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Running PIA aground

The so-called national carrier is on the verge of collapse. The Pakistani penchant to run things to the ground before rectifying them has brought PIA to the point where it is continuously experiencing flight disruptions. One PIA plane was grounded at Dammam airport and four others stopped in Dubai as the airline was unable to pay the fuel bills. The planes were only allowed to depart the airports once written assurance was given to settle the debt. Moreover, PIA was unable clear the fuel bills with PSO that stopped the fuel supplies resulting in cancellation of flights and the affected international route was Karachi-Muscat and domestic routes were Karachi to Faisalabad, Islamabad and Lahore. Additionally, the International Air Transport Association (IATA) suspended its services to the airline citing various irregularities committed by it but the issue was resolved after PIA paid a fine of \$3.5 million. There is a growing concern that PIA will be forced to ground more planes if financial difficulties continue. Reports are that 15 more aircrafts could be grounded within a week if outstanding bills are not cleared bringing the total of grounded aircrafts to 30. What is needed is swift privatisation of the airline if it is to be salvaged. **TW**



BOL network sold

BOL is a pretty controversial media network and has not been able to shun controversies associated with. To begin with was the fact that it was the brainchild of the infamous Axaat-owner Shoaib Shaikh who was convicted in 2018 along with 22 others in the fake degrees case. He planned launching BOL in 2015 and hired many prominent journalists on exorbitant salaries even before the network commenced its operations. The launching of the network's TV channel was not found possible after its parent company got embroiled in fake degree scandal. Later, the network was acquired by the ARY news network and the

TV channel was launched in 2016. BOL network became the hub of sensational journalism that played a significant role in polarising the media world. Reportedly it has been acquired by AsiaPak Investments, a private equity firm whose credentials are shrouded in mystery. As a general partner at SparkLabs Group, AsiaPak has invested in over 500 technology companies in China, Korea, Saudi Arabia and other countries. The new owner and Chief Operating Officer, Sameer Chishty, is described as a seasoned technology investor in Asia and the Middle East and his firm is mentioned as investing 'only' in Pakistan in sectors including infrastructure, energy, power, transport, logistics and technology. **TW**

Former cricketer sentenced

ADutch court sentenced former Pakistan cricketer Khalid Latif to 12 years in prison for urging the murder of anti-Islam MP Geert Wilders. Latif, 37, had offered 21,000 euros for the head of Wilders in an online video after Wilders sought to arrange a competition for cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH). The judge ruled that it was not a stretch to think that somebody around the world would have taken heed of the call to kill Wilders and that the accused knew this as his call fuelled the fire to have Wilders killed. It is extremely unlikely that Latif, convicted in absentia, will serve his sentence. Dutch authorities have sought in vain to question Latif over the case and requested legal assistance from Pakistan, also to no avail. Wilders cancelled the cartoon contest after protests broke out in Pakistan and he was inundated with death threats and has been under 24-hour state protection since 2004. In Holland, the plan to stage the contest was criticised widely with politicians, local media and ordinary citizens slamming the idea as needlessly antagonising Muslims. Rashid Latif played five one-day internationals and 13 T20 internationals for Pakistan but was banned from cricket for five years in 2017 for spot-fixing in a Pakistan Super League match in Dubai. **TW**



Unknown destination



Pakistan is facing the consequences of clash of wills of individuals who apparently have failed to learn from the gross mistakes of the past and are unwilling to change their course. It is abundantly clear that a journey is traveling to an unknown destination that mostly results in hazardous outcome. Instead of correcting their course these elements keep on harping about the resilience of the people of Pakistan thereby implying that it is only resilience that is required to remain constant as no change in perception would be allowed to happen. These forces do not care that the Pakistani polity has reached the end of its tether and it is not far that the patience will completely run out. It is not realised that it is futile to expect that a fast-growing horde of people can be fed on promises without finally bringing them to fruition. The people of the country have reached the point where they do not know where they stand and if the situation is allowed to persist then they may lose whatever moorings they are left with.

The country finds itself in a state of inertia indicating the dilemmas countered by it with the result that the ruling segment of the state getting unsure by the day. The ongoing controversy regarding deciding the forthcoming election date

has yet again brought to fore the deepening uncertainties prevailing in the polity. When closely observed, the situation is underpinned by contradictory stances taken by major stakeholders that fly in the face of reality. The scenario therefore appears very hectic with the caretaker government issuing a volley of press releases showing that it is successfully grappling with rising inflation though this assertion is far from truth. The official policy appears to be sidelining main issues by sleep-talking about lowering taxes on imports and exports to improve the commodity supplies to the markets conveniently ignoring its parallel narrative implying that the fountain of inflation is based within the country controlled by vicious mafias. The inferred reality is that everything is topsy-turvy and the paint job may not last for very long and even what is in the offing is certainly not clear and is causing further confusion.

By the look of things battle-lines are clearly drawn between the overt and covert factors responsible for determining national affairs. Both sides are battling their demons painstakingly hiding their conflicts. It is quite clear that both sides are suffering equally though they maintain a bravado that is just as skin-deep.

Discerning observers can gauge the discomfort but are helpless to fathom the end result. In the meanwhile, national issues are direly neglected and the wavering downward slide continues. Looked at closely the problem is not simply a deep divide between political elements of the state but it carries in its wake deeper socio-economic malaise that is not properly diagnosed.

These issues require cool and steady approach to devise some sort of a solution but in the current state of frenzy this looks highly improbable. What is more worrying is the fact that some decisive elements prefer the state of frenzy the country is in because such state provides them a chance to retain their hallowed state of saviours. Their policy has always been to keep perpetuating the frenzied state of affairs so that the focus does not come to the essentials that they prefer to manage on their own without any interference. The result is that the most important geo-strategic issues are dealt with by this particular segment of the state according to their particular perception without keeping in consideration the wider interests of the people of the country.

The real policy makers are widely known to willingly ignore the fact

that the regional shifts that are fast are corresponding with global shifts complicating the situation fundamentally that requires development of a national consensus about policies framed to tackle them otherwise it will become the situation will become untenable with the potential to keep the keep the arbitrary decision makers engaged in conflict for long time to come. This ostrich-like approach is now recognised by the rest of the segments of population except the arbitrary decision-making apparatus and they have now started to speak out pointing out that the solo flight may ultimately prove detrimental to the national interest.

The situation is so dire that it not only requires total reappraisal but also immediate change of course. It certainly cannot be left to a cabal of people having no legitimate representational approval and authority to pursue misdirected goals mostly beneficial to them. The current scenario demands some people to abandon their ivory towers and come down to what is actually happening on the ground with a view to rectify the ills afflicting the nation. It must be realised that the welfare of the common man is the real issue of the country and it should be the paramount concern while managing the country instead of playing games. **TW**

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Pakistani economy is tanking while global economy is picking up

Asrar Raouf comments on the current economic situation

It is indeed ironic to observe that while the global economic situation is recovering from the setbacks of Covid pandemic and Ukraine war yet Pakistan's economy is sliding consistently. A new world trade report released by the World Trade Organisation (WTO) points out that negative headlines are obscuring a more optimistic global trade picture as even trade between the United States and China reached its highest-level last year despite escalation of trade tensions between them since 2018. Trade tensions that began in 2018 between the world's two largest trading partners saw tit-for-tat escalation of import tariffs but the report noted that despite all obstacles bilateral trade increased. Unilateral trade-related measures are generating an increasing number of trade measures that are raised by WTO members in different bodies. The nature of these concerns is also changing as re-globalisation through increased international cooperation and broader integration is assisting trade, inclusiveness and environmental sustainability.

On the other hand, Pakistan is sinking deep in economic mire as it is now reported that the country's interest pay-



ments last month increased alarmingly to Rs.537 billion while its income stood at Rs.381 billion surpassing the federal government's net income for the month by Rs.156 billion that constitutes 41 per cent shortfall. This has raised concerns that the annual debt servicing cost may exceed budget allocations due to rising interest rates. Provisional federal fiscal

operations for July, marking the beginning of fiscal year 2023-24 have indicated that Pakistan's debt situation is no longer sustainable. The country is now borrowing primarily to meet interest payments that is contributing to an elevated debt burden. Intriguingly, just a year ago, the net income was sufficient to cover interest payments but this is not the situation currently.

Moreover, the ever-increasing interest rates has forced the federal government to borrow Rs.1.3 trillion at a rate of 24.5% for three months, a rate that was 2.5% higher than the key policy rate. Market sentiment appeared reluctant to lend money to the government due to reports that the central bank was considering increasing the key policy rate to 25%, although the State Bank of Pakistan

(SBP) denied these reports. The federal government had no choice but to secure these costly loans due to its cash buffers being nearly Rs.1.5 trillion less than emergent needs as against the available cash buffers, the government was scheduled to make Rs.2.05 trillion in debt repayments. Similarly, Rs.310 billion in interest payments were due within this week including on external loans. Additionally, around Rs.80 billion was due to the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) beneficiaries. It must be kept in view that for the current fiscal year, the government has allocated Rs.7.3 trillion for debt servicing though this figure may go up to Rs.8 trillion.

In the previous fiscal year, the federal government missed its budget targets and failed to restrict fiscal operations to the level agreed upon with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as the coalition government went entirely out of line leading to a substantial increase in public debt from Rs.44 trillion in March 2022 to Rs.61.8 trillion by July this year. It happened because the federal government's total expenditures surged by 20% compared to the same month the previous year, reaching Rs.645 billion. It was left with no option but to borrow even for defence expenditure. It was mentioned that taking a questionable action the government undertook the responsibility of polio eradication programme entailing an expenditure of \$1.8 billion. Additionally, development spending also witnessed significant growth rising to Rs.16 billion from Rs.5 billion from previous year indicating preparation for election for the parties of coalition government.

Another serious difficulty faced by the financial decision makers of Pakistan is



the reservation exhibited by Saudi Arabia with respect to protection of its investments and rights in Pakistan prompting an immediate wholesome review of the situation and setting of tight deadlines by Pakistani authorities to materialise the much-needed investment in Reko Diq gold and copper mines. Saudi Arabia has shown interest in making multibillion-dollar investment in the Reko Diq project and the Saudi leadership is interested to capitalise on it at the earliest but the project's bankable feasibility study has not yet been completed. In this context, it was reported that a Saudi Arabian delegation visited Pakistan last month evincing interest in bringing in-



vestment in major projects subject to the resolution of certain issues. Pakistan eyes around \$25 billion investment from Saudi Arabia that it hopes to get under the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) umbrella in the next three to five years.

Saudi Arabia wants to make investment in mines, mineral, power, agriculture and plasma products. However, it was reported that Saudi Arabia raised the issue of hurdles in repatriation of dividends by the foreign investors as the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) is not allowing free outflow of the dollar due to thin positions of the foreign exchange reserves that has created serious resentment among the existing and the new foreign investors. It was also reported that Saudi Arabia also enquired about the regime in place for its investment protection and issues related to dispute resolution mechanism along with demanding additional benefits on its investment though what kind of benefits was not specified. Reportedly, the Saudis are particularly concerned about the investment proposals floated by two of its companies, Aramco and ACWA Power, which are interested in setting up oil refineries and investing in the renewable energy projects.

Under the aegis of SIFC, negotiation and oversight committees of the Reko Diq project for negotiations with Saudi Arabia are constituted. SIFC has also directed that ministries concerned would devise and upgrade existing brownfield investment opportunities through the platform provided by the SIFC to ensure

new investment in these projects. The SIFC has also approved to exempt the hiring of financial advisers by Pakistan from the Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA) rules aimed at achieving the deadlines set to dilute Reko Diq shares in favour of Saudi Arabia. The finance ministry and the SBP had been instructed by the SIFC to facilitate foreign currency payment by the Pakistani shareholders of the Reko Diq project to make payments to the advisers. The SIFC also allowed the energy ministry to engage local legal advisers, technical consultants and financial advisor for the Reko Diq project along with specifying future course of action for them.

On the other hand, the caretaker government is under pressure both from the public and the establishment to improve the financial position. Deeply conscious of the public outcry on receiving inflated electricity bills the caretakers resorted to a crackdown on power theft and it was reported that eight million units of power theft detected fetching fine of Rs.352.4 million out of which Rs.27.25 million recovered from them so far. These consumers were involved in theft of electricity by direct supply, punching holes in the meter body, shunt system, tempering of the meter body and various other methods. All electric supply companies known as DISCOS are involved in this nation-wide crackdown and it was reported that LESCO and MEPCO are doing better than other companies. **TW**

Asrar Raouf is a former civil servant

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G20 summit concluded

Dr. Tahseen Mahmood Aslam describes conclusion of a moot

The 18th two-day G20 summit in New Delhi concluded as India handed over the bloc presidency to Brazil. Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russia's Vladimir Putin both skipped the summit. Even otherwise the domestic situation for Joe Biden and Narendra Modi, the leading personalities, of the summit looks quite troubling as Modi's party had lost four of seven by-polls in important states to the newly minted opposition alliance including the Indian Congress and Biden's ratings within his own Democratic party had plunged to forbidding levels. It was pointed out that it was one of the most difficult G20 summits in the almost twenty-year history of the forum as it took almost 20 days to agree on the declaration before the summit and five days on the spot. It was mentioned that the Ukraine war was the most contentious issue in the negotiations. Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine has left tens of thousands dead, displaced millions and sown economic turmoil across the world. Moscow, which says it is conducting a special military operation there and denies committing any atrocities. The difficulties arose not only due to some disagreements on the Ukraine subject but also due to differences in positions on all key issues, primarily the is-



sues of climate change and the transition to low-carbon energy system.

