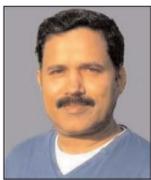


In the midst of strategic chaos

OVER A COFFEE



DR HAIDER SHAH

Both India and China are emerging economic giants and regional power comes with economic muscle. Fuming over India's improved influence and therefore supporting a jihadi network amounts to cutting off one's nose to spite one's face

LIKE INDIVIDUALS, SOCIETIES also suffer from various psychological illnesses. Judging by the hullabaloo the jihadi media has created in Pakistan, one can see the signs of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). In this illness, an individual suffers from impulsiveness, restlessness, hyperactivity and inattentiveness, which often prevent children from learning and socialising well. On Pakistani TV screens, from female commentators to those that wear their divine piouness up their sleeves and from urban liberals with posh accents to sponsored defence analysts, all seem to be harping on about the same song. The US is losing the war in Afghanistan and is therefore blaming Pakistan for its own failure. It is not the statement itself that is boring me to death as I have myself in the recent past analysed the possibility of NATO forces leaving Afghanistan to its own fate not because of the Taliban but because of the economic recession that is menacingly knocking at European doors. What makes me cringe is the glory-filled voice with which these half a dozen analysts mention US failure in Afghanistan. Their Hamid

Gulian zest for the defeat of NATO's forces in Afghanistan becomes too overbearing at times. To be fair, however, a few people remain honourable exceptions among the electronic media anchors while Nawaz Sharif, among the politicians, looked different as they did not ride completely on the wild horse of jingoistic discourse.

Once upon a time, we lived in the blissful era of Ziaul Haq. There was a perfect strategic alignment of everything that existed in Pakistan. We were told that Pakistan was a gift of the Two-Nation Theory and, being a fort of Islam, it was just obvious that leading the then international jihad against communist non-believers was its natural duty. The army, jihadi organisations and the Jamaat-e-Islami all worked in tandem towards one strategic goal. The civilised world also approved of this strategic alignment of state organs as it was determined to defeat the much more potent problem of communism, led by a nuclear superpower. History moves in phases. With the collapse of the Soviet bloc the old priorities became redundant and a new realignment of friends and foes had to take place.

Pakistan has still not been able to redefine its priorities and continues to suffer from an identity crisis, and hence ADHD. In terms of strategic objectives, it is in complete chaos. Let us accept that the Two-Nation Theory is the essence of Pakistan and, consequently, it is the propagation of Islam that defines our strategic objectives. Then, how come India, where Muslims have no problem in pursuing their religion and where a Muslim can become the president, is our foe while China, which does not allow its 20 million Muslims to read the Quran in primary schools, is our closest friend? If pragmatism, and not religion, guides our national interest, then why should we be so happy over the Haqqani network's influence in Afghanistan? True, Mr Haqqani was the US's blue-eyed boy during the Afghan jihad days as he was enterprising and outmanoeuvred others in bagging the lion's share. But we cannot remain frozen in history as time and tide wait for nobody. The Saddams, Hosni Mubarak, Gaddafis and Haqqanis, when they outlive their utility, become disposable. Statecraft is not built around 'till death do us part' romances but on preservation of national interests in an ever changing world. If we are pragmatic then we need to know in what way the Haqqani network will further our interests in the region.

The security establishment seems to be inspired by the legacy of the British 'great game' in Afghanistan. One very important feature of the East India Company's policy is, however, conveniently ignored. It was a private enterprise of London-based merchants whose primary aim was to earn profit for their shareholders. Glory for Britain was an accidental by-product. All its operations were first discussed in terms of profit making opportunity. Long before the march of the army of the Indus towards Kabul in 1838, Alexander Burnes was deputed on a special mission to survey the Indus for commercial navigation and then despatched to Kabul and Central Asia to hold trade related negotiations. Russia was seen as threatening the East India Company's monopoly over Indo-European trade. British wars had a clear strategic objective - preserving the East India Company's profiteering in India. What is the strategic objective of Pakistan in Afghanistan, a troubled terrain since Alexander right up to the NATO forces? Why does it want to be a player in Afghanistan? Both India and China are emerging economic giants and regional power comes with economic muscle. Fuming over India's improved influence and therefore supporting a jihadi network amounts to cutting off one's nose to spite one's face. Even if the Taliban make major gains, anti-Taliban forces will also not vanish and our dream of finding access to central Asian trade through a friendly regime will remain a delusion. The backlash of a pro-Taliban Afghan policy in terms of socio-political catastrophe hardly appears in the cost-benefit analysis of our policy makers.

