba, as was Bolan and Kaachi areas, too.

The areas were well populated, and fertile, with Saraiki speaking people, when Naseer khan Barrohi, was given these areas, 1740, for the services rendered, he pushed out the old people and transplanted them, with people of his own confederacy, the Eastern passes, of the Rohe Suleiman Range had been gateways of Trade, since Ancient Times, In the Mughal era with opening of Khyber pass, majority of Trade routes suffered, the cause, being the Movements, of Bayazids Ansari, heretics, and expansion of Safavid's in the east.

Now coming to the most pertinent question, which being, is the present head of Bugti tribe and its Sept's (clans), Actually Balochi???

For that a study of the Notes on the Balochi, Barrohi, and the Sindhi tribes, should suffice.

Immediately after the creation of Baluchistan entity by the British, the Government ordered,

that the data be made of the Ethnic composition of various tribes of the region and inter-related ones, all the Mukhtiars and Mahaska's, in the revenue departments, in the districts concerned were ordered, The reports compiled, from, communications, histories, manuscripts and the popular oral accounts, which also covered, profession of, various, tribes, matrimonial, and other related customs, were submitted to Drum. Daudpota, member, Sindh public service commission, and published in 1901.

The excerpts of the report state (p-26/27), covering the Bugti tribe, In January 1890, on the recommendation of Robert Sandmen, Shahbaz khan, was conferred with the title of a Nawab, he was also later given a large tract of land on the Jamrau canal, for rendering assistance, during the outbreak of the ,HUR, in 1896/1897. Here without going in the details of the 24 Sept or clans of Bugti Confederacy, the report states, that, The chief of the tribe is Nawab Shahbaz Khan, Rahejo Bugti, son of Ghulam Murtaza Khan rahejo Bugti, A popular account says that Rahejo or more commonly called, Rahuja, are from the Major Sindhi tribal set up of the 'Samma', to which the great ancestor of the present Bugti chief belonged, and that by Association with the Balochi's and settlement in the old Bugti hills and streams, his

descendants became Bugti Baloch, and if we study the Samma, tribal Sept's/clans which number in all 766, we find Raheja, very much so part of their entity (pages-44 to 53, and for more details in minor off shoots, pages 89 to 97)

If one follows the Baloch population, one would more Baloch living in the Punjab alone than what are living in Balochistan; then there is a strong Baloch population in Sindh as well. All these Baloch shifted out from Balochistan for various reasons and one of them was the treatment meted out to these people by the Sardars therefore they took a refuge away from their ancestral places.

These Sardars have always demanded money for their loyalties but never spent a penny on the welfare of their people. When one meets the tribesmen, they show resentment and unhappiness with these Sardars and their system.

Makran Coast is a different ethnic and cultural background. It was under the occupation of Sultanate of Oman. In 1956, Feroze Khan Noon, then the Prime Minister of Pakistan had bought it by paying cash to Oman. Therefore it does not form part of Balochistan, also the Pathan population of Balochistan is over 50% and then there are settlers and Brohis also. Thus the entire land does not belong to the Baloch.

Have people and media men in particular forgotten that on the 1973 constitution even the Baloch Sardars had their signatures to approve it unanimously now how can they claim that Pakistan has occupied their lands forcefully.

Existential Threat

The Taliban who get all the coverage do not pose an existential threat to Pakistan. Generations of military families have periodically fought FATA insurgencies. For example, Shuja Nawaz, the author of *Crossed Swords* says that his grandfather, his uncle and his cousin have all been deployed in Waziristan by the British and later Pakistani governments in the last century and a half. American withdrawal from the region will eventually calm the situation in Waziristan, and the rest of the country. *Climate change and the growing water scarcity are the main long-term existential threats to Pakistan and the region.* Water per capita is already down below 1000 cubic meters and declining. What Pakistan needs are major 1960s style investments for a second Green Revolution to avoid the specter of mass starvation and political upheaval it will bring.

