

Fortnightly

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Islamabad

1st - 15th January 2023

ABC Certified

Pakistan Politics in 2022

Country fell victim to severe political and economic crisis-leaks politics hit back

Pakistan's Struggle to Improve Economy

Record inflation, skyrocketing prices of energy and food coupled with floods pushed 10 million under poverty line

Pakistan-Afghan Border Tension Escalated

There are multiple reasons for border clashes between Pakistan and Afghan Forces

2023 Another Tough Year for the World



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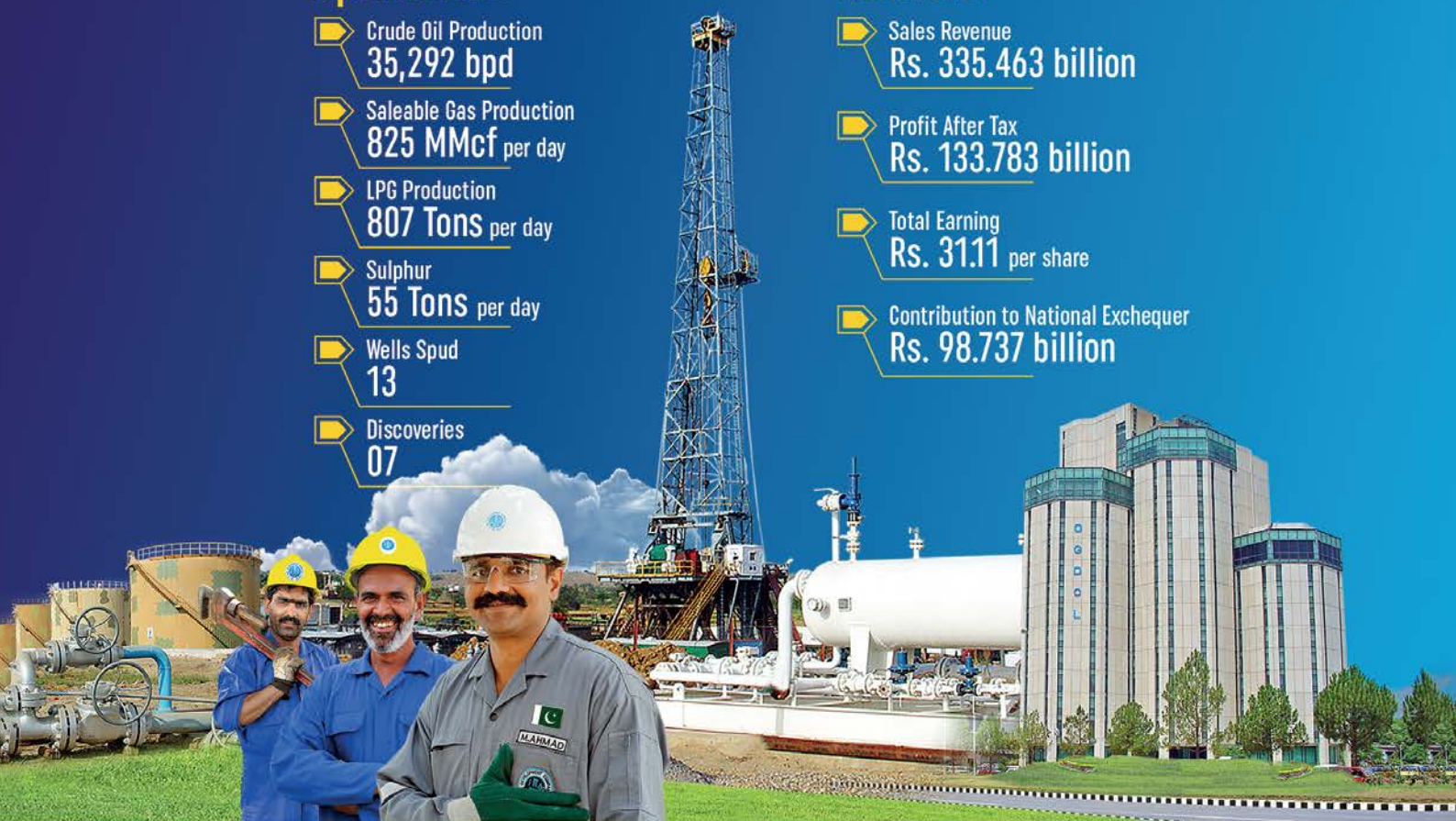
Fiscal Year Ended
30 June 2022

Operational

- Crude Oil Production
35,292 bpd
- Saleable Gas Production
825 MMcf per day
- LPG Production
807 Tons per day
- Sulphur
55 Tons per day
- Wells Spud
13
- Discoveries
07

Financial

- Sales Revenue
Rs. 335.463 billion
- Profit After Tax
Rs. 133.783 billion
- Total Earning
Rs. 31.11 per share
- Contribution to National Exchequer
Rs. 98.737 billion



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Pakistan Politics in 2022
Country's political system in review: Political and economic challenges politics has faced

Pakistan's Struggle for Prosperity: Economy
Rising inflation, depleting price of energy and food coupled with already existing economic crisis, poverty line

Pakistan-Afghan Border: Tension Escalated
There are multiple reasons for border clashes between Pakistan and Afghan Forces

2023

Another Tough Year for the World

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Talk to the Enemy

By Hammad Ghaznavi



The Establishment-Imran Khan gulf seems to be widening. So far, at least, he has been considered luckier than many of his predecessors who were thrown behind the bars once they had fallen out with the powers-that-be: but if former Prime Minister Imran Khan refused to agree on certain 'red lines', this might change. Imran has been crossing many a red line of the Establishment since his ouster from the office which has kept broadening the chasm between Imran and the all-powerful Pakistani Establishment.

When Imran was being thrown out of the government, he started criticizing the army, particularly the then COAS Qamar Javed Bajwa for his alleged role in bringing him down. Imran was told many times to eschew from attacking the chief, considered inseparable from the institution. Imran paid no heed to the advice. The upper echelons of the army were visibly perturbed at Imran's tirade. When a failed attempt at his life was made, Imran wasted no time in accusing serving intelligence officers by name. Journalist Arshad Sharif's brutal murder in Kenya also elicited a similar response from Imran – he pointed fingers at the military. This all led to a famous press conference wherein the DG ISI in an unprecedented move, addressed a press conference, answering various accusations made by Imran. This presser brought the sour army-Khan relations into the limelight.

Imran's Long March was also not popular

with the Establishment. In fact, all Imran's efforts to force snap polls have been unpopular with the Establishment, fully convinced that the country's dire economic situation doesn't permit early elections. Imran's positioning on the appointment of the new Chief also raised many an eyebrow within the institution, as Imran had a clear favourite, Faiz Hameed, and a clear 'unwanted', Asim Munir. Imran lost the appointment battle. Imran and the new COAS are not each other's best friends, to say the least. Their relations may improve but 'Imran Khan has to agree on the basics of the system', that is, no direct criticism of the army, including its former chief, and no derailing of the present dispensation to force snap polls as that is a sure recipe for default. But Imran refuses to budge. He now refrains from naming serving officers but continues slating Bajwa. Punjab CM Pervez Elahi's statement objecting to Imran's criticism of Bajwa shall be seen against this backdrop.

Imran has also played his trump card to bring elections nearer – the announcement of the dissolution of the KP and Punjab Assemblies. Imran's effort was defeated by the Judicial Establishment. In fact, no institution or political party, other than Imran Khan, is in favour of general elections before the summer of 2023. While Imran Khan is bent upon snap polls, knowing that the timing of the next elections are crucial as for his return to power. Imran is convinced that at the moment he is riding a popularity wave. But

if elections are pushed to end-2023, it all may change, with the government managing a semblance of economic stability and doling out some relief to the common man. Imran would also be worried about the cases being pursued against him that may lead to his disqualification, or the worst case scenario, his arrest. Snap polls can thwart that scenario. Besides, the audio leaks must be weighing heavy on his mind. Imran fears more such leaks, audio and video, in the weeks to come. It is a fact that intelligence agencies have been recording audios and videos of the politicians and judicial officers, and have been using the same if need be. When a politician refuses to kowtow to the powerful, the material is leaked to the media. Imran Khan knows the hazards of late elections, but the more he tries to wriggle out of this situation, the harsher the reaction from the Establishment.

When political leaders are pushed against the wall they resort to parliament, the institution that lends strength to the people's representatives. When in trouble, politicians talk to politicians. PPP and PML-N have been through all this. The government has already shown willingness to talk to Imran Khan. Imran's sour relations with the Establishment may prove a blessing in disguise, making him realize that his ultimate strength lies in the fortification of the system. A charter of democracy/economy seems in the best interest of all political forces – above all, Imran Khan's.

Dissolution Difficulties

The stakes remain high

By M A Niazi

PTI chief Imran Khan has finally grasped the nettle by hand and announced the dissolution of the Punjab and KP Assemblies. Doing so will mean the playing of his last card to force a dissolution of the National Assembly, and thus the end of his enjoying the political initiative, something he has had after he turned the tables with his rallies to get his May 29 Long March support. He had initially lost it when he was ousted through the no-confidence motion against him.

That momentum had allowed him to propagate his narrative of a foreign conspiracy to topple him, with the assistance of the PDM and the establishment. That narrative included a strong element of calling out the Army leadership, specifically the incumbent COAS, Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa. He did well in two sets of by-elections, but he failed to achieve two things: fresh elections, and the appointment as COAS of anyone except the person who, as DG ISI, had pointed out corruption in his family circle.

If dissolution does not lead to fresh elections nationally, as well as the dissolution of the Sindh and Balochistan Assemblies, though no doubt satisfying to him personally, it will have failed. Paradoxically, one excuse for not holding elections, the floods, also means that it makes a kind of sense to have provincial elections in Punjab and KP, which have been less affected by the flooding, before the worse-affected provinces. They will presumably need a longer time to recover and will benefit from the lower need for resources when holding national and provincial elections together. Punjab faces a triple burden rather than a double one because it has not had local government elections, unlike KP.

The elections would be a referendum on Imran. As elections have shown so far, provincial elections have not been about the provincial government. They have either been about the



constituency, or about national politics. Though provincial governments are at the cutting edge of service delivery, with health, education, and policing all exclusively provincial subjects, the PTI is going to base its appeal on Imran Khan's appeal, not the performance of the Buzdar or Mehmood governments, if anything, Ch Pervez Elahi will campaign on his record from his tenure as CM from 2003 to 2008, because his current tenure has not been long enough to campaign on. The PML(N) would also like to campaign on Imran, and much of its narrative-building will be about the Toshakhana gifts, for the corruption issue is likely to be central, with Imran once again promising to combat corruption, but with the PML(N) now having examples of its own to show that Imran was also corrupt, and that too in a mean way. The accusations against the Sharifs by the PTI were of kickbacks, for failures to provide the money trail. The accusations against Imran are sleazy and specific.

Imran does not just have to avoid these charges. He has also got to answer why the PTI government was unable to get any convictions against the corrupt, and why those arrested by NAB got bail, often after long periods in jail, got

bail. Imran has already sketched out his counter: he could not obtain convictions because the corrupt were protected by General Bajwa, who controlled NAB. The emphasis on NAB is interesting because the statements by Ms Tayyaba Gul indicate that the PM used her videos of harassment to blackmail the Chairman NAB. Why he would do such a thing when he didn't control NAB will doubtless be raised in the election campaign.

Ch Pervez appears the more reluctant of the two CMs to dissolve, and his defence of General Bajwa is not merely an expression of solidarity with the former COAS, something Ch Parvez is big on, but also a declaration of loyalty to the establishment. If Ch Pervez dissolves, he wants it assumed that the establishment wants the Assembly dissolved. Mr Khan wants to use General Bajwa as a major campaign tool, and may well try to hang all his failures onto him. How Ch Parvez will manage if that is the campaign strategy is not known.

His argument said to have been made to Mr Khan that dissolving will mean depriving Mr Khan of the protection from arrest he currently enjoys in Punjab and KP, especially when it is kept in mind that the caretaker adminis-

trations, probably chosen by the Election Commission of Pakistan, will not be particularly favourable to Imran. It should be remembered that Imran is involved in legal wrangles with the Chief Election Commissioner, who has already decided against Imran in the foreign funding case as well as the Toshakhana reference. The CEC will display the height of professionalism by selecting a neutral caretaker, and will be sorely tempted to choose someone anti-PTI (especially since any choice is going to be thus disparaged).

The CEC is likely to make the final selection of caretaker CMs, because the choice is supposed to be after joint consultation by the CM and the Leader of Opposition. At the moment, these two are not on talking terms in either province. The Constitution has decreed that if there is no consensus, the ECP will decide. Mr Khan may well find himself trapped by his own rhetoric, and unable to accept the caretaker administrations put in place.

Mr Khan will also find himself facing a similar problem if he gets the dissolution of the National Assembly he wants. There the consultation between Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Leader of the Opposition Raja Riaz Ahmad will be amicable, obviating the need for the CEC to make a decision. The only way Imran can stop that is by bringing his party back to the



National Assembly, assuming the office of Leader of the Opposition, and taking part in a consultation. His refusal to talk to 'thieves and dacoits' would prevent him from participating in the necessary consultation, with the result that the ECP will have to decide.

The opposition on Tuesday moved both a vote of no-confidence against the CM, and had the Governor ask him to take a vote of confidence. Either is sufficient to stop a CM advising a dissolution. At the same time, there was no movement in KP, where it

seems the opposition does not have the numbers there. In Punjab, it seems, the numbers are complete, and the move was not merely to stop the dissolution, but to remove Ch Pervez.

The main motive for this is to allow PML(N) supremo Mian Nawaz Sharif a safe passage back home. He has no intention of landing to face a Punjab Police contingent eager to haul him off into durance vile. His case is a little different from either Ishaq Dar or Salman Shehbaz, who were both accused on bail from courts, to which they had to surrender. Mian Nawaz is a convict on bail from jail and will have to surrender to the Punjab Prisons Department. Only then can he obtain bail from the court as his daughter Maryam did.

One option that has been considered is declaring his house a sub-jail, where he can be kept. That option requires an executive order, which would not be possible with Ch Pervez in office. It is doubtful if a caretaker CM would allow something so blatantly partisan. To avoid this, Ch Pervez has to go. Incidentally, the option of retaining Ch Pervez with the PML(N) providing his 10 members support from outside, has clearly been abandoned.

Dissolution also means that Mian Nawaz has to come back, no matter if it means going to jail. Even if he campaigns, victory is not assured. Indeed, going by the latest by-election results, maybe all he can do is ensure that the loss is not a rout.



No rapping for Ch Pervez



A part from the usual suspects (Imran, Ch Pervez, Shehbaz, Hamza Shehbaz, and so on), the two men uppermost in my mind when the Lahore High Court issued a stay order till January 11 against Governor Balighur Rehman's denotification of Ch Pervez as Chief Minister, were Chief Secretary Abdullah Khan Sumbal and minister Khayal Ahmed Kastro.

Sumbal is a dyed-in-the-wool bureaucrat, the son of one and the nephew of a senior police officer. A former Commissioner of Lahore, his being CS was not exceptional, in the sense that officers like him have held the job in the past, and have not messed up. Yet after the LHC order, he will have to interact with the CM, even though the denotification notification was signed by him. If he had become CS as a matter of routine, it wouldn't have been so bad, but Ch Parvez had fought tooth and nail to get him posted, and he had only recently taken office. At the very least, like National Assembly Speaker Asad Qaiser, he should have resigned rather than signed that notification. Or like the Roman Mucius Scaevola, who thrust his hand into a flame, and did not show any pain, before the Etruscan King, Lars Porsena. Scaevola had been caught while trying to assassinate Porsena. The PTI would probably have preferred it if Sumbal had burned down the Daftar Laat Saab (CS Office at Civil Secretariat) rather than sign such treason to the Cuptaan.

While the CS was only really affected by the restoration, the person affected most by the original denotification was Khayal Ahmad Kastro, who had been sworn in late, only last Wednesday. While the denotification said, Ch Pervez was to continue, Kastro was sacked too. He probably had not had time to move into a residence, or get a car, when the axe dropped. The restoration of the Cabinet by the LHC was thus more than welcome.

He got his moniker because he is a revolutionary like Castro of Cuba, but the change in spelling puts him in the company of two rappers, one of them from Albania. Maybe our Kastro doesn't rap in Punjabi, but he was still given the Culture portfolio by both Ch Pervez and Usman Buzdar.

Other people were not as lucky as Kastro.

Four policemen were killed in an attack on a Lakki Marwat police station, while 25 militants were killed after an operation at the Bannu Counter-Terrorism Department, which had been seized by militants, apparently, after two militants got hold of an assault rifle,

That means it was possible for Dr Afia Siddiqui to have seized a weapon from her guards and attempted to kill them. I never believed it before, but now I think it's possible.

Bannu and Lakki were not the only places with violent deaths. In Vaughan, Ontario, not too far from Toronto, there was a shooting spree, in which six people were killed, including the 70-year-old suspect. No, it wasn't the cold, nor was he the standard mad Muslim, who was heard crying "Allahu Akbar", but a white resident of the condominium where the incident occurred, who had problems for years with the condominium board. The really interesting thing was that this happened in Canada, despite their strict gun laws.

For a crime committed without guns, you had Harvey Weinstein convicted of rape. I heard Ali Zafar protested this, being as sure of Weinstein's innocence as of his own.



Another kind of oppression of women, the Taliban ban on women in universities, provoked an odd reaction over here. A medical school student, which is a university-level course, remarked to her cousin, an O-level student, "Let's go to Kabul". Male students want to protest too, demanding that Pakistani authorities follow suit, with a nondiscriminatory ban.

But we need to be careful. The audio clips of Imran Khan and some women have apparently made him stop naming recently retired COAS Qamar Javed Bajwa. The clips have served to remind everyone of the time after he divorced his first wife, he almost married one of the Nawab of Kalabagh's granddaughters. The second wife he married instead, has got married again to a model and actor 13 years younger than her. Like Imran, she's marrying for the third time. Oh, the salt that is being sprinkled over his wound.

By M A Niazi

Year 2022 adds another turbulent chapter in country's political history

Year marred by protests; no-confidence motion against IK; Punjab, KPK Assembly crisis; bid to assassinate PTI chief; US conspiracy theory; political unrest likely to enter next year

By Tahir Niaz

Pakistan's political history has been replete with power struggles resulting in political unrest. However, the year 2022 remained the most turbulent in terms of such incidents. The country's 75-year long political history has been marred by turbulence caused by internal and external disturbances. The country saw four coups, assassination of prime ministers, hangings and the disqualification of prime ministers by the court.

Even by Pakistan's standards, 2022 had been a difficult and the most turbulent year in the country's history. The people saw the country falling victim to severe political and economic crises in the last eight months. The country continued plunging toward an uncertain future and the economy remained on the brink of collapse. The continuous tug of war between the political parties not only harmed the political institutions but also created a political vacuum. It can be said without any doubt that the last eight months in the country have been exceptionally turbulent.

Pakistan had a new government on April 11 after Imran Khan was voted out of power via a vote of no-confidence. The weeks leading up to the vote, from the filing of the no-confidence motion on March 8 to the vote on April 10, were quite dramatic. The country remained in an economic and political crisis throughout the year. Shehbaz Sharif's government struggled to find its footing, while the ousted prime minister was among the masses demanding new elections. Since day one, Imran Khan has been heading an anti-government campaign, leading rallies across the country, and questioning the government's legitimacy.

In March 2022, the Pakistani political crises began when the opposition joined hands and submitted a no-confidence motion against Imran Khan in



the National Assembly. On the surface, the opposition blamed bad governance and economic failures for Khan's ouster. However, the Imran-led party believed that it were the NAB cases that the ruling alliance wanted to maneuver by amending the NAB laws after coming into power.

Eight months have passed since the new government took charge and the political crisis is consistently worsening. Dollar is not available in the market even against Rs 250. Pakistan's trade deficit has widened by 23.59 percent month-on-month in November, climbing to \$2.87 billion compared to \$2.32 billion in October as exports declined, according to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. The Bureau reported that the country's exports stood at \$2.3bn compared to imports of \$5.24bn. On a month-on-month basis, exports during November 2022 decreased by 0.63pc while imports jumped by 11.34pc.

On the other hand, significant occurrences in the year 2022 on Pakistan's political front, include PDM protests, no-confidence motion against Imran Khan, Punjab Assembly crisis, constitutional crisis, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Assembly crises, no-confidence motion against Azad Kashmir prime minister, oath crises, Imran Khan assassination attempt, and Imran Khan conspiracy concerns against USA, etc.

