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The year 2017 sets in with more vulnerable and dimly stable world with continual rise of threats and conflicts amongst nations and groups hence marring further the global stability and security. Humanity is still facing grim hopes of coming out from war, deaths, upheavals, struggle and fight for power, diseases, huge displacements, refugees, and environment disasters and unresolved conflicts in Palestine, Kashmir, Nagorno-Karabakh, Cyprus, Syria, Afghanistan and many others. The world bid adieu to 2016 with Donald Trump in highest and most powerful office of the world as the 45th President of the United States of America, Britain’s referendum of opting out of Europe (Brexit), fall of David Cameron, amplifying influence and inference of Russia in world politics, China’s OBOR and economic corridors remained the highlights of the year. The year also ended with rise of threat of ISIS and the humanitarian crisis in Syria where world orders are contending for supremacy and domination. So far the year 2016 has remained the most momentous political years of our time while providing historic dimensions and transformative events to the world stage whose effects will be visible in coming years and days ahead. As far as the expectations and upcoming changes in the year 2017 are concerned, we will observe the somewhat similar fireworks in the year around too with talks on Brexit and related will continue with all eyes on the European elections in France, Germany and Netherlands. Britain has also recently presented its blueprint for Brexit to begin the process of officially quitting the EU following last year’s historic referendum vote. It has been observed the transformation of power from the historic legacy of Barack Obama to Donald Trump when later took oath amid fierce resistance and huge demonstrations against his Presidency across the world including the US. World is hoping to expect Mr. Trump to remain tolerant and accommodating as compared to what he has shown his muscles so far, be that of his tweets or his recent ban on immigrants. Although, there is no doubt that Mr. Trump will put his country’s interests at first but there is also a need to make serious moves to handle the complicated issues especially those of international problems in rational and considerate manner. We will be expecting Presidential elections in Iran also in coming May and there is complexity involved while US-Iran relations are concerned. With historic nuclear deal between the countries in 2015, Iran will continue to stick by it despite the fact that Mr. Trump seems very of Iran at the outset. China and Russia reflected in BRICS Summit to become strategic allies after several decades while both powers are together at Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) which will observe its first expansion after sixteen years of its existence at the Summit in Astana where Pakistan and India will join the groupings as permanent members.

For Pakistan, the year 2016 was mix of successes and failures on several fronts but still there is more hope from the new year since Pakistan is on the way to highest in terms of achieving relative stability like for instance cordoning the menace of terrorism with full force. Gen Raheel Sharif completed its full term and new Gen is in charge of the operation with both military and civilian government is on the same page to have zero-tolerance approach towards all forms of militancy. After the historic operationalisation of Gwadar port-crown of China-Pakistan-Economic Corridor last year, Pakistan is opening to new markets with steadfast pace. CPEC project completed its full one year with short and long term projects are on the full swing to complete. Many other countries have shown keen interest in investing in CPEC projects including Central Asian Republics and many others. Pakistan’s relations with Russia have improved and several key high level delegations were exchanged during last year and hope exists on both sides for further improvement. Pakistan’s US relations are evolving and they are complex. Some of the measures taken by the Trump administration few days after the inauguration reflect that Pakistan need to ready to expect the unexpected. Ask to CIA to be ready for war against “Islamic Terrorism”, suspension of refugee program, visa ban on seven Muslim countries where Pakistanis and Afghans face “extreme vetting”. On the other hand at the domestic front, Panama case and new building of alliances of opposition against the incumbent government is carrying on with new Chief Justice is in charge. Another important step that needs to be taken is census in 2017 while electoral reforms need to be reviewed, documented, concluded and implemented in their full spectrum. Pakistan needs also make its house in order to make the swift and desired progress in all the sectors and in all spectrums of the affairs to be the considered as a serious and robust player in the international political system. We wish our readers new year and pray that this year brings peace, prosperity and development to the country which will open new corridors of happiness to entire nation.
At the end of 1991 and the beginning of 1992, Armenia initiated combat operations on the territory of Azerbaijan. As a result, a significant part of the territory of Azerbaijan, including its Nagorno-Karabakh region and seven adjacent districts, was occupied by Armenia.

On the night of February 25-26, the armed forces of Armenia, with the support of irregular armed bands and terrorist groups, as well as with the direct participation of the infantry guards regiment No. 366 of the former USSR, seized the town of Khojaly and perpetrated atrocious massacre of the civilian population of the town. In a few hours 613 civilians were killed including 106 women, 63 children, moreover, 1,275 inhabitants were taken hostage, while the fate of 150 persons remains unknown to this day. In the course of the massacre 487 inhabitants of Khojaly were severely maimed, including 76 children under the age. 6 families were completely wiped out, 26 children lost both parents, and 130 children lost one of their parents. Of those who perished, 56 persons were killed with special cruelty: by burning alive, scalping, beheading, gouging out eyes, and bayoneting pregnant women in the abdomen.

Armenians outraged upon survivors. They scalped, cut people’s head and other organs off, extracted eyes of children, chopped stomachs of pregnant women. Episodes of Khojaly genocide are really terrifying. Ms. Antiga, the resident of Khojaly, was burned alive because she did not say “these places are part of Great Armenia”. Khojaly resident Sariya Talibova said that, “heads of four Meskheti Turks and three Azeri Turks were cut off over an Armenian grave. Then they extracted eyes of two Azeris”. All these facts prove that Armenia committed genocide against civil population, violating Geneva Conventions.