The Politics of Foreign Hand

Asit Das

Recently, Manmohan Singh the Prime Minister of India, in a very derogatory mala - fide intention and to malign the anti-nuclear movement in Kudankulam (Tamil Nadu) , said in an interview that the people's resistance to the Kudankulam nuclear power plant and people who are campaigning against GM foods, are supported by a foreign hand. Apart from the interview, Manmohan Singh's servitude to national and international capital has made him resort to the worst kind of slander and repression on anti-nuclear struggle in Kudankulam, including the struggle against other nuclear plants all over India.

With hundreds of thousands of farmers committing suicide, millions of hectares of land are forcibly grabbed; thousands are dying of hunger and disease. This accusation of 'foreign hand' is a cruel joke on the hapless, millions of whom are suffering state repression and their land, resources, livelihood and dignity are being snatched away. The bogey of foreign hand has been played by post-independent rulers to divert the rising discontent of the masses.

I am reminded of Marx's famous remark on Shakespearean tragedy; history repeating itself from tragedy to farce. Late Indira Gandhi had been invoking foreign hand to suppress the rising mass anger, radicalization of the working class and widespread peasant revolts. Governments at both the state and centre, justify pushing destructive projects and other anti-people policies blaming all the valid questions raised and opposition, by invoking the elusive foreign hand.

To suppress the legitimate voice emanating from Kudankulam anti-nuclear movement, Manmohan Singh has played the card of foreign hand. Therefore, it is necessary to examine who is this foreign hand, what is its motive, and whom does it represent and serve. Then it is important to expose the real foreign hand.

Of course, there is a foreign hand, but nobody understands this better than the toiling people of the Indian sub-continent and the broad masses of the third world. They are still suffering from imperialist plunder so they feel the oppression of the foreign hand more than any one else.

The Adivasis, peasants, Dalits, ethnic and national minorities of the Indian sub-continent understand the real meaning of foreign hand when British imperialism colonized them, looted their natural resources, subjugated them into service, took away their dignity, wiped out their economy, eliminating the artisans and ruining the peasantry. They suffered the subjugation by the foreign hand for three centuries. The agony was not over even after the transfer of power in 1947. Now they have to suffer the super imperial foreign hand of the USA.

The slave trade and the building of Robber Baron capitalism in the USA show how inhuman, dangerous and catastrophic has been the foreign hand for the people of Africa. Racism and the present plunder of resources, including buying up their land mines and forests by multinational corporations is not only the continuation of the centuries old "scramble for Africa", but it also shows how the foreign hand still ruthlessly exploits Africa.

India and Foreign Hand:

Indian toiling people like the peasants, workers, Adivasis and Dalits have suffered the cruellest aspects of the foreign hand. The deceit, sadism and the helplessness of a colonized people cannot be worse when the British imperialists under the premiership of Winston Churchill diverted grain for British war abroad, resulting in the Great Bengal Famine where millions of people died of starvation. "We got a taste of foreign hand". Hence, we really cannot forget the foreign hand and so we are still struggling to fight that foreign hand. Broad masses of the working people and other artisans cannot forget the fact now that their indigenous textile industries and other crafts were destroyed.

The Adivasis are offering stiff resistance to the present foreign hands like Wall Street, hot money flowing via POSCO, Vedanta, Areva, etc., and their local agents like Manmohan Singh who have thrown open

their resources, forests, livelihood and habitats cheaply for rapacious national and multinational corporations. It is the continuation of a glorious tradition of Adivasis' rebellions led by Birsa Munda, Sidhu Kano, in the Santhal Parganas, and Chhitu Kirad in the Bhil region of western MP and eastern Gujarat.

From Rajmahal Hills in the east to Khandesh in the west, the heroic Adivasi uprisings fought against the then foreign hand - the marauding British imperial invaders, who were out to usurp their land, livelihood and territories. They brutally colonized northeast; even in the post-independent era the Indian state betrayed the democratic aspiration of the people of northeast and resorted to the worst kind of neo-colonial plunder, brutally suppressing the peoples' aspirations for a dignified life with barbaric state repression under draconian laws like AFPSA. The Adivasis had the bitter taste of foreign hand when their forests were snatched away by the British imperialists. Under the Indian Forest Act, they were declared intruders in their own habitat. There was massive deforestation for the sleepers for British Railways to plunder the natural resources of India, most of which is in Adivasi regions. Even after the transfer of power in 1947, the neo-colonial extractive plunder continues for cheap natural resources for world imperialism and their junior partners in the third world.