Sometime back I reviewed a few instances of paradigm shifts. Many nations have faced the difficulty of making a challenging choice. Japan and Germany laid down millions of lives against the allied powers. After their defeat, they, however, chose a different national path. Similarly Russia, once a communist superpower, had to face reality and is now an emerging capitalist power. More recently, Serbia was faced with a difficult choice: either to go for the economic wellbeing of its nationals or continue trading along the violent warpath of jingoistic nationalism. It traded its generals for the economic prosperity of future generations. We also face a similar situation today but we happen to be a martial race: "Sau pushi se hai paisha-e aba sipah gari" (to provide services to armies has been our livelihood for hundred generations). "We prefer throat slitting to earning a few bucks," comments Mushtaq Ahmed Yusufi. So, unlike the timid Serbians, we have shown no qualms in trading economic prosperity for generals. We perhaps also need to look towards nuclear North Korea and start learning lessons about living in famine and splendid isolation.

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THE ELECTION COMMISSION OF Pakistan (ECP) declared officially a few months ago that about 37 million of the 80 million votes polled during the previous election were bogus. While the existence of such votes most unfairly tipped the 2008 election in favour of status quo political parties - both treasury and opposition - the media, civil society, and non-government political parties gradually pumped up the pressure. On August 22, 2011, the ECP not only eliminated the bogus 37 million votes but also began the process of door-to-door voter verification, registration, and elimination.

In retrospect, Pakistanis, by and large, do not seem to have achieved the critical transformation from drawing-room politics to ballot-box politics: about 60 percent of our already 'registered' voters do not even step out of their homes to visit the polling booth on Election Day!

During the previous election, the candidate that secured the National Assembly seat from my area NA 250 (Karachi) is reported to have bagged only about 16 percent of the registered voters' vote for herself. Out of about 324,681 registered voters, the turnout was 104,176, with 52,045 voting for her. More than 220,000 registered voters chose not to cast their ballot. Therefore, NA 250 residents became subject to someone who does not enjoy an 'outright' majority but a majority only amongst the minority that actually went out to the balloting booth. Very similar was the situation of the country as a whole and only about 43.65 percent of all registered voters cast their ballot. Add to this the millions that were eligible to vote but had never registered themselves, and the percentage representation slips further south.

When 'registered' voters choose not to vote, they are signalling either 'not interested' (in which case they ought not to complain later about shoddy governance and the dismal state of the state) or 'none of the above' (in which case the absentee vote may well have had strength enough to bring in completely new faces

during the election). With such low electoral turnouts, if more people were to increase participation, many candidates winning seats with marginal votes may perhaps be politically annihilated. Our electorate appears akin to the miser who prayed to God day after day to help him win the grand lottery but refused to purchase a single lottery ticket!

Voters may also be victims in varying degrees of the 'herd instinct', tending to follow the herd, failing to think independently, forgetting the track record of incumbents, and generally making juvenile political decisions such as, "I will not vote for him/her because he/she will not win!" The reality, however hurtful, is that every single tried and tested politician and traditional political party has failed to bring overall relief to the populace over the years. Yet we continue voting them in. And then crib incessantly for years to boot them out! It appears then that only a new face at the helm of affairs can bring about an affirmative change. The only way to affect this is for each one of us to participate in the voting exercise, and to mobilise the population that are registered to vote but choose not to cast their ballot. It is a well known, though less raised, subject that Pakistan is being ruled by politicians who had narrow electoral margins in general, and that too from a small minority that actually voted. Let us urge ourselves to cure 'voter absentia', and spare those 15 minutes to vote on Election Day.