The following elements of the crime of genocide, as defined under international law, are present with regard to the attacks on civilians in Khojaly: the actus reus consisting of killing and causing serious bodily or mental harm; the existence of a protected group being targeted by the authors of the criminal conduct; and the specific genocidal intent to annihilate, in whole or in part, a group distinguished on racial, ethnic, national or religious grounds. According to the findings of the investigation, the following requirements are met for the purpose of sustaining the genocidal charges with regard to the crime committed in Khojaly: the clear and convincing proof of the intent to destroy the group in whole or in part; the fact that the destruction that took place in Khojaly was “significant” enough to affect the defined group as a whole; and the crime was committed within a specific geographic locality.
The key provisions of international responsibility are laid down in the articles on State responsibility adopted by the United Nations International Law Commission on 9 August 2001 and commended to States by the General Assembly on 12 December 2001. According to article 1, “every internationally wrongful act of a State entails the international responsibility of that State”, while article 2 provides that “there is an internationally wrongful act of a State when conduct consisting of an action or omission (a) is attributable to the State under international law; and (b) constitutes a breach of an international obligation of the State”. Article 4 (1) of the articles on State responsibility addresses the question of the attribution of conduct to a State, and declares that: The conduct of any State organ shall be considered an act of that State under international law, whether the organ exercises legislative, executive, judicial or any other functions, whatever position it holds in the organization of the State, and whatever its character as an organ of the central government or of a territorial unit of the State.

Thomas de Waal, a famous expert on Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, in his book “Black Garden” cites remarks by Serzh Sargsyan, the then “field commander” and current president of Armenia, from an interview with him: “Before Khojaly, the Azerbaijanis thought that they could joke with us, they thought that the Armenians were not capable of raising their hand at the civilian population. We managed to break this (stereotype). That is what happened.”

Till date 13 parliaments of the world countries, as well as Senate of Pakistan, and more than 20 legislative bodies of US States have recognized the Khojaly events as genocide and adopted relevant resolutions and other documents on the issue. It should be particularly noted that Armenians have destroyed Islamic monuments, mosques and shrines, and insulted these places by using them as barn for pigs. The main aim was to lose tracks of Islam in the occupied lands. Organization of Islamic Cooperation has passed a number of resolutions on Khojaly Genocide, the last one of them was adopted by the 42nd session of the Council of Foreign Ministers which was held in Kuwait, in 2015. Moreover, on February 1, 2017, Parliamentary Union of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation unanimously adopted resolutions at the 12th session of the PUIC Conference held in Bamako, Mali, recognizing the Khojaly events of 1992 as genocide.

There are also UN Security Council resolutions 822, 853, 874, 884 which demands immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of all Armenian forces from all the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. Regrettfully, these resolutions have not been implemented yet.

It is obvious that impunity still enjoyed by the perpetrators of the crimes continues to impede progress in achieving the long-awaited peace and reconciliation between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Therefore, the establishment of truth in respect to gross violations of international humanitarian and human rights law committed during the conflict, the provision of adequate and effective reparations to victims and the need for institutional actions to prevent the repetition of such violations are all necessary adjuncts to true conflict resolution. Consequently, ending impunity is essential not only for the purposes of identifying the responsibility of parties to the conflict and individual perpetrators, the achievement of which is undoubtedly imperative per se, but also for ensuring sustainable peace, truth, reconciliation, the rights and interests of victims and the well-being of society at large.

*Courtesy by Embassy of Republic of Azerbaijan to Pakistan*
The "comfort women" is an historical black scar on the face of Japan and the feud has not been washed out despite diplomatic efforts and Japan’s political normalization with South Korea since 1965. The issue stays alive as a bitter memory and hurts the feelings of Japan’s number of neighbors. The issue often erupts and spoils goodwill created between Japan and its eastern neighbors.

Japan’s relations with many East Asian nations often bogged down on historical issues – something a very peculiar situation than other regions. There always remains an undercurrent of past incidents that are buried long ago through diplomatic and political efforts but un-surfaced time and again. The recycle continues. This also undermines the level of economic achievements made between Japan and several of East Asian countries.

Relations have never remained tranquil between Japan and the Republic South Korea. They have deep-rooted historical differences. Japan was an imperial power colonizing Korea during 1910-1945. The diplomatic scuffle often erupts between the two countries. Recently, harsh diplomatic words were exchanged and actions were taken by both sides. Japan has its own logic of dealing a number of historical, territorial, and diplomatic issues with South Korea. The former has its own way of dealing with Japan.

The Comfort Women

During wars powerful nations often committed many crimes. These included sexual crimes. On the forefront of these sexual crimes was imperial Japan. The “comfort women” is the latest heated feud erupted in the South Korean capital of Seoul. Bronze statues of comfort women have been erected in Seoul in December 2011 and Busan in December 2016 in front of the Japanese diplomatic missions, reminding Japanese about sexual atrocities passed onto the unfortunate slave Korean women, kept by Japanese imperial army during wars to appease Japanese soldiers.

These women are known as “ianfu” (in Japanese meaning ‘comfort women’), “halmoni”, (in Korean) “grandmothers” a euphemism for innocent women provided forced sex to Japanese soldiers and worked in brothels in Japan and other places during wars for Japanese army.

The comfort women brought in from Korean Peninsula as it was not divided then and was under Japan’s control. Therefore, women from North Korea were also systematically molested by force by Japanese soldiers. This provides a common ground to arch rivals, the two Koreas, to stand up for the same cause against Japan together. The issue is a point of divide between South Korea and Japan but it could be point of unification between the North and South Korea.

The comfort women also brought in from China, the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia and elsewhere in Japanese occupied territories and all together they ranged up to 410,000. It is estimated that half of those comfort women were unfortunate Korean women. Japan disputes the figure and says there was no official record of comfort women and the number was exaggerated.