PDM protests: The PDM component parties were quite vocal against the Imran Khan government for price-hike, lack of governance and unemployment. Maulana Fazlur Rehman of the JUI-F and Bilawal Bhutto Zardari of the PPP led separate long marches against the PTI government. However, the then government tacked the opposition parties quite prudently and without letting them create chaos in the country.

No-confidence motion against Imran Khan: A no-confidence motion was tabled against PM Imran Khan on the 28th of March 2022. This was followed by a slow trickle of allies going from the PTI-led government to the Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N) led opposition. First came independent members and the Jamhoori Watan Party, followed by the Balochistan Awami Party (BAP) and defectors from the Pakistan Muslim League (Q) (PML-Q). However, the final blow to the ruling coalition was the defection of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan. On 12 April 2022, PTI submitted a motion of no-confidence against their own Azad Kashmir prime minister.

Punjab Assembly crisis: After years of political pressure, Chief Minister Usman Buzdar resigned. The resignation was accepted by the governor on the 1st of April 2022. The then speaker, Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi, a member of

the PML(Q), was nominated by the PML-Q and PTI for the role of chief minister, while the opposition parties, PML-N and PPP nominated Hamza Shehbaz of the PML-N. Due to the speaker being a contestant in the election, the deputy speaker, Dost Muhammad Mazari of the PTI was in-charge of the proceedings. The election, originally scheduled for the 16th of April was moved ahead to the 6th of April by the deputy speaker. However, the secretary assembly refused to comply with his orders, and a no-confidence motion was moved against him by his own party.



An extraordinary session of the Punjab Assembly was held on 16 April 2022, in which the opposition candidate Hamza Shehbaz was elected the new chief minister but he followed a situation of uncertainty as Governor Punjab Omar Sarfaraz Cheema refused to take oath from the newly-elected Chief Minister Hamza Shahbaz.

Constitutional crisis: On the 3rd of April 2022, Deputy Speaker Qasim Suri refused to hold a vote of no-confidence against the then prime minister Imran Khan, citing article 5 of the Constitution. Later PM Imran Khan proceeded to dissolve the National Assembly. He, along with other members of the ruling PTI, alleged a foreign conspiracy against them. The Supreme Court took on the case suo moto and ruled 5-0 that the Speaker's ruling was unconstitutional and the vote needed to take place on the 9th of April 2022.

Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Assembly: On April 8, opposition parties in the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Assembly filed a no-confidence motion against KPK Chief Minister Mahmood Khan. The no-confidence

motion was filed by united opposition having signatures of more than 20 members.

Oath crisis: When PML-N leader Shehbaz Sharif was elected Prime Minister, President Arif Alvi had to take oath from him. However, the President went on leave due to 'illness'. In his absence, Senate Chairman Sadiq Sanjrani administered the oath of office to the new prime minister. On April 19, 2022, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's 34-member cabinet was sworn in, but President Arif Alvi refused again.

Imran Khan assassination attempt: On November 3rd, 2022, former prime minister Imran Khan survived an assassination attempt. He survived the shooting during a political rally in Wazirabad, district Gujranwala. The march to the Capital as it was called was an important rally for Khan's political comeback.

Imran Khan conspiracy concerns against USA: Former prime minister Imran Khan during an exclusive interview with CNN's Becky Andersen claimed that Donald Lu, who is an Assistant Secretary of the US Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, insisted that Imran Khan should be removed from office. Khan indicated to CNN that Lu made serious allegations that if Khan is not removed this will lead to "serious consequences for Pakistan."

Over the past few weeks, Pakistan experienced increasing political and economic uncertainty as the new government at the centre struggled to consolidate control. The multi-party coalition led by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif of the PML-N faced a setback in July 2022 by-elections for 20

constituencies in the country's political heartland, Punjab. Although the PML-N coalition attempted to retain control of the provincial government through maneuvers in the Provincial Assembly, a Supreme Court ruling on July 26 overturned earlier precedent and ordered the election of Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi, an ally of former Prime Minister Imran Khan, to the position of chief minister.

Drama is still continuing in the Punjab Assembly. With PTI Chairman Imran Khan announcing to dissolve the Provincial Assemblies of Punjab and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, to pave way for the fresh polls, the opposition in the Punjab Assembly moved a no-confidence motion against chief minister Punjab, barring him from taking a decision to dissolve the assembly. The governor also, in collusion with the PML-N-led opposition, asked the chief minister to take a vote of confidence from the House failing which he de-notified the chief minister. Chief Minister Elahi approached the Lahore High Court against the decision which restored him barring him that he would not dissolve the assembly till the next date of hearing; January 11.

So, with the economy under serious pressure, law and order under serious question and governance at its lowest point, the political conflict is likely to enter next year. High levels of inflation, deteriorating foreign exchange reserves and a sharp decline in the value of the rupee remain the main concerning area as it was before the change of government in Islamabad.

On the political front, swelling crowds at Imran Khan's gatherings show the support worldwide for his stance. The new government under the leadership of the PML-N President Shehbaz Sharif is facing huge challenges.

A major question causing political uncertainty in Pakistan is the timing of the next elections, which, according to the constitution, are to be held by the late summer of 2023. Khan has made it clear that he wants to carry his current momentum to snap elections. The coalition government has said that it would not go to early elections and there is a complete likelihood that Pakistan would continue to find itself in the midst of perhaps its most serious economic and political crisis in a quarter century.

The return of a terror year!

CTD Bannu takeover by TTP biggest terrorist incident of 2022; KPK govt focused on IK image building more than province; only November witnessed 59 terror attacks; TTP leadership roaming freely in Kabul



By Syed Fakhar KaKaKhel

The Year 2022 ended with increasing threats of terrorism in Afghanistan and the adjacent Pakistani provinces of Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan.

In December 2022, for the first time, a video of the Baloch Taliban was released in the Baloch language. In the past, Baloch Taliban existed in Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, but for the first time, a propaganda video of pure Baloch Taliban has emerged. Arab, Pashtun, Baloch, and even Turkish fighters are mentioned in this video.

Afghanistan saw dozens of terrorist incidents in 2022. In August 2022, the Taliban government in Afghanistan completed one year, but still, the Afghan Taliban themselves are now facing security threats in Afghanistan. Many of their key leaders were killed within the first year. Among them was one Maulana Rahimullah Haqqani.

Negotiations with the Pakistani Taliban also proved fruitless. This was the reason why terrorism returned with full force in the latter part of 2022. We witnessed a suicide blast in Islamabad.

The year 2022 started with a targeted killing of a policeman in Bannu. On January 1, 2022, police officer Asghar was shot dead in Bannu city. At the end of the year too, Bannu had to go through a major terror incident. A Counter Terrorism Department (CTD)-run police station in Bannu was taken over by militants under custody in December. The December incident was arguably the biggest terrorist incident of the year. The Bannu incident gained global attention.

The CTD police in Bannu arrested dozens of militants during various intelligence-based operations. During the investigation, one of these militants snatched the weapon from the CTD official and took over the entire building after releasing all his colleagues from lockup. Meanwhile, they demanded in their video messages that they should be taken to Afghanistan along with the hostages and that they would send all the hostages back to Pakistan safely.

As a reaction to this statement, the Afghan Taliban protested to the Pakistani Taliban in Afghanistan. In fact, in the Doha talks, the Afghan Taliban had agreed that they would not allow Afghan territory to be used

against any country. Therefore, on the very next day, the Pakistani Taliban issued an explanatory statement that their fighters had been misunderstood. It was then demanded that all these fighters should be transported to the hideouts of Tehreek-e-Taliban in North Waziristan or South Waziristan.

On the other hand, the military authorities in the operation room tried to force these fighters to surrender through negotiations. Therefore, families of these fighters were brought to the CTD building to talk to them and to convince militants to surrender.

After these meetings, Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan chief Mufti Noor Wali Mehsud sent an audio message to these fighters that all the fighters should not surrender but rather sacrifice themselves. At this point, the SSG commandos launched the operation during which seven militants surrendered and all the remaining militants were killed. Meanwhile, the United States offered assistance to Pakistan in its war against terrorism during this ordeal.

After the Peshawar Army Public School attack in December 2014, National Action

Plan was announced to curb homegrown terrorism, and then with the successful operation across the country peace was almost restored in troubled regions. So question arises what are the reasons for this fresh wave of terrorism?

When Army Public School was attacked in 2014, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI) was in power in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. After successful operations in the tribal areas, militant organizations took shelter in Afghanistan. When the tribal areas were merged into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the provincial government's priority at that time was to initiate efforts to stabilize these areas. There was a need for a judicial system, implementation of laws regarding distribution of lands, as well as a strong police force.



But instead, the Pakhtunkhwa government was engaged in the image building of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf chief Imran Khan. Funds provided for former Federally Administered Tribal Areas were allocated to unnecessary popular projects like Bus Rapid Transport (BRT) subsidies, social media influencers, health cards, and Medical Teaching Institutes (MTI) system including provincial funds to their respective home constituencies. Thus, instead of investing in the post-operation situation on a solid basis in peace and security, the provincial government's priorities remained political.

Police stations, outposts, and police lines in tribal areas could not be constructed on time. Most of the tribal police do not have official weapons and are responsible for protection with personal weapons as in the

former tribal system. Majority of the police stations are functioning in rented buildings and there is no specific training arrangement. The former police chiefs were all focused on enhancing political image of the PTI.

The world is aware of the policy of the party chief Imran Khan vis-à-vis Taliban. He always had a soft corner for the Taliban and once offered an office to the Taliban in Peshawar. Recently, the government spokesperson has stated that he himself has been a jihadist.

This was the situation in which the Afghan Taliban took over Afghanistan on August 2021. At that time Pakistan's prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf chief Imran Khan called it a victory of the "liberation

war." He always believed that this is a western war and that once the US left the region there will be peace. But now the results are quite opposite after the Kabul fall.

In areas adjacent to the Afghan border, Taliban supporters raised Taliban flag and took out rallies. The then DGISI, Lt Gen (retd) Faiz Hameed told reporters in Kabul that everyone will be fine. Along with this, he started negotiations with the Pakistani Taliban. This was the occasion when the Pakistani Taliban deemed themselves as equal to the Afghan Taliban and hoped for a Doha-style agreement with the Pakistani government.

The PTI government released several militant commanders as a goodwill gesture. The result was that in August 2022, exactly one year after the arrival of the Taliban in

Kabul, the Pakistani Taliban appeared in Swat and took police officers hostage. There was a nationwide protest against this, after which the Taliban withdrew.

But the Taliban launched massive attacks on police and security forces across the province including Bajaur, Malakand, Mardan, Swabi, Nowshera, Charsadda, Peshawar, Khyber, Kohat, Lakki Marwat, North Waziristan, South Waziristan, Tank, and Dera Ismail Khan.

The provincial government sent a delegation headed by former 'jihadist' and government spokesman Barrister Mohammad Ali Saif to Kabul. Before the negotiations entered the final phase, the head of the Taliban negotiating team in Afghanistan, Abdul Wali alias Omar Khalid Khorasani, was killed, while in Pakistan; and Imran Khan ousted from PM House.

As the provincial government's priorities changed again, Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan announced end of the negotiated ceasefire, seeing their lack of interest. The situation worsened in November and 59 attacks including three suicide attacks were carried out in one month in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. As if on an average of two attacks per day, TTP continued to attack. Until now, the Pakistani Taliban have been aggressively expanding their targets.

Experience of our police, intelligence agencies and army, in the last twenty years and in a most dangerous and longest war in the world, makes their capabilities more than any force in the world. But here the neglect is of political priorities and resources.

For a nuclear state, this situation is certainly alarming. The Afghan Taliban may not have an idea of this seriousness. Pakistani Taliban are present in Afghanistan. All their leaders are roaming freely in Kabul. In such a situation, saying that Afghan land is not being used against Pakistan is false. Increasing threat of Daesh in Afghanistan and harsh policies of the Afghan Taliban are increasing the problems for the Afghan Taliban and its impact will directly affect Pakistan. The same concerns have been expressed by the Secretary General of the United Nations. The world knows Pakistan's war on terror is much bigger than what it appears to be.

2022 _ Worst Year for the Economy of Pakistan

Finance Minister Senator Muhammad Ishaq Dar, who boasted of throwing dollars below the 200 rupees benchmark, now appears totally helpless and now he has been holding smuggling and hoarding of dollars responsible for an unaffordable exchange rate of dollar vs rupee

By Javed Mahmood

The year 2022 might be remembered as the worst year for the economy of Pakistan. The year began amid optimism of moderate economic growth in the wake of recovery from the global pandemic _ Covid-19. The first quarter of the calendar year 2022 passed comfortably and no one had thought that another experiment _ regime change _ will completely shatter the economic and political foundations of Pakistan.

From Jan-March 2022, the exports, inflows of remittances, dollar-rupee exchange rate, stock market, and foreign exchange reserves were moving in a comfortable zone with no indication of any extensive setback to the economy we are experiencing since the formation of the coalition government. In March 2022, the foreign exchange reserves with the State Bank of Pakistan stood at \$10 billion while the national reserves amounted to \$16 billion as the commercial banks were holding around \$6 billion reserves at that time while the dollar-rupee exchange rate was moving in the narrow range of Rs173 to 175.

However, the situation changed altogether with the experiment of regime change and everything turned upside down. The exports suffered a blow from April onward in 2022, remittances too declined, and dollar-rupee parity hit 250 rupees record level in the open market before falling to



around 235 rupees in the last week of Dec 2022. Finance Minister Senator Muhammad Ishaq Dar, who boasted of throwing dollars below the 200 rupees benchmark, now appears totally helpless and now he has been holding smuggling and hoarding of dollars responsible for an unaffordable exchange rate of dollar vs rupee. During the PTI regime, the US dollars and other major currencies were available with the banks and in the open market trading _ but during the past few months, the US dollar has become scarce with the banks and exchange companies. This is evident from the delay in the opening of Letters of Credit (L/Cs) of the imports, including the pharmaceutical companies and exporters who want to import raw materials.

Shortage of US Dollars in Pakistan

All Pakistan Textile Mills Association, PMA, pharmaceutical, automobile, and other mega companies have repeatedly warned the government of the bad consequences of inordinate delay in the opening of the L/Cs. A few days ago, Indus Motors _ a manufacturer of Toyota cars has shut down its production plant in Karachi till Dec 31, 2022, due to the non-availability of parts of the vehicles because of the delay in the opening of L/Cs. All this scenario indicates that Pakistan has partially gone bankrupt and the country was facing a shortage of US dollars and other major currencies. For example, in the third week of Dec 2022, the central bank's reserves have fallen to \$6.1 billion dollars _ the lowest level since 2014 and sharply down from \$10 billion when the coalition government was formed. Despite the resumption of IMF loans and disbursement of assistance by the World Bank, ADB, AIIB, IDB, Saudi Arabia, China, UAE, and rescheduling of around \$27 billion worth of foreign loans, Pakistan's government was unable to boost the foreign exchange reserves _ at least to the level it inherited from the PTI government.



Unbearable Cost of Utilities

Soon after the coalition government was formed, the cost of the utilities – petrol, electricity, gas, and other essential consumer items increased massively. The government's deal with the IMF is one of the key reasons for an extensive hike in the rates of utilities and other essential consumer products. For instance, the cost of electricity per unit has gone up to Rs25/unit – excluding taxes and with taxes the value of a unit goes beyond 30 rupees, depending on the consumption of electricity. It is true that the IMF has asked the government to enhance the cost of utilities to generate revenues – but why does the

lurking on the brink of default. If one more experiment is done either way (against Imran Khan or the coalition government), no one will be able to save the country from default and subsequent catastrophe that might be much more than what the world witnessed in Sri Lanka. It is because Pakistan is a nuclear power and much larger in population and territory than Sri Lanka. Thus, intensify of default would be much, much greater than in Sri Lanka.

Deepening Political Mess and Growing Blasts

Two more problems – political crisis and terror attacks have deepened in Pakistan in recent months probably because of regime



IMF not ask the government to abolish unprecedented and unaffordable perks of the ruling elite – ministers, senators, MNAs, MPAs and bureaucrats – including those in uniform. It is clear that Pakistan has gone bankrupt partially, but when we look at the lifestyle of the ruling elite – there is no sign or worry of deepening default symptoms at all and everything is going as it was before the dismissal of the Imran Khan-led PTI government and formation of coalition government – comprising very seasoned and experienced political leaders. The way things are going on, it appears that the coalition government was unable to manage the governance in a smooth manner. The rulers are also unable to ensure the sustainability of the economy of Pakistan – which has been

change. The political mess has been extending with the passage of time while frequent terror attacks have further added fuel to fire – creating more uncertainty on all fronts in the country. Hardly a day passes when we don't hear any bad news – either from the government or from the opposition parties. And this disappointing situation was prevailing in the country at a time when all the leading political parties are in power in the center, Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Balochistan provinces. Instead of working for the well-being of the people, most of the political leaders have locked horns to achieve their vested interests – disregarding the threats and critical challenges Pakistan has been facing for the past many months.

Delay in IMF tranche

After the resumption of a bail-out package from the IMF in October 2022, the government was facing great difficulty in getting the second tranche of around one billion dollars. According to Finance Minister Senator Muhammad Ishaq Dar, the IMF was supposed to disburse the next tranche in November due to devastating floods, but this did not happen till Dec 2022. The IMF officials are more interested in asking the government to 'do more' than giving money. Recent media reports suggest that IMF officials have asked the government to further enhance electricity tariffs and take more measures to increase tax revenues – completely setting aside the catastrophic impact of floods on the economy of Pakistan. The consumers and business people have already been facing a tough situation due to unaffordable conditions of the IMF pertaining to very high costs of utilities, and massive taxation, and now the Fund was pressing the coalition government once again to further enhance utility rates and tax revenues as well.

State Bank of Pakistan 2021-22 Annual Report

The 2021-22 annual report of the State Bank of Pakistan also indicates that the economy of the country was going well before the regime change. The annual report of the SBP covers the fiscal year from July 2021 to June 2022.

According to the report, in FY22, Pakistan's economy achieved real GDP growth of around 6 percent, for a second consecutive year in FY22. The growth was broad-based as both agriculture and industry saw a notable increase that spilled over to the services sector as well. However, with the continued reliance on consumption as the source of growth, amid sluggish improvement in productivity, the country remained vulnerable to adverse developments in the global economy. Hence, a combination of adverse global and domestic developments led to the reemergence of macroeconomic imbalances during FY22.

The report noted that the expansionary fiscal stance in FY22, an upsurge in global commodity prices, and the fallout of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, led to a marked

deterioration in the current account deficit (CAD). In addition, the delay in the resumption of the IMF program and political instability exacerbated the country's vulnerability through the depletion of FX reserves. The resulting depreciation in PKR amplified inflationary pressures by magnifying the effect of the global price increase.

Fiscal policy support in the shape of tax incentives for industry, export, and construction, a large increase in provincial development spending, tax incentives, and subsidies to protect consumers from the impact of rising international oil prices, supported the momentum of economic activity. Also, the lagged impact of monetary stimulus rolled out during the pandemic, SBP's targets for housing and construction, and capacity expansions under Temporary Economic Refinance Facility (TERF) and Long Term Financing Facility (LTFF) continued to underpin GDP growth. In addition, the sustained rally in domestic and global demand and receding concerns about the Covid-pandemic also catalyzed the momentum of economic activity during FY22.

However, the impact of accommodative policies contributed to higher-than-planned growth in the economy, and together with the rapid rise in global commodity prices, posed risks to the country's macroeconomic stability. Particularly, this led to a sizeable increase in the import bill in FY22 that significantly outpaced the expansion in exports and widened the CAD to a four-year high level. On the financing side, the net inflow of FX loans and liabilities rose considerably compared to last year, but remained lower than planned commitment amid the delay in the resumption of the IMF program and domestic political instability, leading to a decline in SBP liquid reserves during FY22.

The external account pressures, together with the appreciation in USD index especially in the second half of the fiscal year, led to a substantial depreciation in the PKR, which further magnified the combined effect of elevated domestic demand and the global commodity price increase, leading to a rise in inflationary pressures. National Consumer Price Index

(NCPI) inflation reached the double-digit level of 12.2 percent in FY22, exceeding the SBP's revised projection of 9-11 percent. The food group, particularly the non-perishable category was a major source of inflation because of the persistent increase in global food prices of imported commodities (such as palm oil and tea), alongside the supply-demand gaps in some commodities (in particular, milk and meat). Furthermore, Fuel inflation also remained at an elevated level during the year. Inflation in the non-food-non-energy (NFNE) group also swelled during FY22, indicating both demand and cost-push pressures.