In India , the contemporary symbol of Uncle Sam's hand is Manmohan Singh; like the earlier foreign hand, the British imperialists, the present dispensation is continuing with extreme repressive measures like Operation Green Hunt.

Absolutely intellectual slaves of imperialism and the compradors of the third world helped to perpetuate this neo-colonial exploitation. For the past two decades, Manmohan Singh has been the most crucial foreign hand in India for ruthlessly implementing the policies of neo-colonial exploitation in India. The so-called project of "Decolonization" proved to be fraudulent. Imperialism changed it from colonial exploitation to neo-colonial exploitation where the broad masses of people of the third world have entered into a direct contradiction with world imperialism.

The Bretton Woods Institutions like World Bank, and IMF of late WTO, were used as instruments of neo-colonial exploitation of the third world. In the post-war period, the cruelty of the foreign hand did not stop despite the rhetoric of "Decolonization" and "Non-Alignment". It became more ruthless, cruel, barbaric and genocidal in the post-war period, under the leadership of the super imperial state - United States of America. The imperial horror continued. Vietnam was carpet-bombed, people sprayed up poisonous chemicals, Korea were invaded, Allende and Patrice Lumumba were murdered, hundreds of plots were made to assassinate Fidel Castro, and the great revolutionary Che Guevara was murdered. Tin-pot dictators imposed on Latin America to further enlarge the open veins of neo-colonial exploitation of its natural resources and sucking the blood of its working people. Compradors were installed in the name of regime change and so-called democracy (truly meaning exploitative bourgeois democracy and class rule). The predatory rule of the imperialist camp was managed by the local elites for their western masters as Manmohan Singh is doing now. The foreign hand was its most repulsive and sadistic impact in the recent decades.

Iraq and Afghanistan were mercilessly invaded by US-led NATO troops. *Millions were killed, while the ordeal of Palestine continues under Zionist Imperialist designs. Another anti-people predatory weapon of the foreign hand has also used the anti-democratic arbitrary instrument of economic sanctions. It tried to strangle Cuba through sanctions; for appeasing the Zionist lobby, the criminal cowboy has used it against Iran recently. But the most savage, cruel and sadistic exploitative use of this monster US foreign hand was the sanction against Iraq to capture Iraq's oil and the US imposed sanction has murdered 5 million Iraqi children much before its fascist attack on Iraq in 2003, overriding the democratic protests of the entire globe. The invasion on Iraq was most barbaric, ostensibly in the name of democracy and the non-existent weapons of mass destruction camouflaged to capture Iraq's oil and to bring it under US imperial hegemony. Left thinker Ravi Sinha explains the attack on Iraq in the following words:*

Further, Ravi Sinha says about our immediate neighbourhood:

“We on the sub-continent, too, have suffered grievously and felt the heat form far too close. Afghanistan is a continuing saga of tragedy; Pakistan has been made to pay too heavy a price; and India too has not managed to steer clear of catastrophe. And we know very well that when we count the countries that have suffered, the loss is borne invariably by the people and not by their rulers. [See Ravi Sinha's 'Three Formidable Barriers to the Advance of Democracy' keynote address at the joint convention of Pakistan-India Peoples' Forum for Peace and Democracy (PIPFPD) at Allahabad from 29 to 31 December 2011].

The dominant actor involved in this projection of power and creating the resulting relations of domination-subordination within the current arena of global politics is the capitalist nation-state. It has evolved diverse forms: democratic or authoritarian, and (with reference to its dominant policy agenda) liberal or neo-liberal. Other agents of imperialism include the largest capitalist corporations, which, in popular imagery or the dominant political “imaginary” of academic, roam the world in search of returns on their investment or capital. However, these corporations are not footloose or free from consideration of national interest. Indeed, the economic interest advanced and protected by the nation-states that make up what can be termed the “imperial state system”, a system currently dominated by the US state.