Many of comfort women died of forced abortions, sexual diseases, physical beatings, and tortures in army camps. Many of them were also trained for fights. Japanese army institutionalized the brothel system of comfort women at large scale throughout in East Asia and the Pacific. For soldiers, comfort women were a gift for their national service. This attracted more young Japanese to join the army. Comfort women were not prostitutes because they did not receive any money for the sex service they offered but kept as slave worse than caged animals. Comfort women were sent to other places in East Asia and the Pacific that were under Japanese imperial soldiers. The centuries old dignity of Asian women was molested and slurred by imperial Japanese forces.

The full contents of the issue was unsurfaced in 1987 but Japan continuously denied all such claims for long. The issue was brought to light by researchers and Japan admitted that the episode was not a fiction but a cruel reality. The issue erupted in the 1990s in South Korea. Then Japan offered an apology in 1993 but the issue did not resolve. Japan, however, argued that the San Francisco Treaty of 1951 solved all such issues but the governments in South Korea, China, and the Philippines asked for the settlement of the issue.
Prime Minister Shinzo Abe twisted on the issue. He repudiated the 1993 apology. He found the issue of comfort women somewhat “groundless” during his first term in office but admitted “human trafficking” of women. Japan objects the term “comfort women” and “sex slaves” too. Human trafficking could be right in the sense that Japanese recruiters and their collaborators in the occupied territories in the 1930s lured Asian women with lucrative jobs and opportunities but finally used them for forced sexual relationship. In that sense, the term “human trafficking” virtually turned into “sexual slavery”.

In 2014, more than hundred of the South Korean comfort women filed a lawsuit against their own government, demanding restoration of human dignity and compensation. The lawsuit is still pending.

The Diplomatic Fire

The feud is not yet over and it continues to damage diplomatic ties between Tokyo and Seoul. In the recent retaliatory spat of row, Japan recalled its ambassador, Yasumasa Nagamine, from Seoul on 9 January, and Yasuhiro Morimoto, the consul general of Japan in Busan. For Japan, the erection of these statues are “regrettable and deplorable”. Tokyo wants the removal of the statues and resolution of the issue in accordance with the agreement reached when Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida struck the deal with South Korean Foreign Minister Yun Byung—seon 28 December 2015. The issue is there for quite some time but the recent diplomatic move by Tokyo was taken as somewhat its overreaction.

Many in Seoul demand compensation, which Tokyo claimed has been paid, amounting to US$ 8.6 million to help comfort women. For Japan, the chapter on comfort women was closed down. Prime Minister Abe offered an apology too, which was seen as a big event in resolving the issue. Prime Minister Abe:

“Expresses anew his most sincere apologies and remorse to all the women who underwent immeasurable and painful experiences and suffered incurable physical and psychological wounds.”

His apology did not go far enough. Activists in Seoul, however, claim that enough compensation had not been paid. Earlier, as mentioned above, Japan offered the landmark apology in 1993. Japan wants South Korea to respect the agreement, compensation deed, and to remove these statues, which South Korean human rights associations considered “peace statues”. Prime Minister Abe considered South Korean action somewhat as scam. The South Korean Government is in lurch. It has become a hostage between Japan and local activists. Much could not be done by the government and it appears handicapped. The government is in limbo on this divide.

The Park Connection

There is a linkage between President Park Geun-hyeeand comfort women issue. She has been impeached and the Prime Minister Hwang Kyo-ahn has taken the responsibilities of the President but he has no political influence to remove these statues erected in Seoul and Busan. Park President was considered a “pro-Japanese collaborator” and friendly to Prime Minister Abe together with her corruption charges.

Her father Park Chung-hee was considered a “pro-Japanese general” who served in Japanese army during World War 11 and imposed the military dictatorship in South Korea for 18 years until his assassination in 1979. The South Korean government also faced unfriendliness within home because of these grave linkages of impeached President Park and her friendly gesture toward Japan. President Park was easily kicked out because of the comfort women fury. She was impeachment on the charges of abuse of power, nepotism, and corruption. Her impeachment also illustrates the unpopularity of comfort women agreement of her government. Over 80 percent South Korean favor her impeachment.

The Activists’ Pursuits

The local activists want to return the amount of compensation and even they disparage their own government in dealing with Japan over the comfort women. Activists considered that the remaining surviving comfort women were not taken into confidence when President Park signed the agreement with Japan. About 40 such surviving comfort women are in South Korea. President Park was in hurry to defuse the tension with Japan but it fired back.

Activists do not want to remove these statues, which they argue, are built on their own soil. Besides statues in Seoul and Busan, there are at least 53 statues all over the country built by civic groups. The statues are legacy of the war. These statues are not sponsored by the government but by civic groups. The activists considered comfort women as an “historical social stigma” on their society and hold Japanese responsible for that heinous crime. They regularly protest in front of the Japanese embassy in Seoul on every Wednesday and want to remind the Japanese of this inhuman social stigma as a black mark on the face of Korea. They regularly protest in front of the Japanese embassy in Seoul on every Wednesday and want to remind the Japanese of this inhuman social stigma as a black mark on the face of Korea. Amidst protest in Seoul, a monk in Seoul set himself ablaze and seriously injured protesting against the crime Japanese soldiers have committed against the Korean women in the 1930s and 1940s and the deal Seoul struck with Tokyo last year. Later he died in a Seoul hospital as he could not recover from burns.

Activists considered Japanese Government action of recalling its ambassador as a retaliatory measure instead of paying heed to the issue of comfort women and its resolution. Activists want to renegotiate the December 2015 agreement, an official apology by Japan, and a fund to compensate comfort women. Japan needs to satisfy the activities. This aspect of the foreign policy has been taken up and hijacked by the activists, obfuscating the issue further.
The Diplomatic Spade

Tokyo also suspended all diplomatic activities with Seoul until the matter was resolved. Japan poured the oil in the fire as it recalled its high-level diplomats from South Korea instead of paying heed to the resolution of the issue. Tokyo is waiting and watching the evolving political situation in Seoul also to see how the issue will be sort out and how diplomats will return to South Korea and resume normalcy.