The group adopted a Leaders' Declaration that avoided condemning Russia for the war but highlighted the human suffering the conflict had caused and called on all states not to use force to grab territory. The consensus came as a surprise. In the weeks leading to the summit, sharply differing views on the war had threatened to derail the meeting, with Western nations demanding members call out Moscow for the invasion and Russia saying it would block any resolution that did not reflect its position. The summit also admitted the African Union which includes 55-member states as a permanent member of the G20 underlining the bloc's inclusivity of more developing countries. Addressing food security concerns, Russia would return to the Black Sea deal that lets Ukraine export grain if Moscow's demands were met. Moscow pulled out of the agreement in July over what it called a failure to meet its demands to implement a parallel agreement easing rules for its own food and fertiliser export. The summit document had called for the safe flow of grain, food and fertiliser from both Ukraine and Russia. Indian Prime Minister Narendra

Modi asked the group's leaders to hold a virtual meeting in November to review progress on policy suggestions and goals announced.

It appears that the G20 summit that recently concluded in New Delhi was

aimed at devising a way for amicably settling issues that have already arisen and may arise in future regarding the gradual emergence of multipolarity. Evidently, the unipolarity era is coming to an end as the reach and relevance of the US is



slowly receding and it has not proved an earth-shattering change as was witnessed during the fall of the Soviet Union during the 1990s altering the geo-strategic balance for a long time to come. The fall of the Soviet Union spelt the end of bipolarity that involved widespread territorial adjustments disrupting the global arena from where it is still coping to recover. The lessons of the end of bipolarity were probably well learnt as it is observed that for maintaining a satisfactory balance after the end of unipolarity, middle powers are brought in to ensure smooth transition to global multipolarity.

The first challenge to the impending multipolarity is the growing economic clout of China that is exploiting its soft power rather dictatorially causing widespread resentment as witnessed by Greek disagreement over and subsequent withdrawal from the BRI deal. The manner in which Greece withdrew manifests the deepening resentment of what is perceived as Chinese hegemonic designs. It is observed that the government of Chinese president Xi is committing a mistake by treating BRI as it treats Chinese domestic situation. There is already a deep division within the Chinese governance setup that opposes president Xi's dictatorial style of leadership particularly after he grabbed an unprecedented third term as president, against the laid-down policy of restricting the presidential tenure to two terms. Apparently, the only acceptable way of countering the Chinese alleged ambitions of global dominance was to present an alternate to the BRI that was done in the recently concluded G20 summit.

In this context, the significant aspect



of the summit was the proposal floated by America, Saudi Arabia and India pertaining to an infrastructure deal that could reconfigure trade between the Gulf and South Asia, linking Middle Eastern countries by railways and connecting to India by port.

The proposal that has also included the United Arab Emirates and Europe was in the pipeline since months and may be a sweeping, multi-national ports and rail deal would come at a critical time. To counter China's BRI global infrastructure push, US President Joe Biden is pitching Washington as an alternative



partner for and investor in developing countries at the G20, especially in the Asia-Pacific region. It also comes as the Biden administration seeks a broader diplomatic deal in the Middle East that would have Saudi Arabia recognise Israel. Actually, the credit for this initiative goes to the Trump presidency particularly Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law, a Jew himself, who devoted considerable time and influence to this issue.

Beyond the diplomatic implications it is projected that such an infrastructure deal could reduce shipping times, cost, the use of diesel and make trade faster and cheaper. Saudi Arabia is also in talks with Italy about a potential Saudi investment in Rome's new strategic fund, with the kingdom focusing on energy, sustainability, supply chains and sport to expand its presence in the country. The proposed deal will benefit low and middle-income countries in the region and enable a critical role for the Middle East in global commerce. It aims to link Middle East countries by railway and connect them by ports, helping the flow of energy and trade from the Gulf to Europe. A memorandum of understanding for the deal was set to be signed by the European Union, India, Saudi Arabia, the

United Arab Emirates, the US and other G20 partners. It is expected that the deal helps turn the temperature down across the region.

Interestingly, Ukraine justifiably found copious mention in the G20 joint declaration released but on the other hand, the silence of leaders from Western democracies over what observers point out as creeping fascism in India was palpably resounding. It was pointed out that the leaders of France, the UK and the US, in particular, indulged Modi at a considerable cost to India. Biden did not have the temerity to even point out the excesses of Modi regime in respect of Indian minorities though he did criticise it in far-away Vietnam. Away from the sanitised and cordoned venue of the summit, journalists from key G20 countries held a parallel online summit they called M20. It discussed a key element many members battle in their respective backyards the freedom of the press. Even the formidable US media contingent accompanying Joe Biden was surprised to find itself excluded from Modi's meeting with Biden. **TW**

Dr. Tahseen Mahmood Aslam is an educationist with wide experience

The erring envoy

Uzair Ali looks at a sad end to a diplomatic career

Richard Olson served as the American ambassador to Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates, both important assignments in the complex global scenario. His first ambassadorial assignment was in the UAE from 2008 to 2011 and was then appointed as the US ambassador to Pakistan from 2012 to 2015. From 2015 to 2016 he was US special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan till his retirement as career minister, the second highest rank in American service, reporting to then Secretary of State John Kerry. Richard Olson was also posted in Mexico, Uganda, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, Ethiopia and NATO. He also served in risky stations such as Iraq and Afghanistan when they were in a state of violent conflict. His was a worthwhile career and it was duly acknowledged by his political bosses particularly John Kerry along with his colleagues. His abilities as a consummate diplomat were also applauded in the countries he served in as well as the institutions he was associated with in his long career.

Though the UAE is an absolute monarchy yet Pakistani governance system also suffers from arbitrary control. Somehow the impression taken by the diplomatic personnel of the western world posted to these parts of the world is that they can get away with anything they do while serving in these states. Accordingly, it appears that both the destinations he was posted to allured him to deviate from the strict diplomatic norms followed by his parent country despite the fact that he was aware of the possible consequences of the misdemeanours he indulged in rather wilfully. So, it happened as was expected as after he retired in 2016 after



putting in 34 years, Olson came under American federal investigation for a pattern of conduct atypical of the upright, protocol-observant world of international diplomacy.

In this context, court documents were filed with a federal court in Central District of California in early April this year and the two charges brought by the Justice Department are misdemeanours stating that Rick Olson had avoided disclosing in required ethics documents that he had received a first-class airplane ticket from New Mexico to London valued at more than \$18,000 and a stay in a luxury hotel in London in January 2015.

In London, the ambassador met with a businessman from Bahrain who soon offered him a one-year contract with a salary of \$300,000 that would start after he left the State Department. The U.S. government bars senior officials from doing lobbying work on behalf of foreign entities during a cooling off period of one year after they leave the government. Olson violated this when he went to work for the Pakistani American businessman in December 2016 and began receiving monthly payments of \$20,000.

The businessman's company lobbied for the government of Qatar. Olson lobbied on behalf of Qatar in Washington on



two issues: the first involved efforts to persuade American officials to establish a U.S. Customs and Border Protection pre-clearance facility in the main airport in Doha, Qatar. Having such a facility gives a host country and its national airlines significant advantages in operating flights to the United States — the airlines can fly directly to more than 160 destinations in the United States even if the U.S. airport has no customs clearance facilities.

Prosecutors indicated that the businessman's company was paid by a company associated with a Qatari official to get Washington to set up such a facility in Doha. According to the case, the businessman drew up a contract in October 2016 that said a holding company controlled by a Qatari government official would pay the businessman's company \$3.5 million per year plus a 20 per cent success fee. It was noted that the United Arab Emirates, a rival to Qatar and where Rick Olson had served as ambassador, had a pre-clearance facility. In April 2013, the State Department signed a treaty with the Emirates that established the facility at Abu Dhabi International Airport.

The other lobbying effort in which Rick Olson was involved occurred after Saudi Arabia, the Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt cut diplomatic ties with Qatar in 2017 and blocked flights and ships from



Qatar from using their airspace and sea lanes. The rupture became an international crisis. American military officials had to scramble to deal with the consequences of the blockade because the U.S. military's main air base in the Middle East is in Qatar. Olson was paid to lobby officials in the Trump administration to encourage the U.S. government to help get the blockade lifted and repair diplomatic relations among the Persian Gulf nations.

While Rick Olson was ambassador to Pakistan, he was also fending off a State Department investigation about a different matter. In 2014, someone tipped off the State Department's inspector general that 11 years earlier, while Olson was serving as the head of the U.S. Consulate in Dubai, the emir of the Persian Gulf city-state had delivered a velvet box to his office, records show. Inside were four diamonds set in white gold — a pendant,

a ring and a set of earrings — that federal officials later valued at \$60,000. They did not name the emir though Dubai has had two different two emirs since 2003. Olson clarified that the emir had given the diamonds not to him but to his mother-in-law who was living with him in Dubai in appreciation of her taking care of Olson's two children in absence of their mother, Deborah Jones, who also served as US ambassador to Libya. Jones said that her mother died in December and that she's not sure what happened to the diamonds. She and Olson filed for divorce in 2018 though she said they have a cordial relationship.

During his posting in Pakistan Olson dated multiple women particularly Muna Habib, a young television reporter working in the country and they dated for two years but broke up in late 2014 after Habib, who is a British citizen, discovered that the ambassador had been



cheating on both her and his wife but they resumed contact a few months later. Habib was admitted to the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism

in 2015 but could not afford the \$93,000 she needed to attend. Olson agreed to help by introducing her to Imaad Zuberi, a Pakistani American businessman who offered \$25,000 to offset her tuition expenses and arrange a \$50,000 loan. It was mentioned that he sent a \$20,000 check to Columbia University and \$5,000 to Habib but never made good on his promise of a loan. Zuberi was sentenced in 2021 to a 12-year prison term for tax evasion, campaign finance violations and other charges. Olson rekindled his romance with Habib and they married in June 2019 and now live in New Mexico.

Olson was not charged with wrongdoing related to the diamonds or his girlfriend's tuition but the Justice Department has argued in connection with his sentencing that the episodes show a pattern of unethical behaviour. Under federal sentencing guidelines, Olson could receive up to six months in prison and he was scheduled to be sentenced on 12 September but his sentencing was postponed for giving due consideration to his service to the country. **TW**

Uzair Ali is in the finance sector



Growing incidence of terrorism

Fahad Ali looks at the worrying terrorism escalation in the country

The upsurge in terrorism in Pakistan has caused jitters within the security establishment that was quite convinced that it has broken its back and proclaimed it often. This upsurge is currently concentrated in the border regions of the country substantiating the official claims that this is a clear indication of cross-border connivance particularly Afghanistan. The incidents of terrorism became so frequent that Pakistan was compelled to closed down Torkham border with Afghanistan. This closure is now a week-old and is reported to have a detrimental effect on bilateral relations with Afghanistan vociferously complaining about serious disruption in trade and also supplies going to Afghanistan through the facility of the transit corridor. The way things are going have made many sceptics to argue that Afghanistan could not embarked upon such a disruptive course of action unless encouraged by some very influential powers that want to punish Pakistan for the role it played in the events that took place before the Afghan Taliban takeover of Afghanistan two years before.

It is quite obvious that supporting and abetting terrorism is considered not enough by the Taliban regime of Afghanistan and it has also renewed its irredentist claims on Pakistani territories. In this context, it was reported that the Afghani side had started building an unlawful structure on Pakistani territory while Afghan troops resorted to indiscriminate firing when they were confronted over the disputed construction. Meetings between officials from both sides have failed to resolve the dispute with the result that hundreds of vehicles remain stranded waiting to go across the border while people wishing to get to the other side have also been left high and dry. The cost of the closure has reportedly resulted in losses worth hundreds of millions of rupees, with perishable items



including fruit and vegetables from Afghanistan, not getting to market and rotting in the hot weather.

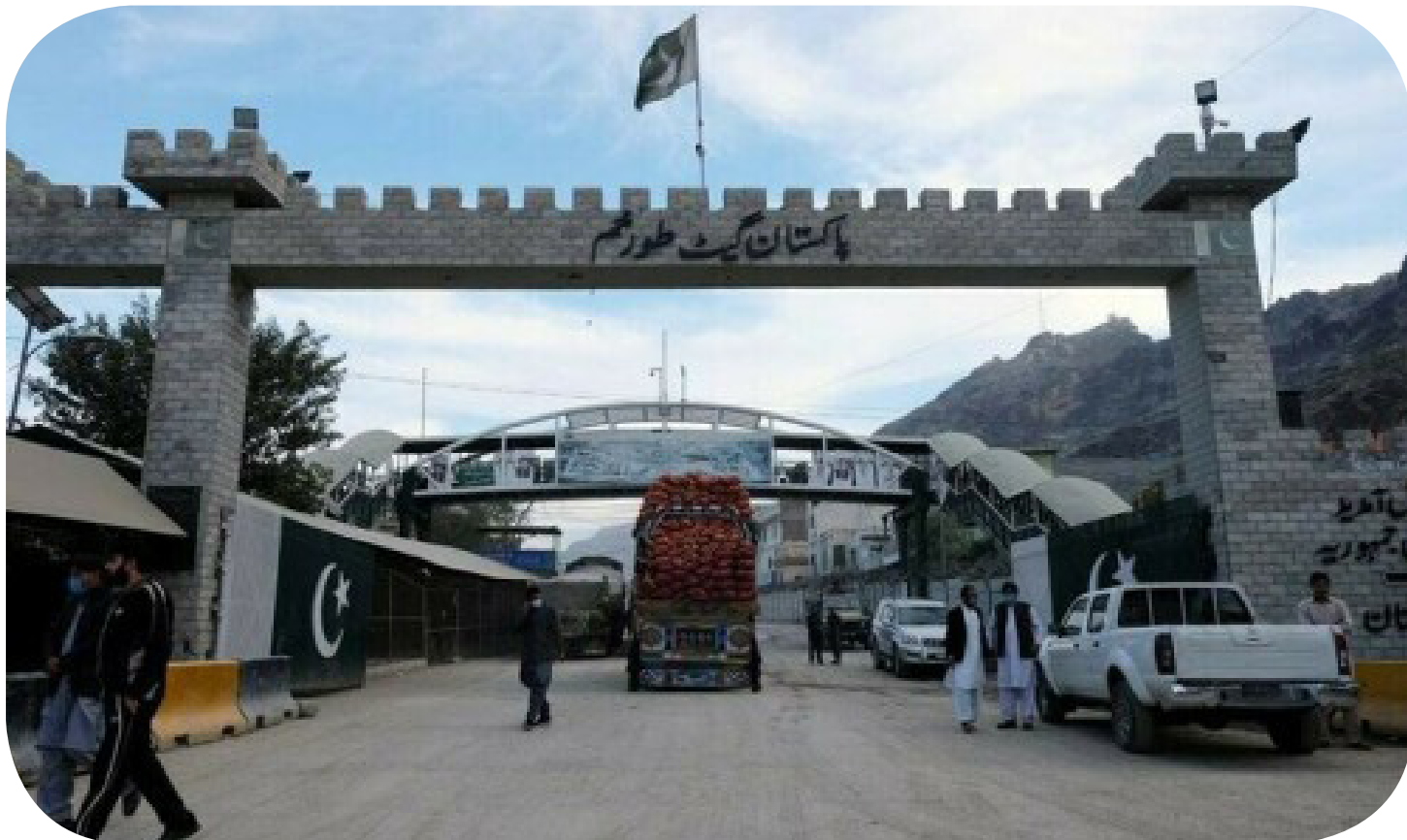
Friction is nothing new for both the countries particularly due to territorial disputes that plague them even before the inception of Pakistan but this time round the Afghan regime is exhibiting extraordinary insensitivity to Pakistani perceptions about this issue and has embarked upon construction activities on disputed territory. It is also not strange to experience border disruptions including their closure and such irritants are required to be removed through parleys with the aim to properly demarcate disputed border regions. It should also be taken into account that trade disruption caused widespread misery to the people. Torkham is a key conduit in Afghan transit trade but it must be appreciated that Pakistan's security concerns must



be addressed for smooth cross-border economic activities. Currently what is witnessed instead is the intransigence of

the Taliban regime that has not refrained from being sarcastic about Pakistan's economic difficulties pointing out that Pakistan should concentrate more on exports than closing borders.