As the macroeconomic challenges during the year rose, the government and the SBP undertook various corrective measures to curb the pace of domestic demand: (i) raising the policy rate by a cumulative 675 bps; (ii) tightening the prudential regulations for auto and consumer financing; (iii) imposition of 100 percent cash margin requirements (CMR) on a number of import items; (iv) increasing the cash reserve requirement (CRR) for commercial banks; (v) increasing FED on locally assembled cars; (vi) elimination of various tax exemptions under the Supplementary Finance Act; (vii) imposition of ban on import of non-essential items; and (viii) gradual rollback of fiscal package.

The report notes that the experience from FY22 brings to the fore once again the need to address the country's structural

weaknesses, such as a narrow base of foreign exchange earnings and meager inflows of foreign investment. Therefore, a concerted approach is required to encourage increased localization of the manufacturing base, along with the lowering of energy intensity of the economy by ensuring energy efficiency and conservation. Moreover, amid the growing issues related to climate change and inadequate food security situation, there is an urgent need to formulate a well-thought-out strategy to meet these challenges. Priority should be given to producing new varieties of seeds that are suitable to varying weather conditions and

to devising a framework that emphasizes water management strategies to increase agricultural productivity.

Finally, transforming the structure of the industry to a highly technology-intensive sector is also needed which requires a voluminous increase in investment in physical and human resources for a sustained period. The rising share of the young population in Pakistan provides an opportunity to reap the demographic dividend. The chapter suggests that investment to improve the quality of human capital, and good governance, alongside an enabling macroeconomic environment that ensures high savings and investments, pro-industrial policies, and efficient markets are some key requirements to yield gains from the demographic window.

Questions 2022 Posed

Some years bring disorder others a resolution, year 2022 asked questions!

By Zahra Sikandar



Conflicts & Catastrophes

By far this has been a year that put the world to the test. From the invasion of Ukraine to Covid-19 in China, from inflation to climate change, from Sino-American tensions to pivotal elections, 2022 asked hard questions. The ordeal has not only sent the world in a new direction, but also shown it in a new light.

The biggest surprise—and the most welcome—has been the resilience of broadly liberal countries in the West. When Vladimir Putin ordered Russian troops into Ukraine on February 24th, he expected the government of a corrupt state to buckle. After a humiliating withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021, the decadent, divided West would surely fail to match condemnation of Russia with real backing for Ukraine.



In fact Volodymyr Zelensky and his people affirmed that self-determination and liberty are worth dying for. They became an inspiration. After an upsurge in popular support, Western governments threw their weight behind democracy's new champion. Led by the Biden administration, the West is providing arms and aid on a scale even hawks had not imagined.

At home voters also made themselves heard, siding against taboo-busting populists. In America, despite the awful approval numbers of Joe Biden, centrists used their ballots to preserve fundamental rights, including in some states the right to an abortion after the Supreme Court overturned Roe v Wade. In competitive races hard-core election-deniers endorsed by Donald Trump almost all lost.



Shifting political Ideologies

In France Marine Le Pen masked her far-right origins, but still Emmanuel Macron, a centrist trounced her. After Giorgia Meloni became Italy's first far-right post-war prime minister, she leaned to the centre. Even in stumbling Britain, both Labour and the governing Conservatives are calculating that victory in elections lies away from the populist extremes of right and left.

Democracy or Autocracy, People want to be heard

As messy democracies show unexpected resolve, so seemingly steady autocracies have had feet of clay. Mr Putin is the prime example, doubling and redoubling his catastrophic gamble. But he is not the only one. After three months of protests following the death in custody of Mahsa Amini, the security forces in Iran have taken to shooting female protesters in the face, breasts and genitals. Now that the mullahs have forfeited the faith of their people, they have no other lever but violence.



Decisions to strengthen Social Investments

While those who admire strong leaders meaning business should be careful what they wish for. Xi Jinping has extended the dominance of the Chinese Communist Party, installing himself as its permanent chief and the most powerful leader since Mao Zedong. But his steps to cool the property market, rein back consumer tech and block covid did grave harm to the economy.

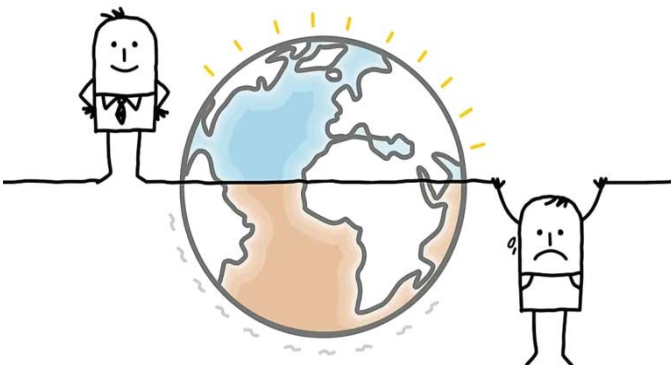
Today, as the virus spreads, it is clear that his government wasted months when it should have been vaccinating the elderly, stockpiling drugs and creating intensive-care beds.



Global South Matters

For all those who embrace classical liberal values, Western resilience is heartening—and an important change after a long retreat. But the good news goes only so far. The tests of 2022 have also revealed the depths of the world's divisions and have set big government on the march. To gauge the divisions, compare the almost universal support for America after the attacks of September 11th 2001 with the global south's determination to stay neutral in the fight over Ukraine.

In the most recent UN vote to reprimand Russia, 35 countries abstained. Many understandably resent how the West asserts that its worries are issues of global principle, whereas war in Yemen or the Horn of Africa, say, or climate-related droughts and floods, always seem to be regional.



Liberal Values Struggle

In much of the world liberal values are embattled. Despite the defeat of Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil, democracy is under strain in Latin America. As he presides over ruinous inflation in Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan is prosecuting potential opponents in the election in 2023. In Israel Binyamin Netanyahu is trying to avoid jail for corruption by forming a coalition with the Arab-hating, gay-bashing far right. Indonesia adopted an illiberal criminal code in December that threatens to ban sex outside marriage, stifle free speech and impose religious orthodoxy. India's economy is brimming over with tech-inspired enterprise, but its politics are majoritarian, ugly and cruel.

All around the world, the idea of limited government is taking a beating. Because of the post-invasion energy shock, European governments are pouring money into fixing prices. They are also powering the transition from fossil fuels, itself a welcome goal, using industrial policy rather than markets. America's answer to the security threat from China is to deploy trade barriers and subsidies to decouple its own economy and boost home-grown industries. If that harms America's allies, too bad.

Economic nationalism is popular. The largesse during the pandemic changed expectations of the state. Creative destruction, which reallocates capital and labour, may be unpalatable to ageing populations that put less store by economic growth and to younger voters who embrace the politics of identity.

But big-government capitalism has a poor record. Given decades-high inflation, caused partly by ill-judged fiscal and monetary policy, especially in America, it is odd that voters want to reward politicians and officials by giving them power over bits of the economy they are not suited to run. State-backed champions in energy and tech sometimes succeed, but the more that countries pile in, the more waste and rent-seeking there will be.



The chips were down

Judged by the liberal yardstick of limited government, a respect for individual dignity and a faith in human progress, 2022 has been mixed. However, there is hope. The West was arrogant after the collapse of Soviet communism. It paid the price in Iraq, Afghanistan and the global financial crisis of 2007-09. In 2022, having been rocked by populism at home and China's extraordinary rise, the West was challenged and it found its footing.

Courtesy: The original Article is published by The Economist.

Will Imran Khan's clouds survive the storm of leaks?

2022 was full of ups and downs, starting with echoes of an in-house change through a no-confidence motion by opposition parties against Imran Khan

By Sarfraz Raja

It was a year of ups and downs for Pakistani politics and some mainstream politicians and leaders, particularly Imran Khan, who suffered the biggest loss of his political career by losing the premiership but surprisingly gained the highest peak in his lifetime popularity as a reward. He survived a life-assassination attempt and some character assassination attempts by unknown hacker, still unidentified. Bullets injured his legs, and leaks fired are damaging his image.

A historical chapter

2022 was full of ups and downs, starting with echoes of an in-house change through a no-confidence motion by opposition parties against Imran Khan. These claims appeared to be political rhetoric intended to put pressure on the government at first, but with each passing day, things began to take some serious twists and turns, which were actually surprising for everyone, including parties in power, the opposition, and people in general. Those who had been allies in government for more than three years began to say differently, and as a result, a no-confidence motion is introduced on March 9th and quickly gains the support of PTI allies MQM, BAP, and a few PMLQ members, effectively turning Imran's majority into a minority in the lower house of parliament; however, Imran refused to resign and decided to face the move in the house.

He initially blamed the opposition for horse trading and spending huge sums to gain loyalties after one and a half dozen of his MNAs expressed dissatisfaction with his government, but later opposition parties, even without the support of PTI dissidents, reached the majority mark with the support of Imran's allies, who had no legal bounds to change their political support.

After losing strength and support in the



house, Imran Khan came up with a narrative of foreign conspiracy based on a diplomatic code sent by the Pakistani ambassador to the US and later, through a court ruling, tried to confront the move for his removal, which was turned down by the apex court within a few days. Imran Khan decided to go public and protest on the streets immediately after his removal from the PM's office, despite the fact that his party members had announced their resignations from their MNA seats.

It was a sheer surprise to all, including his opponents, that Imran Khan's move worked, and people started buying his narrative of a foreign-aided conspiracy for regime change. His popularity skyrocketed, reaching its peak in the two-and-a-half decades since he entered politics. Despite an unsuccessful long march, weeks later after his removal, he hit back hard by surprisingly winning 15 out of 20 Punjab assembly seats in by-elections held in July 2022, which were actually on the seats of his own party MPAs who had voted against party policy in the chief minister's elections and lost their seats consequently.

It was an unexpected victory that altered the political landscape in the country's largest province, helped along by a Supreme Court interpretation of not counting votes cast by assembly members against a parliamentary party decision. Gaining confidence from the Punjab by-elections, he announced his intention to run for all seven National Assembly seats vacated by the speaker's acceptance of the resignations of PTI members of the National Assembly, and he won six of them, causing another setback for the ruling alliance, the PDM.

With these successes, Imran Khan continued forcing his demand for immediate elections but couldn't get the desired result despite putting all of the possible pressure on him, including a long march at the end of October during which he suffered an assassination attempt in Wazirabad in which one person was killed and many others injured, including Imran Khan.

He carried on with his protest and finally threw his last card on the table and announced in his speech in Rawalpindi on November 26th, at the end of



his month-long march, he announced the dissolution of the Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assemblies. Even though it was a surprise and a strong move, it didn't have the effect that was wanted because the opposition in the province responded with a "no-confidence" motion and the governor gave the chief minister a "vote of confidence."

their political gains without naming the relevant country, which was the United States, and in another audio leak, he was talking to his party fellows about arranging MNAs to counter the no confidence motion against him.

These multiple audio leaks have already taken the sheen out of his projected image,

of followers who believe in him blindly. Also very successfully, Imran links all the actions against him with a conspiracy narrative, whether it was his possible arrest, disqualification, or character assassination with audio or some possible video leaks. He foresaw and warned his followers that such things could happen, so their minds were prepared much earlier.

But still, such things are damaging his image as an honest and reformed religious man among people in general, which could hurt his popularity graph. Political gurus believe that Imran Khan has assessed that his reputation might suffer with such attempts in the coming days and months, which is why he is extremely eager for early elections so that he could take maximum advantage of his current popularity wave.

On the other hand, his opponents recognize the same; they also understand that with the passage of time, Imran's acceptance would dwindle due to cases against him and any number of other possible leaks, which is why they are not even thinking about elections a few days earlier. But actually, it is believed on both sides, that is, the PTI and its opponents, that this stuff could hurt Imran's image.

PTI would try to decrease or diminish the damage, and opponents would definitely try to get the maximum gain out of it. In fact, the assassination attempt harmed his body but boosted his popularity graph, and the leaks storm could harm both his image and popularity and how he and his party deal with this certainty will be a new and difficult challenge for Imran and his party until the next elections.



Some unintended consequences

Amid the popularity wave, Imran Khan was hit by some controversies. A much-awaited decision by the ECP against PTI funding Imran Khan and his party faced tough charges of prohibited funding taken from some foreign sources and false declaration of asset details submitted in their annual accounts and in the "Famous Tosha Khana" reference where Imran Khan was involved in the sale and purchase of precious gifts he received during his official visits abroad, especially the story of a unique Makkah collection watch he received from the Saudi crown prince, which was highlighted in media headlines. Imran Khan faced a disqualification decision against him by the ECP.

The television interview of the alleged buyer of that valuable watch sparked further controversy, providing his opponents with more spicy material to use against him. But it was back-to-back audio leaks that boosted his popularity and provided some memorable moments for his opponents. These audio files were leaked by some unknown hackers and revealed some conversations of his with his close aides regarding the cypher issue, where he was talking with his party leaders about how to play with that diplomatic cable for

that of an honest man, but the latest leaks target the other side of his image, that of a reformed person who is deeply religious and profoundly pious in the true Islamic way.

Those earlier audio leaks involved some political issues, which were aired by mainstream news channels in their headlines, but the most recent and latest audios allegedly carried his private talks with some ladies, and these audios remain trending on social media. Although these audios were not discussed in national media due to their personal nature, they were all over social media.

What harm could a leaking storm cause?

Imran Khan is no doubt at the peak of his popularity, and luckily, he has generations





Audio Leaks: are they useful?

In Pakistan audiotapes have become a propaganda tool; latest IK audiotapes hitting social media platforms; such tapes have little legal standing in court of law; societal resistance against bugging a need of the hour

By Dr. Syed Rifaat Hussain

Audio leaks--the unauthorized and covert use of information about private lives of people who matter, often celebrities--is an old tactic deployed by the governments to embarrass their political rivals and discredit them in the eyes of the public.

In case of Pakistan, audiotapes have become a propaganda tool in the hands of those who would like to use them for their benefit. Since such audiotapes are recorded secretly, they have little legal standings in the court of law unless a forensic analysis establishes their authenticity and credibility. Even then, such audiotapes could be denied by those implicated the case.

Unlike audiotapes in which information is leaked through covert means and where identity of the leakers is in doubt, the whistleblowing is considered to be a legal activity. This act is supposedly performed in 'public interest' by an employee, ex-employee or a contractor etc, who believe there is an activity taking place against general public interest.

Whistleblowing is not illegal and the Whistleblower Protection Act is supposed to protect whistleblowers from being fired, demoted or otherwise retaliated against by the agencies they work for. There are three main reasons why it can be worthwhile for whistleblowers to remain anonymous.

First, reprisals are less likely. If authorities do not know your identity, they can't take action against you. Many whistleblowers who reveal their identity often face petty harassment, ostracism, trivial duties, hostile rumors, forced transfers, reprimands, referral to psychiatrists, demotions, dismissal and blacklisting etc. And as retaliation begins, life becomes difficult; many whistleblowers suffer in their careers, finances, health and relationships. So, it is better to avoid such a situation if possible.

Second, while remaining anonymous you can hold your job and continue to collect

information and leaking them. But as soon as you are identified, your access to sensitive information is blocked and efforts made to hide or destroy information about 'wrongdoing.'

Third, by remaining unidentified, attention is more likely to be drawn on issues 'uncovered' rather than the person, uncovering them.

As a retaliation employers prefer to turn the spotlight on the whistleblowers, including their personalities and alleged flaws, as a means of distracting attention from their own offences.

bugging devices planted in the building.

PTI reaction to these audio leaks has been two-prong: one section of the party flatly rejecting authenticity of tapes and calling them 'a fake'; while the other tagging it an unwarranted interference in someones personal and private matters and that such leaks should not be the focus of public attention.

The "denialists" argue that such audiotapes are either fake or doctored by the opponents to discredit PTI and its leadership. This stance is also corroborated by PTI youth and many of its diehard followers.



Networks like Facebook and Instagram are often studded with hundreds of anonymous postings containing audiotapes being broadcast on daily basis about political switching and other misdeeds of politicians; and those implicated in audiotapes feel helpless when it comes to punishing the leakers.

Currently, alleged audiotapes involving PTI leader Imran Khan and a reputed female anchorperson are hitting the social media platforms, specifically Twitter and Facebook. Khan is perturbed to the extent that he has reached Special Branch, Punjab, to conduct "sweeping operation" of his Zaman Park residence in order to detect

Those who maintain the leaks are a "private matter" draw a distinction between issues of public and private morality. This appears to be a false categorization--hard to maintain in case of political leadership's role vis-à-vis politics of the developing societies. This section of the party will always judge party leaders by their speeches, preachings and sayings.

Any blatant contradiction between words and deeds of a political leader is likely to cost him or her much. Political leaders who preach morality in public but act otherwise, face the music in consequence --Imran Khan a pertinent example.



Watch his diligently crafted image of a 'reformer' trying to recreate Riasate-e-Madina or the State of Madina; and millions of Pakistani youth clinging to his narrative; and yet his political conduct falling short of this image.

Any political leader who is found to be morally corrupt would always encounter the risk of losing public confidence. A high degree of public's confidence, on the other hand, is vital to maintaining trust in a given leadership. Leakage of audiotapes is an attempt to break this trust between leaders and their followers.

Audiotape-leakes during the 1990s and onwards within Pakistani politics, have had damaging affect on the Pakistani society. Social media platforms are being currently used with impunity by vested interests to advance their goals far and wide. This has led to depletion of Pakistan's political landscape.

Instead of seriously engaging in political discourse in view of mega challenges facing the country eg corruption, bad governance, fiscal mismanagement, rising debt, population explosion, climate change and a staggering economy, the political debate in Pakistani media is often about rating and point scoring.

As a political rhetoric, Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) is churning its 'political



sacrifice' in the 'interest of the state' but situation suggests otherwise and contrary to its claim. All efforts to deal with looming fiscal crisis of the state seem fruitless -- reflective of an old saying that 'if you are in a hole then stop digging.'

The only way to deal with such audiotape-thing is to put up societal resistance against organizations who obtain or manufacture them. It is an open secret that which of the government agencies in Pakistan have the capabilities to spy citizens.

As reported during the year 2022, an Israeli software outfit, Pegasus, was being used to read text messages, track calls, steal passwords, locate tracking, access microphones and cameras, and derive

information from apps. Pakistan is among more than half of the countries that have used this spyware against their citizens.

For a very long time these agencies have been allowed to operate on the dubious assumption that whatever information they gather regarding activities of the citizenry, it would not be misused or abused by them.

Pakistan's experience speaks to the contrary. Information collected by 'big brother' in the name of 'national security' is often used to blackmail people, intimidate and harass political opponents. In this context, country badly needs a legal framework to fight off tyranny of the modern state.





Imran woos establishment after playing all his cards

Punjab situation awfully fluid; Haqeeqi Azadi loses vigour; PTI chief eyes Punjab election victory; Zaman Park camp poised to give PML-N final push

By Ahmad Waleed

Right at the time when Lahore High Court asked Punjab Chief Minister Pervaiz Elahi to give an undertaking not to dissolve the Provincial Assembly, a senior PTI politician remarked: "it was a well-designed plan by Ch. Pervaiz Elahi to save his government." The LHC sought this undertaking in order to declare 'null and void' the Punjab governor's notification to de-notifying Elahi as chief minister.

Remarks by the senior PTI leader reflected the level of confidence between both the allies in Punjab Assembly. Ch. Pervaiz Elahi has the art of turning things into his favour in a given uncertain political situation; he played it well this time.

PTI appeared reluctant to allow an undertaking that would render them amid an ugly political situation, nonetheless it permitted Elahi to go ahead. Many experts believe Imran Khan is also to be blamed for the political situation that allowed PDM to submit a no-confidence motion against the Punjab chief minister. According to an analyst, IK could have simply asked the Punjab chief minister to dissolve Provincial Assembly without announcing deadlines etc. that paved the way for present political melee if he was serious at all.

Khan, during a meeting with senior journalists, was asked if he should instead dissolve Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly, replied 'there is no use of dissolving the KP Assembly.'

Punjab situation is awfully fluid; future of the Punjab Assembly hinges on Khan and Elahi's no-nonsense if they are really interested in dissolving the assembly or complying with what the LHC ordered the Punjab chief minister.

The LHC gesture suggests it wants Punjab Assembly to complete its constitutional tenure as Pakistan cannot afford further political instability in view of the chaotic economy.

Majority of PTI lawmakers are not in favour of Punjab Assembly dissolution while PML-Q has already tried to convince Imran Khan to let the assembly complete its term. But in order to remain relevant Khan wanted to build up more pressure on the PDM government. The PTI chief, it seems, is under tremendous pressure in the wake of sequential attacks against his person.

Whether Imran Khan is heading towards a blind alleyway after playing all his cards to get the election date from the PDM government, which have yielded no results until now.