Apart from the comfort women issue, the island of Dokdo (in Korean) and Takashima (in Japanese) is another source of contention between Tokyo and Seoul. Following the dispute, Japan also recalled its ambassador to Tokyo in 2012. The island is controlled by South Korea.

A day earlier than the erection of the statute in Busan, Japanese Defense Minister, Tomomi Inada, visited the Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo where Japanese war dead are buried, triggering emotional controversy between Japan and Seoul. Following the dispute, Japan also recalled its ambassador to Tokyo in 2012. The island is controlled by South Korea.

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Toward Reconciliation

The present diplomatic escalation of tension, however, looks temporary and will find a resolution at the end but the issue is not going away sooner. The comfort women ghost will continue to hound Japanese-Korean relations and the mutual diplomacy could not bury the ghost altogether. Much of the tension is on the South Korean side as it is the victim. There is political uncertainty and the government is in complete turmoil in Seoul. The South Korea, Government might relocate these statues out of front of Japanese missions but might not remove them altogether. There is a strong political connotation behind these statues. The spade will continue in some shape in the future too. A complete resolution is out of the hook.

Many questions will arise: Will Seoul remove these comfort women statues as demands by Japan? Will South Korean society abide by the agreement signed in December 2015? Will Japan also terminate paying tributes to the Yasukuni Shrine in a bid to improve relations with Seoul? Will Tokyo offer an official apology on the comfort women issue to South Korea? Finally, will Japan set up a comprehensive fund to compensate all comfort women as a token of defusing tension with South Korea? These are thorny questions and one sees how both countries would overcome these differences especially after the new elected government takes charge in Seoul after the impeachment hearing.

The writer is an eminent expert on the Asia-Pacific. He holds doctorate from La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia. Previously, he worked for the Korea Foundation in Seoul and Japan Foundation in Tokyo. Currently, he is a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad.
Energy Expo in Kazakhstan 2017
Muhammad Asif Noor

Just less than five months before “EXPO-2017-Future Energy” is opening in Astana, many large and huge investment and energy related companies are preparing to participate in one of the largest energy exhibition in Kazakhstan starting from June till September this year. International Exhibitions Bureau(BIE) chosen Astana as the venue to host EXPO-2017, which will focus on the theme “Future Energy”. This theme is meant to highlight the “future of energy but also on innovative and practical energy solutions and their global impact”. It also aims at creating a global debate between countries, groups, NGOs, companies and general public on the crucial aspect of ensuring safe and sustainable access to energy for all. Here being a leading energy hub and producer, role of Kazakhstan in organizing and hosting such a prestigious event is a great step forward which will add to a credit to the country for working in collaborating ways in energy sector. Now 112 countries and 18 international organizations officially confirmed their participation in the Exhibition. It is also expected that around 2-3 million people are expected to participate in this event. The Expo, which is taking place on a site covering 25 hectares, will be open between 10 June and 10 September 2017.

The Expo will allow Governments, organizations, environmentalists, the business sector and consumers to write and agree on a set of directives and recommendations to meet global challenges related to energy. Written in the form of a Manifesto, these directives will aim at promoting a new code on the social and technological innovations needed to tackle the issue of energy. During the Expo, the debates and conferences hosted by the Future Energy Forum will give way to the core content of the document. The issues the Manifesto will address are: The management of energy as a resource that impacts our lives and the environment; The theme and sub-themes of the Expo; The promotion of sustainable democratic and responsible energy future and the need to address the issue of energy through collaboration.

According to President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev, “Nowadays Kazakhstan is recognizable on many aspects. - as a major energy state, as the lead country for the extraction of uranium ore, as a wheat exporter, as the owner of the vast natural resources. But now we need to show the new Kazakhstan, looking to the future”. And being the host of such a phenomenal Exhibition reflects the triumph of the great leadership of the country.

Selection of Kazakhstan as energy resource rich country is actually giving a recognition to the commitment of Kazakhstan for adhering to and implementation of Green Bridge and Atom Projects initiatives at international level. Also this reflects Kazakhstan political and diplomatic victory. This is the most important event that the country is hosting since its independence. The recognition and selection of Kazakhstan to host such a global event is providing the country an opportunity to reflect as being dynamic and reliable international player in all the prospective sectors.

The capital city of Kazakhstan Astana is an ideal location to discuss the issue of Future energy because the Kazakhstan is an oil producer since 1911 and has launched the transition plan to green its economy by 2050 and become a hub for research and innovation on energies. Based on Jeremy Rifkin’s “Third Industrial Revolution”, the Kazakh Green Economy plan is built on 4 pillars: efficient use and management of resources, modernization of infrastructures, improvement of the well-being of the population and the quality of the environment and improving national security including water security. Expo Astana 2017 is one of the several key projects that will lead the way towards green development. Astana is Asia’s northernmost capital. Due to its convenient location in the centre of Eurasia, Astana is an economically profitable transport, communication and logistics hub. It functions as a bridge between Europe and Asia. The city is famous for its modern architecture, including some designed by leading architects such as Norman Foster and Kisho Kurokawa. Since becoming the capital of Kazakhstan in 1997, Astana’s population has tripled, reaching 1 million citizens.