Election results indicate that it is the urban vote that normally slackens. While feudal lords may push their way in their rural geographical areas through brute force, buying of voters and so forth, and thus record a comparatively higher turnout, the urban intelligentsia continue to crib (without generally taking practical action) that feudals and the 'same faces' dominate our political system. Election results may improve progressively provided our urban voters become more independent in their choice of vote, spare those literally life-changing 15 minutes, spread

ANALYSIS



TAIMUR SHAIQUE HUSSAIN

Voters may also be victims in varying degrees of the 'herd instinct', tending to follow the herd, failing to think independently, forgetting the track record of incumbents, and generally making juvenile political decisions

the message of voter registration and rise as an educated, democratic-minded, intelligent, decisive, and change-oriented middle class. It cannot be highlighted enough that since urban turnouts even of registered voters may be dismally low, their ballot remains 'open' and 'exposed' - thereby game for a fake vote. When election turnouts are large, a tacit national consensus may appear such as in nations like India (election turnout about 60 percent) and Bangladesh (election turnout about 70 percent), which, although large and populous, exhibit more continuity in government, greater likelihood of elected parties completing their terms, and lesser incidence of crying foul and demands for throwing out the incumbents.

It is logical next to also address the unregistered voters. These are people

who have come of age (every year about 6,000,000 Pakistanis turn 18, so the size of this pocket is large, whenever elections are held say every four years or so), expatriates returning, simple lazy folks, marginalised sections such as traditional housewives or domestic help, perhaps. The latest ECP stipulation is that all people with NADRA cards are automatically placed on the new election lists. To be part of 'real' change in Pakistan, it would be worthwhile to find your nearest Election Commission Office at 1217.

All is not lost! If we all act in our individual/household capacities by simply setting out to vote come Election Day, we may still envisage a completely new political canvas free of the tried and tested failures that have been repeatedly taking turns in ruling us for the past two decades. The people who happen to be ruling our country appear quite obviously not to be people of our choice, for, as stated, about 60 percent of registered Pakistanis refrained from even casting their vote in the previous elections.

With the 37 million bogus votes already removed, thus hurting the traditional political parties, bickering and disarray among the parties-in-power; strong resurgence of viable, strong political alternatives with proven track records and low likelihood of any party boycotting the next election, what appears likely is that this time around the electorate may finally be the decisive decision-maker in a hotly contested and fragmented election.

To echo Khalil Gibran's historic words in his work entitled, *The New Frontier* circa 1925, "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country." It does seem now that - provided we all exercise our 'right' as well as our 'duty' to vote - Pakistan may very well be on the brink of an electoral revolution!

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Real danger of regular flooding

COMMENT

It is now recognised that the great heat-wave and 'blocked' stagnant air over Russia in 2010 deflected westerly air flow onto the Himalayas above Pakistan. This added to the precipitation that caused last year's calamity

LORD JULIAN HUNT

ONE YEAR ON FROM THE calamitous flooding in Pakistan in 2010, much of the country is again under water. Already, more than 220 people have died, a million homes have been destroyed, and much crop yield devastated in Sindh and Balochistan provinces. This week, the UN called for \$ 357 million to help the government in Islamabad provide life-saving assistance to the estimated 5.4 million people affected.

To be sure, the crisis this year is not of the same order as last summer (the worst for 80 years) when some 20 million people were estimated to have been left homeless, along a path of destruction of more than 600 miles.

Nonetheless, the episode once again highlights the real possibility that Pakistan, and the Indian subcontinent in general, will become the focus of much more regular catastrophic flooding as a result of global warming, with the problems this would bring for a state at the centre of the campaign against terrorism.

This is not just therefore a question of better protecting against natural hazards, but also one with profound implications for geopolitics and international security.

Heavy monsoon precipitation has, without doubt, increased in frequency in Pakistan and western India in recent years. In July 2005, Mumbai was deluged by almost 950 mm of rain in just one day, and more than 1,000 people were killed in floods in the state of Maharashtra. In 2009, deadly flash floods hit north-western Pakistan, and Karachi was also flooded.

This trend is fuelled both by global warming (which means extremes of rainfall are a growing worldwide trend) and potentially by intensification and alteration of the El Niño/La Niña cycle, which is observed across the whole Pacific-Indian Ocean basin.

To understand the reasons why global warming is playing a role, one needs to look at the main climatic trends in South Asia. In addition to changing patterns of rainfall, there is also a reduction of ice over the Tibetan plateau and less snow at higher levels, plus more rapid run-off from mountains.

It is now recognised that the great heat-wave and 'blocked' stagnant air

over Russia in 2010 deflected westerly air flow onto the Himalayas above Pakistan. This added to the precipitation that caused last year's calamity.