The PTI chief touched the peak of his popularity, subsequent to his ouster from power nine months ago. He did all what he could to achieve this goal. The threat of dissolving KP and Punjab Assemblies against the will of his partymen and coalition partners was last of his cards he has played. And now after throwing all his cards on the table, Khan has come to realize that 'establishment was an established fact' in a country like Pakistan.



Imran Khan promised his supporters to get 'Haqeeqi Azadi' or real freedom from powers that matters, as soon as he lost power through a historic no-confidence motion. It appears his strive for 'Haqeeqi Azadi' has lost its vigour and potential as he has begun wooing the establishment. Khan now believes the establishment could be asked to play its role in securing rule of law in the country as they are well organized and have a system of checks and balance within the institution.

Imran Khan decided to shift his base camp to his Zaman Park residence in Lahore after the assassination attempt during his long march towards Islamabad, in order to give a final push to the PDM government from the PML-N stronghold.

His eyes are on Punjab from where he thinks he could secure two-third majority in the next general elections; in case he is able to maintain his popularity graph to defeat his arch rival PML-N in their power hub.

Imran Khan seems confident he will do it despite fears his rivals will do their best to drag the next general elections beyond 2023 on the pretext of dwindling economic condition of the country. He believes this can only be done with the help of the establishment. That seems to be the reason his stance has become soft once again.

Although a host of cases against him and leaking of audio tapes have shaken his morale to some extent, he is still very confident that these tactics will not be able to damage his popularity graph.

The biggest challenge Khan faces now is to keep the momentum going in the months ahead. He thinks the PDM government will not be able to offer any relief to the masses who are burdened with unprecedented price-hike. And that will remain his major slogan against his rivals and to keep his politics afloat as at this point of time there is no other party in the country who could take on the government which finds no immediate solution to the present economic and financial quagmire.



Reunification of MQM; reopening of Altaf chapter on cards?

Tessori designation prompts MQM merger buzz; Sindh governor separately meets MQM factions; London chapter rejects unification plan

By Hamza Qureshi

With the political forces in KPK and Punjab busy with their own set of rivalries, pundits in Sindh are predicting a temperature rise in the province's political atmosphere. There are some constant echoes that either MQM is being re-unified or the Altaf chapter is to be reopened.

Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) and the establishment have shared a coaster ride in terms of their relations. MQM proved to be an asset to the establishment at various points in its four-decade long history. The term "establishment" generally refers to deep-rooted military and political forces that have traditionally maintained dominance over the governments in Pakistan. The "carrot and stick" policy of the establishment has made MQM suffer two military operations while enjoying treasury benches in most parliamentary setups since the 1990s at the same time. With such support, MQM managed to grow and retained itself as the most powerful party in urban Sindh until 2016.

An anti-speech speech on August 22, 2016, by MQM founder Altaf Hussain saw the tables being turned on MQM. Party's offices and local units were sealed and workers arrested on criminal charges. The events following the August 22 speech, caused MQM to split. Party members loyal to Altaf Hussain, call themselves MQM-London (MQM-L). A few ex-leaders of MQM have already formed a splinter group, named Muhajir Qaumi Movement (Haqiqi) back in 1992. Others which included MQM's ex-mayor Mustufa Kamal have already formed a new political party known as Pak Sarzameen Party (PSP) in March 2016.

The 2018 general elections shocked the post-2016 MQM (renamed MQM-Pakistan) which barely managed to bag 5 seats out of 21 National Assembly (NA) seats in Karachi Division. This was a big setback



for MQM-P in Karachi where in past MQM seats used to be 14-18 in number. Nonetheless, they chose to join the coalition government under Imran Khan.

Interestingly, it was again MQM-P whose seven votes decided the fate of the PTI government. MQM-P now enjoys ministries in PDM alliance's government. At the same time, MQM has also been trying to increase its stake in the urban centers of Sindh. To some success, MQM-nominated Kamran Tessori was appointed as Governor of Sindh in October. Similarly, the incumbent Administrator of Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC), Dr. Saif-ur-Rehman's name was suggested by MQM-P. The administrator's appointment was confirmed in the second week of December.

On Dec 19, the provincial government appointed the administrators of Hyderabad Municipal Corporation and district municipal corporations of Korangi and East districts in line with an agreement between the PDM and MQM-P. However, their appointment was criticized by opposition parties including Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI) and Sindh United Party (SUP), which termed it a pre-poll rigging attempt as local govern

ment elections in Karachi and Hyderabad divisions are scheduled to be held on January 15, 2023.

In the wake of criticism and local bodies elections, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has called upon Sindh government to declare null and void the appointment orders of three government officers, said to be party loyalists.

MQM-P has also decided to cooperate with Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) in Sindh Assembly. After deliberations and direct interference by Asif Ali Zardari, the PPP's co-chairman, MQM is now willing to become part of standing committees in Sindh Assembly after 4 years and is likely to get the chairmanship of four committees. Our sources claim that the Sindh government has also put the ball in MQM-P's court by asking them to reach out to ECP and convince it of any change in delimitation. The Sindh government said that it will not raise any objection over the demand.

All the above-stated achievements were not easy for MQM-P. It took them more than seven months of deliberations and threats. Moreover, it would be not easy for MQM-P to transform these attainments into a true political advantage as the local bodies are just around the corner.



Current political sentiment in the city

Meanwhile, PTI currently has the majority mandate in the city, and Imran Khan managed to bag all contesting NA seats in by-elections. MQM was only successful in winning one seat which also was by a negligible margin.

The Jamaat-e-Islami factor has also revived after four decades. Independent surveys such as that of Pulse Consultant are suggesting that JI-Karachi chief, Hafiz Naeem-ur-Rehman is the most popular leader who is vocal on metropolitan issues. Hafiz Naeem regularly criticized MQM and PPP for their ill-doings in the city. On recent political developments, he recently stated that PPP had acquired local partners in Karachi in the form of the MQM-P to help it turn the city into a village (Sindhi: goth).

Attempts to unify MQM

Kamran Tessori is an interesting character in Karachi politics. A businessman by profession, he was closely associated with Farooq Sattar. Often mentioned as the source of conflict between MQM-P leaders which lead Sattar to leave the party, Tessori is also tagged as establishment's blue-eyed. His appointment as governor has caused buzzing of an impending merger between different factions of the MQM.

Since November, the Governor House had become a center point to reunite various factions of the MQM as Tessori had been separately meeting leaders of the MQM-P, PSP, and MQM-Restoration committee (headed by Sattar). In the meetings, both the PSP and MQM-RC laid down their conditions for joining or allying themselves with the MQM-P, but they are currently not unacceptable to the MQM-P leadership. However, all the parties have agreed to continue talks.

As of the last week of December, there is no major update regarding a major breakthrough. However, sources close to the governor claim an agreement might be reached by the first week of January. Sources say that the plan is to contest local bodies as an alliance. Mustafa Kamal would be the

candidate for mayor of Karachi while all local UCs and DMCs shall be contested by MQM-nominated members.

Senior journalist, Azfar-ul-Ashfaq mentioned in a month-old article that reunifying efforts were attempted in 2017. But the bad blood between the MQM-P and PSP did not make the merger hold for long.



The Altaf Hussain-led MQM-London, has rejected what it called attempts to unite different groups of the party without the main person, who is its founder. Meanwhile, MQM-London is trying to become more active. Wall-chalking by MQM-L is visible in several areas. The response from LEAs is quite slow and kind of accommodating in the last couple of weeks.

MQM is a fired cartridge?

Karachiites are not happy with MQM. The galloping crime rate in the city is often attributed to the political culture introduced by MQM which other groups are taking advantage of. One does not need to place a stethoscope to sense the deprivation as well as the continuous feeling of insecurity in Karachi.

In another recent development, the MQM-Pakistan's Aminul Haque has initiated a case against the party's founder to gain control of the seven expensive

London properties. There also lies a pro-Altaf sentiment in a significant part of the Urdu-speaking community. They feel that the MQM-P has betrayed its founder. Laymen also bashed MQM-P for what they termed as its leadership's pursuit of mere material gains.

The citizens also object to the performance of MQM's mayorship during 2016-2020. The ex-mayor, Waseem Akhtar is accused of enjoying the perks and privileges of being the mayor while crying for no powers. MQM blamed PPP back then for failing to perform on the municipality level. People question the integrity of current MQM leadership for joining hands with PPP.

The same became more evident when MQM failed to gather the public in its women's convention held on December 19. The party leaders vowed to restore the party's 'lost glory' and 'regain' the political ground that was 'snatched' through 'political engineering'.

In another attempt to gather an audience on the occasion of Muhajir Cultural Day, the MQM-P's student wing organized an event. However, participation from party workers and the public remained quite low.

An apolitical event was subsequently held by Nojawan-e-Muhajir. The rally was well-attended. It was interesting to see the Sindh Rangers providing an escort to the rally. The rally organizers are mostly former student leaders from APMSO (the student wing of MQM) and are often doubted for their contacts with MQM-London.

MQM leaders were also not received well when they tried attending the funerals of party workers who were designated as missing persons. In September, three bodies of MQM workers were found in different cities of Sindh. People shouted slogans against MQM-P Deputy Convener Waseem Akhtar and other accompanying leaders in funerals. The Senior Deputy Convener, Amir Khan was reportedly manhandled by engrieved people at one of the funerals. Amir Khan has now been residing in Dubai for the last two months. Some also linked this with change of political environment in the city.



LG Elections "expose" the ruling party's popularity

A five-member bench headed by Chief Election Commissioner Sikander Sultan Raja reversed his earlier decision to hold elections on December 31

By Asadullah

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) finally delayed the much-awaited local government elections in the Federal Capital on December 27, three days before these elections were scheduled to be held.

The postponement of the Local Government (LG) Elections scheduled for December 31 may provide a brief respite for the government, which was concerned about the outcome; however, this respite will not last long, as the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) has already challenged the order that allowed the ECP to postpone the LG elections. A five-member bench headed by Chief Election Commissioner Sikander Sultan Raja reversed his earlier decision to hold elections on December 31.

In a short order posted on Twitter, the ECP said: "Keeping in view the legal provisions and the judgement of the Honourable High Court, Islamabad, dated December 23, 2022, regarding the subject matter, the local government election in ICT scheduled to be held on December 31, 2022, is hereby postponed for the time being."

The ECP finalised plans to hold LG elections on 101 Union Councils (UCs) on December 31; however, the Federal Cabinet increased the number of UCs to 125 and amended the law to allow for direct elections for Islamabad's mayor.

ECP rejected the cabinet's notification on December 20 and decided to hold elections as per schedule. Interestingly, the ruling coalition haphazardly tabled the amendment to the Islamabad Capital Territory Local Government Act 2015 and hurriedly got the bill passed from both houses of parliament.

However, the Islamabad High Court (IHC) on December 23 set aside the ECP order revoking the federal cabinet's decision and asked the commission to decide the matter after hearing the stance of the federal government.

The litigation concerning the LG elections could be divided into three categories: in one set, the petitioners were candidates for local body elections in the Islamabad Capital Territory who sought postponement of the elections; in the second set, the plaintiffs were voters of different Union Councils who were upset that their names were omitted from the voter lists of their respective UCs.

Third Category has challenged an order dated December 20 of the ECP that has rejected the decision of the Federal Government to increase the Union Councils in Islamabad Capital Territory from 101 to 125.

The petition in the first category contended that under Article 218(3) of the Constitution, it is the duty of the ECP to hold fair and transparent elections.

They claimed that ECP's act of introducing and including votes from other Union Councils in one Union Council violated the petitioners' fundamental rights under Article 17 of the Constitution. The second category insisted on holding LG elections after making corrections to the voter list.

IHC Chief Justice Aamer Farooq observed that the petitioners are members, candidates, or voters in the various union councils and are dissatisfied with the fact that voters from other union councils have been added to or deleted from the voter list, which is a violation of the Elections Act.

The correction of electoral rolls is provided in Sections 34 and 35 of the Act. ECP ought to have undertaken the exercise in fulfilment of its statutory obligation for the preparation of voter lists accordingly, the court order said, adding that the Federal Government ought to have undertaken the exercise of enhancement from 50 to 101 Union Councils in June 2022 comprehensively to avoid the present situation.

According to Justice Farooq, the IHC "cannot intervene in the Federal Govern-

ment's decision to devolve power in true spirit to the people of the locality and in its wisdom."

"The Election Commission ought to have understood the perspective of the Federal Government before passing the impugned order dated December 20, 2022, which on the face of it violates Section 4(4) of the Act of 2015," said the court order.

Justice Farooq observed that the case in hand seemed to be a "first impression" and that the Election Commission ought to have provided an opportunity to all concerned before reaching a conclusion in the order dated December 20.

"Since the discrepancies pointed out in the voter list and the grievance raised in the first category of the case seem plausible and bona fide, ECP is required to look into the matter, and turning a blind eye would tantamount to flouting the spirit of the Constitution and Election Act, 2017."

The court has then referred the matter to the ECP for decision after providing an opportunity for hearing from all the stakeholders. The opposition parties and progressive politicians slammed the ECP's decision to postpone the elections.

Interestingly, the contesting candidates of the ruling party were also perturbed by the delay in the elections.

A candidate from the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz for the position of chairman of a union council expressed disappointment with the ECP's decision to postpone the elections and stated that he will not be able to canvass again due to his limited financial resources.

Citizens of Islamabad are now turning their attention back to the IHC, where a two-member division bench will hear the PTI's petition. However, the ECP is likely to issue a fresh schedule of LG elections after the demarcation of newly created UCs, and it would take a few months.

Choices for Pak struggling economy shrink

Default not an option; inability to earn dollars a real issue; exports require urgent boost; revival of stalled IMF program needed



By Mehtab Haider

Amid dwindling foreign exchange reserves that touched \$6.11 billion held by the State Bank of Pakistan, the choices for Pakistan's struggling economy have shrunk significantly. Pakistan requires breathing space on an immediate basis in order to avert the eruption of a full-fledged balance of payment crisis.

Although, it's beyond any doubt that the lingering situation has become very precarious and the economy cannot run with the simple approach of the status quo.

Pakistan cannot afford to live in isolation so default is not an option. Pakistan's real problem arises from the fact that the country is not able to earn dollars through non-debt creating inflows such as boosting exports, and luring remittances through Pakistanis living abroad.

Out of the 206 million population, around 8 to 10 million Pakistanis are living abroad and are sending back \$30 to \$31 billion on a per annum basis of their disposable earned income into Pakistan thus helping Pakistan to keep its economy afloat in the presence of the severe crisis. The remaining 200 million population living in Pakistan

can fetch just \$31 billion through exports on annual basis indicating that its population was highly unproductive and inefficient.

Now the time has come to devise a roadmap for boosting exports at all costs otherwise this boom & bust cycle on the economic front will continue to persist on the economic horizon of the country. The exportable surplus cannot be generated in a security state so there is a need to convert it into a state where the reliance should be induced to produce more at competitive rates and export it to different destinations of the world to earn dollars.

In the short run, there are no other options but to revive the stalled IMF program. Pakistani authorities still hope the country may receive financial assistance from a friendly country by end of December 2022, providing a breathing space to avoid further depletion of foreign exchange reserves till the time IMF program is restored.

If the breathing space remained unavailable despite the all-out efforts of the incumbent regime, then the real crisis will trigger in weeks and months ahead of making it imperative for reviving the IMF program as early as possible.

Now the IMF has handed over its wish list to the Pakistani side and implementing all prerequisite demands could only pave the way for striking a staff-level agreement after the end of January 10, 2023, when the holidays will end in Washington D.C.

All required actions will have to be implemented by Pakistani authorities as the IMF asks the government to take actions to fix the power and gas sector by erasing the monster of circular debt that touched Rs 4 trillion, taking additional taxation measures, and pursuing structural reforms in the remaining period of the Fund program. The IMF also demands an end to the existing three different exchange rates and coming up with a single rate because the Fund program does not allow keeping inter-bank rates artificially stable.

Pakistan and the IMF high-ups held rounds of virtual talks in recent days and Minister for Finance Ishaq Dar assured the Fund staff that Pakistan was expecting to receive dollar inflows from one friendly country by end of the ongoing month or early next month keeping in view dwindling foreign exchange reserves held by the State Bank of Pakistan.

The government has asked the relevant authorities for revising the roadmap for curtailing the Circular Debt Management Plan (CDMP) for the financial year 2023. The government cannot allow slapping of a power surcharge in the range of Rs 31.60 or Rs 12.69 per unit hike, keeping in view the political cost attached to it.

They assigned the relevant authorities to come up with a revised CDMP in such a way that the power tariff could be revised upward on the lower side while the efficiency and governance could be improved to reduce reliance on the piling up of required subsidies as well.

It could be just a pipe dream of the incumbent economic managers to convince the IMF of such a roadmap of curtailing the circular debt without revising upward the tariffs of gas and power sectors. It seems impossible because the IMF will not allow patchwork.

The IMF granted its assent for an adjuster of Rs 340 billion for hiking the budget deficit on account of flood-related expenditures in the current fiscal year up to the same proportions.

The IMF also asked Pakistan to take additional measures for bridging the yawning gap for materializing the FBR's envisaged target. It has assessed that the



FBR might not achieve the desired revenue collection target of Rs 7470 billion for the current fiscal year.

The IMF also expressed concerns over the number of income tax filers--so far staying below 3 million, as it stood at 2.913 million against 3.6 million received in last fiscal year. The FBR high-ups apprised the FBR that the corporate returns would be filed by December 31, 2022, so the number of received filers might further go up.

The government is considering taking additional taxation measures for levying additional customs duty or imposing flood levy on imports and granting another tax

amnesty scheme belonging to merged districts of FATA/PATA into the KPK province.

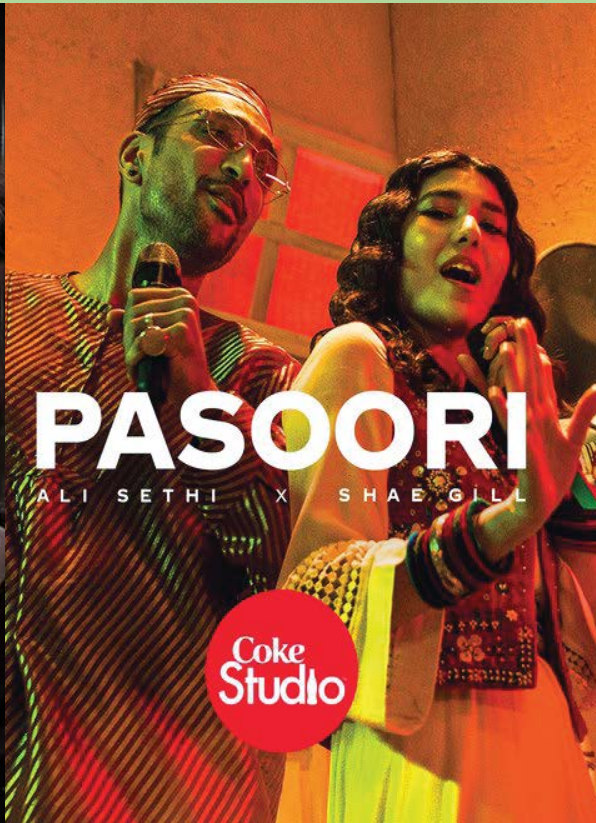
On account of nontax revenues, there is a shortfall on account of the Petroleum Development Levy and the government is considering getting banking sector's lofty profits as dividends which they earned through currency manipulation in recent months.

It is one of the options, said the sources, and added that the government would also increase petroleum levy on diesel as well in the coming months for maximizing the collection on account of the petroleum levy.

On structural reforms front, the government missed out on an agreed action whereby it wanted to pass a law from the Parliament on SOEs Improvement Law.

The IMF also expressed its concerns over the prevalence of three different exchange rates as the government and SBP kept the inter-bank rate around Rs 225 against the US dollar. In the open market, dollars are not available so two different rates persist if anyone is vying to get dollars. Although, the government launched a crackdown against currency smugglers without improving the dollar liquidity crunch, this crisis will go nowhere in near future.







in Pictures



New Reko Diq deal to fetch colossal financial benefits

Agreement makes Pakistan largest foreign investment recipient; 40-year project poised to boost Balochistan economy, create over 10,000 jobs; Barrick Gold to pipeline from Reko Diq to Balochistan Port

By Anum Akram

Pakistan signed the final Reko Diq mining project deal with the Canadian based Barrick Gold after Supreme Court, declared it legal under the Constitution of Pakistan. According to Barrick attorneys, the firm will invest \$10 billion on the project-- \$7b in the first and \$3b in second phases.