EXPO is good anti-crisis project, - said the chairman of “Astana EXPO-2017” Akhmetzhan Yesimov. - We have proved this by concrete figures and facts. So we signed cooperation memorandums with the mayors of all Kazakhstan regions to support domestic producers. As a result today we have attracted 322 domestic producers, signed contracts worth a total of 150 million USD, the project has allowed creating and saving about 50 thousand workplaces throughout Kazakhstan. In addition we have attracted 126 million Euros as sponsors, as well as 600 million USD as an investment. It is difficult to disagree with him. Theme “Future Energy” is the most win-win option for current anti-crisis scheme. Renewable energy sources are on the focus of all countries and global companies.
The Pacific Alliance states (Chile, Mexico, Peru, Colombia and Barbados) were bribed by these aspects and have confirmed their participation in the Exhibition. They are actively exploring the possibility of widespread using renewable energy sources. For example, in Chile, where the mining industry develops, solar and wind energy is being used increasingly. Despite the great potential of hydropower resources, significant reserves of natural gas and condensate in Peru the field of solar, wind and geothermal energy is developed. Colombia - the country that produced its own car on solar energy has a significant potential for the development of alternatives in renewable energy area. Mexico, being one of the oil-producing countries, is actively searching for new forms of energy.

According to Secretary General of the BIE (Bureau of International Expositions) Vicente Loscertales - "guests of exhibition would be surprised by main three discoveries. There is Kazakhstan as a fantastic country, Astana is a miracle in the middle of the steppe and the “EXPO-2017”, which I’m sure will be a successful and wonderful event”.

In general Kazakhstan has done a great job for the last preceding year. 130 international pavilions were built. Centre of Public Communications will be built within one month, where Unified Service Center, Accreditation Centre and Media Centre will be placed. After examining the built infrastructure, the Kazakh leader Nursultan Nazarbayev said: - we need to use maximally new and innovative technologies that will be demonstrated at the exhibition”.

Among other countries, Pakistan will also be participating in the Expo 2017 wherein last year as statement by the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan(TDAP) said that the Secretary of TDAP signed agreement to participate in Astana Expo-2017. This agreement was signed during the “International Participant Meeting” held in Astana.

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China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: A French perspective

Raphael Lissillour

The Chinese embassy in Paris introduces the economic corridors as the being the “first chapter of the One Belt One Road symphony,” thus putting the accent on the way it will contribute to harmony in south Asia. Two economic corridors are cited, namely the the “Steppes Road” connecting China with Mongolia and Russia, and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). If a constructivist analysis of the norms and values promoted by Peking may provide some insights on the credibility and diffusion of the Chinese credo, it seems a realist perspective it more justified in this context. Chinese foreign policy is better understood as a tool to develop an international environment able to contribute to its economic expansion and to prevent containment. Such grand strategy is elaborated and enacted with “instrumental rationality,” thus systematically looking at getting asymmetric relative gain.

This paper will review the diplomatic style which characterizes the Chinese foreign policy before analyzing more closely the general framework within which the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project unfolds. It is argued that the CPEC responds to both internal and external rationales, whereas external factors such as balancing India and optimizing oil import seem to prevail. This paper intends to provide a textual analysis on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor relying on French resources. It does not have the ambition to reflect the general opinion of the French people, neither to reveal the current official voice of the French government, but rather relies on a textual analysis of documents published in French language, either by the government, the academia, or the press. Recent articles from influential French newspapers, namely Le Monde, RFI, L’Opinion, and Courrier International, have been selected and analyzed. The information provided by the press has been crossed with texts published by the French government and by prominent French research centers, such as Asia Centre and the National Center of Scientific Research. In the meantime, foreign literature is also included in the analysis to contextualize and contrast the French literature.

The French ministry of Economy and Finance stresses that despite the implementation of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) of Pakistan remains weak, less than 1% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP). But this figure will be likely to change when the CPEC will really take shape, which will further reassure China of the viability of its investment. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project foresees a global investment of 46 billion dollars into Pakistan, within which 36 will be invested into the energetic sector. According to the French Ministry of Economics and Finance, the main factor that explains the weak FDI is the lack of attractiveness of Pakistan, notably because of the uncertainty linked to its political and economic instability, which in turn has a negative impact on the assessment of rating companies. Le Monde reminded also that the previous symbols of the Sino-Pakistani cooperation such as Karakorum road, which has been inaugurated in the 80’s, and Gwadar harbor, inaugurated in 2007, had so far not brought the successful economic reward which were expected. This illustrates that, according to Confucian traditional values, the rational of the Chinese foreign policy for Pakistan is not quick financial return, rather a long term project in line with key concerns which structure its foreign policy. According to Duchâtel and Racine from French research center Asia Centre, Pakistan benefit from a key position in South Asia which can be instrumental in securing an environment favorable to Chinese geopolitical and economic development. Indeed, Pakistan could contribute to balance against India and the USA in the region. The active participation of China to the nuclear capacity of Islamabad illustrates how important this regional balance of power is for China. Another strong illustration is the purchase of eight diesel submarines Yuan type 041 by the Pakistani government for the amount of 5 billion dollars. The decision was announced as President Xi Jinping last visited Pakistan in 2015. It was the first time China exported such military devices. On the other hand, China does not want to rely only on Pakistan to safeguard its geopolitical interest in South Asia. According to Research Director at French National Scientific Research Center CNRS Jean-Pierre Cabestan, China is growingly aware that this close connection with Pakistan hinders any true strategic rapprochement with India. French Director for South Asia program at Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Frederic Grare argues that “the new aspects of this partnership reside in the affirmation of China’s foreign policy in this region. Peking wants to stabilize this zone, it will not let Islamabad hinder its dialog with India and is now directly involved to solve the afghan problem.”