On the other hand, the cross-border infiltration by terrorists has increased manifold causing worry to Pakistani security forces. The latest outrage was committed in Chitral during which an unspecified number of terrorists attacked two Pakistani positions resulting in martyrdom of four Pakistani troops. It was reported that a large group of terrorists belonging to the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) crossed over from the Afghan side and launched an attack. Though TTP is reportedly active in several parts of KP and northern Balochistan but Chitral had not seen any terrorist activity up to now indicating that the terrorists are feeling confident enough to extend their area of activity which set-off alarm bells considered conducive by the TTP as they assist in spreading fear far and wide. The growing militancy also points out to the inadequacy of the Pakistani security apparatus as was also evident from the fact that intelligence agencies warned of an impending attack on Chitral.



The sequence of events in this context clearly points out that the upsurge in terrorism in Pakistan cannot be an isolated phenomenon as a terrorist group cannot launch massive cross-border attacks involving a significant number of terrorists inside Pakistan without the support and approval of the Afghan Taliban regime. If there is any semblance of truth in such suspicions harboured by increasing number of international observers then it points out to a covert declaration of hostilities against Pakistan by Afghanistan. This is an unnerving state of affairs that is fraught with dangerous consequences both for Pakistan and Afghanistan. It also belies the impression that Pakistani security establishment had close ties with Haqqani network because media reports

mention its direct involvement in terrorist activities across Pakistan.

Contrary to the impression, in actual fact that the Haqqanis maintain close relations with the TTP and the network was reportedly instrumental in acting as a conduit during negotiations of Pakistani government with the TTP that ultimately failed. Haqqani network is part of the large set of Afghan militants that have held and maintained close relations with the TTP that has evolved over time with filial relationships having taken place between them. The cooperation between the Taliban when they were fighting foreign occupation was due to strategic considerations as Pakistan security establishment held firm belief that the Americans would ultimately quit

Afghanistan, and in that case, Pakistan would be constrained to deal with them on amicable terms. The Americans did indeed withdraw but the turnaround of the Taliban, Pakistan's erstwhile allies, was highly unexpected and caused tremendous disruption in ties between both the countries.

It is reported that the Haqqani network largely recruited Pakistani militants and the result was that a considerable number of militants now engaged in terrorist activities are Pakistanis that has extremely complicated the security situation. Haqqani network does have multiple connections with many other terrorist groups that have strengthened its combat ability and financial as well as logistical supply chains. Such connections

have made the network to be considered part of wider affiliations harboured by Al Qaeda though this setup does not have a recognised centre. The propaganda pattern of Haqqani network as well as the Al Qaeda has also influenced Pakistani militants further radicalising them against the state. By the looks of it, Pakistani security apparatus has seriously underestimated the potential hazards such terrorist groups carry in their wake particularly the solidarity of their association with Afghan Taliban and their affiliated groups.

It is very apparent that this nexus has facilitated shifting of a large number of its fighters to Pakistan providing them with Nato-calibre weapons that have tremendously increased their fighting capability. Moreover, it is reported that the TTP network is actively engaged in merging various factions particularly in Pakistani territory that provide support terrorist activities in the country. In addition, Afghan Taliban are also re-directing their fighters towards Pakistan aiding the nefarious activities of the terrorist network. TTP terrorists are exploiting Pakistan's vulnerabilities with regard to territory, resources and support base as was borne out by the string of terrorist attacks in Zhob and Chitral. These activities reveal a broader strategy that also involves establishing a new base in Chitral that may extend terrorist activities in the region with an additional aim of exploiting communal tensions in Chinese regions. This situation is precarious not only for Pakistan but also is dangerous for the Afghan Taliban regime that may face the reaction of Pakistani security apparatus that is now sick and tired of the scenario. **TW**

Fahad Ali is associated with maritime trade



Remembering Quaid-e-Azam

Malik Nasir MAHmood Aslam
Aslam recollects the
personality of the founder of
Pakistan on his death
anniversary



It has been three quarters of a century to the demise of father of the nation and still a vast majority of people regret his early passing away from the national scene. It speaks volumes about the prestige and acceptability of Quaid in national psyche. He is the only political leader to have retained his awesome presence in the historical annals with his prestige increasing with the passage of time. Interestingly, he belonged to a small province of the subcontinent and that too from the minority Muslim community. Hailing from Gujrat he was not only a contemporary of MK Gandhi but was also completely free from the communal prejudices that remained the hallmark of Gandhi's personality, conduct and politics. Gandhi portrayed his communal prejudice quite early in their respective careers when right after his arrival from South Africa he was feted in Gujrat in which the Quaid was also present making Gandhi to welcome him but pointedly mentioning that though the Quaid was a Gujrati but was a Muslim.

People from Gujrat were and are still known for their enterprise and commercial along with their marked propensity for social welfare and their names are associated with plenty of philanthropic projects. They are known as extremely resourceful and dedicated to whatever task they choose to pursue. Both the Quaid and Gandhi opted to work in public life and diligently pursued their aims and met with success that is unparalleled. In this context, the Quaid was radi-

cally different than rest of the leadership of his times in many respects that made him the tallest politician of his era. The differences were extensive in nature and they ranged from his outlook, method of operation, tactical brilliance to acute legal acumen, appreciation of public aspirations and sincerity of his mission.

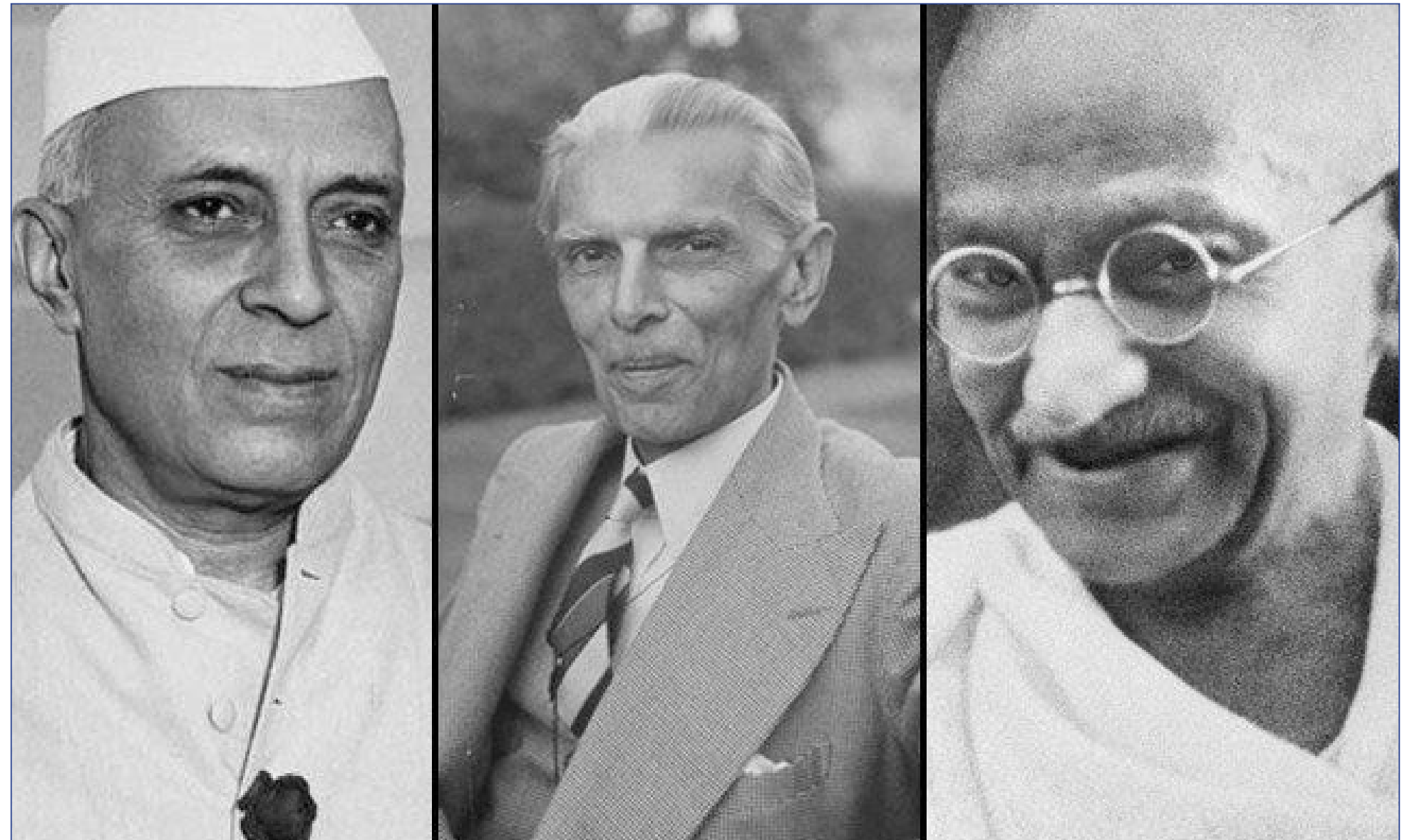
Though Gandhi was equally successful like the Quaid but the crucial difference between them was that the Quaid was completely independent in his life and lived it according to his means that were

considerable. Gandhi, on the other hand, never worked for living after he landed in India from South Africa and in the words of Sarojini Naidu required lots of money to keep him poor. This fundamental difference was instrumental in transforming the Quaid as the most potent stakeholder in the freedom movement in the dying days of the British Raj whereas Gandhi was quietly and discreetly sidelined by the Congress Party particularly by Nehru and Patel and his political eclipse, though gradual, had begun after

the end of the Round Table Conferences. The Quaid, on the other hand, gained strength day by day and by the end of British rule his political role became indispensable not only to the Muslims but also the Congress leader ship as well as the departing British.

The Quaid was nothing but steadfast and held to his stance wholeheartedly as he usually adopted them after careful deliberation. It was in this context that his acceptance and later withdrawal from the Cabinet Mission Plan is usually cited as probably one of the rare incidents in this respect. It is more than evident that this reaction was triggered by the glaring deviation from the Plan undertaken by Nehru and could not be considered as specifically Jinnah's change of tactics. In this respect he was different than the Congress leadership particularly Gandhi who regularly changed his position and this proclivity was evident from the days of Khilafat Movement and continued right up to the partition. Gandhi's wavering positions not only baffled by the British but it also exacerbated the communal harmony in the subcontinent. The discomfiture caused by his meanderings created within his party as became evident by the bitter rivalry between Nehru and Patel. It goes to the credit of the Quaid that he consistently maintained unity in his party and it was primarily due to his steadfast attitude.

It is indeed laudable that the Quaid, noted for his natural reserve and aloofness, quickly adjusted the rough and tumble of electoral politics and became the first Muslim leader in the subcontinent to crisscross the vast land mass and his rallies were devotedly attended by the large number of Muslims. One can just imagine the tough travelling conditions of the time with dusty roads and crowded railway with the Quaid negotiating them with patience and determi-



nation. Though there had been Muslim leaders such as Maulana Muhammad Ali Jauhar who garnered huge support for the causes they espoused such as Khilafat Movement but the Quaid's mass appeal was altogether different and largely superior to any such effort taken before him. His persona was extremely charismatic and his presence was electric as is evident from the fact that he was largely

unable to address his gatherings in Urdu and had to depend upon speaking in English but despite this handicap he was raply listened to.

The Quaid was not only intelligent but also very resourceful as is evident by his successful attempts to convert his hitherto moribund party into a mass movement that proved one of its kind in the annals of the history of Muslims in India. He was

undoubtedly a natural-born leader and possessed the knack of handling Muslim leaders from different areas and backgrounds who ultimately came under the umbrella of his guidance. His attention to detail was phenomenal and he never ignored even the minutest of details and this ability to read and comprehend the fine print stood him in good stead. This quality indicated his indefatigable inten-

tions ensuring that all ends were properly tied and no opportunity was ever missed. His opponents understood this point but were unable to do anything about it because his commitment level was absolute and he acted accordingly becoming a colossus in the very competitive political arena. He was far ahead of his contemporaries in terms of formulating strategy that was not only effective but also far reaching and stood the test of time.