Furthermore, it is these states, in their projections of military and political power that create the conditions needed for the home-based multinational corporations to take advantage of and operate profitably in the world's “emerging markets”. The US imperial state, both directly (via the departments of state and defence) and indirectly (via control over financial institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF), constitutes a directorate to manage the global systems. Just like the government of the country, the decision-making power concentrated in this directorate of the new world order (the world capitalist or imperialist system) is backed up by a repressive apparatus, the armed forces of the US State, whose maintenance and global operations cost US tax payers and US capital around \$300 billion a year in 2003, at least \$480 billion in 2004, and over \$500 billion in 2005, including Iraq and Afghanistan supplementary budgets. (See “Empire with Imperialism - The Globalizing Dynamics of Neo-liberal Capitalism”, James Petras and Henry Veltmayer. Aakar Books, New Delhi.)

Foreign Hand and the Post-Colonial Developmental Trajectory of India:

Like elsewhere in the third world, the project of decolonization in India was equally fraudulent. Behind the veneer of “Nehruvian socialism”, “self-reliance”, “import substitution” and “non-alignment”, the Indian ruling classes manoeuvred their path in the cold war rivalry to build what Prof. Randhir Singh calls “India specific capitalism”. True to the new Indian states commitment to the pre-independent “Bombay Plan”, the consumer goods sector was dominated by multinational corporations for which public money was spent to provide them infrastructure.

The public sector was projected as socialism, while in reality it was facilitating ruthless accumulation by imperialists and their Indian junior partners. Nehruvian socialism was extremely deceptive, American think-tanks like Ford Foundation imposed the so-called “Green Revolution” taking advantage of the humiliating PL-480 arrangements. Green Revolution opened up Indian agriculture for predatory penetration of imperialist capital. It was a big blow to the self-reliance and dignity of the Indian farmers. Hybrid seeds, pesticides (which were developed from Agent Orange used on Vietnamese) and chemical fertilizers were imposed on India to fill the coffers of the multinational corporations who control the seed and pesticide market. The entire Indian agriculture and the peasantry were mortgaged to the international agri-business, especially companies like Monsanto, Syngenta, Bayer, etc. This is the foreign hand. Indian farmers still suffer the worst symptom of this - the suicide of hundreds of thousands of farmers, unprecedented in Indian history.

Indo US Nuclear deal, Kudankulam Struggle and the Foreign Hand

American imperialism can never find such an obedient puppet like Manmohan Singh in the entire world who even staked his own Government to implement Indo US nuclear deal. The entire episode was akin to feudal loyalty of the peasant serf to the lord of manor. It is a well known fact that nuclear energy is an extremely obsolete screw driver technology which is not even preferred in Manmohan Singh's ideological Mecca the United States.

Manmohan Singh's imperial masters who have themselves abandoned this in their own country found a loyal slave in Manmohan Singh to bail out their private nuclear corporations like Westinghouse to make super profits in a poor third world country like India, when in their own country the technology is destined for oblivion. After Fukushima disaster when the ruling classes of advanced capitalist countries are giving up nuclear power this intellectual slave of the neo-liberal west is so blind information wise. So blocked in his thinking that while his master have outgrown the nuclear option this loyal slave still thrusting nuclear energy into our throat. Nuclear Energy in India becoming an instrument for super profits of American nuclear corporations. They have imposed their obsolete and dangerous technology in India.

The Indo US nuclear deal was not only an instrument for bailing out the American nuclear corporations but it was a brazen attack on our sovereignty. It allows unrestricted entry into our nuclear installations by the Americans; it was an outrageous act by the US imperialists to consolidate their hold in South Asia for their defence and geo strategic interests. This foreign hand Manmohan Singh did everything in his capacity including striking a deal with Samajwadi Party to thrust the imperialist Indo US nuclear deal on Indian people. The loyal Foreign hand in India was at full play during the debate on Indo US nuclear deal. A conservative estimate puts it that the US nuclear corporation will make around 6 Lakh Crores of the business facilitated by the Indo US nuclear deal, Uncle Sam will never find such loyal agent.

