

Redefining Pak-US relations

By **Zahid Hussain**

WITH the last of the American soldiers packing to leave Afghanistan, post-9/11 US-Pakistan relations have come full circle. Originally touted as a strategic alliance, it morphed into a transactional one over the years. With American forces leaving Afghanistan, there is now a move to reset the alignment. There is, however, no indication yet of the relationship moving away from the Afghan pivot.

While the foreign policy priorities of the Biden administration are more or less defined, there is no likelihood of any major shift in its policy towards Pakistan. For the past several years, Washington has seen Pakistan purely from the Afghan prism and there is no indication that the Biden administration will be deviating from that policy approach.

Relations are likely to remain largely transactional with some convergence of interest between the two in the Afghan peace process. Pakistan's support remains critical for America's exit from Afghanistan and to bring to an end the two-decade-long war in the region. Fast-changing regional geopolitics including Pakistan's growing strategic nexus with China may also cast a shadow over the Biden administration's policy towards Islamabad.

It has been six months since the Biden administration took over, but there has not been any contact between the two erstwhile allies at the highest level. Except for a few telephonic conversations between senior American officials and the Pakistani civil and military leadership that largely revolved around Afghan conflict, there have not been any serious negotiations that could define the framework of the future course of bilateral ties. Lot of importance has been attached to the recent meeting between US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan and his Pakistani counterpart Moeed Yusuf in Geneva. It was the first face-to-face high-level official contact between the two governments. The meeting was reportedly held at very short notice. Jack Sullivan was attending a conference in the Swiss city.

A short joint statement issued after the talks said: "Both sides discussed a range of bilateral, regional, and global issues of mutual interest and discussed ways to advance practical cooperation." There is, however, no indication yet of the Biden administration willing to redefine its relationship with Pakistan beyond America's regional security prism. Pakistan is not only still important for the US for a smooth exit from Afghanistan but also for its post-withdrawal security plans in the region. In a recent statement, a Pentagon spokesman said that the Biden administration is in negotiations with Pakistan and other regional countries on the option of having US bases there.

Apparently, the US wants a presence in the region as part of its efforts to counter the global terrorist groups making Afghanistan the centre of their activities after the withdrawal of foreign forces. Washington also wants Pakistan to continue providing the US overflight access to Afghanistan after the troops' withdrawal. Surely after entering into an alliance with the US after 9/11 Pakistan did allow the use of its airbases for US planes in the invasion of Afghanistan. But those were closed down several years ago.

Pakistan has also provided ground and air lines of communication for supplies to Nato forces operating in Afghanistan. But they were closed for the supply of weapons. Pakistani officials have denied that any negotiation on military bases is being held with Washington. But the controversy over the issue refuses to die.

It remains unclear whether or not US Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin raised the issue of bases in his last telephonic conversation with army chief Gen Qamar Bajwa. The US officials would not comment on whether any serious negotiations on a 'possible basing agreement' is underway.

But it is very clear that the US wants to 'stay in the game' in Afghanistan and sees a role for Pakistan in this game. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken in a recent interview to BBC declared that it was in Pakistan's own interest to do so. He made it very clear that the US was only withdrawing its troops from the country and was not leaving Afghanistan.

This makes Pakistan's predicament more serious. The Afghan endgame remains tricky with the postponement of the peace conference in Istanbul after the Afghan Taliban's refusal to attend it. This has jeopardised the possibility of the Afghan government and the insurgent group reaching an agreement on the future political set-up in Afghanistan before the American withdrawal. The situation has become more complicated with the insurgents continuing their military offensive as the US is expected to complete the withdrawal of forces by July 4, weeks before the Sept 11 deadline.

Inevitably, the withdrawal of American forces from Afghanistan will have a huge impact on regional geopolitics. The country's strategic location has historically made it vulnerable to the involvement of outside powers and proxy battles.

A major concern has been that the American military withdrawal could lead Afghanistan to further descend into chaos fuelling a full-scale civil war with India, Russia and Iran backing different factions and dragging Pakistan into a protracted conflict. The spillover effects of spiralling instability and conflict in Afghanistan could be disastrous.