How does global climate change lead to these regional effects?

First, rising temperatures lead to less snow on mountains and faster run-off from precipitation. Second, the less stable atmosphere causes deeper convection and intense rainfall. This can lead to more frequent and lengthy stagnant conditions and to the air flowing more readily over mountains with less lateral deviation so that the monsoon winds and precipitation can be higher in north-west India and Pakistan and weaker in the north-east.

In 2006 there was an unusually intense drought in Assam and rain in north-west India. But last year with the strong rainfall in the north-west, there was no pronounced decrease in the north-east.

Recent US studies have also concluded that the mountain meteorology is also affected by the aerosols emitted from urban areas of South Asia.

An overriding question is whether the El Niño southern oscillation (Enso), that determines the 10-year oscillations of weather across the Pacific basin and into South Asia and Africa, will change. The only scientific consensus on this point is that there is likely to be greater variability and the possibility that the warming El Niño phase may become more frequent than the cooling La Niña phase. The changes may be reinforced as the Amazon rainforest continues to disap-

pear, and snow/ice melting significantly increases over the Tibetan plateau.

The ocean and land surface temperatures and other processes are closely monitored and compared to the computer models that are used to predict these future trends. Until about 2020-2030, the natural fluctuations are expected to be greater than man-made changes (as was pointed out by many scientists in the 1990s).

But progressively, we can expect increased floods, droughts and hurricanes in different regions, especially in regions with the greatest populations. Minimally, better flood and drought warning systems and water management infrastructure will thus be needed, using the expertise of new research centres in Asia.

Some countries like Bangladesh and Hong Kong are already demonstrating how long-term social and infrastructure preparations by communities and governments can significantly reduce the impact of the devastating combination of changing environmental stresses and growing population. However, as the Pakistani example highlights, the international community also must provide help to address the geopolitical instability that makes preparations and recovery against these extreme events even more difficult.

The writer is visiting professor at Delft University, Vice Chairman of Global Legislators Organisation for a Balanced Environment (Globe), and a former director-general of the UK Met Office

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Post letters to Letters to the Editor, The Daily Times, 41-N, Industrial Area, Gulberg II, Lahore, Pakistan Phone: 92-42-35878614-19; Fax: 92-42-35878620
E-mail: letters@dailytimes.com.pk; letters.dtt@gmail.com. Letters may be edited for length and clarity



Encouraging women

Sir: Women police stations are being established in Gilgit-Baltistan keeping in mind the cultural restraints of the region and aiming to end women's rights violations.

Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan Mehdi Shah reiterated that due to cultural restrictions of the region, it is hard for policemen to investigate matters pertaining to women. However, after the completion of women police stations in

the province, this problem is expected to become easier to manage.

For this matter, women will be recruited from all districts so that every administrative unit is given equal representation. The establishment of women police stations will surely be a step forward towards ending women's rights violations in the area.
ZULFIQAR HAIDER
Islamabad

Load shedding on the rise again

Sir: WAPDA and PESCO have once again started their illegal, unscheduled load shedding in Peshawar. It took WAPDA and PESCO almost four years to realise that they were not facing an energy crisis of massive proportions but, due to the irregular or non-payments by WAPDA themselves,

of Pakistan has agreed to raise bonds to make payments to the thermal energy production companies in Pakistan and, in future, the thermal energy production companies will themselves be responsible for the import of fuel and storage, while WAPDA will only need to pay for the electricity added to the grid.

Now that the fuel/cash flow problem of thermal power producers has been resolved and due to regular monsoon rains, the rivers, dams, barrages, etc, are all running at near full capacity, why is load shedding still occurring?