The most vital difference that the depicted during his long political life was the deep indifference he exhibited regarding advantages of high office. He was more than willing to pursue politics remaining outside the influence and trappings of incumbency. He proved again and again that he was never tempted by the lure of political power and considered it to be below the dignity of a committed political leader. He was very sincere in his disinterested attitude towards political advantages and treated them as something alien to his nature. His decision to take over the office of the first governor general of Pakistan was a tactical decision as he was aware that Mountbatten will not be able to do justice with the newly created Pakistan as joint governor general of both the dominions. He was also aware that in a new country with no government worth calling for only his towering personality and incredible prestige would be able to straighten out matters. This was a very realistic assessment as his presence at the helm of national affairs steadied the ship of then state that otherwise would not have been possible. While remembering him the Pakistani nation is profoundly aware that it is extremely rare to find such a man. **TW**

Malik Nasir Mahmood Aslam
a seasoned social activist



The fraught times

Ambassador Alam Brohi talks about the difficulties faced by the country

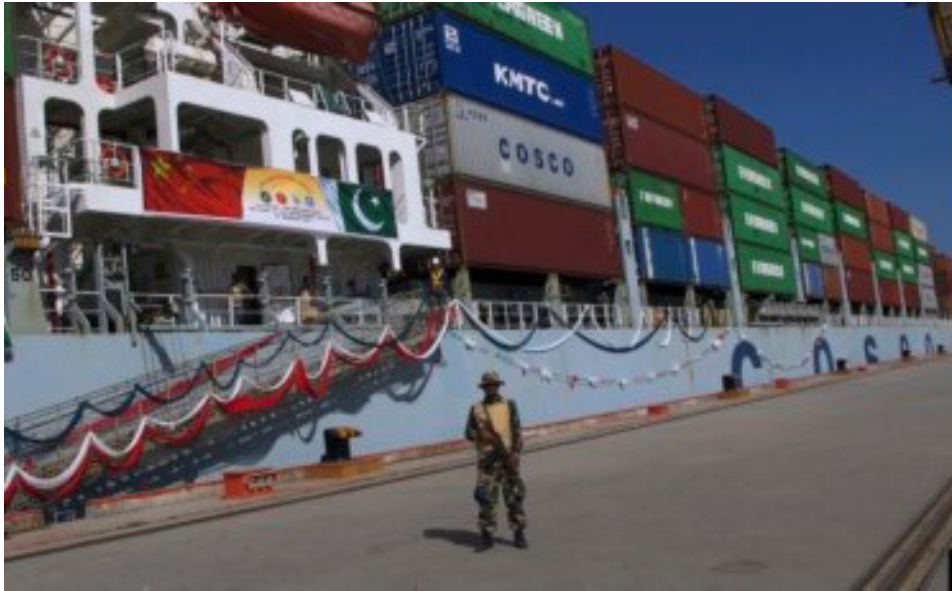
The anti-democratic forces are fighting an intense battle to foil the popular challenge to their supremacy notwithstanding the chaos they have created by their wrong choices and priorities. The security conditions are getting worse; the political instability is deepening; the economy is in continuous nosedive; the human rights violations are rampant; the courts have come under tremendous pressure to dispense justice and establish the constitutional supremacy and rule of law; the political leadership is in disarray and lives in awe and fear; the state institutions function in a constitutional vacuum and, more often than not, at cross purposes; the poverty has leapfrogged exasperating the woes of the common man and the young generation is fast losing hope in the future of the country.

The switch over from a dictatorship to a democratic rule in developing countries is always fraught with political pitfalls. The political leadership has to be cautious, farsighted and steadfast. Such a transition in our country has always been prone to derailment. Our politicians are impatient, unrestrained and devoid of political discretion, principles and ideals. Their rhetorical love for democracy has a short life and evaporates as soon as they get out of power. To have a plump piece of the apple pie, they seem to be ever ready to slit each other's throat. They pliantly consent to become part of the toolkit of the undemocratic, unelected and the constitutionally unauthorised forces to destabilise a sitting government, and restrict the remit of a democratic rule to bring about positive changes in the political, economic and foreign and security policies of the country. We have been going back and forth in this vicious circle of political spectacle since independence.

We have neither democracy nor had any benevolent autocracy or dictator-



ship. We are entangled in a cobweb of half democracy consisting of elected parliament and cabinet and half autocracy comprising not-so-hidden string pullers-euphemistically called hybrid rule-with the latter firing the shots and using the former as sandbags to bear the brunt of any backlash. They show no qualms to throw out the leading showman of the spectacle if he dares to protest or defy them on any issue. They have politicians waiting in the wings to fill the vacancy. This is what we have grown up in since our adolescence, witnessing Prime Ministers being toppled, framed in murder cases and hanged; dethroned and sent packing into exile or lodged in a small cell in Attock Jail. The law enforcers remain pliant; the judiciary stands divided and avoids asserting its constitutional writ; the parliament enacts laws specific



to a limited purpose unconcerned with the public wellbeing, and rubber stamps

amendments to the existing laws to strengthen undemocratic forces thereby reducing the Constitution to a worthless book.

This country has withstood many a serious crisis in its short history. However, the political crisis of 1970 proved fatal to the territorial integrity of the country. The current political crisis is deeper than the turmoil we faced five decades ago in the rebellion of the people of East Pakistan against the usurpation of their right to form the federal government. The current crisis involves the political aspirations and economic interests of the four federating units. These units are diverse in their political aspirations, economic resources, cultural moors and ethnic and linguistic composition. They can remain glued with each other in a democratic dispensation with sufficient provincial autonomy and guaranteed right of ownership over their land and resources. We have walked past the times for highly centralised governance as evidenced by the consensus of the political forces over the enactment of the 18th Amendment to the Constitution augmenting the quantum of provincial



autonomy.

There has been a chronic unrest against the broken promises of the federal authorities in Balochistan. The three insurgencies in the Baloch land were overcome, and the fourth one remains aglow and has been festering since 2006. It shows no sign of abatement. Rather it has exasperated apparently establishing a nexus with the religious militants. This is a political issue and could be resolved through political reconciliation. Nevertheless, we have been wittingly or unwittingly treating it as a purely security issue, and trying to find a military solution to it. The recent history is replete with instances where the insurgencies within a region were finally resolved through dialogue by the political leadership.

The erstwhile tribal territories are infested with the militants of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) as evidenced by their increased attacks on security per-

sonnel even in the settled districts. Some credible reports suggest that we lost 200 security personnel in the first six of the current year. In the last two weeks we have had three attacks on our security posts in which we lost over a dozen soldiers including one major. This is really alarming. There are insidious attacks from the western border too that have compounded our security problem. KPK is entangled in political chaos and uncertainty. The political engineering does not seem to be going according to the plan of the security establishment. The PTI continues to be the most popular political outfit there. We should be cautious given the tumultuous history of the region since the colonial period and through the years of our independence up to 1980. It would be a phenomenal blunder to foist an unpopular rule on the province. The centrifugal forces in KPK are far stronger than the centripetal factors.

Sindh has remained sandwiched between rapacious and corrupt PPP ruke and the wrong, extractive and extortionist policies of the federal authorities since five decades patronising the MQMP and eyeing the provincial resources in terms of its lands, islands, seaports, forests, coal and mineral and hydrocarbons reserves. The Sindhis are gripped by a deep sense of insecurity. The feudal dominated structure of their society; the crumbling law and order situation giving way to increased and organised crimes of dacoity, highway robbery, kidnapping for ransom and extortions, forced conversion and marriage of minority girls and, above all, the fast-expanding poverty and helplessness has created a confused, directionless and disordered sense of nationalism in the Sindhis. The Sindhi nationalist leaders have failed to collect and lead them from a credible political platform for political liberty and economic

prosperity. They are disillusioned and angry with the factional nationalists and mainstream political parties. This anger is boiling under the surface and needs a small spark to erupt if things, God forbid, spiral out of control.

Punjab is politically at a crossroads. The popularity of the beleaguered PTI has been continuously ascending despite the incarceration of its chairman and the first rank leadership. The desertion of the bulk of its stalwarts to Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party has not made any difference as far as its vote is concerned. Any attempt to engineer the results of the general elections to the advantage of anti-PTI political parties in Punjab and KPK would plunge the country in a long spell of political and economic chaos. We cannot afford it given our fragile security situation.

It seems the security establishment is unmoored from the ground realities in its rage to politically destroy the PTI and its chairman before the general elections. In any way, this is not a wise course to take. The PTI chairman is patriotic and would not be averse to any sensible suggestion to bring political stability in the country. The ongoing prosecution of the PTI leaders through concocted cases has made us a laughing stock in the comity of nations. We cannot adopt head-in-sand attitude and claim to be a democratic polity conforming to constitutional norms, human rights and rule of law. We are under scrutiny by friends and foes in this global village. This should underpin any move to have a new political configuration in the country. **TW**

Alam Brohi is former Ambassador of Pakistan and was associated with Foreign Service of Pakistan



Dangers of internal instability

M Ali Siddiqi describes the dangers of instability

There is hardly any doubt that internal stability is the most crucial factor every state aims to ensure for not only its survival but also for peaceful existence for its people. It is a recognised factor that developments within countries also pose a threat to world order as a lack of order can provide space for terrorists to train, prepare for, and carry out their attacks. Instability within states often results in civil strife that brings in large flows of refugees that cause instability in their neighbouring countries. It is also well known that many stronger and stable states try to seek advantage of instability of unstable states and look for the outcomes they prefer that may be harmful to the unstable state. It must also be kept in view that most conflicts in the global arena are the result of unstable countries and the difficulties experienced by them that ultimately spill over and pose complex risks for the international order.

Though there have been consistent attempts to avoid conflicts globally but they keep on recurring in almost all parts of the world. It is reported that on an average twenty conflicts occur every year with many countries at some point in their existence face a challenge from secessionist movements that seek to break away and establish a country of their own. What these secessionists seek is not an alternative to sovereignty but rather a sovereign country of their own. In this context, South Sudan broke away from Sudan in 2011 and there is an effort in the Catalonia region of Spain to create a new country for those living in that area. Meanwhile, some governments are facing challenges from terrorist organisations, drug cartels and pirates whose goal is not so much a country of their own as the ability to ignore the government and carry out activities that advance their own political or financial agendas.

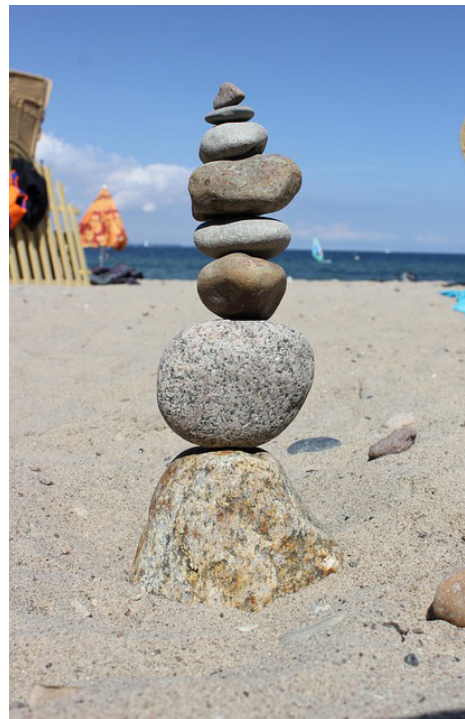
Internal conflicts are certainly not an

isolated phenomenon as it is assessed averagely 1.5 billion people live in states that are rated fragile in content. Fragile states may fulfill all tenets of a state existing in global order but somehow, they fail to perform the basic duties of what is expected from governments including maintaining internal security, collecting taxes, issuing and supporting a viable currency, building infrastructure, offering basic education, regulating food and product safety and providing the basics for retirement and health care. It may be pointed out that Pakistan unfortunately falls in this category where now large areas are rated as ungovernable and the people living there are widely considered insecure. It is just not that a weak state is the one that has lost control over territorial areas but also the one that has failed to provide required security umbrella and opportunities of equitable existence for its citizens. It is more than manifest that sovereignty is not just a conceptual

imperative to be adhered to but also to be put into practice otherwise it remains hollow and extremely harmful to the existence of the state.

A fragile state continuously runs the risks of breakout of violent internal strife that exacerbates the already prevalent instability. Such strife involves the own forces of the state as well as militias and terrorist groups, a situation that is ram-

pant in Pakistan with rising terrorism making life miserable for the citizenry. Moreover, ethnic and communal conflicts are also taking place in Pakistan with its state apparatus simply unable to contain them as the coercive ability of the state has been taken over by the professionally armed segment of the state that invariably pursues policies beneficial to its own interests. Most worryingly, internal

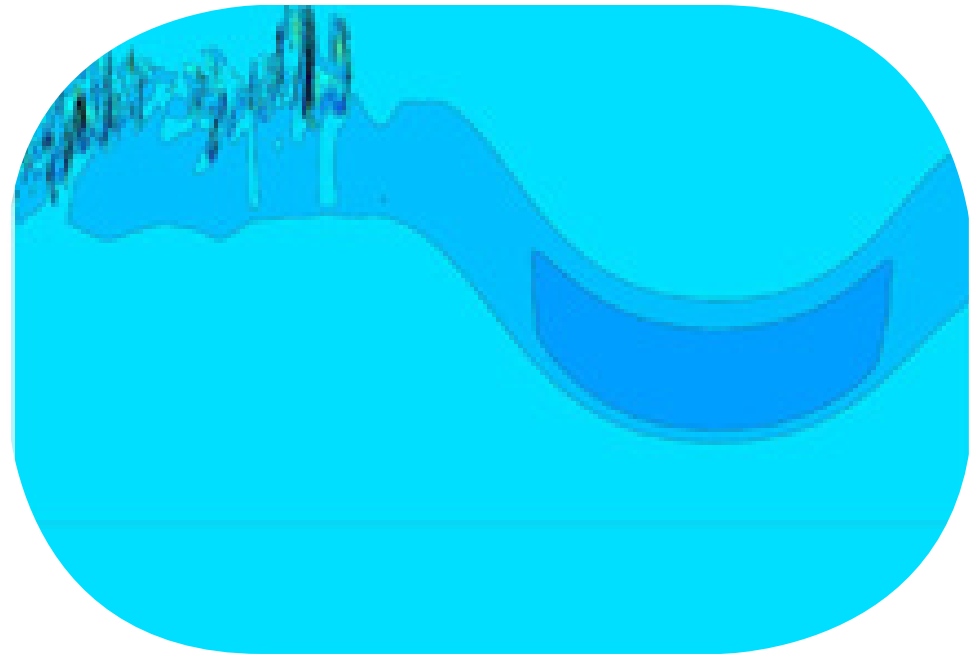


conflicts tend to last longer and, after they conclude, are more likely to flare up again indicating that their underlying causes are not addressed and removed. This is certainly a dangerous position most fragile states counter and they find themselves unable to wriggle out of it. It is now widely acknowledged that what makes a country weak in absolute terms is its inability to control what takes place within its borders or to make available to its citizens what they require to lead a normal life.