It is a common sense world over that nuclear energy is undesirable and dangerous. The cost per megawatt of nuclear energy is much higher than any other forms of power generation. Yet this extremely dangerous and price wise exorbitant this killer energy is being forcibly thrust on Indian people by this loyal Foreign hand Manmohan Singh Nuclear Energy hardly provides 1% of our power generation, and the official claim of being a clean and green source of energy is pure bullshit. The nuclear establishment clearly fails to account the embedded energy requirement to build a nuclear power plant. There is genuine and increasing public concern over the dangers of nuclear technology, particularly because the Indian nuclear establishment is directed by the government to expand their nuclear power activity on the basis of the import of untested reactors and in the absence of an independent and transparent nuclear safety regulator.

Let us be clear that nuclear power, like most other power technologies, is not 100% safe and can never be. But, given that the downside risk of a nuclear accident can be immeasurable and the empirical evidence from the past three core meltdowns the world has witnessed reinforces such a possibility, how safe it can be will depend on the integrity of our regulators and our leaders who on the other hand are constantly manipulating the system, including the safety regulator. Our government has not yet realized that there is a strong positive correlation between the transparency of a safety regulator and the degree of eventual safety obtained.

The US pressure on the civil nuclear liability bill shows the impact of foreign hand in the nuclear matters in India. The struggle against the nuclear power plant at Kudankulam is the struggle against this foreign hand.

Conclusion: Manmohan Singh, operation Green hunt and state repression in India:

As soon as Manmohan Singh was sworn in as Prime Minister, he declared Maoists to be the greatest internal threat to India. Thus he declared a war on the poorest and poor people who are struggling for

survival and dignity against snatching away their water, forest land, life livelihood and dignity. At the behest of his imperial masters Manmohan Singh has launched a war on his own people to snatch away their land, forest, mines and water for rapacious plunder by international and national corporate. He launched "Operation Green Hunt". Tens of thousand of paramilitary forces with the help of the army were deployed to severely crush the poorest of the poor' uprising against total destitution and state repression. Hounds of the Indian ruling classes BSF, CRPF, COBRA, and GREYHOUND were unleashed on the struggling Adivasis' from Jangalmahal to Chhattisgarh to Narayana Patna. Thousand were murdered, raped and tortured. Custodial torture, death and rape have become order of the day in the name of "Operation Green Hunt". There is a witch-hunt on oppressed nationalities and minorities. Kashmir, North-east and the Batla house encounter are stark indicators of what is being done to the oppressed nationalities and minorities in this country. The arrest of the Delhi based journalist Mr Kazmi under pressure from the imperialist Zionist lobby is a test case, how Manmohan Singh operates on behalf of CIA and MOSSAD. The people in Fatehabad, Jaitapur, Mithivirdi, and Chutka are fighting to shove off this foreign hand off their back, to save themselves from the disasters of nuclear power plant. The struggle in Kudankulam is a struggle against this Foreign hand Manmohan Singh who is forcibly pushing the nuclear power plant into their throat. To save the people and environment of this and to free ourselves from the clutches of US imperialism this hand needs to be chopped off.

Asit Das is a political activist. He blogs at

www.stormingthewinterpalace.blogspot.com

Email: asit1917@gmail.com

From Agartala to Ajmer

Usman Khalid

The forthcoming visit of President Asif Zardari (on 8 April) to the shrine of Hazrat Khawaja Gharib Nawaz in Ajmer (India) has raised many brows. Since he is well known for 'deals' on national aspirations and interests, almost every one is suspicious what is he up to? India is as jubilant as Pakistanis are in fear. He went to the USA and was openly auctioning the nuclear deterrent of Pakistan. The starting price for bidding was 100 billion Dollars. No one took any notice or interest. The Israeli newspaper HAAR'TZ was the only one to comment. It said in an editorial that the price was not too steep. But there were no bidders for two reasons: 1) Pakistan was not Libya and Zardari is not Gadhafi; he could not deliver on the deal because it was the military that was guarding the 'strategic assets' of Pakistan, 2) Pakistan's nuclear deterrent is India specific and it has kept peace in the sub-continent – the only place where wars have been fought again and again with some regularity. The 'auction' did not bring any money but it did reinforce the perception that Zardari may really be suffering from dementia as doctors has certified during his trial for money laundering in Switzerland.