Meanwhile, changing regional geopolitics have created a new alignment of forces. The growing strategic alliance between the US and India and the China-Pakistan axis reflect these emerging geopolitics. Pakistan needs to tread a cautious path as it seeks to reset its relations with the United States.

Surely we must cooperate with the US in achieving peace in Afghanistan but it's not in our interest to become part of any new US 'game' in the region. The use of Pakistani soil

for America's post-withdrawal counter-insurgency strategy could suck the country into yet another conflict.

We certainly need to have a broad-based relationship with the US but should not get pulled into any new 'game' on America's behalf. The resetting of our relationship with America will certainly not be easy. We need to be extremely clear about our interests and priorities when negotiating the terms of the relationship.

The writer is the author of No-Win War — The Paradox of US-Pakistan Relations in Afghanistan's Shadow.

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Detoxifying the bureaucracy

A dose of Antepar needed?

By **Dr Farid A Malik**

The year was 2015, lists were being prepared for the promotion of the bureaucrats. Merit was being compromised for loyalty. A Grade 20 Joint Secretary was bypassed, in protest he not only took early retirement but decided to prepare a list of the officers who had jumped the queue and in return had sold their souls to the rulers. As leader of the opposition, Syed Khursheed Shah lodged a strong protest on the floor of the National Assembly.

The list was also discussed in the Core Committee meeting of the PTI (Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf). The electables prevailed, as for them it was business as usual, but for a party that stood for change it has proven to be lethal.

Without major detoxification of the bureaucrats, change cannot be delivered as their soul is not with them. All loyalty-driven promotions since 2008 in Sindh, Punjab and the Centre need to be investigated and reversed to achieve neutrality of this important pillar of governance.

As a child I remember that deworming was the most traumatic experience. There was only one distasteful medication available, called " Antepar ". It was a single dose of about 20 ml of the world's most abnoxious liquid which I had to gulp to get rid of the worms in my stomach. Though it was effective yet it was not easy to drink as every drop tasted like cyanide. My father insisted that all the boys should go through this exercise at least once a year. In the later years, I was told that much better tasting options were introduced in the market that were more palatable. As it was a black and white world in those days, inputs and output was clearly balanced. Those who ate and lived well were required to perform at that level, slackness was not permissible. I went to a private English-medium school on the Mall not too far from where we lived. When my old man dropped me there, he made it very clear that I had to pass every class on merit, otherwise he would send me to a less exclusive government school. I am sure the same sermon must have been repeated to my other siblings as all five of us completed our degrees which included foreign education as well.

Consumption without performance is a recipe for disaster that has been ongoing in the land of the pure since July 1977 when the third usurper took control of the country after dislodging the elected government of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto (ZAB). There was an era when

all civil servants showed up for work on time. The gates of the Secretariat were shut 15 minutes after the arrival time.

Senior officers holding important positions had a one-room office in their official residences for purpose of co-ordination, all official work was carried out in the designated offices only. There was no duplication or wastage of resources. Now empires have been built within the residences of the Chief Secretary, Commissioners and Deputy Commissioners which must be shut down to bring the focus back. Even the Prime Minister has a separate secretariat and residence, only the Presidency is all inclusive. Dr Arif Alvi enjoys this unique privilege of staying and working in the same building, and no one else should enjoy this luxury at state expense as it is counter-productive.

It is a fact that the Royal Colonial Bureaucracy enjoys widespread powers with almost no accountability as such, though their neutrality is vital for the state to function. If bonds of common loyalty are established between the unscrupulous politicians and the bureaucrats who manage the paperwork, the ultimate losers are the people. There is a famous Punjabi saying which warns of the danger in case the watchdog befriends the thieves (kutti ral gai choran nal). There are similar English proverbs as well; like 'fox guarding the henhouse' or 'bull in a china shop'. While the bulls continue to stampede us, there is no one to stop them. The loyalty chain runs deep. The courts, prosecution, law enforcement, dare not come in the way. In the end there is a mass cover-up, the ruins of the china shop do not provide strong enough proof that can lead to conviction of the corrupt. It is on record that the PML(N) never lost a by-election while in power, but now it continues to prevail while it is not running the government.