Earlier, the Reko Diq deal was named as Chaghai Hill Exploration Joint Venture Agreement. In 2006, the Government of Balochistan signed a deal with two international firms--Barrick Gold, and Chilean Antofagasta. These companies spent \$240 million on mine-exploration and on feasibility study till the year 2011. Both the companies sought extension in the exploration-lease from the Mines and Mineral Development Department, which was rejected.

The Supreme Court declared this, 2006, deal illegal terming it null and void. According to Supreme Court, public interest was ignored in this agreement. And as Pakistan backtracked, it faced international repercussions. Both the companies approached the International Center for Settlement of Investment Dispute (ICSID). In 2019 the World Bank's arbitration slapped \$11b penalty on Pakistan. Now after a decadelong legal battle, Pakistan has agreed to renew contract with Barrick Gold. The project was on hold since 2011 and the dispute ended in March 2022.

President Dr. Arif Alvi, vis-à-vis new accord, asked the Supreme Court of Pakistan whether the renewed Reko Diq gold and copper mining project in Balochistan was legally safe under the Constitution of Pakistan and international arbitration.

The president filed a reference with the apex court under Article of 186 of the Constitution on the advice of Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif. According to Article



186 of the Constitution which deals with the Supreme Court role, the president may refer a legal issue to the apex court if he believes it involved public interest and that the court's judgment was required. On 9th December 2022, the Supreme Court declared the agreement as legal, and transparent, "having no illegal issue." The SC ruling thus salvaged Pakistan from \$11 billion penalty. The fresh Reko Diq agreement is a significant development that makes Pakistan the largest receiver of foreign investment.

Reko Diq deal was operated and owned 50% by Barrick Corporation, and remaining 50% shareholding owned by Pakistan. This share will be equally divided between the centre and Balochistan. The project's feasibility study should be completed by 2024, while production is slated to begin by 2028.

The Reko Diq deal also drew criticism from political parties, mainly Jumait Ulema-I-Islam (JUI-F) and Balochistan National Party Mengal (BNP-Mengal), who boycotted the relevant cabinet meeting.

According to Sardar Shaukat Popalzai, President Balochistan Economic Forum, people of Balochistan won't be able to have their share from the deal; hence continue to be impoverished. However, later these political parties joined the cabinet meeting, saying they were not taken into confidence during the earlier preparation of the bill.

Barrick's President and Chief Executive Mark Bristow said: "we're making sure Balochistan and its people will see these benefits quickly. Starting early next year, Barrick will implement a range of social development programs prioritizing improvement of healthcare, education, vocational training, food security, and provision of potable water in a region where groundwater has a high saline content. In addition, Reko Diq will advance royalties to the government of Balochistan, the social development programs representing an estimated investment of \$70 million over the construction period." He added "Reko Diq will advance royalties of up to \$5 million in the first year, up to \$7.5 million in the second and up to \$10 million thereafter until construction starts".

Moreover, Mark Bristow said they have industry's best assets of copper, and gold that would help promote their portfolio and creating world's best copper and mining business. "This is a unique opportunity for substantial foreign investment in the Balochistan province that will bring enormous direct and indirect benefits not only to this region but also to Pakistan for decades to come," Mark Bristow remarked.

Talking to a news channel, Popalzai said "the life of this contract spans 40 years; the project will generate \$100 billion in revenue, which will boost economic activity in Balochistan". He added the Reko Diq carried world largest copper reserves which remain untapped due to lack of exploration tools.

Reko Diq will have major impacts on the economy of Balochistan. It is predicted to have transformative impact on the undeveloped province, will create mining jobs for the locals. The company will invest in development programs and promote the growth of regional economy.

Full funding of the province's stake in the project will allow Balochistan to profit from its 25% ownership's dividends, royalties, and other benefits without having to contribute financially to its development.

The mining project will create over-7000 jobs initially in addition to 4000 long term jobs. Dwellers of the region will be a top



priority. Along with executing road and community development projects in the province, the Barrack Gold plans to build an underground pipeline from Reko Diq to Balochistan Port.

The company will also spend 0.4% of the annual income on provincial uplift. The provincial government and Barrick will

work on Balochistan infrastructure -construction and maintenance of main highways to be done by the provincial government while that of project roads by the company. The project is predicted to be game changer for the province and the country as well.




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Pakistan has a gas bomb

Pakistan was gas-sufficient till 2005; however, due to increased demand, a lack of alternative fuels, and price subsidies, there were gas shortages



By Azeem Waqas

Pakistan's economic black hole is widening. After the electricity "circular debt monster," the "gas sector circular debt" reached PKR 2 trillion. With the exception of the electricity tariff, nothing was done to reduce losses.

non-starter energy reforms such as raising the gas tariff, rising circular debt, and expenditure overruns as a result, it is more difficult to come to a consensus on a staff-level agreement in the context of the 9th review under the \$7 billion Extended Fund Facility (EFF), said an official while talking to The Truth International Magazine.

According to the IMF's report on Pakistan as of June 2022, the power sector's circular debt is 3.4% of GDP, while the gas sector's is 1.1% of GDP.

Energy expert Abdul Rehman says that "circular debt keeps rising despite a massive power tariff hike." In the gas sector, Pakistan loses Rs 2 billion per day. The IMF program will not be successful without a gas price increase. The Finance Ministry has constituted a committee to "stop bleeding in the Gas Sector."

He said that Pakistan's economy must begin by at least removing the natural gas price anomalies. The government's policy to keep gas prices artificially low is going to extensively hurt the energy sector, where circular debt is continuously growing due to the reliance on liquefied natural gas (LNG) imports.

Natural gas price anomalies in Pakistan are stupendous. ECC recently extended lower-cost gas to two Punjab urea producers, Fatima and Agritech.

The industrial sector (including captive power) on the SSGC network gets a natural gas supply of about 350 MMCFD at an average price of less than USD 4.5 per MMBTU. Compared with the subsidized tariff of \$9 per MMBTU for the export industry on the SNGP network, the aggregate annual cost advantage to the industry on the SSGC network is about \$550 million.

The residential sector on the SNGP and SSGC networks combined received a supply of 850 MMCFD of natural gas at an average price of \$1.5 per MMBTU. Compared with the subsidized tariff of \$9

per MMBTU for the export industry on the SNGP network, the implicit annual net subsidy to the residential sector is more than \$2.2 billion.

Pakistan was gas-sufficient till 2005; however, due to increased demand, a lack of alternative fuels, and price subsidies, there were gas shortages. The gas started ascending when gas, being cheaper, was substituted for oil and there was a political will to add new consumers on account of annual development schemes. It is forecast that in 2025, a gas shortfall could reach 6 BCFD, while in 2030, the gas demand in the country would be 8.7 BCFD, the indigenous gas supplies would be 0.7 BCFD, and the shortfall may touch 8 BCFD.

The PTI government passed amendments to the OGRA Ordinance 2002 in February 2022 that will streamline the process of future gas determination and improve cost recovery in the gas system. The Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) is the regulator with powers to determine petroleum and gas prices in Pakistan; however, government intervention in the past has undermined its ability to pass on the increase in the cost of gas and other

fuels (aimed at containing the increase in prices to protect consumers). The resultant inefficiencies—from delays in determinations and inadequate cost pass-on—ultimately led to massive circular debt and a liquidity crisis in the entire gas chain.

According to the amendment, the cost of RLNG imports has now become part of the weighted average cost of gas—of the gas distribution companies, SNGP and SSGC—instead of being accounted for separately from the distribution of indigenous natural gas. This is supposed to significantly improve cost recoveries for the gas utilities and, in turn, their suppliers (E&Ps and PSOs). Previously, during the winter, gas utilities supplied imported RLNG to domestic consumers, who were charged at the rate of natural gas (less than half the cost of RLNG), exacerbating the utilities' and their suppliers' circular debt. The amendment will spread out the cost of expensive RLNG to all consumers and improve cost recovery in the long run.

The amended Bill has empowered OGRA to notify new gas prices without government and public intervention. This will make the gas determination process more agile, reducing the time it takes utilities to match the cost of gas with their revenues and, as a result, not adding to the circular debt balance, especially in an environment of sharply rising oil prices (Pakistani gas prices are benchmarked to international oil prices). In the past, delays in gas determination have been as severe as 2-3 years apart.



A member of the CFA said that absurdly cheap gas rewards wasteful consumption. For domestic consumers, the average monthly bill is less than Rs. The gas rate for the general industry is 4.7 USD/MMBTU, while industries in South Carolina pay a rate of 3.7 dollars per MMBtu, and those in the export industry pay a rate of \$9 per MMBtu.

Asif Ali Qureshi has suggested that a major increase in natural gas prices is needed to reduce its consumption. A unified framework for pricing all energy substitutes based on their respective heating values and levying carbon taxes based on fuel's

environmental cost is required to deal with the gas sector. The government should remove all cross-subsidies in energy tariffs and replace them with direct and targeted subsidies. Competitive industrial electricity tariffs should be announced to discourage captive power generation. To flatten the rising capacity payment curve, the federal government should extend the maturities of power plant project debts. About 45% of capacity payments relate to the public sector, with NPPs and hydropower holding the lion's share.

He recommended restructuring of the legal, regulatory, and governance frameworks, the privatization of public-sector energy companies, and the electrification of energy use to deal with energy sector circular debt.

Pakistan's gas sector circular debt stock was Rs. 720 billion, and the gas sector's UFG for FY 2022 is 300 MMCFD. During the last 10 years, Pakistan's power sector's circular debt has reached almost PKR 1000. As of June 2022, the power sector's circular debt was PKR 2253; from 2007 to 2022, it was provided with a budgetary support of PKR 4836, while the borrowing cost of this support was PKR 2355 at 8%.

During a key economic meeting, PM Shehbaz directed the relevant authorities to encourage exporters in order to boost exports and manage twin deficits.



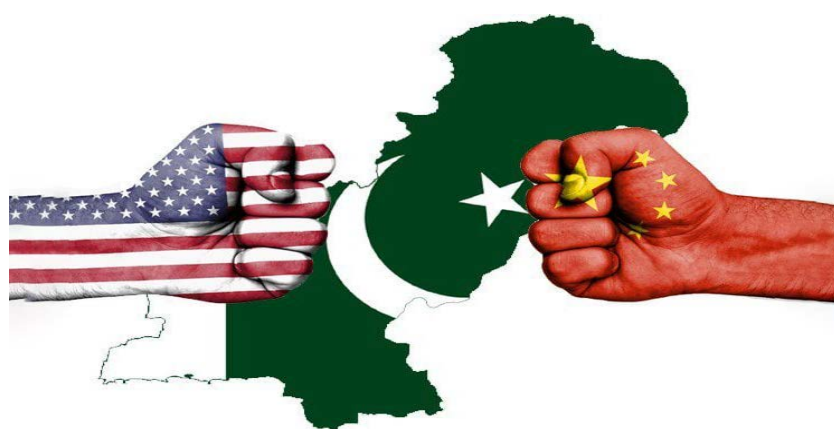
New Cold War to decide fate of Pakistan's political system

US, China to seek Pak military role in Arabian Sea, Indian Ocean; China deems Pak a base during war in South China Sea; conflict in Arabian Sea to make Pakistan and its coast vital

By Umer Farooq

What if the only product Pakistani state and society has the capacity to offer to the international community is military manpower? Just like the Cold War years when Washington's Cold War warriors adopted Pakistan to act as a bulwark against Soviet expansionism; what if—even now when new Cold War is emerging on the international horizon—Pakistan has no capability to share with the international community other than offer them the military expertise and manpower to deal with threat peripheral to economic and technological competitions, which will be central to the new Cold War between rising power China and existing power United States. Washington's Cold War warriors picked Pakistani Generals (especially the physically overpowering General Ayub Khan) to play the role of military strongman in Pakistani society, that was geographically close to Soviet Central Asia and thus provided an excellent military and reconnaissance base for bombing Soviet territory as well as eavesdropping on them.

Pakistan's military-dominated power structure and social and political systems make it clear that we will continue to perceive the international reality from a military standpoint. The new Cold War, however, will not be primarily about military competition. First strong indication of the non-military nature of competition between Beijing and Washington is that China is not primarily a military power—it is an emerging economic giant, whose main activity in the international arena is primarily based on enhancing its economic and financial footprints across the world. Secondly, US President, Joe Biden couldn't be more specific in his assertion about what he sees as an impending economic competition with China. He told an audience in Indonesia after meeting the Chinese President that he would make sure that



rivalry with China doesn't turn into a conflict and it would remain a competition. In such a situation the role assigned to the Pakistani state by their "All weather Friend" and Erstwhile Ally—Beijing and Washington respectively, will be nothing else than a purely military role.

Afghanistan is the area where both Washington and Beijing want Pakistan to put their military manpower and expertise into use.

One year after they took control of Afghanistan it has become crystal clear that they are not interested in containing violence within their territory. Four neighboring countries including Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Iran have clearly witnessed violence spilling over into their territory from Afghanistan in recent months. Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Iran have reported minor incidents of violence that originated in Afghanistan and in all the three cases ISIS-Khorasan was instrumental in these incidents. The respective governments in these countries had treated incidents of violence within their territory as not very significant. Their significance – such as it is – stems from the fact that ISIS-Khorasan claimed responsibility for them.

However, Pakistan on the other hand, is facing a serious threat of violence spilling over into its territory from

Afghanistan. Both the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) whose leadership and cadre is based in the border towns and cities of Afghanistan, and Islamic State-Khorasan (IS-K), whose members are mostly drawn from former radicalised members of TTP, have become active in carrying out terror attacks in Pakistan. IS-K is also using eastern Afghanistan as its operational base. All this is enough to reach the verdict that Afghan Taliban have failed to contain violence within the territory under their control. The nexus between TTP and Afghan Taliban couldn't be clearer: the Afghan Taliban mediated between Pakistani military officials and TTP leaders in indirect talks between the two, which failed to register any progress nevertheless. And recently a group of terrorists which took control of Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) center in Bannu city were demanding that they be provided safe passage to Afghanistan. This clearly shows that terrorists in Pakistan see Taliban-ruled Afghanistan as a sanctuary.

The US State Department offered assistance to Pakistan in dealing with the renewed terror threat in the north-western part of the country. The State Department spokesman made this offer the day Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto reached Washington for talks with US officials. The assistance from

Washington could be in the form of training or military equipment—US and British experts had been training Pakistani soldiers in counter insurgency and counter terrorism operations, but training was discontinued after Pakistan sent the trainers back after the May 2011 raid in Abbottabad that killed Osama Bin Laden. Pakistan officials indicate that in principle they were not averse to any foreign assistance, “but we are quite capable of dealing such a threat on our own,” said a senior official.

Observers believe that the US offer is still significant from the standpoint that the US was again showing an inclination to remain engaged with the region and its problems of terrorism and militancy. Despite expression of confidence by Pakistani officialdom in their capacity to deal with the threat of terrorism, the Pakistani government is clearly short of funds to launch a full-scale military operation in the tribal areas against TTP. The US once used to provide the Coalition Support Fund that was utilised for financing such operations, but it has stopped since 2018. Similarly Chinese are no less interested in its desire to see Pakistan do the dirty work in Afghanistan for them.

The second type of military role US, and China would be wishing Pakistan to play would be in the Arabian Sea and larger Indian Ocean, where two Superpowers will be engaged in an intense competition with each other.

Pakistan is away from the industrial core of the Eurasian landmass, where American military power might have to confront Russian forces in plains and mountainous regions of Eastern Europe. Russia, a relatively minor power, is in alliance with the economic giant, China. The South China Sea is the great theatre where the Americans militarily have to confront China to protect US allies like Indonesia and Vietnam, and to hold the Korean peninsula, the new industrial core of the world.

In the emerging international political situation, Pakistan is seen by Washington as the hub of overly dangerous nuclear proliferation and extremist ideologies, while Chinese military planners see Pakistani territory that can provide Beijing with enough space to base its military

hardware. Chinese military literature is filled with references to Pakistan as a probable base in case the Cold War with the US turns into a hot war in the South China Sea or the Korean Peninsula.

Everything is calm on the surface right now. And US President Joe Biden’s comment that he won’t allow competition with China to turn into a conflict is heartening for people overly worried about the commencement of the new Cold War. But the fact that both the United States and China are preparing for this imaginary situation turning into reality couldn’t be overstated. American military experts see the South China Sea and Korean peninsula



as the possible arenas of military conflicts between the two superpowers. And any possible military conflict in the South China Sea would make the US and Western naval forces block Chinese oil and raw material supplies passing through the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea. This will be when Gwadar and the Chinese presence at this southern port of Pakistan would provide China with the required base that Chinese military literature so readily mentions in its latest writings.

Politically the world is far away from such a point or situation of conflict. The Chinese are on very friendly terms with the South Koreans—the American military ally on the Korean peninsula—and both see eye to eye on many issues relating to North Korea’s sabre-rattling. This minimises any possible point of conflict on the Korean peninsula. The South China Sea is no less calm—even minor incidents of Chinese ships trying to check American ships in the sea didn’t raise alarm bells.

But American military experts have been discussing a scenario where conflict in the South China Sea will lead to clashes in Arabian Sea. Pakistan and its coast will become overly important in such a strategic conflict between the rising power and the existing superpower.

Two important indicators should bring Pakistan strategic thinkers to start pondering over such scenarios.

First, American experts have started discussing the scenarios relating to the new Cold War and its military implications for different regions of the world. Pakistan often finds a prominent place in these

discussions. Secondly, Chinese military literature sees Pakistan as a territory which will provide them with military bases in any possible international military conflict.

This possibility will again drag Pakistan into future superpower rivalry. Early this year, the Pakistani military inducted Chinese weapons systems of different varieties which will enhance its interoperability with the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) and enhance Pakistan’s Armed Forces’ reach deep into Arabian Sea. Even as these weapon systems were inducted into the Pakistani military the Indian media made a lot of hue and cry about their possible strategic and military implications for the region. As to what possible role these weapons systems – which include a fighter jet and a naval frigate – would play in the strategic and military situation in our region will be important for us both militarily and politically.

Pakistan cannot afford to be militarily part

of any future tensions between China and the United States. This much is obvious and Pakistani military leaders have clearly pointed out that, as far as they are concerned, Cold War-style camp politics is a thing of the past. Unlike what happens in domestic politics, Pakistani military leaders' wishes cannot become concrete realities on the international political stage just by a mere public statement or public speech. Military use of Gwardar and what role Pakistani military forces will play in the Arabian Sea is something that Pakistani strategic thinkers and military experts should seriously ponder upon.

In any event, it must be remembered that our political structures are in a state of flux. We have yet to decide decisively what we want to do with them. People in powerful positions have been openly and publicly talking against the parliamentary form of government and federal structure of the constitution. These powerful people have been dubbing freedom of expression as a vehicle in the hands of fifth columnists and those pursuing fifth-generation warfare against the state of Pakistan.

Two patterns from our political history will make a decisive impact on political outcomes in the coming days.

First, the Pakistan power elite is extremely adept in making use of their international connections to consolidate their grip on the power structure of the country. Four military coups are witness to this reality.

Second, the military-strategic logic of international politics has often been used in our past history to disrupt political processes in our country. The fact that the United States is a democracy and China is an autocracy where the legitimacy of the ruling elite is based on providing affluence to various classes, will hardly matter for Pakistan. The fate of the Pakistani political system will be decided by the military and strategic logic of the new Cold War.

The Pakistan state will once again be caught in a whirlwind of international politics where military conflicts and tensions may become the new normal – unless we muster the political will and financial and economic wherewithal to chalk out an independent course for our state and society.

Pakistan is once again all set to become a center-piece in the new emerging Cold War between the United States and China. At the moment, Pakistan is an economic disaster story. Yet its strategic location, its once strategic relations with Washington and ongoing strategic cooperation with Beijing will compel it into a situation where it cannot afford to remain aloof from rising competition and expected military tensions between two superpowers. US President Joe Biden attracted the applause of peace



nicks around the world when he said—on the eve of the US-China Summit in Indonesia—that he would not allow competition with China to turn into a conflict. But Washington is very good at using high-sounding positive adjectives to camouflage its strategic fears of “enemies” with diplomatic niceties. The strategic debate in Washington tells a very different story about how US strategic elites view the rise of China as an economic power and its corresponding rise as a military giant.

Two recent documents issued by the US administration — “National Security Strategy” and “National Defense Strategy” identify China and Russia as strategic rivals and sources of military and strategic competition. A 2018 Report by the Rand Corporation—an independent Washington based think tank – claimed that “U.S. officials and experts have significant degrees of uncertainty about Russian and especially Chinese intentions. Combined with some degree of aggressive behavior,

the uncertainty is producing intensifying fears about Russian and Chinese intentions and growing urgency about the U.S. response.” This quotation is directly taken from the report, which points towards a strong possibility of direct international competition between US and China on the one hand and US and Russia on the other hand. The report in fact points out a strong possibility of the emergence of a new Cold War: this time between China and the United States.