Considering the corrupt and unprofessional record of WAPDA in the past four years, the consumers find it difficult to trust WAPDA anymore. Therefore, I would like to suggest that a third party company be hired to collect, check and publish the daily energy production and utilisation of Pakistan. They would work independently and publish their data online and in the newspapers. This would at least stop the unprofessional and incompetent workers of WAPDA making errors that result in load shedding, greatly inconveniencing the masses.
SHAHRYAR KHAN BASEER
Peshawar

Pakistan police

Sir: In order to build a proactive and informed society that is not beset by bad governance, the police and citizens will have to be brought closer together as the trust deficit amongst the citizens continues to grow. As a concerned citizen, I urge the authorities to take concrete steps for the betterment of Pakistan. To establish a peaceful society we will have to take measures and perform exercises in which both the parties understand the problems faced by each other and move forward in a positive direction.
ALI HAMDANI
Texas, USA

Billions of rupees

Sir: This is apropos of a news item published today with the heading: 'CIA, not Pakistan, created Haqqani network: Malik'. According to this news item, our interior minister acknowledges that Rs 5 billion was given to him by our heroic president and prime minister to enhance the efficiency of the law enforcement agencies in Sindh.

I would like to ask our proud interior minister that if such a huge amount was utilised for the law agencies then why have they failed to cope against the target killers? Where were the law enforcement agencies when innocent people were being targeted?

It appears that Rs 5 billion have been utterly wasted as they have not been adequately spent on the protection and safety of the citizens of Pakistan whose lives have been made miserable with the recent events. It is not enough to just allocate money and state the purpose it is to be used for; the authorities need to ensure that it is utilised in the best possible way and achieves the purpose of its allotment. The standard of defence mechanism really needs uplift so that people can feel safe and their inconveniences and fears are mitigated.
RIZWAN JAMIL JAFFERY
Karachi

Scientific way of moon-sighting

Sir: Most people will be wary of the complicated mathematical calculations involved in moon-sighting. However, the following simple explanation should suffice to convince the public that scientists are not trying to 'invent' an artificial birth of the moon. The first common misconception is the myth that the length of the lunar month varies between 29 and 30 days; in fact, the moon always goes around the Earth in 29 and a half days. As we cannot have a date of one and a half or half, we choose to count the first day either after 29 days or after 30 days. If a month is chosen as 29 days, the next month is already longer by the extra half day. So, 29 and a half plus half is equal to 30 days for the next month. When the month is 30 days, the new moon will always be thicker because it is one-and-a-half days old. This needlessly makes people suspicious that moon-sighting has been mistakenly delayed, which is not true.

On any day, there is always a greater probability of moon-sighting in Europe and the US as compared to Asia. This is because the moon is getting bigger by the hour, and evenings in Europe and the US are five to 10 hours later than those in Asia.

Scientists are not trying to invent any moon-sighting, nor are they trying to see it through telescopes. That is unnecessary. All they are doing is making a simple calculation

and informing us that the age of the new moon will be 0.2 days or 0.8 days or 1.3 days, etc, when the evening arrives at a particular spot on the Earth.

They also tell us how long it will remain above the horizon during the twilight. It is then for us to lay down some rules to decide whether we should start the new month or postpone it by one day. For example, if the age of the moon is less than 0.4 days, the new month may be postponed by one day. In this way, the lunar calendar can be easily and accurately produced for the next 100 years or more.
MESHAL SHAKAIB KHAN
Karachi

Medical progress in Pakistan

Sir: On August 12, the liver of a brain dead teenage boy of 16, who had pledged to donate his organ, was successfully transplanted to a recipient of 42 years, suffering from cadaver liver disease (CLD) in Lahore. The liver transplant was carried out at the Sheikh Zayed Hospital and was the fourth cadaver liver transplant to take place in Pakistan.

The first cadaver liver transplant was performed by Dr Adeebul Hassan Rizvi in 2003 at the Sindh Institute of Urology and Transplantation in Karachi. While no living donor transplant has been done in Pakistan yet, our team is very optimistic to make this possible as well and so we have conducted all the necessary research for it.

Last month, London's Royal Hospital team, comprising of Business Development Director Alison Shutt, Consultant Surgeon Massimo Malago, Consultant Surgeon Giuseppe Fusal, Consultant Anaesthetist Colin Beard and Operating Theatre Sister Angeline Shoniwa, visited PIMS in Islamabad to provide valuable training to our team with regard to liver transplantation. They said that they were satisfied with our work.

Commendable efforts of Prime Minister Gilani and the Project Director of the Centre for liver diseases and liver transplant in PIMS Islamabad, Professor Aftab Mohsin, have accelerated this work on a priority basis. We are doing our best and hope to achieve success in the advancement of healthcare in Pakistan.
DR SAIF UR REHMAN
Islamabad