In the 1988 elections Pakistan People's Party (PPP) under the leadership of Benazir Bhutto prevailed, yet it lost all its vacated seats to the IJI in the by-elections. This 'magic spell' of the PML(N) in the largest province of the country has to be neutralized for normalcy to return. With his governance experience in KP, Kaptaan brought his confidant bureaucrats from there to run his Secretariat in Islamabad. The move has been counterproductive. Despite the same party being in power at the Centre and Punjab, serious governance voids exist. Co-ordination remains a big challenge. While able bureaucrats from KP are now running the PM Secretariat and may be trying their best, they have not been able to streamline the working of the bureaucracy in the country. In the end they have to cut a sorry figure.

Recently the Rawalpindi Ring Road and the Jahangir Khan Tareen (JKT) case is in the news, evidently both have been mishandled. Pakistan has a history of Ring Road scandals. The Lahore Ring Road is a prime example of manipulative realignments to serve vested interests. I am sure if all the route revisions are published, the Rawalpindi route

infringements would be easily understood. The 'Chakri Loop' on the M-2 Motorway is another disaster. It has not only increased the distance between Lahore and Islamabad by over 100 Kilometers, its gradient is unmanageable and deadly for heavy vehicles that suffer regular brake failures. Realignment of M-2 is urgently needed to get rid of this detour that has been costly for the travellers. Islamabad is a strange place where all misdeeds are recorded to be used at the appropriate time, but there is never a proactive intervention to stop the disorderly act. The JKT case falls in this category, where the empire decided to attack back after the beans had already been spilt.

While my friend Dr Ishrat Hussain continues to work on long-term reforms in the bureaucracy, the detoxification has to be done right away. It may not taste that good but with my childhood experience of deworming, I am sure it is worth the effort as it will significantly improve their health. Only a merit-driven, neutral administrative set-up can deliver good governance.

With its long stints in government, the PML(N) continues to remain in power through its influence in the bureaucracy. For change to take place, the bureaucrats have to be open-minded and neutral, which they are not. Merit must prevail for a meritorious outcome otherwise it will be business as usual. Detoxification is the way forward.

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Dealing with climate change challenge

All nations must do their bit

By **Malik Muhammad Ashraf**

Climate change triggered by the increased emissions of greenhouse gases is undoubtedly the biggest challenge facing humanity in the 21st century. Admittedly the failure of the international community to check the continued rise in temperature caused by the emission of greenhouse gases, can lead to catastrophic consequences. Therefore as reiterated by the UN Secretary General repeatedly it was absolutely essential to make peace with nature, meaning thereby that there was no escape from keeping the temperatures rising less than 1.5°C, as emphasized by the scientists and environmental experts.

The climate change phenomenon has already started having a devastating impact globally, and Pakistan is among the top 10 countries which have been bearing the brunt during the last 20 years. While the world is still indecisive and some countries are even showing reluctance to cut down on the greenhouse emissions, preferring industrial growth over it– notwithstanding two major protocols, namely the Kyoto and Paris Agreements in which commitments were made to fulfill the targets given to the industrial nations– the developing countries including Pakistan perforce have to devise their own strategies to minimize the impact of climate change till such time a collective will and commitment of the global community crystallizes to deal with the challenge.

Pakistan, particularly the PTI government, has rightly given top priority to putting in place steps and measures that can be helpful in lessening the debilitating impact of climate change. The government's landmark initiatives like the Billion Tree Tsunami have won international acclaim, including from the World Economic Forum. Pakistan also co-chaired the multibillion-dollar Green Climate Fund, established to support climate actions in developing countries, last year. It has also taken myriads of other initiatives including green economic stimulus, ecosystem Protection, wildlife management, the Protected Areas initiative and the Pakistan Clean Air Programme.