Indeed, the past records of Chinese interactions with India created diplomatic patterns which are difficult to solve. For example, the Indian government responded as follows to the Sino-American declaration which was published after the nuclear tests that both India and Pakistan carried out in 1998: “We have seen the US-China «Joint Statement on South Asia». India categorically rejects the notion of these two countries arrogating to themselves, joint or individual responsibility for «the maintenance of peace, stability and security in the region». This approach reflects the hegemonic mentality of a bygone era in international relations and is completely unacceptable and out of place in the present day world.” China provides more and more economic, military and politic assistance to countries such as Nepal and Myanmar, which naturally contributes to the Indian anxiety. Decades of strategic balancing with India, fueled with the Tibet issue and
border disputes may hinder the prompt development of any trustful collaboration between both governments.

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is also motivated by internal factors on the Chinese side. The 12th five-year plan which was decided in November 2010 adopted a policy for the development of Western China, to which the cooperation with Pakistan contributes in two ways. First the CPEC can provide economic development to these regions, which will become an important logistic hub. Then, the collaboration with Pakistan can help to the stabilization of local ethnic group. As the USA withdraw their forces from Afghanistan, the thin Afghan border with China became vulnerable. Indeed, as Peking fears eventual Islamic epidemics in West China, Pakistan proved cooperative at policing the border. Pakistan returned Uighur fighters arrested in Pakistan back to China. On the same time, according to Cabestan, China tries to play a role in stabilizing the region, thus taking advantage of the Western failure in Afghanistan to increase one’s own legitimacy as a responsible power. Peking renewed the dialogue with the Taliban in 2014, in order to better control the Uighur armed forces with bases established on both side of the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

In April 2015, Xi Jinping visited Pakistan. This first visit of a Chinese Head of State since 2006 has been celebrated by the Pakistani government, as it symbolized the close friendship and cooperation between both countries. Prior to 2006, visits of head of state occurred more often, which eventually illustrates that the Chinese sent a signal to India by allowing less symbolic visits to Islamabad, while continuing to develop strategic partnership with Pakistan. This last visit has been instrumental in engaging both parties in the CPEC project with the signature of 51 agreements accounting for 46.69 billion dollars. These projects will all be financed by loan issued by Chinese banks such as the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC), Exim Bank of China and the China Development Bank Corporation, rather than relying on International Monetary Fund or other liberal Western institution, arguably too tightly controlled by the Western powers. Such development shows the continued commitment of China to multipolarity in international relations, thus promoting cooperation not necessarily against the United States, but preferably not with the United States or other Western powers.

RFI reports that, on the 13th November 2016, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is inaugurated as the first 150 containers from China were loaded into the port of Gwadar. The CPEC allows China to secure access to the Indian ocean and more specifically to Africa and to the Arab Gulf. Such access will ensure the easy import of oil by securing access to Gwadar port. Indeed, China can then bypass the Malaccia Strait which remains the Achilles heel of Chinese oil import route. The distance of oil transport can be reduced to 2000 kilometer of intermodal transport instead of 12900 kilometers of maritime transport. 660 million dollars will be invested into the development of Gwadar port and the management of the harbor is then conceded to State-Owned Company Chinese Overseas Ports. The pipeline network will connect Iran to China, thus securing Iranian gas import to China. Even if still vastly unexploited, the resources of Pakistan and Afghanistan will then become easily accessible through the transport network. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor will contribute to its energetic security and to a sustainable domestic development.

5.9 billion dollars will be invested in developing a highway network to connect China and Pakistan. The question of which party will benefit most from the Chinese led project is worth asking. Le Monde and RFI report the resemblance with the “Marshall Plan”, as China seems to secure easy and cheap transportation for the Chinese products into Pakistan, as the Pakistani industry is still under-developed and could hardly compete with the world’s workshop. China can also take advantage of the current government style to get contracts signed through opaque processes. Indeed, Transparency International who measures the level of corruption of all countries ranked Pakistan 117 out of 167. Courier International specifies that technically, the 923 hectares of land is lent to the Chinese SOY by Baluchistan province, thus stressing the non-democratic process taking place as many Baluchistani’s are against the CPEC.

Gwadar is located in Baluchistan, which is the biggest and poorest Pakistani province, and is periodically shaken by separatist or Islamist manifestations. The Pakistani government is committed to reassure the Chinese partner by implementing security policy, which led to expulsions and expropriations in Baluchistan, which people is opposed to the CPEC. French periodical L’Opinion report that China would pressure Pakistan and urge Islamabad to engage more frankly its army to fasten the development of the CPEC project. It is worth reminding that China contributed largely to the procurement of military device to the Pakistani army and to the development of the the Pakistani military industry. In 2006, both governments decided to to further develop the coproduction of JF-27 military jets with Awacs system and electronic system of defense. According to Cabestan, from that year onward, both powers also multiplied the joint military exercise. The alliance between China and Pakistan relies substantially on the close relationship between Peking and its embassy in Islamabad with the Pakistani generals to safeguard Chinese interests. Journalist Claude Leblanc reports that despite disagreement from the Pakistani government, it seems Beijing and the generals succeeded in securing that 1% of the total investment will be used to finance a special security force of 15000 men led by retired General Zahir Shah to insure the security of the CPEC area.

Journalists from major French newspaper Le Monde noted that these investment projects will benefit primarily to the Chinese State Owned Companies which suffer from the slowdown of their domestic economy. By using the term “big band economique,” Follorou and Petroletti, express the opinion that such big contracts do not benefit much to the
Meanwhile, on the 25th June, the French speaking section of Silk Road is also an illustration of the way the PCC is committed to the unemployment, may destabilize the government and the from unemployment. If not contained, such a generalized potential for Chinese workforce as China is now suffering infrastructure. It will also secure a substantial employment potential for Chinese workforce, as China is now suffering from unemployment. If not contained, such a generalized unemployment, may destabilize the government and the PCC. The involvement of COSCO in the Greek port of Pirce is also an illustration of the way the PCC is committed to the involvement of its SOCs in the development of the Maritime Silk Road.