It is described that fragile countries face the endemic difficulty of lack of commitment to the rule of law, whether because of corruption, leaders with too much power, or some combination of the two. This in turn reduces incentives to own private property or invest in the



country which stymies economic growth. The uncertainties of governmental policies often cause the investment to shy away and this investment includes local and foreign investment. Such states also suffer from rampant discrimination that is widely pervasive and negatively affects minorities and women who are reduced to live a subdued life under constant fear of persecution and violence. On the political side, countries facing internal instability tend to be characterized by high



concentrations of power in merely a few hands. There tends to be little oversight of these leaders and little inclination on their part to learn from mistakes. The government may be seen as having lost its legitimacy and right to rule by a significant share of the population. Constitutions and checks and balances on the arbitrary exercise of power either are inadequate or are inadequately enforced.

The economic condition of the fragile state is also pitiable as it suffers from rampant corruption that badly impedes economic growth by forcing people to spend time and money-making payoffs rather than focusing on their businesses. The capacity of governmental agencies is considered weak that fails to collect due taxes and even whatever collection is made it is unevenly collected such as collecting more of indirect taxes instead of direct taxes increasing tax burden on the populace. The coercive network including police and judicial institutions is weak with the result that incidence of inequality is high and upward mobility is limited or nonexistent. As is now widely recognised in Pakistan, elites tend to perpetuate themselves with special interests dominating anything associated with the general interest. These external controlling factors seriously and deci-

sively disrupt the functionality of the governmental structure and it often tends to concede to their demands as has been repeatedly witnessed in Pakistan.

In such a situation it is widely feared that a fragile country would remain at the brink of civil war as all sources of instability within countries are driving the country towards it. Civil war is characterised by the fact that it ensues between internal forces not controlled by the government or ruling authority and government forces and Pakistan is currently facing this prospect as Tehrrk-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)-led insurgency is spreading out far and wide. This insurgency is aimed at not only taking control of the Pakistani districts bordering Afghanistan but also to implement their own brand of religious and cultural code. This attempt of the TTP is equally resisted by the state as well as the residents of the area where the insurgency is rampant. At one time, the state had controlled the insurgency but, as was pointed out above, it has the tendency of recurring which it has with external help from Afghanistan. **TW**

M Ali Siddiqi is a writer who contributes to leading periodicals



Respiratory issues

Nabeel Zafar talks about major health hazards

Healthy lungs are incredibly important and knowing the early signs of a poorly functioning respiratory system can help one breathe easier. There are many symptoms describing the problems associated with breathing that is an extremely discomforting medical condition.

Chronic cough
Many people experience a cough for short-term reasons such as a cold or flu but a cough that does not go away may be a sign of a chronic condition. Conditions that often lead to chronic coughing include postnasal drip, asthma, emphysema and chronic bronchitis and can be one of the early signs of lung cancer. While there is no reason to panic from a few days of coughing, a long-term cough is worth getting looked at.

Wheezing
Wheezing is caused by inflamed, narrowing airways, which can in turn be caused by a number of conditions. From chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) to allergies to heart failure, wheezing can be caused by so many different conditions, it is important to speak to a doctor about it even if no other symptoms are present. Additionally, wheezing can be caused by certain medications, such as aspirin so it may be best to tell the physician if it is experienced.

Painful swallowing
If it hurts to swallow, it could be an early indicator of respiratory illness. On top of the typical suite of illnesses that typically cause sore throats such as strep



throat and tonsillitis, chronic conditions like COPD can also involve symptoms such as painful swallowing. When in doubt, it's always best to consult a medical professional about the possibility that persistent pain when swallowing might be linked to COPD or another chronic condition.

Chest pain
Chest pain can indicate a number of respiratory, cardiac, muscular and digestive conditions, so it is important not to armchair-diagnose yourself. That said,

if one is experiencing other respiratory symptoms along with chest pain, such as shortness of breath and coughing, it might be a sign of pleurisy or another respiratory condition.

Shortness of breath
Though some causes of shortness of breath are temporary and mild, others are quite serious including asthma, anaphylaxis, COVID, and even carbon monoxide poisoning. Of course, reaching out to a doctor is the best way to learn more about why one is experiencing shortness



of breath.
Coughing up blood
Coughing up blood is never a good sign as it is a sign of something more severe going on. Identifying the underlying cause of coughing up blood may include X-rays, blood tests, CT scans and other examinations. One's doctor can help determine which tests are needed to identify the root cause of symptoms.

Waking up with headaches
If one experiences morning headaches in tandem with snoring and other major sleep apnea symptoms, it might be time to reach out to a doctor.

Choking
One of the many complications associated with COPD is swallowing problems to the point that one might have an increased risk of choking.

Loss of weight or appetite
Sudden weight loss or a decrease in appetite can be caused by a number of factors but it may be possible that it is linked to respiratory issues. Conditions like COPD are known for causing a decrease in appetite while pulmonary fibrosis can cause weight loss.

Excessive mucus production
The cause of excess mucus can be anything from short-term conditions, like infections or allergies, to chronic illnesses like asthma and bronchitis, so it is important to speak to a physician, especially if symptoms persist long after recovering from a cold or making it through allergy season. **TW**

Nabeel Zafar works in the private sector

Revisiting 9/11

Umair Jalali looks back at a tragic phenomenon

The critical analysis to find out the flaws of one of the longest bloody conflicts of human history has begun and blames are flying all around. There is hardly any doubt that the sole superpower of the modern era has been humbled and that too at the hands of almost a ragtag army that at any given time in two decades did not have necessary wherewithal to take on the might of the NATO arsenal. That the only lethal weapon the Taliban possessed was the ability to kill the Afghan civilians but they could not inflict the same damage on the foreign forces as is evident by the number of casualties borne by the civilians vis-a-vis the armed forces. It is however not understood that being aware of the difficult terrain and guerilla tactics of the traditional warfare pattern of Afghanistan why the foreign troops stayed so long as they did.

It is conceded at the outset that some events, due to their sheer magnitude, change the course of history and 9/11 was one of them and that there was no justifiable reason for Al-Qaeda to target innocent civilians even if it has serious grievances against the West. It also is fact that post 9/11 events affected locales far from American shores and for a time the notions of the so-called clash of civilisations became a self-fulfilling prophecy. While the retaliation of the US and its allies to carry out a revenge attack after 9/11 is not debated but what motivated them to keep on increasing their involvement in the developing quagmire is open to question. If the target was to neutralise radical Islamist militancy, the two-decade occupation of Afghanistan and apparently the never-ending war on terror hardly did much to neutralise it and the situation got worsened with time as America's imperial overreach helped create even more bloodthirsty outfits, such as the self-styled Islamic State group, along with destabilising functioning Muslim states and increasing sectarian and ethnic fissures within these societies.



It is also a fact that consistent critical voices kept on pleading that Al Qaeda and its affiliates could have been targeted through other, more intelligent and less intrusive methods but the rise of neocon perception in power segments of the US decided to take the opportunity to further their agenda of the new American century aimed at reasserting the global superiority of the western system. The western policy makers, in the guise of fighting terrorism and spreading pluralistic governance system embarked upon imperial civilising missions across continents and soon it enveloped Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Libya that actually proliferated and strengthened the concept of clash of civilisation that till then was just an academic debate.

The pity is that even after two decades of bloodshed and tremendous financial waste the world is just as dangerous a place than it was before the 9/11 events. These twenty years presented the western democracies in ugly light with prisons and torture practices that recruiters for militant movements have used to influence young minds within the Muslim world and strengthen their violent narratives. Instead of rooting out terror and with equally dangerous after-effects these two decades have enabled the authoritarian Muslim states have run roughshod over their hapless populations that suffer from acute poverty and lack of opportunities that further trigger violence.

Even for America and its allies the lin-

gering effects of 9/11 are still palpably felt. There has emerged a clear wedge between American and Western Europe, particularly France, regarding threat perceptions associated with militant ideological enmity. Adding to the woes is the triumphant return of the Taliban who appear unwilling to depart from their perceptions of an ultra-rightist state having scant respect for the kind of pluralism that was the mainstay of the argument forwarded by the western alliance. Pathetically, there is not only Afghanistan to be worried about now but almost the entire region that is infested by anti-western groups harbouring profound anti-Western emotions that apparently are difficult to assuage. The memories of the bitter twenty years are more deeply etched in the consciousness of the region as compared to the western world.

The West may be able to turn a new page as is evident by the US Department of Justice that announced that the FBI had recently closed a portion of its investigation into 9/11 attacks and is reviewing some long-classified documents to determine if they can now be disclosed. This announcement came in the wake of President Joe Biden's executive order directing the declassification of certain 9/11-related documents to be released. However, it may prove enormously cumbersome to erase the bloody memories of the last twenty years from the collective memory of the people of Afghanistan and the region it is located in. It is now crystal clear that the efforts of the last two decades have failed to devise and implement a cogent strategy to encounter terrorism in the world. **TW**

Umair Jalali teaches in The Royal Colosseum and is an avid sports fan



Developing world and international relations

Hoor Asrar talks about a perceived change of perception

The recently held summit meeting of G-20 countries in India has emphatically pointed out that the developing world is not as straight forward as it seems. Its inherent evolution is an important source of cleavages observed in the international system. To begin with is the fact that the two crucial participants of the G-20 summit are still considered a veritable part of the developing world though the top industrial nations of the so-called developed world are unwilling to consider India and China as part of the developing world as it is generally perceived. It must be kept in view that the G20 consists of 19 countries and the European Union making up about 85 per cent of global GDP and two-thirds of the world's population and this description is completely unlike the description of the developing world in vogue. Within the developing world, countries were usually classified as having relatively low and medium levels of development. Through the mediation of international institutions, the dynamics of international relations has progressively defined the notion of developing world. For instance, the United Nations Development Programme uses its Human Development Index to measure development in terms of several indicators such as life expectancy at birth, adult literacy rate, gross domestic product (GDP) per capita and human poverty. Whatever category it is put in it is, however, a reality that the developing world is an element in international relations but its changing nature required reviewing its position in the global perspective.

The developing world was the world politically created by peoples of Africa and Asia meeting in Bandung in 1955; the Bandung conference was the beginning of the collective claim of Third World countries for decolonisation and development. From this conference, a collective



consciousness of belonging to the underdeveloped world and a clear resolution to change international relations arose. For this reason, the trademark of developing countries in international relations has been and still is the denunciation of the international order. In the same way that Westphalia constitutes a mythical reference for the foundation of European public order, Bandung is a reference in international relations. The Bandung conference was a Third World appropriation of principles of European public law and the United Nations Charter. The creation of the Non-Aligned Movement in 1961 in Belgrade was part of the same dynamics. The developing world is a world in rebellion against the international order but the clash between the developing world and the developed world is relative as the developing world does not refer to an autonomous entity.

It is generally recognised that the developing world is the world on which



developed countries wield their power through various means: economic, cultural, political, or military. Economically, the lower position is reflected by the weakness of the national currencies, raw

materials dependent on the trade structure, high rate of human poverty, or insufficient industrialization. In international relations, developing countries are to a large extent subordinate to developed countries, which create explicitly or implicitly international clientelism: Patron states are developed states; client states are developing states. Clientelism makes it difficult for developing states to have diplomatic autonomy or to go beyond vocal affirmation of sovereignty. However, the economic dependence of the developing world is not an absolute. Ideological, political, or religious parameters may determine the diplomatic demarche of a developing state.

As a specific space of action, the developing world has at least two meanings. The developing world emerges from the solidarity approach to international relations used by states and international organisations in their action. Each developed state defines its south. For instance, while the United States had privileged South Asia and Latin America during the Cold War era, France was organizing its aid policy with an emphasis on Africa. International organisations such as the World Bank or UNDP elaborate quanti-



tative criteria to measure underdevelopment and then rationalise the contribution of the international community. In this regard, the developing world is the space filled by world generosity. The developing world has influenced the structuring of international relations through the agencies, funds, and programs aimed at the development of Third World countries. In as much as the developing world induces the creation of development organisations, international institutions crystallize the existence of the developing world.

Owing to their very nature, presence of cleavages is very obvious in international relations and here they are translated through the antagonism between the developed world and the developing world. The concept of the developing world is an important one that has ac-

quired an enduring meaning in international relations. The developing world cannot be understood without reference to the developed world—they form an antagonistic couple. Each of these worlds has specific attributes. It could be said that while the developed world is a world of high economic performance and standard of living, the developing world is a world of relative or absolute deprivation. However, it is important to bear in mind that the concept of the developing world is an over generalisation of a complex reality. Instead of a single developing world, there are several such worlds. There is a hierarchy within the developed world in which some countries of the South are seen as nearer to those of the North. Moreover, the developed world is not a monolithic world.