Prime Minister Imran Khan has been a vociferous advocate of collective action on climate change. In recognition of his discourses at the Convention of Biodiversity and in the UN General Assembly, and the nature-based solutions devised by the government as mentioned above, the UNEP has approached Pakistan for hosting the UN Environment Day 2021. It is indeed a great honour for Pakistan and an irrefutable acknowledgment of the positive steps that the country has taken to mitigate the impact of global change.

Hosting this event will surely bring positive projections for the country as it would afford it an opportunity to highlight its commitment and achievements at the global level, which can help other nations like Pakistan to deal with the phenomenon. This will be the first time in history that the country will be officially hosting the Day. Only four global personalities, including Prime Minister Imran Khan, the UN Secretary General, Pope Francis and German Chancellor Angela Merkel, have been selected to participate in the World Environment Conference this year.

Pakistan rightly felt incensed when US President Joe Biden, who had announced the USA's return to the Paris Protocol and convened the Leaders Summit on Climate Change, failed to extend an invitation to Pakistan for participation in the moot. Prime Minister Imran Khan, reacting to this questionable omission, said that he was puzzled at the cacophony over Pakistan not being invited to a conference on climate change. Citing the examples of the Clean and Green Pakistan campaign and the 10 billion-tree Tsunami initiative he reiterated "My government's environment policies are driven solely by our commitment to our future generations of a clean and green Pakistan to mitigate the impact of climate change." The foreign office emphasized, "Climate change is one of the defining challenges of our times that can only be countered through inclusive, cooperative and forward-looking policies. "

However, after realizing the mistake to omit Pakistan, the USA did extend an invitation to the SAPM to the Prime Minister to attend the conference, which he did and gave an exhaustive expose of the measures that Pakistan had taken in regards to fighting the effects of climate change and its future vision. The leaders' summit on climate change underscored the urgency and the economic benefits of strong climate action. It was termed as a key milestone on the road to the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26), to be held in Glasgow in November. The USA also committed to announce its own ambitious 2030 emissions target as its new Nationally Determined Contribution under the Paris Agreement.

The major contributors to the green-house gas emissions are China 30 percent, USA 15 percent, the EU nine percent, India seven percent, the Russian Federation five percent, Japan four percent while 30 percent is the share of the rest of the world. As is evident, the major responsibility lies on these countries to take effective measures to keep the temperature rise below 1.5°C while the rest of the countries also need to abide by the commitments made under the global Agreements.

The US return to the international protocols on climate change and renewed commitment in this regard is a significant development in regards to dealing with the impact of climate change. It is hoped that the other countries would also exhibit the same spirit and commitment to this collective challenge and would come up with the adoption of measures which not only help the industrialized nations, but also enable the badly

affected countries to fight the challenge and make their own contribution to the world effort.

The challenge needs to be tackled with impregnable solidarity among all the nations by keeping at bay the political and strategic considerations. It relates to the future of the entire humanity and the time is running out to stem the rot. A balance needs to be struck between development and environmental compulsions.

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India policy revisited

By **Javid Husain**

PAKISTAN'S India policy has generally suffered from the constant tussle between wishful thinking based on merely legal and moral arguments, on the one hand, and the compulsions of power realities at the national, regional and global levels, on the other. Our actual policy has vacillated between these two extremes creating the impression of confusion, inconsistency of purpose and lack of a sense of direction.

Our official pronouncements on India and Kashmir, the core dispute, are generally tactical and short-term in nature responding to day-to-day developments. They do not reflect a well-crafted long-term policy which is grounded in power realities and which weaves its political, economic, military and diplomatic dimensions into a coherent whole within the framework of a grand strategy. What we need is a long-term and strategic approach to give a sense of direction and steadiness of purpose to our India policy.

Our long-term India policy must be based on an accurate understanding of India's strategic goals in the region, the demands of Pakistan's independence, security and economic progress, and the regional and global strategic environment. India's main strategic goal is to establish its hegemony in South Asia and the India Ocean region. It views an independent and strong Pakistan as the biggest hurdle in the fulfilment of its hegemonic ambitions. According to Indian security analyst C. Raja Mohan, the creation of Pakistan left India with a persistent conflict with the former and an internal Hindu-Muslim divide, separated India geographically from Afghanistan and Iran, and created profound problems for India's engagement with the Muslim Middle East.