Meanwhile, on the 25th June, the French speaking section of Xinhua published an interview of the Chinese ambassador in Islamabad who depicts the generously the social contribution of the CECP as many Chinese companies financed social projects to increase the welfare level of the Pakistani people, bringing electricity and water to those who did not benefit from such services before, bringing employment, transport, and scholarships, thus contributing to the education, urban planning, and economic development of the local population. According to the ambassador, the CECP progresses smoothly with the full support of the Pakistani government, parliament, army, press and think tanks, thus illustrating the long-lasting and mutual friendship between China and Pakistan.

The special relationship with Pakistan brings substantial political benefits to China on the international diplomatic scene. Islamabad’s support in international forums is useful. Pakistan’s friendship provides a worthy ally at the supranational level, as Islamabad unconditionally and systematically supports China in International Organizations such as the UN and the Islamic Conference Organization. Pakistan can serve as a bridge to the Islamic world, not only through such organization, but also helping China making bilateral deals with Islamic governments. In this respect, Duchâtel and Racine mention the benchmarking role that the Pakistani army played in the decision of Egypt to purchase Chinese military jets.

Chinese scholars would also agree that the China Pakistan partnership is “all weather, but maybe not all dimensional,” thus acknowledging the fact despite mutual benefits, this partnership has loopholes at the disadvantage of Pakistan, whereas China is getting the lion’s share. India plays a significant role in China’s foreign policy for Pakistan, as an emerging power with high potential which has to be balanced and even contained, while it becomes an important economic partner for China. Ye Hailin, quite in line with the French literature, agrees that “the China-Pakistan relationship is an unbalanced and externally led bilateral relation, which lacks solid internal support.” A rapprochement between India and China seems more and more important as both parts are aware of the mutual economic benefits that they can get from cooperation. Such rapprochement is a source of concern for Pakistan which fear being put aside by China, but the Chinese diplomacy reinsures Pakistan that this rapprochement is useful and will not hinder their special relationship.

This review seems to indicate that the foreign policy of China toward Pakistan is in line with its traditional realist foundation, but includes the liberalist touch of a “Marshall Plan”. Although the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor does bring benefits to Pakistan, this project is more likely to advantage China as it contributes to contain India and balance its influence in the region. The CPEC will provide easy access to the Arab Gulf and to its oil, while also building the necessary transportation network for China to get closer to the underexploited resources of Pakistan and Afghanistan and to export China-made products to these regions. Pakistan remains a non-democratic and corrupt country, which leaves China many options to sign contracts quickly and promptly develop its economic corridor. This project allows Chinese state-owned companies to benefit from big contracts in a period when the domestic market does not provide the same perspectives as in the past decades. These contracts ensure the employment of Chinese workforce and the consumption of China-made construction materials. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor will allow the development of Western China according to the 2010 five-year plan by converting the region in an influential transport hub. The cooperation with Pakistan contributes to control the Uighur armed forces which brought unrest in mainland China. Strong of being the biggest military partner of Pakistan, China benefits from close relations with the Pakistani generals who are prone to safeguard Chinese interests. On the Pakistani side, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor contributes to the development of the country, notably that of the Baluchistan province which is one of the poorest in Pakistan. Gwadar may foster commercial exchange, which in turn will further attract commercial exchange and foreign investments. Consequently, according to Lionel Baixas, Gwadar port has the potential to become a major regional port, able to compete with the Iranian-Indian port of Chabahar. The close collaboration with China transformed Pakistan in a nuclear and military power which now counts in South Asia. When the corridor will be operational, it may arguably make China partly dependent on Pakistan. Ultimately, it may contribute to reduce the lasting asymmetry in Sino-Pakistani relationships. But such developments remain unsure as many obstacles are still on the path for the corridor to reach its full potential, notably the capacity of each part to negotiate successfully with the Uighur Islamic resistance in Xinjiang and the separatists in Baluchistan. In addition, internal political obstacles may also rise from within China, as Chinese scholars raise doubts about the whole One Belt One Road project, which seems hardly able to influence the enthusiasm of the People’s Party of China.

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Why is Europe able to manage its decline, while Asia is (still) unable to capitalize on its successes

Prof. Anis H. Bajrektarevic

How to draw the line between the recent and still unsettled EU/EURO crisis and Asia’s success story? Well, it might be easier than it seems: Neither Europe nor Asia has any alternative. The difference is that Europe well knows there is no alternative – and therefore is multilateral. Asia thinks it has an alternative – and therefore is strikingly bilateral, while stubbornly residing enveloped in economic egoisms. No wonder that Europe is/will be able to manage its decline, while Asia is (still) unable to capitalize on its successes. Asia clearly does not accept any more the lead of the post-industrial and post-Christian Europe, but is not ready for the post-West world.

Following the famous saying allegedly spelled by Kissinger: “Europe? Give me a name and a phone number!” (when – back in early 1970s – urged by President Nixon to inform Europeans on the particular US policy action), the author is trying to examine how close is Asia to have its own telephone number.

By contrasting and comparing genesis of multilateral security structures in Europe with those currently existing in Asia, and by listing some of the most pressing security challenges in Asia, this policy paper offers several policy incentives why the largest world’s continent must consider creation of the comprehensive pan-Asian institution. Prevailing security structures in Asia are bilateral and mostly asymmetric while Europe enjoys multilateral, balanced and symmetric setups (American and African continents too). Author goes as far as to claim that irrespective to the impressive economic growth, no Asian century will emerge without creation of such an institution.