Then Asif Zardari turned his attention to Pakistan's 'best friend' China. He started turning up in China every three months. Directed to outlying regions, received by minor officials, taken on pointless sightseeing trips, and given a cold shoulder everywhere, it took him a long time to take the hint. In the process he got to be shunned in China as much as in Pakistan which dampened – if not destroyed – the hopes for better relations. He did not give up. He turned his attention to Iran which resulted in Iran increasing the price of gas negotiated earlier. He annoyed Saudi Arabia in the process scuttling any prospects for subsidised oil. Then he turned his attention back towards his favourite targets – the military and the judiciary. He continues to demonise the Supreme Court replacing Babar Awan in his team – who

specializes in acts of contempt of court – with Aitzaz Ahson who specialises in pointless points to prolong court proceedings. Now Zardari has been joined by his son – Bilawal – who devoted his entire maiden speech at Garhi Khuda Bakhsh on the death anniversary of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto on 4 April demonising the judiciary. He criticised the Supreme Court for ‘double standards’ favouring the Punjab and submitting to the military. That is the politics of ‘Sindh Card’; Zardari is preparing for the likely event of his party losing the next elections in all provinces except Sindh. He is following in the footsteps of Sheikh Mujib, who had no hope for building a constituency of support in any province of West Pakistan. The PPP has been the only party with a solid constituency in all the provinces of Pakistan. It is Zardari’s politics which has robbed it of support in the Punjab. But he is already blaming the Punjab and courting disaster with agenda is perpetual strife and eventual disintegration.

Asif Zardari feels cornered because he has not been able to ‘tame’ the military or the judiciary. While his defiance of the judiciary is put on display every day in the national and international media, one gets only an occasional glimpse of his plans for ‘taming’ the military as it entails alternation of a charm offensive and seeking support of ostensible enemies of Pakistan. At one time he put Rehman Malik (his Interior Minister) in charge of even military intelligence – the ISI. But his most sinister plan became public when the Memo-gate scandal got the attention of the world media. It was revealed that President Zardari had asked his close confidant Hussain Haqqani, who was his Ambassador in the USA, contacted Admiral Mullen through a US citizen of Pakistani descent – Mansoor Ijaz – writing a Memorandum (Memo) to seek US help to remove General Kayani (COAS) and Lieut. General Pasha (DGISI) in exchange for accommodating the US interests in ‘nuclear assets’ of Pakistan and forming a new ‘national security team’ of US approved officials. The USA found that level of treason by a Head of the State hard to accommodate; the blowback would have damaged not just Pakistan but undermined the entire US strategy in South and Central Asia. The USA informed Kayani and Pasha. Mansoor Ijaz spilled the beans and revealed the plot in an article in the Financial Times of London. The matter is now before the Supreme Court and Hussain Haqqani, who was allowed to go abroad on written undertaking to return at short notice, is using all the tricks to avoid returning to Pakistan to record his statement. After all, his boss – Asif Zardari – did escape trial for 11 years after indictment, until his wife was killed and he became the President thus enjoying immunity from prosecution.

The Memo written to Admiral Mullen is not the only proof of high treason by the Head of the State against the State of Pakistan. It was revealed during public investigation by a Commission appointed by the Supreme Court which comprises three Chief Justices of High Courts that President Zardari okayed the raid on Abbotabad on 2 May the target of which was Osama bin Laden. It transpired that he omitted to tell the military. That also constitutes ‘treason’; this could have started an air war between the USA and Pakistan. Such decisions (to permit a foreign country to mount a raid within the country) are institutional – not a personal – decisions. On this occasion, a war was narrowly avoided but the President has not come clean. The danger of state decisions, including those affecting war and peace, being taken by the President without institutional input continues to exist. Is President Asif Zardari really suffering from dementia, or is it something else? His visit to Ajmer might give a clue as to what afflicts him.