India's hegemonic ambitions in the region pose an enduring threat to Pakistan's independence, security and economic well-being over and above the negative repercussions of Kashmir, Sir Creek, Siachen and Pakistan-India water disputes. These factors are major obstacles in the way of good-neighbourly relations between the two countries. There are no indications that in the foreseeable future India will give up its hegemonic ambitions or agree to a just settlement of the Kashmir dispute. The coming decades will witness continued tensions and hostility between the two states.

The balance of power between Pakistan and India, more than anything else, will determine the shape of their future relationship and the ultimate outcome of their outstanding disputes, especially on Kashmir. So it is imperative for Pakistan to build up its relative national power vis-à-vis India. On the other hand, India can be expected to employ every instrument of policy, overtly and covertly, to destabilise Pakistan politically and weaken it economically, to bring it to its knees for the sake of establishing its hegemony in the region and achieving the settlement of outstanding disputes on its own terms. It will not

desist even from fomenting terrorism in Pakistan as the arrest of Indian spy Kulbhusan Jadhav in Balochistan in March 2016 conclusively proves.

Pakistan must formulate its long-term India policy keeping in view the foregoing analysis and the growing strategic partnership between the US and India to contain the expansion of China's power and influence in South Asia and the Indian Ocean region, which inevitably will push Pakistan closer to China so as to maintain a strategic balance in South Asia. In the long run, Pakistan's security will be ensured primarily by its political stability, economic and technological power, and a credible security deterrent.

Simultaneously, we should pursue a low-risk and non-adventurist foreign policy to minimise chances of a major armed conflict, allowing the country to allocate the lion's share of its resources to economic development. Trade with India should be conducted on a level playing field while promoting Pakistan's economic growth and well-being.

Within this framework, Pakistan should try to defuse tensions and adopt confidence-building measures in its relations with India while maintaining a principled position on outstanding disputes like Kashmir, Sir Creek and Siachen. In view of India's hegemonic ambitions and intransigence, any breakthrough in the settlement of the Kashmir dispute can be safely ruled out in the foreseeable future. The best that can be hoped for in the short term is the cessation of hostilities across the Line of Control and efforts to safeguard the human rights of Kashmiris in Indian-occupied Kashmir through demilitarisation and local autonomy. For the long term, Pakistan should build up its national power, especially its economic and technological strength, and go for a final settlement at an opportune time.

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India's Operation Blue Star: A Tragic Memory

Why India fears the Sikh national movement

By **Sajjad Shaukat**

'Operation Blue Star' was an Indian military operation which occurred between 3–8 June 1984, ordered by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, to win control over the Harmandir Sahib (Golden Temple) complex, the holiest shrine of the Sikhs in Amritsar, Punjab, and to arrest Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale and his armed followers from the complex buildings. Bhindranwale had earlier taken residence in the Harmandir Sahib and made it his headquarters in April 1980. Bhindranwale was the only leader who had boldly been fighting for the genuine rights of the Sikhs.

The Indian Army led by General Kuldeep Singh Brar, supported by troops and armoured vehicles, broke all records of state terrorism and extra-judicial killings through that barbaric operation.

However, at that time, there were only 251 Sikhs inside the complex to protect the Harmandir Sahib, and to resist the well-trained Indian army, equipped with sophisticated weaponry. In those days, the majority of the Sikhs were coming to the temple complex to celebrate the Martyr Day of Guru Arjun Dev.

Then the Indian regime used tanks and destroyed the Akaal Takht Sahib which is right in front of the Harmandir Sahib. On June 6, when all Sikh fighters were martyred along with Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, Indian troops entered the temple complex with their shoes, deliberately ignoring the holiness of the place, showing utter indecency. When the Indian Army felt that only 251 men had prevented them from entering the Harmandir Sahib for so many days, they started killing innocent Sikhs who had come there to visit the temple. The only purpose was to hide their humiliation.