It is also important to keep in view the

phenomenon of international relations in which the developing world intervenes as an actor and its dynamics come into play. Like all social relations, international relations are structured by the balance of forces. In this context, power is based on the level of development. The developed world is the dominant world, the world of the powerful, while the developing world is the dominated world, the world of the powerless. Thus, the developing world stands as testimony to the inequality in international relations and constitutes a specific field of action. The existence of an international hierarchy is confirmed by the category of developing world. In contemporary international relations, the developing world has often been named the Third World used for countries that were neither Western capitalist countries (First World) nor the

socialist countries of Eastern and Central Europe (Second World). The term Third World indicates the lower position occupied by countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

To some extent, developing countries have succeeded in constructing the "North" as the enemy of the "South" through a mobilisation of the history of colonisation, the systematisation of neo-colonialism, and the explanation of underdevelopment by exogenous factors. In international relations, the developing world has been institutionalised as a category of vision, division, and action. It is a basis of solidarities of both resemblance and interests: solidarity of resemblance through the regrouping of developing states in circles such as the Group of 77 and solidarity of interests due to the relative similarity of the economic problems of developing states, as exemplified in the dialogue between the European Union (EU), Asian, African, Caribbean, and Pacific Group of States. The underdeveloped world is the product of the development of the capitalist mode of production at the periphery. Therefore, the relations between developed countries and underdeveloped ones are like metropole-satellite relations. The argument of the dependence of the underdeveloped world is based on several elements among which are internal colonialism, which is the domination of the economy by the metropolis, and the extraversion toward central states of the economy. **TV**

Hoor Asrar Rauf has remained a national swimming Champion and recently Completed all requirements for MSc in Global Hospitality Business from EHL-Switzerland, Polytechnic University-Hong Kong & Conrad N. Hilton College of Global Hospitality Leadership-University of Huston, USA.



Willful Iskandar Mirza

Manaksha Memon describes a controversial political figure

Pakistan's chequered history is full of controversial characters willful enough to try to mould events according to their preferences. Iskandar Mirza was the quintessential colonial administrator who dabbled in politics with an administrative mindset. Hailing from West Bengal, he was the subcontinent's first Muslim to be trained at the Imperial Military Academy at Sandhurst. Of Persian ancestry he descended from a line of soldiers but his career made him to work in the civil administration in the elite Indian political service that mostly dealt with princely states and tribal areas. Known for his strong personality and no-nonsense administrative style, he became an important part of various ruling cliques that governed Pakistan and nurtured a close relationship with Ayub Khan, the first Pakistani chief of the army. He could conveniently identify with the perceptions of the armed forces as he kept his army connection intact, very unusually, got regularly promoted as an army officer reaching the two-star position of major general while serving on civilian positions in civilian clothes. He and Ayub Khan shared their thoughts about the needs of the new state and came to a common understanding on the course the nation must follow.

True to his colonial mindset, Iskandar Mirza displayed little patience with politicians and often aired his views about the ongoing rivalry between combative political organisations. For Mirza, and no less so Ayub, the first imperative lay in promoting national unity even if that meant curtailing the activities of political elements as well as religious zealots. By a quirk of fate Mirza gained unprecedented political ascendancy and he was brought in as the governor general and then became president when Paki-



stan was declared a republic. Believing that political conflict only added to the state's weakness, President Mirza was determined to maneuver the politicians toward common goals or nullify their actions altogether. Although General Ayub's sentiments were similar but he wanted more time to establish the army as an efficient fighting machine and hence left the political strategising to his colleague. Mirza was a staunch believer in the theory and practice of nation-state and was deadly against those who showed less than total commitment. He was particularly outspoken in his criticism of the religious political leaders and their parties because they had insisted on framing the public discourse in theological terms.

Mirza was not comfortable with the parliamentary system though he acceded to the pressures imposed by the constitution. He played for time and prepared for future and surrounded himself with



strong personalities who could be expected to act in accordance with his ideas. His choice for the leadership of the new One Unit of West Pakistan was the frontier leader and opponent of the Muslim League, Dr. Khan Sahib. Mirza pulled another rabbit out of his hat when

with the collaboration of Dr. Khan Sahib and the politician from Punjab Mushtaq Ahmed Gurmani, he prompted the formation of the Republican Party. When PM Chaudhry Mohammad Ali learned that many large Punjabi landlords had left Muslim League, he accused Mirza of betrayal and quit his office. This was the first instance of a politically engineered party formation that became an unfortunate practice of Pakistani politics. Mirza also became the first non-elected state official to manipulate political scenario and this practice also became a device in the hands of the opportunist establishment and was used very frequently distorting the entire governance structure of the country.

Despite attaining supreme administrative authority Mirza still needed political legitimacy and he brought in HS Suhrawardy as Prime Minister. Suhrawardy started attempting to create a coalition between the West Pakistani Republicans and East Pakistan's Awami League as such alliance seemed to satisfy Suhrawardy's long quest for true parity between the two wings of Pakistan. Both Mirza and Suhrawardy were Bengalis but they were from the old Bengali families who spoke Urdu and identified more with the western wing of Pakistan than with East Pakistan. However, their partnership did not continue for long as Suhrawardy had to go when the 1956 Suez crisis and his insensitive reaction



to it created unrest in the country compelling him to resign. Mirza sidestepped responsibility and allowed Suhrawardy to bear the brunt of the assault on government policy. Mirza demonstrated how quickly he could form still another unlikely coalition. Political double-dealing and the curious gyrations in Pakistani politics had reached an intolerable level with Mirza playin the game as well as anyone, but his more serious thoughts were riveted on the necessity for a civilian-led military coup. The main issue here was that Mirza had to contend with General Ayub Khan, who had also displayed increasing distress over Pakistan's sustained insta-

bility. Ayub had become even more disillusioned with the behaviour of the country's politicians.

Unfortunately for Mirza, Ayub Khan was no less incensed by Mirza's opportunism and unabashed ambition. Whereas Mirza, to some extent, was constrained by the political ambience, Ayub had no difficulty in separating himself from it. As a civilian in a constitutional system, Mirza needed to play at politics but Ayub could avoid doing so with the result that both of them started to travel on different paths. Ayub was fully aware that any civilian-led coercive action would certainly require active army support and started

to think what was there for the army in such a situation. By this time Ayub had started to develop his own theory of governance whose first postulate was to discard all the political baggage. This was unfortunately an era of coups with many of them, particularly Egypt and Iraq, that proved successful and encourage military leaderships of the recently decolonised countries of the third world. On the other hand, Mirza started accumulating more executive power and brought in a minor figure II Chundrigar as prime minister who could only last for two months and his government was dismissed and a fellow Republican and feudal leader, Malik

Firoz Khan Noon, was called to form still another government. Noon's cabinet included politicians from all the significant political parties of East and West, except Islamist political parties but Firoz Khan Noon neither had control over events nor could he manage affairs in the parliament. Totally dependent on the military establishment he too yearned for an end to the political charade.

The civilian-led military coup came after the army carried out against the rebellious Kalat state and the very next day on 6 October 1958 the army seized control of the radio and telegraph stations in Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar and Dacca, constitution was abrogated and all legislatures were banished. The imposition of martial law was a reality and given the speed with which the country was brought under army decree it had no doubt been planned well in advance of the action. Mirza remained President and Ayub was named the country's Chief Martial Law Administrator but it was obvious that dual leadership was hardly likely to succeed. Mirza was good in intrigue but did not have the capability of long-term planning and, fatally enough, did not command support of the army. Ayub Khan's role was Mirza's major obstacle and indeed it tended to make the President redundant. True to his nature, Mirza immediately started intriguing against Ayub who was a sharper foe and a tough cookie and refused to play along and physically forced Mirza out of country to exile in London ending his meteoric career. **TW**

Manaksha Memon is a social worker devoted to social causes



Britain, a year after Queen Elizabeth

Elsa Sc S describes a year after the demise of the fabled British monarch

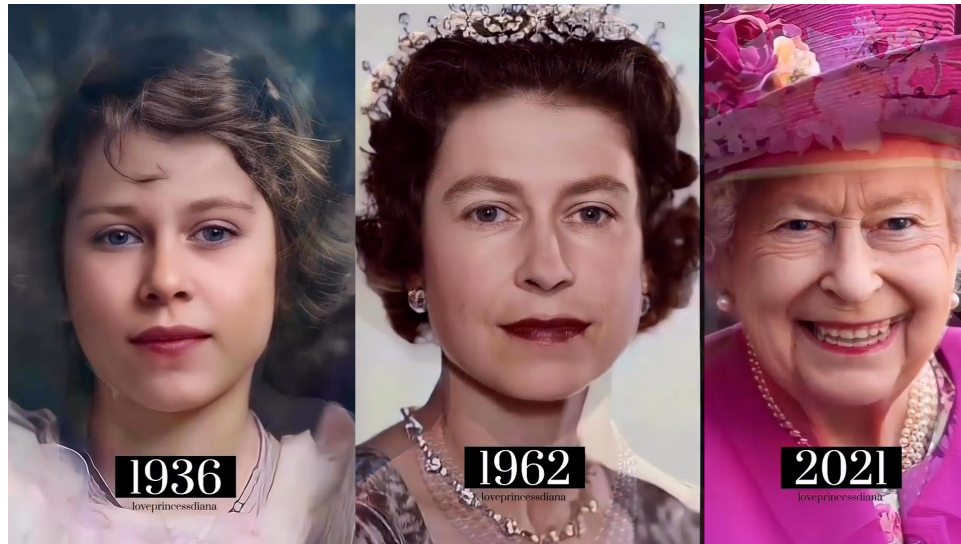
Queen Elizabeth II died at the age of 96 after reigning for seven decades and leaving an indelible mark on the British history. She of course was venerated globally and had close links with the sub-continent where she remained queen of both Pakistan and India before they became republics. She was very publicity conscious and her entourage took pains to keep her and the royal family in the news. She was known to be temperamentally aloof and very mindful of her royal status. She was not close to her children often leaving them under the care of nannies when they were young particularly her elder son and heir who was known to be resentful of her attitude. She was however very fond of her third child Andrew whose randy behaviour became an issue for the royal family.

Queen Elizabeth was devoted to her husband with whom she stayed in a bitter-sweet marriage throughout their lives. She could survive only a year and a half after her husband, Prince Phillip, passed away in April 2021. Her long-suffering son and heir Charles finally succeeded to the throne after almost seven decades wait. Her death was deeply mourned by the British people who paid their respects in masses, queuing for as long as 24 hours to attend the Queen's lying-in-state in Westminster Hall. World

leaders and global royals flew to London to stand alongside British politicians at the monarch's funeral viewed by more than 29 million viewers in the UK and probably billions across the world.

Though king Charles III immediately succeeded to the throne but he was crowned in May in a widely televised coronation ceremony that was adequately branded but cost between \$ 65 to \$125 million. It was remembered that his mother's coronation in 1953 cost something like \$25 million but that was an exorbitantly huge amount for the war-ravaged and cash strapped Britain. However, the political leaders and the royal family decided that a gala event was needed to provide much needed gaiety to the people and it was accordingly held in a grand manner with its outstanding quality being its television coverage that brought media-related technology to the royal family that took full advantage of it.

The passing away of Queen Elizabeth brought many changes to Britain with King Charles face replacing his mother's and his title bringing about a rebranding of UK institutions. For 70 years the Queen signified the British identity with her face present on coinage and postage stamps and her title Her Majesty emblazoned on everything official in content and practice. Now, Charles' image is ever-present and the official language of government has switched to His Majesty. Now the senior lawyers working in the UK are referred to as King's Counsel instead of Queen's Counsel or QC. The British national anthem dating back to the



19th century has also changed its lyrics from "God Save the Queen" to "God Save the King. His face will be embossed on the British pound that will start circulation next year.

Her first death anniversary was observed with due deference recollecting her wonderful reign. King Charles paid tributes to her along with the whole country. It is reported that King Charles rather subdued presence is widely appreciated as the people were exposed to the excess of royal family media coverage. It is pointed out the King's dedication to inclusivity, which was demonstrated at his tradition-breaking multi-faith coronation, is faring particularly well. Moreover, Charles' ascension had a knock-on effect for the line of succession in the royal family that has become more nuclear. Though the line of succession features 23 members of the royal family now William is second in line followed by his eldest son Prince George, his only daughter Princess Charlotte, and his youngest son Prince Louis with Prince Harry fifth in line. What was once thought to be almost impossible has also materialised as Ca-

milla was made queen immediately after Charles ascended the throne.

After death of the Queen, the royal family tried to project an image of stability but Prince Harry's antics made the task difficult for them. Harry has become the proverbial pain in the back for the royal family particularly his American wife Meghan Markle who released a docuseries in which they narrated the story of their courtship and departure from royal life in the UK and the racism Markle faced there. Harry's memoir exacerbated the situation with its contents describing his history of drug use, loss of his virginity to an older woman, his killing of 25 people in Afghanistan during his military association and being physically assaulted by his brother. Currently, the royal family is trying to cast a spin on the Harry affair with reports circulating that Harry wants to re-enter the royal fold and is in contact with his father about it. **TW**

Elsa Sc S is doing her graduation from LUMS & a keen researcher

Ugliest cars

Kausar Fatima mentions some eyesores

Like every sector, automobile sector has produced very attractive vehicles but along with that they have also produced some ugly-looking vehicles. Apparently, it is surprising that such cars were ever designed and they were approved by the decision-makers of the company. This shows that auto sector, at times, became completely insensitive to the aesthetic choices of the people. Interestingly, it's not just older model cars that are hard on the eyes but there are several modern vehicles that are some of the ugliest cars ever made.

Stout Scarab

The name Stout Scarab sounds like something you get from picking at your face, not what was considered by many to be one of the first minivans. It had a rear-mounted engine and lacked running boards, which probably contributed to its strange, Twinkie-like shape.

Subaru BRAT

Despite a quirky design, the Subaru BRAT had a pretty good 16-year production run. The term BRAT stands for bi-drive recreational all-terrain transporter, a reference to the button that turns its all-wheel drive on and off.