US experts, however, reject the possibility of US-China rivalry leading to division of the world into two rival geographical blocs like the ones which the world experienced in the post-Second World War till the collapse of Soviet Union in 1991. There are multiple poles of political and military power in different regions of the world and these countries or poles are unlikely to merge their political interests and identities in the larger blocs led by China and the United States, if at all it comes to that. American experts and think-tanks, however, have produced many reports during the past five years in which they have pointed out close cooperation between the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) and Pakistani military forces in the situation of military tensions between Washington and Beijing.

It appears that this perception of the Pakistan Army as siding with Beijing in any future military conflict is a product of the days when the Pakistani state was in full gear to incorporate the CPEC project into its economy and Gwardar port was recently handed over to a Chinese company. Since then, Pakistan seems to have slowed down on CPEC and not without reason: Pakistani military leaders purposely and publicly expressed their inclination towards close relations with Washington during the past two years. This, indeed, dispelled the impression that Islamabad was about to put all its eggs in a Chinese basket.

Ironically, we still haven't shown the ability to see the broader picture of the emerging political situation in the international arena. To the international community we offer what we have—the military manpower and expertise. We don't have anything else to offer. This will be to our great disadvantage in the future scenarios of international politics.

Border clashes' motives and motivations

For Pakistan, there is no reason to initiate clashes with the Afghan Taliban, which Pakistan has for decades supported and done its level best to bring into power in the expectation of having a "friendly" regime on its western border

By Dr. Raza Khan



Attacks by Afghan Taliban forces on Pakistani border security personnel and Pakistani territory have become a regular occurrence in recent months. This became more deadly in December when Taliban soldiers used artillery and mortar shells to target Pakistani security officials and, more concerning, the civilian population in Chaman, Pakistan's Balochistan province, killing several Pakistanis. Both sides accused each other of starting the violence. However, apparently, Taliban forces initiated clashes and assumed the stance that the immediate reason for the attack was Pakistan's objection to the construction of security checkpoints by Afghan officials.

When both sides deny starting the clashes and are hesitant to divulge their exact causes, there are multiple plausible reasons for the border clashes between Pakistani and Afghan Taliban forces. The underlying causes are the historic Afghan irredentist claims on Pakistani territory, Kabul's consistent non-recognition of the international border between the two countries, and the Taliban's increased anti-Pakistan posture after coming into power.

There are other reasons for the clashes, too. These range from generally prevalent anti-Pakistan sentiments in Afghanistan to the fencing of the international border

between Pakistan and Afghanistan by Islamabad, the Taliban regime's bid to consolidate its domestic support base inside Afghanistan by displaying its Afghan nationalistic credentials, and the Taliban's efforts to demonstrate to the world that they are not Pakistani stooges. For Pakistan, there is no reason to initiate clashes with the Afghan Taliban, which Pakistan has for decades supported and done its level best to bring into power in the expectation of having a "friendly" regime on its western border.

Afghan Nationalistic Orientation of the Taliban

Attacks by the Afghan Taliban on Pakistani security forces are intended to convey to Islamabad and the world that they don't recognize the border between the two countries and have objections to Pakistani construction on it. The Afghan Taliban may be perceived as an Islamist group by many in the Western world or even in Pakistan. However, the Afghan Taliban, to all intents and purposes, is an Afghan nationalist outfit. Islam does not believe in any ethnolinguistic or geographic nationalism. Instead, the golden injunctions of Islam cross all ethnic, geographic, and nationalistic loyalties and affiliations.

Against this backdrop, the Afghan Taliban's nationalistic orientation is obvious.

The group has always taken the stance of denying having any aims or agenda beyond Afghanistan. There is a lot of substance in the argument that the Taliban are more of an Afghan nationalist force, and the group narrative consistently proves it. So like all Afghan nationalists in the past and present, including Sardar Daud in the 1970s and the communist Afghan regimes of Babrak Karmal and Dr. Najeebullah Ahmedzai of the 1980s, for the Afghan Taliban, Pakistan is a rival. Traditionally, Afghan nationalists in particular and the Afghan state, in general, have argued that Pakistan has been in possession of "Afghan" territory, referring to Pakistani Pashtun and Baloch-inhabited lands once part of the defunct Afghan Empire that were "forcibly" and "illegally" occupied by British colonial rulers of India. This Afghan claim has been legally very weak as all countries, including the United States, consider the Durand Line, which was carved up in 1893 by British India Foreign Secretary, Sir Mortimer Durand, and Afghan King Amir Abdul Rahman, as a settled international border.

However, Afghanistan has never officially accepted the Durand Line as a permanent border. This was the underlying reason for Afghanistan's objection to Pakistan's membership in the United Nations in September 1947. But Afghanistan, despite having irredentist claims on Pakistani territory, has never had the military potential to forcibly wrench away territory from Pakistan or its British predecessor.

In Afghanistan, nationalistic and anti-Pakistan cards sell like hotcakes. To mollify and pacify anti-Taliban Afghan sentiments, the militant regime carved up a strategy to demonstrate their strident Afghan nationalism by adopting an anti-Pakistan posture, which is best done by physically attacking Pakistan and its security forces. Assuming an Afghan nationalist posture is critically

important for the Taliban for their domestic needs and the legitimacy of the militant group, which forcibly usurped power by dislodging an elected regime.

Due to the unelected and thus non-representative make-up of the Afghan Taliban regime, there is extensive suppressed antagonism and implicit anger among Afghan citizens for the Taliban's rule. This is exactly what Afghan ruler Sardar Daud did in the 1970s after deposing King Zahir Shah in 1973, and in search of legitimacy for his personal rule and his act of usurping power,

her efforts to stop cross-border infiltration of militants and terrorists and also to curb smuggling of narcotics and general-use items. Afghanistan has consistently blamed Pakistan for nurturing Afghan militants, particularly the Afghan Taliban, on its soil and then launching them into Afghanistan under President Hamid Karzai and President Ashraf Ghani. The former Afghan regime of President Ashraf Ghani officially protested the construction of the fence on the border. For Pakistan, erecting fencing on the Pakistan-Afghanistan international border is the single most vital

depth in Afghanistan. Consequently, barbed wire fencing on the Durand Line was initiated.

But for their part, the Taliban have objected to the fencing, and on several occasions, Taliban local commanders cut the barbed wire fencing. Afghan Information Minister and Chief Spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid earlier in 2022 had said in an interview for a Pashto-language YouTube channel: "The issue of the Durand Line is still an unresolved one, while the construction of fencing itself creates rifts within a nation spread across both sides of the border." "It amounts to dividing a nation," referring to the Pashtun community, the biggest ethnic group in Afghanistan and the second-biggest in Pakistan. Responding to Mujahid Pakistan's former military spokesman, Major General Babar Iftikhar said during a press conference, "The blood of our martyrs was spilled in erecting this fence." "It is a fence of peace. It will be completed and will remain in place.

A very important aspect of recent border clashes between the Afghan Taliban regime and Pakistan is that they have come very soon after the Afghanistan-based Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) declared an end to their ceasefire with the Pakistan government and intensified their deadly attacks in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province. It means that anti-Pakistan elements within the Afghan Taliban have been emboldened by the antagonistic posture of the TTP. It is reported in international media that recently, when Taliban forces tried to construct some posts close to the border with Pakistan, TTP men were seen standing with the regime's soldiers. With fencing, it makes sense that TTP militants in Afghanistan can't easily sneak back into Pakistan.

Factionalism within the Afghan Taliban

Border clashes between Pakistan and Afghanistan during the Taliban regime were also triggered by factionalism within the Afghan Taliban regime. There is a Taliban faction known as the Kandahar Faction or Quetta Shura to some. This group is made up of Taliban commanders and clerics from the provinces of Kandahar, Zabul, Helmand, and Uruzgan. This



he announced in his first speech from Radio Kabul that "Afghanistan has no enemies save Pakistan." Daud also for the first time formed an anti-Pakistan militant group of Pakistani Pashtun, Pashtun Zalmay (Pashtun Youth), which later carried out many terrorist attacks in Pakistan.

Anger at Pakistani Border Fencing

The Taliban's attacks on Pakistani border forces and civilians living near the border are intended to vent their rage on the fence, making it controversial enough to internalize and to put pressure on Pakistan to negotiate on the fence. Pakistan started construction of a barbed wire fence on its more than 2640-kilometer-long border with Afghanistan in March 2017 and successfully completed erecting it on most of the border by 2022.

The logic of Pakistan's construction of such a long barbed wire fence has been rooted in

achievement in its policy regarding Afghanistan.

It was a faux pas on the part of Pakistani strategists to gloss over constructing fencing on its border with Afghanistan for decades. Due to the exponential cost and required level of sophistication, it may have been humanly and technically impossible for several decades. But since the 1980s, Pakistan has also deliberately overlooked the construction of fencing on its Afghan border, primarily to implement its policy of locating "strategic depth" in Afghanistan. Under this policy, Pakistani strategists thought that, in the event of an all-out Indian strike, Pakistani forces would withdraw across the border into Afghanistan and launch a counteroffensive therefrom against Delhi. Despite the fact that in the previous Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's foreign affairs advisor, Sartaj Aziz, officially declared abandoning the policy of strategic



faction has been particularly anti-Pakistan. Importantly, most of the border attacks from Afghanistan have come in Balochistan province, particularly in Chaman, which adjoins Kandahar. Mullah Yaqoob Akhund, the eldest son of Taliban founder Mullah Omar, is a key figure in this faction and serves as the Taliban Defense Minister of Afghanistan. Mullah Yaqoob has been making very strong anti-Pakistan statements and even, on one occasion, invited Pakistan's archrival India to train Afghan forces. Commanders from the Kandahari faction manning the Pakistan-Afghanistan border in Balochistan are ostensibly acting on their own to launch attacks on Pakistan without taking direction from Kabul. Noticeably, the Afghan Taliban are not acting as a unified state but as a regime with little central authority and policy. Factionalism and uncontrolled elements in the Taliban regime must be a cause of concern for the group as well as for regional countries.

Efforts to diffuse the situation

Here it is important to note that soon after the clashes in December, Pakistan refused to hold the official flag meeting with Afghan Taliban authorities, terming it inconsequential. Instead, Pakistan sent a 16-member jirga of Pakistani mullahs, tribal chieftains, and traders from the Pakistani side of the border to talk to Governor Kandahar. As a result of the visit by Jirga, both sides agreed to resolve all border issues through talks. It was further decided that civil and military officials of both sides

would visit the other country for negotiations on all issues in the future. Parties agreed the role of jirgas with religious clerics was important to pave the way for talks, and therefore such jirgas must continue.

The Pakistani Jirga was led by a religious figure, Qari Aslam Alamyar, from the Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Islami Fazl (JUI-F) of the ruling Pakistani alliance, the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM). It appears that JUI-F, by maneuvering to have its man-head Pakistani Jirga hold talks with the Taliban, is once again trying to create a role for the party and its head in Pakistan's affairs with Afghanistan.

Although there may have been efforts to

stop border clashes between Pakistani and it would be very difficult to do so. because the issues between the two sides are deep-rooted and the Taliban regime is acting much like traditional Afghan rulers, raising irredentist claims on Pakistani territory. Moreover, the Taliban, since coming to power, has been constantly increasing their anti-Pakistan posture. This is both out of frustration with Pakistan's refusal to extend diplomatic recognition to the regime and to try to convince other countries to do so, as Pakistan did in the 1990s. Moreover, the anti-Pakistan stance of the Taliban is also ai



History of Kashmir: Part 1

By Azmat M Saqib

Historically, Kashmir refers to the Kashmir Valley, where, from a lake to a valley and eventually a region, the population grew in the fertile valley. Today, it denotes the Jammu and Kashmir Valleys and Ladakh under Indian control, Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan under Pakistan, and the Chinese-administrated regions of Aksai Chin and the Trans-Karakoram Tract.

The earliest Neolithic sites in the floodplains of Kashmir are dated to 3000 BCE. In 326 BCE, the King of Kashmir aided Raja Porus, who lost the battle against Alexander the Great. Abhisares, the Kashmiri king, submitted to Alexander by sending him treasure and elephants.

During the reign of Ashoka (304–232 BCE), Kashmir came under the Mauryan Empire, and Buddhism was introduced in Kashmir. Mauriyans founded the town of Srinagar. By the fourth century, Kashmir had become the seat of learning for both Buddhism and Hinduism. Kashmiri Buddhist missionaries helped spread Buddhism in Tibet and China.

A succession of Hindu dynasties ruled over the region from the 7th through the 14th centuries. During this period, significant development took place in Kashmiri Hinduism and produced many poets, philosophers, and artists who contributed to Sanskrit literature and Hinduism. Karkota, Uptala, and Lohara were the three significant Hindu dynasties.

The oppressive taxation, corruption, internecine fights, and rise of the oppressive lords during the unpopular rule of the Lohara dynasty paved the way for foreign invaders of Turkic origin. Zulju, a Turkic-Mongol chief, and his subsequent queen, Kota Rani, ruled until 1339.

Rinchana, a Tibetan refugee, rose to power and became the ruler of Kashmir. In 1350 CE, Rinchana was converted to Islam by a Sufi preacher named Syed Sharfuddin Bulbul Shah. He was the first Muslim ruler of Kashmir. The coup led by his minister, Shah Mir, against Rinchana's successor established Muslim rule and the Shah Mir

Dynasty. During the rule of this dynasty from 1339 to 1561, Islam was established in Kashmir.

Under Muslim rule, Sufi saints and preachers converted the population, and with time, Hinduism was replaced by Islam. Most of the ruling Sultans were tolerant of other religions. Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin (1420–1470 CE) invited artists and craftsmen from central Asia and Persia to train local artists in Kashmir; the arts of wood carving, papier-mâché, weaving shawls, and carpet weaving also prospered.



Mughal General Mirza Muhammad Haider Daughat, a member of the ruling family in Kashghar, invaded Kashmir in 1540 CE on behalf of Emperor Humayun. He was overthrown by a revolt instigated by the Suri kings of India.

In 1586 CE, Kashmir came under the direct rule of the Mughals, when Akbar the Great ruled India. Nadir Shah's invasion in 1738 CE weakened Mughal control over Kashmir. Taking advantage of the declining Mughal Empire, Ahmed Shah Durrani took control of Kashmir in 1752 CE. His governor rebelled against the Durrani Empire before being defeated in 1762. After this, the Durrani became repressive toward all classes, irrespective of religion, and a heavy tax burden was levied on the Kashmiris.

Several Afghan governors ruled Kashmir on behalf of the Durrani Empire and amassed large revenues for Afghanistan. The Empire controlled Kashmir until 1819 CE, after which the region was annexed by the Sikh ruler Ranjit Singh. As the Kashmiris had suffered under the Afghans, they initially welcomed the Sikh rulers. However, the Sikh governors were hard taskmasters and ruled oppressively.

The Sikhs enacted several anti-Muslim laws, which included handing out death sentences for cow slaughter, closing the

Jamia Masjid in Srinagar, and banning the Azaan. There was widespread poverty among Muslims, and harsh taxes were levied. However, after 1832, the Sikhs reduced the land tax to half and gave interest-free loans to the farmers, and Kashmir became the second highest revenue earner for the Sikh Empire. During this time, Kashmiri shawls became known worldwide, attracting many buyers, especially in the West.

Previously, after the death of Ranjit Deo, ruler of the Jammu kingdom (south of the Kashmir Valley), Jammu was captured by Sikhs in 1780. His grandnephew, Gulab Singh, subsequently sought service at the court of Ranjit Singh, distinguished himself in later campaigns, and got appointed as Raja of Jammu in 1820. With the help



of his general, Zorawar Singh, he annexed Ladakh and Baltistan for the Sikh Empire.

After the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1839, the empire had a succession of several short-lived rulers. In 1843, Rani Jind Kaur became the Regent Queen as her son King Duleep Singh was still an infant. Led by her, Punjab went to war with the British in 1845 but was defeated due to the treachery of some Sikh generals.

The Treaty of Amritsar was signed between the British and the defeated Sikh forces; Rani was imprisoned, and in 1849 she escaped to Nepal. The Kashmir region was sold to Gulab Singh for 7.5 million Nanak Shahi rupees (the cost of the war with the Sikhs), who was said to have indirectly colluded with the British during the first Anglo-Sikh war. He was recognized as Maharaja by the East India Company, and the Hindu Dogra dynasty was established, which ruled Kashmir till 1947.

The Maharaja returned favor by supporting the British in the revolt of 1857 CE. After Gulab Singh's death in 1857, his son Ranbir Singh took over. The British rewarded the Sikhs by giving the new Maharaja complete control of Kashmir, which became a princely state under the British Empire. Ranbir Singh introduced the Ranbir Penal Code and reformed his administration, and the shawl industry flourished during his reign.

The British nominated Pratap Singh to become Raja after Ranbir Singh—not his choice, since Pratap was more gullible to Britishers than the other son. Kashmir was granted a salute state; that is, the Maharaja

was given a 21-gun salute. After the death of Pratap Singh in 1925, his son Hari Singh became the ruler and ruled Kashmir till 1947.

The population of Kashmir was predominantly Muslim (around 85 percent); the rest were Hindus, Sikhs, and Buddhists. There has always been a difference in how Muslim, Hindu, or Sikh rulers treated people from other groups in Kashmir.

Regionally, Ladakh was Tibetan Buddhist; in south Jammu, there was a mixed population of Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs. The Kashmir Valley was overwhelmingly Sunni Muslim; however, a small Hindu Pundit community was influential in the ruling class. The north was Gilgit-Baltistan, mostly Shia Muslim. In the west, Poonch was predominantly Sunni Muslim. Hence, the greater Kashmir region was never coherent demographically.



From 1757 to 1857, the East India Company ruled India indirectly. From 1857 until 1947, India was under direct British Empire rule. Kashmir was the largest princely state in British India. After 1857, the British implemented the "divide and rule" policy in India because a unified revolt of the entire Indian society was unacceptable.

They injected differences in the local population: princes against subjects; Hindus against Muslims; castes against castes; provinces against provinces. The Indian populace became divided, and the danger of unified resistance against British rule was minimized.

A political awakening began to take root in Indian society around the year 1870 CE. Several politically active groups were formed, and in 1885, the Indian National Congress was established. In 1906, the All India Muslim League was formed. Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College became Aligarh Muslim University in 1920. All these events gave rise to Indian nationalism.

After the death of Pratap Singh in 1925, Hari Singh became the Maharaja and ruled autocratically. Princely states were ruled on a feudal system, and in Kashmir, the Muslim majority population had no political rights till 1930. In 1931, the Kashmiris protested against Maharaja Hari Singh's policies, and the first armed clash took place between the people and the state police. In October 1932, Sheikh Abdullah founded the Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference in collaboration with Mirwaiz Yusuf Shah and Chaudhry Gulam Abbas.

Volodymyr Zelensky's visit to the US: What happened?

Biden vows that Washington will remain Ukraine's biggest ally "as long as it takes."



By Aimen Bukhari

December 21st's visit to Washington, D.C., by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, was filled with political drama.

The journey, which was shrouded in secrecy until the last minute, marked Zelensky's first known trip abroad since Russian President Vladimir Putin's February invasion. Zelensky arrived when the conflict's parameters were evolving.

Russia has been bombarding Ukraine's infrastructure with drones, leaving a large portion of the population without power or heat as a harsh winter approaches. Approximately 5,000 miles from Kyiv, the Republicans are poised to narrowly take control of the House in January, with one faction of the party harbouring strong scepticism regarding the current level of U.S. assistance.

Congress is presently considering a \$1.7 trillion spending plan that includes \$45 billion in fresh funding for Ukraine.

Here are a few key insights from Zelensky's journey:

Symbolism matters

The physical presence of Zelensky in Washington possessed its own force. The Ukrainian leader and his cronies in the Biden administration created and enjoyed the spectacle. Biden received Zelensky on the South Lawn of the White House, escorted him through the Rose Garden to the Oval Office, and had a press conference with him.

Later, prior to his address to Congress, Senate Majority Leader Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.) and Speaker Nancy Pelosi gave Zelensky a tour of the Capitol (D-Calif.).

His address was punctuated by applause from members of both parties, and it reached its emotional climax when he presented the chamber with a Ukrainian flag from the front lines in Donbas, autographed by the troops. Zelensky was

attired throughout in his typical military garb.