In this regard, in their book, *The Sikh Struggle*, Ramnarain Kumar and George Sieberer write, "The army killed every Sikh who could be found inside the temple-complex. They were hauled out of rooms, brought to corridors on the circumference of the temple and with their hands tied behind their back, were shot in cold blood. Among the victims were many old men, women and children." However, all visitors were locked up in rooms for two days without any food, water, or electricity and were starved to death. Besides, the Harmandir Sahib remained under the army control for many months."

The brutality of 'Operation Blue Star' was not confined to the Harmandir Sahib. Indian armed forces simultaneously attacked 40 other historic gurdwaras all over East Punjab.

When Sikhs in other states came to know about the desecration of the Harmandir Sahib and the massacre of their brethren, they quickly left for Punjab. New Delhi tried to stop them before they could reach Punjab. Many Sikhs were assassinated on the way and many others were arrested.

According to an estimate, about 50,000 Sikhs were killed within a few days. The whole of Amritsar city was sealed and was burnt. A number of tourists either were murdered or arrested. Shops belonging to Sikhs were looted and their houses were set ablaze by Hindu mobs. In most of the cases, Sikh women were molested and some persons of their community were also burnt.

Another tragic dimension of the operation is that historical Sikh artifacts, including all the literature written by the gurus, was also set ablaze by the Indian army. But New Delhi fabricated a false story by claiming that it was burnt, while bombing the Harmandir Sahib. In the same year of November, two dedicated Sikhs named Beant Singh and Satwant Singh, policemen who were posted at Ptine Minister Indira Gandhi's residence in New Delhi, assassinated her. Then Hindu riots erupted in the capital and other cities in which more than 15,000 Sikhs were murdered in broad daylight by the supporters of Indira Gandhi, while police watched silently so as to provide the Hindus with a free hand to massacre Sikhs.

Nevertheless, the attack on the Harmandir Sahib and genocide of Sikhs accelerated the liberation movement for Khalistan as Bhindranwale became a folk hero.

Meanwhile, after 'Operation Blue Star' and the Sikh genocide, the Sikhs' struggle for independence continued, but the Indian government made every effort to crush it with the state machinery. To maintain its control over the Harmandir Sahib, another attack was launched on the Temple in 1987, called 'Operation Black Thunder'.

This time only Sikh resistance, which was the natural outcome of the tragedy, was the main target. In that respect, quite a number of people of the community were killed and dead bodies lay inside the sacred place for many days.

According to a report, many trucks were loaded with dead bodies and all were burned with kerosene oil. Afterwards, 'Operation Woodrose' and 'Operation Black Thunder-II' were conducted against the Sikh community, which also assassinated them extra-judicially.

After these barbaric operations, Sikhs organised themselves into an armed power in order to fight the Indian state terrorism. Many Sikhs left India to escape religious persecution. Sikhs have spread out all over the world to keep the movement of Khalistan alive. In this connection, their struggle is still going on.

We may conclude in the words of, a renowned scholar, Dr. Sangat Singh who writes in his book, *The Sikhs in History*, "The Indian government has killed over 1 million to 1.2 million Sikhs. Since 1947, the Indian government has also killed 50,000 Christians and 100,000

Muslims. The only way to stop this state terrorism is to create a Khalistan state, where Sikhs and other religious people can enjoy their freedom."

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Muslim-Jewish ties

By **Muhammad Ali Siddiqi**

THROUGHOUT history, Muslims and Jews have lived in peace, in sharp contrast to the persecution the followers of Judaism suffered during the 2,000 years of their life in Europe's ghettos. That Arabs and Jews were Semites only partly explains the reason for Muslim tolerance; Turks and Persians aren't Semites, but they treated the Jews with respect.