Corbin Sparrow

To say the Corbin Sparrow looks like a giant jelly bean on wheels wouldn't be overkill, especially considering the brightly coloured hues you often find them in. This electric, plastic vehicle was designed for city commuters, and only featured three wheels.

Ford Pinto

The first subcompact vehicle produced by Ford in North America, the Ford Pinto wasn't just unsightly to look at, it was also a death machine. There is a design flaw in the car that allows the fuel tanks to catch fire, which they frequently did following impact.

Crosley CC



The miniature cars produced by Crosley during the rationing of World War II were popular for good reason, and the CC was the first new model released during peacetime. It featured a squished front

end, no running boards, and undersized wheels, making it look like a toy or clown car.

Lada Largus

Russian manufacturer Lada is known over the world for their ugly cars—in



fact, every model in their lineup could be on this list, but the Largus has to be the most hideous. From the elongated front end to the boxy rear, and the out-of-place door panel trim, this car is truly ugly.

Nissan S-Cargo

First introduced at the Tokyo Motor Show in 1987, the Nissan S-Cargo is reminiscent of an Airstream trailer in its design. It offers a tall rear cargo area ideal for deliveries, and is based on the Nissan Sunny/Sentra. **TW**

Kausar Fatima works in an international audit firm and writes for magazines

Noor Jahan: A queen who ruled

Zoya Ansari recollects a remarkable personality

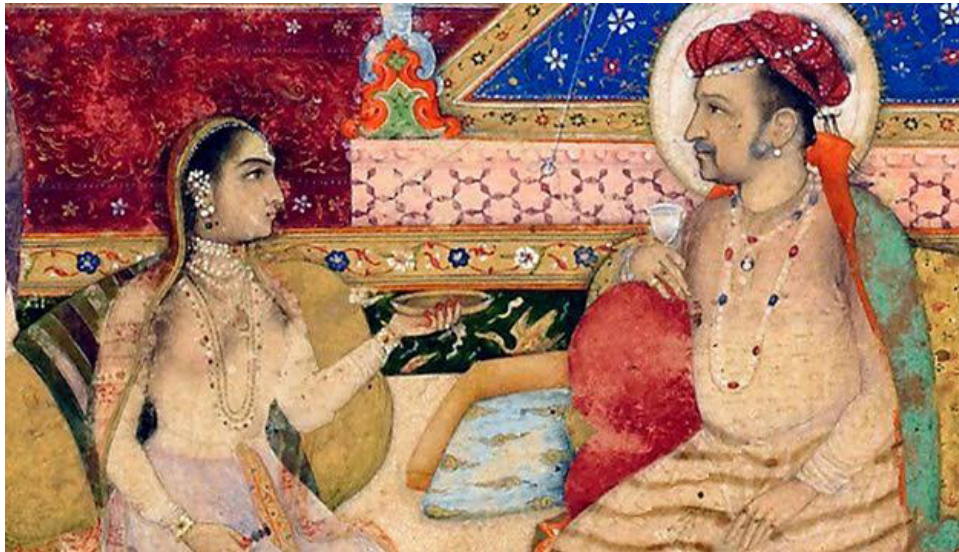
The life-story of Mughal Empress Noor Jahan is a fascinating rag-to-riches story with the added advantage of rising to unprecedented heights. With her dynamism and prudence, she created a powerful niche in the governance process in a male-dominated Mughal Empire. She was also very sagacious person as she resigned to her lot after the rule of her husband, Jahangir, ended. Prior to her retirement, Noor Jahan had a larger-than-life presence in the Mughal Empire and her word was considered law as her husband had delegated most of his imperial power to her. It was actually Noor Jahan who provided access to Shahjahan to become part of the ruling troika yet they fell out after Jahangir became dysfunctional and Shahjahan could see that Noor Jahan would be the only obstacle in him getting to the imperial throne.

During his many years of cooperation with Noor Jahan while ruling the empire Shahjahan was appreciative yet apprehensive of her talents as a prudent politico-administrator as, while as heir apparent known as Prince Khurram, he had ruled the empire with her as part of a troika comprising him, Noor Jahan and her brother Asaf Khan who was also his father-in-law. The fact that Noor Jahan was family as her niece, Asaf Khan's daughter, Arjumand Bano, later famed as Mumtaz Mahal, could not stop emperor Shahjahan

from keeping tabs on the fallen empress. There must have been something special in this lady that catapulted her as joint ruler of the vast subcontinent with her husband. Otherwise she was 35-year-old widow of Sher Afgan who had fallen out with Mughal emperor when she caught the eye of Jahangir. Born in Kandahar to impoverished Persian parents fleeing Iran for better prospects in Mughal domains, Mehrunissa was a beautiful and accomplished girl.

She was married at 16 to Ali Quli Istajlu, an Iranian immigrant serving at the establishment of a prestigious Mughal noble Abdul Rahim Khan-i-Khanan. Ali Quli bravely fought for Prince Salim in many campaigns and was awarded the title Sher Afgan (lion-slayer). Sher Afgan unfortunately fell out of favour with prince after Salim rebelled against Akbar but the rupture in ties was not due to Noor Jahan at all. On ascending the throne Jahangir pardoned Sher Afgan and transferred him far away to Burdwan in Bengal. As luck would have it, the reckless Sher Afgan was killed during a fracas with Qutbuddin Khan, Governor of Bengal.

Her father meanwhile had grown in stature as Chief Minister of Jahangir and the widowed Mehrunissa along with her daughter Ladli Begum were taken under the privileged appendage of late Emperor Akbar's wife Salima Sultana Begum. Her impeccable manners and skills in embroidery and stitching became legendary during her four year's association with royal harem. She fashioned



brightly coloured brocades, tissues and silks for ladies of the harem. Her designs were much sought after and often set the fashion trends. She invented Dudami (flowered muslin) for peshwaz (gowns open in the front), panchtoliah for orhnis (a new design for veils), badlah (embroidery with metal strips), kinari (lace), and farsh-i-chandani (white cloth for floor covering). She is also credited with designing gold ornaments with elegant new patterns. She was quite well known in harem circles as an embodiment of good taste.

After six years on throne Jahangir in 1611 met her at Meena Bazar – a New Year fair started by Akbar in which the emperor was the only male present while princesses, noblewomen and other female members of royal harem exhibited brocades, exquisite silks, fine muslins, bejeweled turbans and the like. An aesthete to the bone, Jahangir was enamoured of her, proposed immediately and married her on 25 May of the same year. Mehrunissa was his 18th and last wife and Jahangir gave her the title of Noor Mahal or Light of the Palace and later Noor Jahan or Light of the World. Soon she became the most powerful woman in the Empire as coins were minted in her name, legislation enacted by her, edicts issued by her orders and foreign affairs conducted under her watchful eye.

As Empress, Noor Jahan was well adept with niceties of art, literature and philosophy and was a brilliant conversationalist. She was famous as a crack shot and often accompanied Jahangir on tiger hunts. She ably assisted Jahangir in his pursuit of art and painting as he was the best connoisseur of fine arts ever in Mughal Empire. Her mother, Asmat Begum discovered attar or essence of roses but Noor Jahan distilled and popularised it. Apart from this, she took care of orphans, especially girls, and is estimated to have arranged the marriages of, or provided for, five hundred such girls. She was patron of architecture and built many beautiful palaces, gardens and mosques. The tomb she built for her father Mirza Ghiyas Beg in Agra is one of the exquisite examples of Indo-Persian architecture and is known to be a precursor to Taj Mahal.

Mughal historians imply that Noor Jahan's dominance over a besotted Jahangir resulted in his favourite son rebelling against him and widespread disaffection amongst nobles particularly the attempt of Mahabat Khan to kidnap both Jahangir and her. Many historians have portrayed her as an ambitious, scheming figure taking advantage of Jahangir's weakness for indolence, wine and opium. It however is clear that during her 16 years stay at the top she worked in close coordination with her brother, the chief minister and heir-apparent Prince Khurram, the future emperor. The strength of their joint policies kept a weak emperor Jahangir afloat otherwise imminent disaster was around the corner. In all probability the prejudice against her reflects the deep-seated anti-feminist bias of many contemporary historians which has often been repeated uncritically by others.

However, she massively impacted Jah-



angir's life who laconically admitted his dependence and left the running of the empire to her. Jahangir was often sick and she took good care of him and started gradually participating in government affairs, that too, with his permission. She so well understood Jahangir that he brought her status at par with him. Her position in the Empire was such that except for khuṭbah (prayer for the reigning monarch), she possessed all the privileges of a ruler. Farmans or edicts were issued in her name and grants were conferred under her seal. From 1623-27 coins were also struck in her name bearing the words: Ba-hukm Shah e Jahangir yaft sad zewar (By order of the King Jahangir, gold has a hundred splendours added to it Za naam e Noor Jahan Badshah Begum zar. By receiving the impression of the name of Noor Jahan, the Queen Begum.

She is the only woman in Mughal history to have obtained the privilege of her name being put on coins of the realm. Another privilege she was granted was that she appeared with Jahangir for jharokha darshan, an exclusive ceremony during which the emperor would show himself in person to common people. At the death of Jahangir in 1627 Noor Jahan was prudent enough to realise that her time was over. She forthwith withdrew from public activity and gracefully retired to a small jagir in Lahore. She lived for another 18 years during the rule of Shahjahan but no harm came to her as she completely confined herself to charitable activities till 1645 when she passed away at the age of 72 and lies buried near her husband's tomb in Shahdara Lahore. **TW**

Zoya Ansari has a good deal of teaching experience and possesses a keen historical sense

Movies highlighting friendship

Nida Faraz describes some enchanting films

Human existence predominantly revolves around the fundamental concept of friendship and this characteristic has played a highly prominent role in human history. Friendships imply supporting each other through good times and bad, helping humans move forward in life. Such bonds of friendship are so precious that they often appear in popular culture. From absurd comedies to period dramas, this concept also amply reflects in movies and some of them leave a strong legacy.

50/50 (2011)
Adam's (Joseph Gordon-Levitt) life is turned upside down when he is diagnosed with a rare spinal cancer. Written by Will Reiser, 50/50 recounts his own experience with the disease through the evolution of Adam and Kyle's friendship following the diagnosis. Kyle is played by Reiser's real-life friend Seth Rogen.

Forrest Gump (1994)
Despite the difficulties he's faced since birth, Forrest (Tom Hanks) remains a caring and optimistic boy with eyes only for his one friend, Jenny (Robin Wright). Growing up, Forrest yearns to leave his native Alabama and see the world. His subsequent adventures create strong bonds with new friends, but test his loyalty.

The Help (2011)
At the dawn of the 1960s civil rights movement, a young white girl named Skeeter (Emma Stone) decides to write a book about the racism African-American women (Octavia Spencer, Viola Davis) serving wealthy Mississippi families face on a daily basis. Despite their differences, the illicit project unites the women and will forever transform the dynamics of their city.

The Shawshank Redemption (1994)
Andy Dufresne (Tim Robbins) is accused of killing his wife and her lover, a crime he didn't commit. Unjustly sentenced to two life sentences in Shawshank Prison, Dufresne forms a strong friendship with another inmate named Red (Morgan Freeman).

The Peanut Butter Falcon (2019)
Zak (Zack Gottsagen) has Down syndrome. One day, he decides to run away from the care facility where he lives to realise his childhood dream of becoming a professional wrestler. Along the way, he meets an escaped criminal named Tyler (Shia LaBeouf) and the latter ends up becoming his trainer and an unlikely friend for all times to come.

It (2017)
For years, the small town of Derry, Maine, has been terrorized by a scary, shape-shifting creature (Bill Skarsgård) that emerges from the sewers every 27 years to feed on its favourite fare, children's fears. In the summer of 1989, seven friends decide to put an end to this deadly cycle and unite to rid the town for good of the monster haunting their thoughts.

The Secret Garden (2020)
After losing her parents, Mary (Dixie Egerickx) moves from India to her uncle's (Colin Firth) manor in the English countryside. Together with her cousin Colin (Edan Hayhurst) and friend Dickon (Amir Wilson), she happens upon a secret garden overflowing with magic that sets their imaginations free. **TW**

Nida Faraz is very active in social circles



Djokovic and Gauff shine in US Open

Ashraf Ali describes a fantastic tournament

The US Open is a gala event that serves as the last grand slam tournament of the year. It is one of the richest tennis tournaments with yearly increase in prize money for the players. This year was a memorable tournament for Novak Djokovic who began the season with setback of losing the Wimbledon that was won by Carlos Alcaraz who emerged as a new threat to 36-year old Djokovic having dominated the tennis circuit for 12 years. Djokovic however is known for his ability to rise from difficulty stronger than before. On Sunday evening in the final of the US Open, his response was predictable and decisive as he held on through countless exhausting rallies to defeat Daniil Medvedev 6-3, 7-6, 6-3 and win a men's record 24th grand slam title.

By virtue of winning his first-round match at this tournament, Djokovic ensured that he will return regain his place as world No 1 and extend his all-time record to 390 weeks at the top of the ATP rankings. Djokovic is the oldest US Open champion in the Open era having won the tournament four times. He is also the first man to have won three grand slam titles in a season on four separate occasions. Djokovic has responded to his five-set loss in the Wimbledon final by winning 12 consecutive matches. Although he now has a legitimate rival in Alcaraz, he finishes the grand slam year as the best player in the world by a considerable distance. Despite his sparse schedule, Djokovic leads Alcaraz by 800 points in the ATP race. Djokovic's refusal to take a Covid vaccine meant that he was barred from traveling to the United States for last year's US Open.