Symbolism may not be sufficient to pass legislation or deliver relief on its own. However, the images of the day emphasised U.S.-Ukraine solidarity in a direct and emotive manner.

Biden's conclusion: "However long it takes."

Some Republicans are arguing more vociferously that U.S. aid to Ukraine should not be a "blank check." Biden's position is vastly distinct. He vows that Washington will remain "as long as it takes."

In the final moments of Wednesday's news conference, Biden attempted to soothe Zelensky, telling him, "There's no need for concern." "We will remain with Ukraine so long as Ukraine exists."

The White House views the conflict in



Ukraine as one that must be lost, for fear that doing so will strengthen Vladimir Putin and reveal American weakness to rivals and foes such as China and Iran.

The sceptics argue that the United States has no critical interests at stake in Ukraine, that the influx of money toward Kyiv is enormous and presumably tainted by corruption, and that the war is a diversion from the multitude of pressing domestic issues.

Once the GOP obtains control of the House, these topics will be contested in a more acrimonious fashion.

Biden's position is clear, despite the fact that he continues to reject the idea of American boots on the ground in Ukraine actively engaging the Russians. The visit put aid critics in a difficult political position. The visit and its timing contained aspects of bare politics, notwithstanding the eloquent speech. The White House admitted this indirectly.

A senior administration official told reporters the evening before Zelenskyy's arrival that the visit would be an "essential injection of momentum." Momentum has the ability, at least in the short term, to overwhelm naysayers.

Those fighting against the \$45 billion in aid included in the spending agreement, for instance, are in a position that is not enviable. They are going up against a wartime leader who has shown personal courage that can't be questioned and is respected all over the world. At least for one

day, he became the focal point of American politics and asked for assistance.

The sceptics could gain political traction in the coming months. However, Zelenskyy's visit currently puts them on the defensive.

Zelensky extended extensive outreach to Republicans

The Ukrainian president walked a fine line when he thanked Vice President Joe Biden. He didn't want to appear too close to the president and make it look like the U.S. support for the conflict was only coming from Democrats.

It's not.

A lot of high-ranking Republicans, like Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (Kentucky) and the ranking Republican on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Michael McCaul (Texas), strongly want the United States to keep helping Ukraine.

Zelensky thanked people from both parties who had come to Kyiv and talked to MPs at the Capitol about the need for "bipartisan" and "bicameral" support.

The overtures were obviously not going to win over everyone

Rep. Lauren Boebert (Colorado), a conservative firebrand, sat down as Zelenskyy entered the House chamber for his remarks and earned a standing ovation. Some

Republican legislators did not show up. Rep. Thomas Massie (R-Kentucky) tweeted that he was in Washington but would not be attending Zelenskyy's speech, mocking him as "the Ukrainian lobbyist."

However, Zelensky left the door wide open for other Republicans to continue their support.

Uncertain outlines of a peace proposal

The question of how the war concludes is plainly of the utmost importance, given that Putin appears unwilling to back down and the likelihood of an overwhelming Ukrainian triumph appears remote. In his address to legislators, Zelensky delivered a very ambiguous indication.

He stated that Ukraine "has submitted ideas." He did not specify what they were, but he stated that he had discussed them with Vice President Biden, that the president supported them, and that they included ten issues for "our joint security." In addition, there was mention of a summit. Despite the fact that this was exciting, it was evident that peace was still some distance away.

During a previous news conference with Vice President Biden, the Ukrainian president expressed some confusion when asked about the concept of "fair peace," pondering what the phrase might imply for his countrymen who had lost family members to Russian assault.



Street crime in Karachi

A sense of insecurity is not only prevailing in Karachi but is growing with every passing day

By Azfar Ashfaq

The city by the sea remains in the news for all the wrong reasons. While Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan have been witnessing a renewed wave of terrorism and the ruling and opposition parties at the Center are busy putting each other down over the issue of dissolution of the Punjab Assembly, the people of Karachi have been left at the mercy of robbers and muggers who shoot every individual who may put up some resistance in front of them without fear of any repercussions.

The heavy presence of paramilitary Rangers and police in the provincial metropolis has failed to stop street criminals from looting cell phones, cash, and other valuables from unarmed civilians in every part of Karachi on a daily basis. The gravity of the situation could be judged from the fact that during December alone, the criminals shot dead more than a dozen people, including half a dozen students, and wounded over a hundred when they offered slight resistance.

More crimes were reported in 2022 than in 2021.

According to provisional figures compiled by the authorities on the basis of the registered number of crimes during the current year, over 83,000 incidents of street crime have been reported in Karachi, and ruthless muggers have killed over 110 citizens and wounded more than 500 over resistance. A break-up of these figures suggests that by December 15, 27,249 cell phones were either snatched at gunpoint or stolen in Karachi. The number of cars and motorbikes snatched or stolen is 2,131 and 52,383, respectively.

Last year, in 2021, a total of 69 citizens were killed and 418 wounded by armed bandits for resisting their robbery bids, and the number of street crimes recorded was 73,348 in the city. A total of 22,595 mobile phones were either snatched or stolen in Karachi, whereas



the number of cars and motorcycles snatched or stolen was 1,966 and 48,787, respectively.

Recently, a meeting chaired by Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah was told that, during 2022, Karachi police had arrested 8,375 suspected robbers during 825 encounters in which a total of 118 suspects had been killed and 973 wounded. In 2021, the same meeting was informed that 6,892 criminals were arrested following 317 encounters that led to the deaths of 39 bandits and the arrest of 174 others in wounded condition.

A sense of insecurity is not only prevailing in Karachi but it is growing with every passing day. Concerned about the failure of law enforcement to provide security, a culture of mob justice has emerged in the city, with residents preferring to take the law into their own hands and punish suspects who are caught red-handed right away rather than turning them over to the police, where they know they will be released on bail.

And it seems the police are doing nothing that may lead to an increased sense of security among the citizens. On December 15, two armed muggers tried to loot four students of the NED University of Engineering and Technology who were having tea at a

tea shop outside the varsity. One of them offered resistance and overpowered a suspect, but his aide shot him three times and rode away. The student, identified as Bilal Nasir, died on the spot.

The very next day, Karachi police chief Javed Alam Odho issued a statement, telling the people not to put up any resistance to armed criminals. The parties in the opposition interpreted his statement as an admission of complete failure in curbing the menace of street crime and restoring order.

The Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan, Jamaat-i-Islami, Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf, Pak Sarzameen Party, and others condemned his statement and lashed out at the Sindh government for failing to take effective steps to restore order.

"There are 13,000 Rangers troops and 65,000 policemen in Karachi, but it seems criminals have been given a free hand to loot people with complete impunity," MQM-P leader and former Karachi mayor Wasim Akhtar has told a press conference while condemning the city police chief's statement. "The Karachi police chief, by advising the citizens not to resist, has given a clean chit to all criminals." "This reflects the level of weakness and lack of political will to control street crimes."

His views are seconded by JI's city chief, Hafiz Naemur Rehman, who says the Karachi police chief's statement is an attempt to practically encourage armed robbers to continue looting and killing citizens. He also slams the paramilitary Rangers, who he says, despite their heavy presence, are not taking any action on the pretext that street crime does not fall within the ambit of their powers. "People of this city are under the constant threat of mugging and killing as law enforcement agencies have badly failed," he says.

The PTI's parliamentary party leader in the Sindh Assembly, Khurram Sher Zaman, is also very critical of the performance of the PPP government that has been ruling Sindh for the past 14 years. He has proposed a separate police force for Karachi that would be answerable to the city's elected mayor. He says recruitment for the new force should be made on merit, but only from among the residents of Karachi. He says the current police setup has been marred by incompetence, corruption, and political influence.

However, Sindh Information Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon disagrees. He claims Karachi's law and order situation is much better than in the past. "I'm not defending... but the crime rate in major cities around the world remains high."

"The situation in Karachi is far better than in Peshawar, Quetta, and Lahore," he told reporters recently.



Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah is reported to have told top officials of the police, Rangers, and intelligence agencies that "street criminals have created unrest among the citizens of Karachi" and that the killing of innocent citizens by robbers "is unacceptable and a challenge to the government." Last week, he chaired a high-level meeting and ordered a joint operation to be conducted by police and Rangers against street crime.

Analysts, however, believe that curbing street crime in Karachi requires not only political will but also a coordinated strategy with law enforcement agencies of other provinces as the snatched and stolen goods,

particularly cell phones, are being taken to other parts of the country from where they are smuggled out.

They say the criminal justice system doesn't see killing in street crime as an act of terrorism, and hence the sessions court tries cases against such criminals who managed to get out of prison in a few months. They also believe the immediate launch of the Karachi Safe City project is the need of the hour. While they do not see any improvement in the near future, they believe active policing can provide a ray of hope in such dark times.



Depleting Air Quality in Pakistan

According to data issued by the international environmental think tank IQAir, Lahore is the most polluted city in the world.

By Mahnoor Mehfooz

Millions of people in Pakistan are affected by the serious health issue of air pollution. Experts caution that the consequences of insufficient action to address the issue could be disastrous for the nation's urbanised areas like Karachi, Islamabad, Faisalabad, and Lahore. Lead and carbon emissions from cars are the biggest contributors to air pollution. Lahore is the most polluted city in the world, according to data released by IQAir, a worldwide environmental think tank. On Monday morning, the city's air quality index (AQI) was 372; this puts it far ahead of Zagreb, Croatia, which is the second most polluted city in the world with an AQI of 174. With some of the most polluted cities in the world, including Lahore and Karachi, Pakistan is now coping with a significant air pollution problem.

According to data issued by the international environmental think tank IQAir, Lahore is the most polluted city in the world. With an air quality index (AQI) of 372, the city was much less polluted on Monday morning than Zagreb, Croatia, which is the second most polluted city in the world. The typical Pakistani's life expectancy is reduced by 4.3 years due to air pollution compared to what it would have been if the World Health Organization's (WHO) recommendation had been followed.

The average life expectancy in Pakistan is substantially lower than in some regions, where the worst air pollution reduces it by over 7 years. All 212 million residents of Pakistan reside in places where the average annual particle pollution level exceeds WHO guidelines. Ninety-nine percent of Pakistanis reside in locations where the national standard for air quality is exceeded. The amount of particulate pollution has increased over time. The average life expectancy of Pakistanis has decreased by 0.9 years since 1998 as a result of a 20 percent rise in annual particle pollution.

Southern Punjab and northern Sindh are the most polluted regions of the nation, where residents would live longer by more than 5 years if particulate pollution were permanently reduced to the WHO recommendation.

In Karachi, the biggest metropolis in Pakistan, people would live longer by 3.6 years. Residents of Lahore, Pakistan's second-largest metropolis, would advance by five years. The population of Islamabad's capital would increase by four years. Out of the 153 million premature deaths worldwide, 11 million have been

The participants had taken precautions since they were aware of the various air contaminants and the health risks, they brought with them. It was determined that air pollution had negative effects on the respondents' physical and psychological health, which changed their behavior. Before the air becomes more contaminated and dangerous to breathe, it is advised that widespread knowledge, a solid mitigation strategy, effective management, and the execution of severe environmental legislation be implemented.

Recent reports showed an increase in air pollution in Pakistan, including in



connected to air pollution in Pakistan. Pakistan is facing an increasingly dangerous issue of air pollution. In light of this, the current study was created to evaluate air pollution over six districts in the Malakand division of northern Pakistan using the air quality index (AQI), particulate matter (PM2.5 and PM10), SO₂, NO₂, and O₃. Through a closed-ended questionnaire given to 4100 students, the second part of the study evaluated the self-reported effects of air pollution on Pakistani students and the practices, perceptions, and awareness of the students regarding air pollution.

the capital city of Islamabad, despite the COVID-19 lockdown around the world, which caused a major decrease in air pollution. To understand the self-reported physical and psychological impacts of air pollution on pupils, the current study was conducted in six districts (Dir Lower, Dir Upper, Chitral, Swat, Buner, and Shangla) of the Malakand division (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan's northwest region).

One of the main focuses of the Pakistan National Conservation Strategy (NCS), which was authorised by the

government, is pollution prevention and abatement. Pakistan Numerous studies were conducted by the EPA with the help of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) to determine the ambient air quality in Pakistan's major cities. The government has taken several actions to enhance the air quality since becoming aware of the problem. Among the recent key actions are establishing motor vehicle emission regulations and improving the nation's system for conducting motor vehicle inspections. establishment of environmental police squads at the federal and provincial levels.

Moreover, 15 gasoline and diesel vehicle tune-up stations have been set up, and a \$3 million revolving loan has been established to stimulate the establishment of more stations in the private sector. About 1.2 million gasoline vehicles have been converted to CNG as a result of the government's incentive program, and numerous additional CNG stations have opened across the nation. Additionally, efforts are being made to convert diesel vehicles to CNG. To provide clean fuels, lead-free gasoline is being introduced, while diesel with sulphur is gradually being phased out. The nation's promotion of LPG and biofuel public transportation is scarce in big cities. Implementing regulations for industrial emissions and the Punjab government's green fund with the assistance of the



Government of Japan, the Pak-EPA has also begun work on the Environmental Monitoring System project. The project's capital cost is Rs. 1,089.10 million, and its primary goals are as follows:

- i) Establishment of mobile laboratories and stations for continuous air monitoring in five cities (Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar, Quetta, and Islamabad).
- ii) Establishing mobile laboratories and continuous water monitoring stations in six cities (Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar, Quetta, Rawalpindi, and Islamabad).

iii) Five EPAs' analytical laboratories have been upgraded.

iv) The creation of air and maritime surveillance

Even if the government has made the correct moves to improve air quality, it still needs the public's participation and support to carry out its policies and goals. All facets of society ought to step forward and fulfil their moral and social obligations. We need to get involved in the environmental movement right now. We can do the following things to improve the air quality in our nation, both individually and collectively: Keep our car as tuned up as possible, and when necessary, get it fixed quickly. When a car is tuned up, it uses less fuel, while putting off maintenance increases expenditures. Rickshaw drivers should refrain from adding too much lubricant to their gasoline.

They ought to select high-quality lubricating oil, especially 2T oil, to lengthen engine life and reduce emissions. Install compressed natural gas in vehicles (CNG). CNG not only has lower operating costs but also produces fewer pollutants. Avoid overloading, especially with diesel vehicles, and maintain optimal engine and nozzle conditions. Untuned or overloaded vehicles produce black smoke and use more diesel. Plant trees and grass in vacant areas.



The change is nigh

Scientists argue that there's a direct link between climate change and the storms in Canada and the US

By Arsim Tariq

This year has been an extraordinary one for the Earth's climate, for all the wrong reasons: Hurricane Ian devastated southwestern Florida, Hurricane Fiona hammered Nova Scotia, a third of Pakistan was impacted by massive flooding, record heats baked the west coast of North America from British Columbia to California. Europe's heat wave shattered all existing records. The list of disastrous extreme weather events — almost certainly the result of anthropogenic climate change — grows longer every year. There is a complicated, contradictory link between rising global temperatures and the likelihood of more heavy snowstorms in Canada and the United States.

According to John Clague, a professor of geosciences at Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, British Columbia, winters are getting milder and warmer on average than they once were, but there has also been a rise in extreme weather events such as strong snowstorms.

"People may find it strange that while the climate warms, regions of the country are experiencing more snowstorms," he added. "Climate modellers have discovered that climate change would result in more frequent extremes."

"This means that throughout the summer, you may encounter dangerously high temperatures, such as those that India and Pakistan have seen in recent years." In winter, you can also experience similar extreme cold conditions.

The jet stream, defined by Environment Canada as "a short band of strong winds about 10 kilometres above the Earth, separating warm and cold air masses," is one of the causes of the extremes.

Clague stated that the jet stream, which travels from west to east and carries weather systems with it, is moving more slowly than usual and appears to be parking itself over a region for a time. His mass of cold or hot air remains in the atmosphere, where it

collides with moisture-laden currents, generating heavy snow or rain.

This contact between wet, temperate air at lower latitudes and cold, dry air—Arctic air—produces snowfall.

Professor of atmospheric physics at the University of Toronto, Kent Moore, stated that it is paradoxical that climate warming is causing more violent snowstorms. "There is evidence that the warming of the planet is altering the dynamics of the jet stream," he said.

As the temperature heats up, the jet stream may see "greater undulations," which indicates that it may no longer flow west to east but instead travel north or south like a wave. He added that it also carries Arctic air with it as it flows southward.

Moore stated, "There is some indication that as the temperature warms, the jet stream becomes more turbulent."

He stated that the interaction between vanishing sea ice and a rapidly warming Arctic is decreasing the temperature differential from the south to the north of the country. He said that a weakening jet stream is sending Arctic air south, resulting in heavy snowstorms.

Moore stated that the oceans on both coasts play a role since a rising climate increases evaporation. This means that there is more water vapour in the atmosphere, which in turn causes there to be more snow.

Blair Feltmate, the director of the Intact Centre for Climate Adaptation at the University of Waterloo, explained that warmer air contains more moisture and heat energy than colder air. "This frequently leads to extreme precipitation in the form of greater rain in the summer and snowstorms in the winter," he explained.

Over the past century, global average temperatures have risen by approximately 1.1 to 1.2 degrees Celsius, and Canada has warmed even more. He stated that the

southern part of Canada has warmed roughly twice as fast as the global average. He said that the northern half has been warming almost three times quicker.

This is causing abnormal or non-typical weather in several regions of the United States. In addition to the possibility of further precipitation, as is now the case, strong cold spells are also possible.

Over the past six decades, the intensity of the top one percent of precipitation events that occur in a given year has increased by 37% in the western Great Lakes and by 72% in the eastern Great Lakes, according to Feltmate.

Moore, who has studied snowfall in the Toronto region, stated that the average amount of snowfall is decreasing while the amount of precipitation is growing. "This does not rule out the possibility of an extremely severe storm that delivers a tonne of snow in just a few days." This is still a possibility, despite the long-term trend toward less snow.

According to Feltmate, climate change is responsible for the symphony of winter storms from Vancouver to Toronto and the Maritimes. He used a baseball analogy to demonstrate the connection between climate change and recent extreme weather phenomena, including the heat dome, atmospheric rivers, post-tropical storm Fiona, and "mammoth" snowstorms.

It is similar to saying a baseball player has used drugs. "Suddenly, this baseball guy is hitting five times as many home runs," Feltmate stated.

"You cannot attribute a single home run to steroid use." There is a strong correlation between the use of steroids and home run hitting if he or she is hitting five times as many home runs. Due to climate change, we are seeing extreme weather on steroids, and the steroids are here to stay.

Women Want a Calling – Not Just a 9-to-5

Expectations of a superwoman is a myth that needs to be busted; employers should galvanize to new women demands, policymakers must create an environment more conducive, allowing for generous life choices for women

By Sara Danial

What do the women working corporate jobs want? This is a question that has plagued the workplaces and the workforce in equal measures. We want equitable pay; we want supportive, understanding mentors to guide us in the right, progressive direction. We want more representation in senior managerial roles; we want FLEXIBILITY and we want to be heard.

One qualm that needs to be addressed with urgent immediacy is balance. We want to contribute to the corporate sector but also want to be there for ‘personal stories.’ We do not want to be tired all the time. Women juggling work, home, kids, and school and the surrounding expectations of a superwoman is a myth that must be busted. We want to be able to take care of ourselves. We want to hit the gym. It is not a ‘lifestyle’. We want to get to that manicure we have been canceling every week. We don’t want to apologize anymore for an afternoon getaway with our friends.

Although monetary and managerial roles form a large part of ‘success’, what it all boils down to for a layman is ‘feeling valued’. And being valued translates into getting paid equally for the equal work that we do. According to the Global Wage Report 2018/19 (ILO), women in Pakistan earn 34% less than men on average. The same report also found that women in Pakistan constitute 90% of the bottom 1% of wage earners in the country.

At the same time, we are not looking for equality in everything that is measurable. Possible? Yes. Actionable? Maybe. How do we explain that more times than we would like to acknowledge, we want to opt out, rather than lean in? We want to perhaps work around job opportunities that are more part-time in nature. Because a lot of unpaid care requires commitment. Not only does unpaid care work not compensate women but it is so time-consuming that we do not have the time to focus on upskilling ourselves and pursuing economic opportunities. And these time commitments are often not quantitative and therefore, go overlooked. And this is exactly why women who land more entry jobs than men, end up with fewer mid-management, senior management, and vice president roles.

If any or all of it sounds contradictory, it is. Yes, we want to have our cake and eat it. We want to bust another myth of ‘having it all’. In fact, there is a painful, well-kept secret – that successful, executive, career women possess. That many of them do not have children in corporate Pakistani. A bulk of the majority does yearn for companionship and children. Some have even gone through extraordinary lengths of complex procedures to be mothers – derailing their careers in the process – but to no avail. So what we see is a typical high-achieving woman, childless at midlife has not made a choice but a stealthy move to nonchoice.