One major reason why the Arabs valued and sought Jewish cooperation was the financial problem faced by the Umayyad caliphate stretching from Iberia to Sindh. Lacking experience in governance, the Arabs had to rely on the Jews and Persians because of their vast experience in the collection and management of revenues. The caliphate didn't have a coinage of its own, and all official transactions were done in Roman and Persian (and partly Ethiopian) coins. It was on Jewish commendation that the Arabs moved in that direction, and the first Arab coin was minted during the reign of Abdul Malik bin Marwan (ruled 685-705). That the coin, called 'dinar' (derived from Roman denarius) had Jewish symbols, including the menorah, shows their influence with Arab rulers.

As Abba Eban in his fascinating book, *My People*, remarks, under Muslim rule "world Jewry entered into a new period of physical and intellectual expansion. [...]he Jews not only retained their ancestors' creed but gained new strength in the land of Muslim conquest". The change in power structure from the Arabs to the various Turkic tribes didn't affect the Jewish people. When the first Crusade took Palestine (1099) it had a Christian majority, but the European knights slaughtered the Jews as well, and it was Saladin who brought them back. Also at Saladin's court was the greatest Jewish thinker, Maimonides (Moses ben Maimon), who was born in Spain. The finest account of Moorish Spain as a joint Arab-Jewish enterprise is given by Eban, whose book dwells at length on Spanish society and the cultural activity of the elite of which the Jews were an integral part.

As in Palestine, so in Spain, as the Reconquista began, Jews, too, had their throats slit. When he heard of this genocide, Ottoman sultan Bayazit II wondered how Ferdinand and Isabella could kill the goose that laid the golden egg. Bayazit then offered asylum to the persecuted Jews in his empire. Today's Bulgarian Jews are the descendants of the Spanish Jews who the Ottoman sultan had offered asylum.

Throughout the Middle Ages and right up to the modern times, the periodic massacre of Jews was a regular feature of European life. In his book, *The First Crusade*, Thomas Asbridge quotes an eyewitness as saying that Jews were "killed like oxen and dragged through the marketplaces and streets like sheep to the slaughter". As Crusaders planned to go to the holy land, a Jewish chronicler summed up their feelings in these words: "here are the Jews dwelling among us, whose ancestors killed [Jesus Christ] and crucified him

groundlessly. Let's take vengeance upon them. Let us wipe them out as a nation. Israel's name will be mentioned no more. Or else let them be like us and acknowledge [Christ]". Such was the 'sadistic persecution' of the Jews and the geographical expanse of the flames of death and destruction that Asbridge quoting other authorities calls it "the first holocaust". As Barbara Tuchman points out in her book *Bible and Sword*, by the Third Crusade (1190) "the association of Crusade and pogrom was automatic".

The coming of modern times made no difference to the plight of European Jews. In the 1890s, Theodor Herzl, covering the trial of Alfred Dreyfus, a French Jew accused of spying for Prussia, heard the crowd shouting: "à mort les Juifs!" ("Death to the Jews!")

In Russia in 1881, writes Tuchman, "a mass savagery on a scale and to a degree of brutality unknowns since the Middle Ages exploded upon the Jews". Hitler, she says, "added the concentration camps and the gas chambers but otherwise he invented nothing. It had all been done before in Czarist Russia."

How have a section of descendants of the European Jews responded to the Muslim goodwill mentioned above? Here are two quotes: Menachem Begin, one of Zionism's ruthless murderers, told the *New York Times* Palestinians would be crushed "like grasshoppers ... heads smashed against the boulders and walls", while Rafael Eitan, chief of staff of the Israeli Defence Forces (1978-83), expressed himself thus: "When we have settled the land, all the Arabs will be able to do about will be to scurry around like drugged cockroaches in a bottle." And here is Robert Fisk at Sabra-Chatila: "Women lying ... with their skirts torn up their waists [...], children with their throats cut, rows of young men shot in the back [...]. There were babies — blackened babies because they had been slaughtered more than 24 hours earlier... "

The writer is Dawn's External Ombudsman.