While doctors alone can diagnose and treat his dementia; the hallucinations and paranoia on which his decisions are based, are evident from his decisions. The sudden decision to visit Ajmer is one such decision. Although his chief apologist in the media – Najam Sethi – often succeeds in giving a spin to events that the actions which strike fear and awe in the public begin to appear to be credible even admirable. According to Najam Sethi, there has been a ‘break-through’ in Indo- Pakistan relations with Pakistan having given unconditional MFN status to India. He conceded that Pakistan’s stand had always been ‘no trade until the Kashmir Dispute is resolved’. He also conceded that the balance of trade is in favour of India and that it would become worse after MFN rules come into play by the end of the year. He said that Zardari would urge Prime Minister Manmohan Singh for quid pro quo by approving agreements of Sir Creek and Siachin Glacier, the drafts of which had been agreed years ago. But President Zardari is not taking the Foreign Minister and a high defence official with him. The only minister in the President’s party is Rehman Malik – one of the two foreign national (others being Salman Farooki) who are still the members of his ‘kitchen cabinet’. These two along with Hussain Haqqani and Farahnaz Isphahani, have been privy to the secret deals made with the USA and the MQM. The similarities between the visit of Sheikh Mujib to Agartala and Zardari visit to Ajmer are too striking to ignore.

At Agartala, it was agreed that India would help in rigging elections in East Pakistan fought on the basis of 'Six Points' approved by RAW; recruit Hindu Bengalis to raise Mukti Bahini infiltrate East Pakistan at the appropriate time: provide offices and housing near Calcutta to set up Bangladesh Government in Exile; carry out propaganda worldwide to demonise Pakistan's 'military rulers'; provide safe haven, weapons and support to insurgents; and invade East Pakistan when both parties – India and Awami League – agreed it was opportune to do so. If Asif Zardari and his allies win elections only in Sindh the situation would be very similar to that of East Pakistan in 1970. Having sharpened his Sindh Card and appointed a successor – his son Bilawal – he believes an insurgency would begin if he is incarcerated. His son would sustain the insurgency from the UK joining hands with Harbiar Marri and erstwhile Khan of Kalat. Other surrogates of India – the MQM, ANP and 'nationalist' elements in Sindh and Baluchistan – he hopes, would join in. Asif Zardari is going to India to ask if he would be offered the same level of support as was given to Sheikh Mujib.

The Americans are aware of Zardari's plans, if they are not the ones to have made the plans in the first place. They are offering India every inducement to go along. But India is wary. Conquest of East Pakistan has been more of a lodestone exacerbating its 'Muslim problem'; Kashmir is far from being integrated into the India Empire even after 64 years of occupation; whatever little success India has achieved in Afghanistan, KPK and Balochistan is dependent on American goodwill. And America is on its way out. Will India buy into Zardari hallucinatory goals? The chances are that Manmohan Singh would not even offer to treat his dementia. ++

Geopolitical Journey: Iran at a Crossroads

Kamran Bokhari

Obviously, the intensity of religious feelings varies in Iran, but a significant stratum of the public remains deeply religious and still believes in the national narrative of the revolutionary republic. This fact does not get enough attention in the Western media and discourse, clouding foreigners' understanding of Iran and leading to misperceptions of an autocratic clergy clinging to power only by virtue of a massive security apparatus.

In the same vein, I had expected to see stricter enforcement of religious attire on women in public after the suppression of the Green Movement. Instead, I saw a light-handed approach on the issue. Women obeyed the requirement to cover everything but their hands and faces in a variety of ways. Some women wore the traditional black chador. Others wore long shirts and pants and scarves covering their heads. Still others were dressed in Western attire save a scarf over their head, which was covering very little of their hair.

In sharp contrast with his first term, Ahmedinejad — the most ambitious and assertive president since the founding of the Islamic republic in 1979 — has been trying to position himself as the pragmatist in his second term while his opponents come out looking like hard-liners. In recent months his statements have become less religiously informed, though they have retained their nationalist and radical anti-Western tone.

We in the West often expect Iran to succumb to international pressure, seek rehabilitation in the international community and one day become friendly with the West. We often talk of a U.S.-Iranian rapprochement, but at a strategic level, the Iranian leadership has other plans.

Exerpt from an article published for Stratfor.