By this, I do not mean to say that motherhood is the be-all-end-all to the life of a woman. What I really want to say is that the cutthroat corporate environment for such women comes at a cost that we do not want to pay.

Because the truth of the career-oriented woman is: we refuse to be judged for leaving early to prepare our kids for exams. And measured for our gender. Stop cornering us for being women. Society expects us to be excellent at whatever we do. But we want to be rewarded and commended not ‘for a woman’. The question ‘what women want?’ is akin to asking what horses want. Or what national leaders want.

Women already have the answer in the movie, *To Wong Foo Thanks for Everything*, Julie Newmar, when the sheriff asked Vida - “I know what all you career girls want.” To which Vida replied, “Careers?”

Of course, there are few careers that will give us all. But post-pandemic, many women I know personally stayed with employers in which their job fit well with other areas of their life, followed by enjoying the work that they do, and believing that their job gives them the opportunity to make a difference.

So while the corporate landscape is bleak and the situation is highly unsettling, I hope that this piece will breed workplace policies that are privy to the huge costs to companies of losing highly educated women when they start their families. At the same time, I also urge the younger women to request their partners to rise to the occasion and lean into the households as women step out of the house for economic equity and independence. I request employers to galvanize to the new demands of women, while policymakers must create an environment more conducive, allowing for generous life choices for women.

Failure teaches success

Disappointed, heartbroken, and in shambles, Babar Azam and the team made their way over to Karachi

By Ali Abdullah

The historic Pakistan-England series came to an end this Tuesday in possibly the most humiliating manner for the hosts, with a 3-0 series whitewash being the only "title" to their name. To everyone's dismay, the Shaheens were left confused, confounded, surprised, and off-guard in every single Test match in this series.

The first test of this historic and oh-so-important series for Pakistan took place in Rawalpindi, which itself was marred with controversies of all types, ranging from poor pitch conditions to improper seating arrangements and whatnot. The visitors, full of vigor and confidence, went at it from the very first ball and posted a demanding score of 657 in the first inning itself. Pakistan did respond and posted 579 in their first innings. It seemed as if the test was headed towards yet another draw, but things took a turn when Ben Stokes decided to declare after scoring only 264 in the second innings. Pakistan had two favorable choices here: They could go on and respond by chasing the target down, or they could just play some gritty Test cricket and block as much as they can. Alas, Pakistan was able to do none of the aforementioned and was bowled out for 268—leading to the visitors' comfortable 74-run victory.

Traveling to the land of "Sohan Halwa," also known as Multan, the Shaheens were under massive pressure and had to come up with a response. Losing a test match at home isn't expected at all. Admittedly, the squad was comprised of six debutants, but a defeat was something Pakistani fans all around the world weren't hoping for. Nevertheless, the debut of the "maestro" leggie Abrar Ahmed surely spiced things up for the hosts, as Pakistan seemed to be all over England. After being asked to bat first, Stokes and co. were left bamboozled as Abrar Ahmed ran riot and wicket after wicket fell, leading to their being bowled out for 281 in the first innings. Pakistan, albeit, was in a stickier situation as they themselves couldn't seem to find their feet in their first innings, being bowled out for just 202.

England attempted a fightback, but they were bowled out for 275 in the second innings by the bowlers. It seemed as if Pakistan was going to run away with the test. Well, they were, until the controversial dismissal of Saud Shakeel came into play. Shakeel was dismissed on 94 after a "brilliant" catch by wicketkeeper Pope behind the stumps. Skipper Babar Azam didn't hold back and seemed rather disappointed with the decision, with him feeling "the ball was grounded." Shakeel's dismissal eventually led to a collapse, and Pakistan has bowled out yet again, this time missing the mark by just 28 runs. England added another victory to their record while clinching the series with a 2-0 lead.

Disappointed, heartbroken, and in shambles, Babar Azam and the team made their way over to Karachi. Hoping and wanting to finish the series on a good note, Pakistan, with

nothing to lose, threw the dice and decided to bat first. A rather paltry total of 304 was posted by the Shaheens as they were bowled out by the English. However, yet again, the Pakistani bowling unit responded, and England themselves packed up for 354 while managing only a 50-run lead.

Pakistan seemed set and raring to go; it seemed as if a big total was indeed possible. However, hopes were once again shattered as Pakistan lost wickets in quick succession and was sent packing back to the dugout one after another. Having to chase only 166 runs, England went all out, guns blazing, playing their own brand of cricket aptly named "Bazball" after their coach Brendon McCullum. They were able to chase the target and take home a 3-0 whitewash over the hosts, who were left to wonder what could've been, what would've been, and what should've been throughout.

Many injuries plagued Pakistan's squad, including talismanic lead pacer Shaheen Shah Afridi, who was injured in the T20 final against England. Haris Rauf and Naseem Shah missed the last two test matches with fitness issues of their own. However, the playing XI and players called up for the series were rather interesting and are a debatable topic as always.

As always, the players are backing each other and their skipper, with Shaheen Shah Afridi and others tweeting in Azam's favor, who in turn backed the coaching staff as well as other members of the team. It remains to be seen whether any changes will take place. However, so far, there's nothing as such to speak of, and Babar Azam is in a prime position to retain his captaincy spot.

Babar Azam and co. are the only Pakistan team white-washed in a home Test series. They have also lost three tests in a home series for the first time in their history. Adding further insult to the misery, they have also lost four home games in a row for the first time.

Right after the historic test series against England, Shaheen's next task is another home series against the Kiwis. Both teams will play two tests and three ODIs in Karachi and Multan. The first test will be played in Karachi on December 26, whereas teams will travel to Multan for the second test. For the ODI series, the National Stadium in Karachi will be the host.

Both teams have played a handful of test matches against each other. Pakistan won 25 of the 60 tests, while New Zealand won 14 of them. The remaining 24 games were all tied. In ODIs, Pakistan is leading by 52, and New Zealand is only four matches behind with 48 wins. Three matches ended in ties, and one ended in a no-result.

The Pakistani team is inexperienced, but keeping the statistics in mind will give them a boost of confidence.

FIFA World Cup Final

It was the most memorable finale that has ever been played in the football history



After 63 games at the FIFA World Cup full of upsets, the final two teams were all set to play the final. Messi's Argentina and Mbappé's France both wanted to lift the trophy. It was Messi's last international game. Messi wanted to win his first World Cup trophy and end his career on a high. France and Mbappé, the defending champions, wanted to bag the trophy twice in a row and become the first team to do so.

The final was played at Lusail Stadium in Lusail, Qatar, located about 15 kilometres (9.3 miles) north of the city centre of Doha. The stadium was intended to host the final as part of Qatar's World Cup bid and was confirmed as the final venue on July 15, 2020. The stadium was also allocated to host nine previous World Cup matches, with six in the group stage and three other knockout matches.

Drawn in Group C and coming off a three-year, 36-game unbeaten streak, Argentina was defeated in their opening game 2–1 by Saudi Arabia. Lionel Messi's opener from the penalty spot was followed by several disallowed Argentina goals that were ruled offside. Immediately after

halftime, Saudi Arabia stunned Argentina with two goals from Saleh Al-Shehri and Salem Al-Dawsari in a span of five minutes before shutting out any further attempts by the South Americans in a disciplined defensive performance.

However, the Argentines bounced back from the shock loss to overcome Mexico 2–0 after a long-range effort by Messi, who then assisted Enzo Fernández for the second, reigniting their World Cup hopes. Argentina then beat Poland by the same scoreline, with goals from Alex MacAllister and Julián Alvarez, despite Messi missing a first-half penalty, taking first place in Group C and sending Mexico and Saudi Arabia home.

France started their World Cup campaign as the defending champions, having won the most recent tournament in Russia, and was drawn in Group D. Their first match was against Australia, an AFC representative. The French suffered a shock deficit after nine minutes due to a goal by Craig Goodwin, but were able to stage a comeback with a double from Olivier Giroud together with goals from Adrien Rabiot and

Kylian Mbappé to win 4–1. France overcame a well-organized and dangerous Danish side, with Mbappé scoring twice in the second half despite conceding an equaliser to Andreas Christensen.

France won 2–1 and became the first team to progress to the knockout stage of the World Cup in Qatar and the first European world champions to do so since 1994. With progression assured, France rotated most of their team, resting their key players for the final game against a desperate Tunisia. France resultantly lost 1–0 courtesy of a goal by French-born Wahbi Khazri before having an equaliser by Antoine Griezmann disallowed. France maintained top spot in the group due to a superior goal difference over Australia.

Argentina was drawn in the round of 16 against Australia, the group D runners-up. Despite an own goal from Fernández creating a frantic finish that required a late point-blank save by Emiliano Martínez, Argentina defeated Australia 2–1.

Facing the Netherlands in the quarter-finals, a rematch of the semi-finals meeting in



2014, Argentina got a two-goal lead by Nahuel Molina and a penalty from Messi but succumbed to two late goals by Wout Weghorst as regulation time ended 2–2 after 90 minutes. Neither team could find a breakthrough in extra time, and penalties were used to decide the winner. Emiliano Martinez saved the first two Dutch penalties from Virgil van Dijk and Steven Berghuis, while only Fernández missed for Argentina as Lautaro Martínez scored the decisive last kick of the game to send Argentina to the semi-finals to meet 2018 runners-up Croatia.

In a rematch of the 2018 encounter, in which Croatia won 3–0, Argentina decisively beat Croatia by the same scoreline. Lionel Messi scored a penalty in the first half, followed by Alonso's solo effort five minutes later. Argentina advanced to the final for the second time in eight years, thanks to Messi's assist on Alvarez's double in the second half.

In the round of 16, France overcame group C runners-up Poland 3–1 with goals from Giroud and Mbappé, despite conceding a late penalty from Robert Lewandowski. France faced old rivals England in the quarter-finals, which France won 2–1 thanks to goals from Aurélien Tchouaméni and Olivier Giroud. England found an equaliser at 1–1 courtesy of a penalty by Harry Kane, but a second penalty to equalise the game was missed by Kane, granting France a place in the semi-finals. France then faced the biggest underdog of the tournament, Morocco, who had beaten

both Iberian representatives, Spain and Portugal, in the process. The French were able to end the history-making run by the African nation with two goals from Théo Hernandez and Randal Kolo Muani. France reached their second consecutive World Cup final for the first time in their history.

It was Argentina vs. France in the final. After 63 games, these were the final two teams to compete to determine the winner of the Qatar FIFA World Cup 2022. France kicked off the match in front of a crowd of 88,966. In the 23rd minute, Argentina was awarded a penalty after Miguel Di Mara was fouled in the penalty area by Ousmane Dembélé as Di Mara cut in from the left. Lionel Messi scored the penalty with a low shot to the right corner. In the 36th minute, Di Maria finished a sweeping Argentina counterattack to make it 2–0, shooting with his left foot over the goalkeeper to the right corner of the net after a pass from Alexis MacAllister from the right.

France made two substitutions near the end of the first half and went into halftime trailing 0–2. France failed to make an attempt on goal until the 80th minute, at which point they had a penalty after Randal Kolo Muani had been brought down in the penalty area by Nicolás Otamendi. Kylian Mbappé scored the penalty low into the left corner. Two minutes later, Mbappé got a pass from Teran, and he sniped it as he was falling to the ground to make it 2–2. Messi had a hard shot parried over the bar by Hugo Lloris near the end of added time.

With the score tied at the end of regulation, the match went to extra time.

Messi scored again for Argentina in the second period of extra time when he finished from close range after Lloris had saved a shot from Lautaro Martínez on the right. France was awarded a second penalty, taken in the 118th minute after a shot by Mbappé hit the arm of Gonzalo Montiel. Mbappé scored his third goal with his penalty kick to the left, sending the goalkeeper the wrong way and becoming the second player to score a hat-trick in a men's World Cup final after Geoff Hurst for England in 1966. Kolo Muani had a late low shot saved by Emiliano Martínez, and with the score tied at 3–3, the match went to a penalty shootout.

Mbappé and Messi successfully converted the first two attempts in the penalty shootout, but Kingsley Coman's attempt was saved by Argentina goalkeeper Martínez down low to his right. Paulo Dybala sent a shot into the net up the middle to give Argentina a 2–1 lead. Aurélien Tchouaméni then sent his shot wide of the goal to the left, and Leandro Paredes scored to put France on the brink of defeat at 3–1. Kolo Muani kept France alive by scoring his chance, setting up a chance for Montiel to make up for his late handball by clinching the championship for Argentina. Montiel scored low to the left, giving Argentina their third World Cup trophy and first since 1986.

By Ali Abdullah

Fashion industry is on decline!

Promotion of fashion industry to create jobs; induce culture of tolerance; boost Pakistan's image

By Khalid Farshori



The new year can be dubbed 'happy' for the Pakistani fashion industry as fashion weeks are planned in Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad. Arranged by private channels, bridal fashion weeks will extend a platform for fewest supermodels, who will be impressing their fans via reels and Instagram posts too.

Unfortunately, during the last 75 years, our fashion industry failed to flourish due to multiple reasons. First, the textile industry has not been able to draw the required government interest and focus; second the fashion sector has not been officially recognized as an industry; and third, the financial health and standing of our fashion industry.

Worldwide the fashion industry's fiscal volume stands at three thousand billion dollars with three billion and thirty-eight million jobs attached to it.

The top-most Pakistani fashion designers have either extended their businesses to the United Arab Emirates or they are focused fully on dressings of international celebrities. Fewer are banking on morning TV shows, exhibiting their limited skills only on occasion.

Pakistani designers, even in the film and television, have not been able to earn money like their counterparts associated with Bollywood or Hollywood. Not only the dearth of sound and seasoned designers, models and choreographers, is affecting our fashion industry but non professionals and dumbheads are too contributing to its total collapse.

Unlike Indian film industry that is flying high along the country's fashion industry, the Pakistan film industry also finds itself in shambles, and struggling to revive. In such a fiasco only some miracle could help bring our fashion industry on the uplift trajectory.

But even in these depressing circumstances, Pakistan Institute of Fashion Designing is doing good under the government patronage. Recently, President Dr. Arif Alvi invited all stakeholders related to fashion industry in the Capital. The event provided an opportunity for Pakistani youth to come forward and take hold of this dwindling sector.

Institute of Fashion Designing is an important government body -- currently educating 1500 students in fashion, textile, furniture and jewellery designing. The institute also offers courses in gemological science, manufacturing, leather goods, shoe making, fashion marketing and other fields.



We need to establish more such institutes in other parts of the country. One pertinent reference could be Faisalabad. In addition, affiliations with renowned international fashion designing counterparts could also be pursued. Parallel to it, Pakistani fashion designers should be helped to join important fashion events abroad, that in turn could expand their networking and connectivity.

Business community also needs to come forward as unless private sector invests in research and development of the fashion sector, promising outcomes are not possible. In this regard, a separate fund on the lines of Export Development Fund can be established. Promotion of fashion industry will not only provide better opportunities for women and youth in the country, but will also promote a culture of tolerance in the society. It will be a way forward to present a positive image of Pakistan at the global level.

It was an honor for me to play Noori Natt, says Hamza Ali Abbasi

By **Kaukab Jahan**

Hamza Ali Abbasi has gathered a huge fan following from the very start of his career as an actor. Be it Afzal Subhanullah of *Pyare Afzal*, Salahuddin of *Man Mayal*, or Qalb-e-Momin of *Alif*, he has left a lasting impact on audiences with his excellent acting skills. Hamza has his fans on the big screen too. From *Main Hoon Shahid Afridi* to *The Legend of Maula Jatt*, the actor has given enthralling performances one after another. Critics regard his performance as Noori Natt in *TLOMJ* as iconic in the history of the Pakistani film industry. The actor is more inclined toward the religion these days and has decided to choose roles in the future that are under the umbrella of Islam.

Truth International reached out to the Parwaaz Hai Junoon star to talk about his role as Noori and future plans.



Where have you been for so many years?

I was busy getting a religious education. I came to realize the divine truth of God, and what I saw was just a trailer of that reality. Now I am watching the whole film. I will continue to learn this in the future as well.

Why did you choose to play a villain in *The Legend of Maula Jatt* when people had seen you play virtuous heroes throughout your career?

True, I've mostly played protagonists, but I've always found villain roles to be more challenging, multidimensional, and with a greater margin of error. That is why I thought I should try a negative role as well. Noori Natt is an iconic character, and it was an absolute privilege for me to do that.

Fawad Khan gained weight for the role of Maula. Did you need to do the same?

Actually, I am very fond of food, so my weight fluctuates unintentionally. Furthermore, I was unable to continue working out for Noori Natt because my shoot for *Parwaaz Hai Junoon* began at the same time as *TLOMJ*. They clashed at some point. Yes, I put on weight at the beginning of *TLOMJ* but had to shed those pounds

for PHJ later. You will notice I am a bit heavy in the beginning scenes of PHJ as well. Hence, we had to compromise with a thin Noori rather than a bulked-up one.

How did you get your training, especially for moving axes in *TLOMJ* fight scenes?

We made two variations of them. One was the original, which was too heavy to lift, while the other was made with a lighter material, with which we shot and maneuvered our action sequences. We also lifted up the originals in scenes that didn't have fight sequences.

We have heard that many actors in the film learned Punjabi for the *TLOMJ*. Did you do the same?

Luckily, Punjabi is my first language; it helped me perform much better and deliver my dialogues very comfortably. Even today, I speak Punjabi with my mother.

TLOMJ is also being translated into Chinese. So have you imagined speaking Chinese in Punjabi?

Actually, I am very curious about what it would be like after being dubbed in Chinese. Friends, the most famous TV

show, was once dubbed in Punjabi and aired on Apna Channel. I was a regular viewer because I loved it when all the characters spoke Punjabi. I enjoyed not only seeing them speak Punjabi but also how they translated it from English. Similarly, I really want to see *Maula*, *Noori*, and everybody else in the film speaking Chinese. So I will definitely watch it.

Have you watched the 1979 version of *Maula Jatt* and taken any inspiration from it or improvised it?

Yes. I always admit that Mustafa Qureshi has taken the character of Noori Natt to the next level. So, on the one hand, that film not only provided me with a foundation for the character of Noori Natt—about his demeanor, personality, and dialogue delivery—but it also placed a lot of pressure on my shoulders to do justice to a character who had already been made iconic by a legendary actor. So, following and adopting some traits from the *Maula Jatt*, I myself build more upon the character of Noori Natt in *TLOMJ* as compared to the other characters in the film.

Have you ever thought the long title of the film should have Noori Natt in its name as well?

Actually, the protagonist and antagonist in Maula Jatt are like Batman and Joker in the DC series. The Joker character has a lot of performance potential, and every actor wants to play that important role. So Noori for me is such a multidimensional, multi-layered role with iconic dialogues that I could not say "no" when Bilal asked me and assured me I would do a good job at that. Then I was like, "Absolutely yes, I will do it."

It was when Bilal and I were visualizing the character of Maula Jatt that I landed the role of Maila Jatt. So in that vision, Fawad Khan fit in so well that there was no other thought. I think Fawad has absolutely outdone himself in this character, whether it is his physical transformation or his acting. I think no one else could do it that way.

It is true that you have signed a film project with Humayun Saeed. Tell us something about that.

Humayun Saeed is like a big brother to me. We have planned many things for the future, and we definitely will produce them. He is one of those few people to whom one cannot say no. But with whom-ever I work with, it must be within the limits of what Allah has set for us. I have surrendered myself completely to the teachings of Islam. I believe that Islam doesn't



prohibit art independently, but it does prohibit the wrong use of it. So I will definitely consider any project that does not contradict the Quran and Hadith. I regret having crossed those lines in the past, but from now on, I will be careful. I am now more concerned with life after death than with obtaining every benefit in this world.

So it's a big no to item numbers or JPNA-like films?

Not at all. I feel we put unnecessary things in our films just to add glamour, which most of the time gets us out of that circle defined by God. So, I'm not sure how many films I'd do in the future, but I'd be more interested in television drama, which I believe is the medium that is still working within the parameters set by Islam.

What would you say about it when we accept the violence being shown in the media, but when it comes to love and affection, we condemn it in the name of religion?

As far as the violence is concerned, that is actually the purpose of what you are trying to show through it. If you are trying to promote tyranny or extremism through fierceness, that is haram, but if your aim is to show a positive message, then there is no harm in it.

But when it comes to showing vulgarity, obscenity, and explicit physical contact, religion has guided us to take clear precautions on that. So anything against it would be against the teachings of Islam.



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