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The trumpet of growth

By **Khurram Husain**

IT'S always the same story, regardless of the government in power. They enter, there is a crisis, they go to the IMF, a painful adjustment follows in which the rupee is devalued, interest rates are raised, growth plummets, and a rain of taxes falls upon the people. This continues for a couple of years by when the government has been skewered and raked over the coals by the opposition for its anti-people policies. Once stability returns, the fiscal and current account deficits shrink and reserves climb, the government in power spends its way back to growth in its thirst to show some tangible results. This causes the deficits to return, the reserves to fall, and brings the country back to the IMF, but by then the government is gone and another one is in power.

This cycle has repeated itself for over 30 years now, with some minor differences between one cycle and the next. For example, the regime of Gen Musharraf managed to ride the growth spurt for a few years more than most, mainly because he was showered with dollars in massive quantities from abroad as his reward for cooperating with the Americans and their war in Afghanistan. His team denied all along that foreign funds had anything to do with their growth story. They preferred to cast it as the fruits of their own labours, saying it was underwritten by their reforms.

In some cases growth has been accompanied by inflation, but in others it has not. Some growth cycles have impacted the rural areas and the agricultural economy more than the urban, industrial one. Some have been spurred by large government spending on massive infrastructure projects, financed through the development budget or via FDI as the CPEC inflows were classified, while others have utilised government resources through other means to spur growth.

But it never fails. A few years' worth of an adjustment is all anybody can take over here and as soon as the deficits are curbed and reserves have risen, they want to get on with the business of spending it all away. This is why our growth spurts are always short-lived. It is also why they always end in a crash.

This same story is repeating itself one more time as the government and its minions get busy with extolling the return of growth. Never mind disputing the four per cent figure they have projected for GDP growth for this fiscal year. We can dispute government data all we want, but at the end of the day that is all we have to work with. Besides there is plenty of corroboration from industry that the wheels of the economy have begun to move again and are gathering speed.

But the wheels of the economy are not the only thing spinning these days. The return of growth is being hailed by the government in triumphalist tones that are almost identical

to those used by everybody before them. In some cases, a few among their ranks are seen going overboard. One particularly committed soul with close ties to the prime minister was seen congratulating everyone on social media on the growth in banking-sector deposits, taking the dance of growth to absurd levels.

But the past has taught us a few lessons about how to view economic growth in Pakistan. First among these lessons is to never — ever — buy a growth story that is unaccompanied by reforms. And reforms does not mean incentive packages. They mean broadening the tax base and export base, increases in productivity, improvement in the regulatory environment and such deeper adjustments to the underpinnings of the economy.

This government has no reform story. None whatsoever. They have started down one road and abandoned it to start down another. Remember the base broadening initiative by Shabbar Zaidi? Where does all that effort stand today? What reforms have been brought in the power sector? The amendments to the State Bank Act lie dead in the water with nobody to champion them anymore.

Fact is this growth spurt is nothing more than the effects of a massive stimulus that the government administered to the economy around summer of last year. All governments administered a stimulus to boost their economies during the Covid months, but in many of those the effect of the stimulus was diluted by the aggressive mitigation measures they were forced to take as pandemic-related fatalities were mounting.

The size of the stimulus can be debated. The interest rate cut alone, for example, gave a stimulus equal to 5pc of GDP, which is larger than anything I can remember. Add up to this all the other measures via government spending and other SBP actions, and you are talking of an unprecedented boost given by government to the economy in Pakistan's recent history. It is not very surprising that it has given us 4pc growth so far with more to come.

The question to always ask when this sort of thing happens is "can it last?" Usually whenever growth begins the vulnerabilities that will swamp it down the road start appearing at the same time. You see it this time too. The government tells you exports have risen more than 11pc in the months running from January to March. But you won't hear them tell you that the trade deficit in the same period has risen by 29pc. They will argue some of this increase is one-off due to imports of food in December. But all signs at the moment are pointing towards a rising trade deficit since almost all raw materials used in our industry are imported, with a few important exceptions like cotton, which had to be imported this year due to a crop failure.

I have said it before and it bears repeating. Investment without savings, expenditures without revenues are like a drug for any economy. What we are seeing today is not growth as much as the rush that comes with the injection of a stimulant.

The writer is a business and economy journalist.

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