As for Medvedev, he had produced one of the best performances of his career in the semi-final topple Alcaraz,



the world No. 1 and defending US Open champion. While Medvedev started off stone cold, errors flowing from his racket in the opening game, Djokovic began the match determined to take the ball early and unload his forehand. He broke Medvedev's serve and then resisted the predictably long, attritional exchanges as he rolled through his service games to take the set. Although Medvedev continued to struggle through but the complexion of the match shifted. As the long rallies began to settle in the players' legs, Djokovic struggled. He dramatically stumbled out of missed backhands and even fell to the floor after one bruising rally and struggled to catch his breath between points. Somehow, impossibly, Djokovic finished the marathon second 104-minute set with a two-set lead. He then thoroughly outplayed Medvedev throughout the final set.

Djokovic's 24th major served as a reminder of the dimensions he has methodically added to his game to maintain his longevity. Djokovic has not aged much visually and he is still startlingly quick around the court but after so much mileage in his legs, he is no longer as tolerant of grinding through endless rallies. No matter, he was adaptable and intelligent as he won so many decisive points at the net. Fifteen years on from his first grand slam title at the 2008 Australian Open, and 12 since his dominance truly began, Djokovic continues to rack up grand slam



titles. Three grand slam titles in four attempts this year still seems like a pretty good record.

Coco Gauff, the world No. 10 women's singles player, has defeated Belarusian Aryna Sabalenka 2-6, 6-3, 6-2 with a dramatic comeback in the women's US Open final. The star-studded crowd erupted with applause after Gauff's home-turf victory at Arthur Ashe Stadium in Queens. The win is 19-year-old Gauff's first career grand slam and makes her the first American teenager to win the US Open since 23-time major champion Serena Williams took the title in 1999. Bidding for her second major title of the year, the soon-to-be women's world No. 1 Sabalenka made quick work in the first set, breaking Gauff's serve three times to win 6-2 in dominant fashion. However, with the packed crowd chanting "Let's go

Coco," Gauff raised her level in the second set, going up a break before eventually taking it 6-3 to force a deciding third set.

A locked-in Gauff took control in the third set, going up a double break to inch ever closer to her maiden grand slam title. Although Sabalenka took the next two games, Gauff closed out the match to become the 12th teenager in US Open history to win the title. In her run to the final, the athlete twice lost the first set of a match, once in the first round against Laura Siegemund and again in the third round against Elise Mertens. With the victory, Gauff becomes the third American teenager to win the US Open title, joining Williams and Tracy Austin. Meanwhile, despite the loss, the Belarusian star will move to No. 1 in the WTA singles rankings on Monday, ending Iga Świątek's 75-consecutive week reign. The 19-year-old has won three WTA titles this season, including the biggest of her career in Cincinnati just before the US Open. The competition was the second grand slam final of Gauff's career after reaching the French Open final in 2022, where she was swiftly defeated by Iga Świątek. **TW**

Ashraf Ali Siddiqi is with electronic media

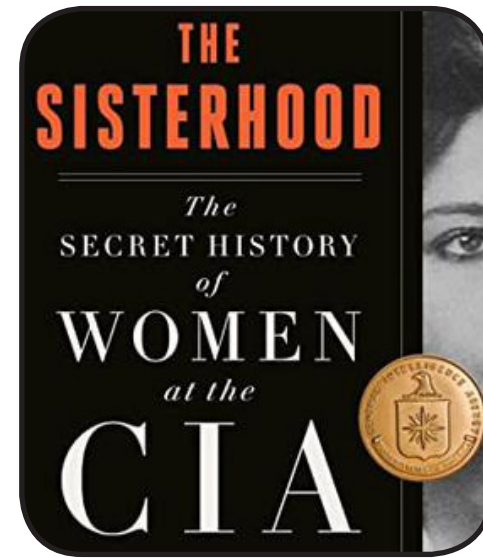
Menu

Energy with Innovation, Excellence & Reliability

The sisterhood

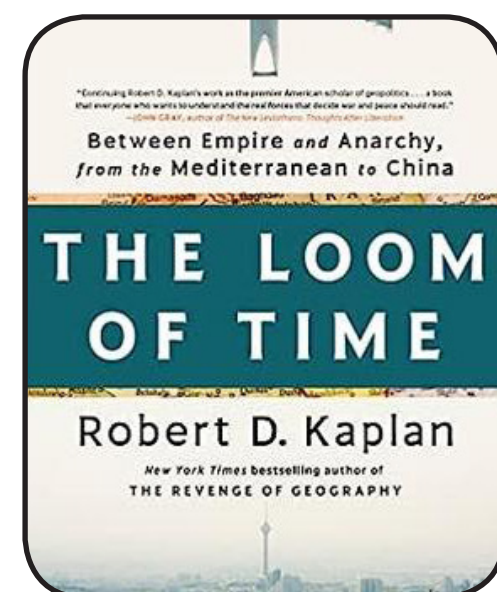
The book is a well-researched narrative of the crucial roles undertaken by women in the intelligence arena. The Cold War and, later, the war on terror were conflicts fought in the shadows, a deadly game meant to prevent large-scale conflict. However, there was another battle conducted within the CIA: the struggle of women within the organization who had to fight sexism and discrimination to have their voices heard. The story spans seven decades, from the establishment of the CIA to the assassination of Osama bin Laden. Many highly qualified women applied to serve in the fledgling CIA but those who made it through the gruelling selection process usually found themselves shunted into typing and filing jobs. There was a culture of toxic masculinity in the organization and women were often seen as little more than objects. Nevertheless, some managed to work their

ways into field operations. They proved to be remarkably good at the tradecraft of spying but there was little recognition from superiors. At the same time, women were doing critical tasks in intelligence analysis and this group stepped into a new role when the threat of terrorism emerged. It required interpreting scraps of information, from financial transactions to the movement of dangerous radicals. Few people in the senior echelons of the CIA, however, were interested in their reports on Islamic militants. After 9/11, there were attempts to elbow the women out of the picture but they managed to continue their work, eventually tracking down bin Laden. The author is able to keep the sprawling narrative and huge cast on track, drawing on interviews and declassified records. The result is a vivid, compelling, and important book. **TW**



The loom of time

Drawing on 50 years of experience interviewing officials, intellectuals, historians, and fellow journalists and reading seemingly every history and scholarly work from Herodotus to Gibbon to Toynbee, the author is convinced that "the big story in the Middle East today is not necessarily the failure of democracy—but the departure of empire." After the breakup of the Ottoman Empire in 1918, Britain and France had their moments, followed by the U.S and the Soviet Union. The 1991 Soviet collapse and disastrous U.S. invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan delivered the kiss of death, so "for the first time in modern history the region is in a post-imperial phase." Western scholars deplore empires, but nations with an ancient imperial tradition have no doubt that the world can benefit from their cultures. That humans yearn for democracy is a peculiarly Western fantasy. In reality, given a choice between dictatorship and disorder, a large percentage of the population, Americans included, prefers the former. In Turkey, Recep Erdogan has been in office for two decades, evolving into another democratically elected autocrat. He has embraced Islamism, reversed national idol Kemal Ataturk's fierce secularization, and revived the expansiveness of the former Ottoman Empire, which Turks have always admired. Egypt is still recovering from the Arab Spring, during which the Muslim Brotherhood won a free election but could not establish order, so most Egyptians did not object when the nation's military returned to power. The author points out that the U.S. regularly denounces lack of democracy throughout this region, from Libya to Saudi Arabia, Syria, Jordan, Yemen, and Iraq, apparently unaware that this would mean government by Islamists whose rule in Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan does not inspire confidence. American officials urge these nations to adopt progressive policies absent in the U.S. until recently. As always, the author offers much food for thought about a variety of geopolitical issues. **TW**



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Horoscopes

Aries

Mar 21 - Apr 19 Try not to smother others, Aries. You may want to seek comfort in their company, but this will only produce grouchiness in all parties involved. Curb your tendency to find fault with the ones you love. Your best bet is to focus on tasks you have on the back burner. Tackle projects that need special attention and discipline.

Gemini

May 21 - Jun 20 It may be hard for you to feel connected to anyone today, Gemini. You're probably better off keeping to yourself. If you're feeling sad or depressed, it's best to work through these feelings on your own. Other people aren't apt to be too sympathetic to your situation. You're better off sticking to your work to keep the demons out of your head.

Leo

Jul 23 - Aug 22 Find comfort in your work today, Leo. Although it may sound ridiculous, checking things off your list is the most rewarding activity today. Try not to be too critical of others. Focus on your tasks. Mountains that seem too daunting to climb will continue to grow bigger until you take the first step upward. Your perseverance will inspire others.

Libra

Sep 23 - Oct 22 Whatever you didn't get done yesterday, Libra, you need to finish today. Discipline and attention to the sand slipping through the hourglass are the journey's themes. The more you're able to accomplish, the better you'll feel. Stagnant energy is a sign that it's time to get moving. Don't waste a moment waiting for someone else to come up with a solution. Take the initiative.

Sagittarius

Nov 22 - Dec 21 People may be a bit critical of you today, Sagittarius. You would do well to listen to what they say. Be receptive of feedback so you can establish a healthy ego. Keep your sense of humility. You may feel critical as you see people moving like sloths compared to your lightning quick mind. Be patient with others.

Aquarius

Jan 20 - Feb 18 This isn't a day to focus on fun and games, Aquarius. In fact, you may feel an annoying weightiness about your emotions, making you feel less energetic than usual. There's a sober tone asking you to look at reality and make some serious decisions about your future goals and plans. You may feel like the timer is about to buzz. The minute hand is ticking, and there are many more adventures to be had.

Taurus

Apr 20 - May 20 There's a squeeze on your emotions today, Taurus, which might leave you feeling like a pot of boiling water. Just by knowing there's a lid on things, you're likely to heat up even faster than usual. Try to hold your temper. A rage will get you nowhere. Concentrate your energy on getting your material affairs in order. Deal with finances, investments, and long-term security.

Cancer

Jun 21 - Jul 22 You may feel a restriction to the day, but in truth, this is for your own good, Cancer. Your sense of discipline comes in handy as you tackle your work with incredible enthusiasm. Your goals aren't far from your reach. Stay focused and don't get pressured by the ticking clock. Hastiness will lead to careless mistakes. If you're going to do a job, do it right the first time.

Virgo

Aug 23 - Sep 22 Get your head out of the clouds, Virgo. Nitpicky details you failed to attend to earlier may now come back to haunt you. Don't postpone your work any further. The time to take care of the job is now. Balance your checkbook and do your laundry. Clean your bathtub and go shopping. The more you accomplish today, the better you will feel about yourself tomorrow.

Scorpio

Oct 23 - Nov 21 Put aside frivolity for a day, Scorpio. This is an important time to prepare for the future. Don't take another step before you know you're on solid ground. This is an important time to establish your goals. Writing them down will help you realize them in life. Think about the long-term harvest. Security and grounding are key themes today.

Capricorn

Dec 22 - Jan 19 Keep up your psychic shield, Capricorn, because you will need it. People's comments may seem harsh even if they may mean well. Your best defense against the critical tone of the day is to use other people's criticisms as constructively as you can in order to build a stronger framework from which to work. Process this energy in a positive frame of mind. Use it to get things done.

Pisces

Feb 19 - Mar 20 There's little comfort in your emotions today, Pisces. You may want to stick to business. Concentrate on getting things done in your regular routine. Create a plan and stick to it. This isn't a day to deviate from the norm, nor is it a time in which you will find much sympathy from others. Stick close to home and take care of your personal business. Time is precious. Don't waste it.

Wordsearch

ANCIENT EGYPT

Can you find the hidden words? They may be horizontal, vertical, diagonal, forwards or backwards.

AHKENATON, AMENHOTEP, ANON, ANUBIS, ATEN, BAST, CLEOPATRA, EGYPT, GIZA, HELIOPOLIS, HORUS, IMHOTEP, ISIS, KHEPERA, MAAT, MEMPHIS, NEFERTITI, NEPHTHYS, NILE, OSIRIS, PHARAOH, PTAH, PTOLEMY, PYRAMID, RAMSES, SEKHET, SETH, SPHINX, THEBES, THOTH, TUTANKHAMUN.

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U S E B E H T H N T I R P R P L V
V L T A H T O H T E S T H H Y A B
N U M A H K N A T U T A Z D G D Y
E P E T O H N E M A K A B C E A N
H S U R O H S I S I K M L A R O L
E Y N N E L I N G H E E A P T P D
L S E E C P D P E Y O B H A O T R
I S F P S R E P B P Z A N O E A K
O I E H O E E T A L R E Y L M H N
P B R T B R T T O A K E M S R O E
O U T H A C R H O H G R E L A N G N
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Sonmiani Beach

Virtually hidden from the scene, Sonmiani beach is one of the loveliest beaches one can find solace in. It is extremely alluring and its clean sweeps of water are greatly admired. It is a heavenly spot for visiting and enjoying. Added to its advantage is its easy access through road that is of good quality. Sonmiani Beach is located at Sonmiani Bay in the Lasbela District of Balochistan and it is a two-hour drive from Karachi. The total area of the Bay is 125.25 sq km and the shelf adjacent to it is 80 km wide. The coastal areas of Balochistan are widely acknowledged to possess the potential of becoming the economic power-houses of Pakistan. With their close proximity to ports these areas are the best locations to develop industrial and commercial zones.

Sonmiani beach is home to the Portuguese man-of-war and various species of fish. The invertebrate fauna are found in large scale at the location including protozoan, annelids and mollusks. The location also is rich in marine flora. More than 350 species of fish are known to exist in the area. Shrimping is also carried out in the shallow waters and shrimp trawling grounds are located in Miani Hor also known as Sonmiani Bay. Major species of fish are pelagic, demersal, shrimps, lobsters, crab and even sharks.

The area is famous for large concentration of water birds including migratory and resident ones. More than 20,000 birds representing 52 species usually visit Sonmiani in winters. The area is one of the designated Ramsar sites in Pakistan. The area is also included in the Global 200 eco-regions of WWF as an outstanding example of major habitat types. It is part of Arabian Sea Eco-region. It is the home of grebes, pelicans, flamingos, herons, storks cranes, gulls and terns.**TW**

Dua Shah is a Digital Media Consultant & Social Activist



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