For over a decade, many of the relevant academic journals are full of articles prophesizing the 21st as the Asian century. The argument is usually based on the impressive economic growth, increased production and trade volumes as well as the booming foreign currency reserves and exports of many populous Asian nations, with nearly 1/3 of total world population inhabiting just two countries of the largest world’s continent. However, history serves as a powerful reminder by warning us that economically or/and demographically mighty gravity centers tend to expand into their peripheries, especially when the periphery is weaker by either category. It means that any absolute or relative shift in economic and demographic strength of one subject of international relations will inevitably put additional stress on the existing power equilibriums and constellations that support this balance in the particular theater of implicit or explicit structure.

Lessons of the Past

Thus, what is the state of art of Asia’s security structures? What is the existing capacity of preventive diplomacy and what instruments are at disposal when it comes to early warning/prevention, fact-finding, exchange mechanisms, reconciliation, capacity and confidence-building measures in the Asian theater?

While all other major theaters do have the pan-continental settings in place already for many decades, such as the Organization of American States – OAS (American continent), African Union – AU (Africa), Council of Europe and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe – OSCE (Europe), the state-of-arts of the largest world’s continent is rather different. What becomes apparent, nearly at the first glance, is the absence of any pan-Asian security/multilateral structure. Prevailing security structures are bilateral and mostly asymmetric. They range from the clearly defined and enduring non-aggression security treaties, through less formal arrangements, up to the Ad hoc cooperation accords on specific issues. The presence of the multilateral regional settings is limited to a very few spots in the largest continent, and even then, they are rarely mandated with security issues in their declared scope of work. Another striking feature is that most of the existing bilateral structures have an Asian state on one side, and either peripheral or external protégé country.
Indeed, Asia today resonates a mixed echo of the European past. It combines features of the pre-Napoleonic, post-Napoleonic and the League-of-Nations Europe. What are the useful lessons from the European past? Well, there are a few, for sure. Bismarck accommodated the exponential economic, demographic and military growth as well as the territorial expansion of Prussia by skillfully architecturing and calibrating the complex networks of bilateral security arrangements of 19th century Europe. Like Asia today, it was not an institutionalized security structure of Europe, but a talented leadership exercising restraint and wisdom in combination with the quick assertiveness and fast military absorptions, concluded by the lasting endurance. However, as soon as the new Kaiser removed the Iron Chancellor (Bismarck), the provincial and backward-minded, insecure and militant Prussian establishment contested (by their own interpretations of the German’s machtpolitik and weltpolitik policies) Europe and the world in two devastating world wars. That, as well as Hitler’s establishment afterwards, simply did not know what to do with a powerful Germany.

The aspirations and constellations of some of Asia’s powers today remind us also of the pre-Napoleonic Europe, in which a unified, universalistic block of the Holy Roman Empire was contested by the impatient challengers of the status quo. Such serious centripetal and centrifugal oscillations of Europe were not without grave deviations: as much as Cardinal Richelieu’s and Jacobin’s France successfully emancipated itself, the Napoleon III and pre-WWII France encircled, isolated itself, implicitly laying the foundation for the German attack.

Finally, the existing Asian regional settings also resemble the picture of the post-Napoleonic Europe: first and foremost, of Europe between the Vienna Congress of 1815 and the revolutionary year of 1848. At any rate, let us take a quick look at the most relevant regional settings in Asia.

**Multilateral constellations**

By far, the largest Asian participation is with the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation – APEC, an organization engulfing both sides of the Pacific Rim. Nevertheless, this is a forum for member economies not of sovereign nations, a sort of a prep-com or waiting room for the World Trade Organization – WTO. To use the words of one senior Singapore diplomat who recently told me in Geneva the following: “what is your option here? ...to sign the Free Trade Agreement (FTA), side up with the US, login to FaceBook, and keep shopping on the internet happily ever after…”

Two other crosscutting settings, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation – OIC and Non-Aligned Movement – NAM, the first with and the second without a permanent secretariat, represent the well-established political multilateral bodies. However, they are inadequate forums as neither of the two is strictly mandated with security issues. Although both transcontinental entities do have large memberships being the 2nd and 3rd largest multilateral systems, right after the UN, neither covers the entire Asian political landscape – having important Asian countries outside the system or opposing it.

Further on, one should mention the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization – KEDO (Nuclear) and the Iran-related Contact (Quartet/P-5+1) Group. In both cases, the issues dealt with are indeed security related, but they are more an asymmetric approach to deter and contain a single country by the larger front of peripheral states that are opposing a particular security policy, in this case, of North Korea and of Iran. Same was with the short-lived SEATO Pact – a defense treaty organization for SEA which was essentially dissolved as soon as the imminent threat from communism was slowed down and successfully contained within the French Indochina.

**Confidence building – an attempt**

If some of the settings are reminiscent of the pre-Napoleonic Europe, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization – SCO and Cooperation Council for the Arab states of the Gulf – GCC remind us of the post-Napoleonic Europe and its Alliance of the Eastern Conservative courts (of Metternich). Both arrangements were created on a pretext of a common external ideological and geopolitical threat, on a shared status quo security consideration. Asymmetric GCC was an externally induced setting by which an American key Middle East ally Saudi Arabia gathered the grouping of the Arabian Peninsula monarchies. It has served a dual purpose; originally, to contain the leftist Nasseristic pan-Arabism which was introducing a republican type of egalitarian government in the Middle Eastern theater. It was also – after the 1979 revolution – an instrument to counter-balance the Iranian influence in the Gulf and wider Middle East. The response to the spring 2011-13 turmoil in the Middle East, including the deployment of the Saudi troops in Bahrain, and including the analysis of the role of influential Qatar-based and GCC-backed Al Jazeera TV network is the best proof of the very nature of the GCC mandate.

The SCO is internally induced and more symmetric setting. Essentially, it came into existence through a strategic Sino-Russian rapprochement, based, for the first time in modern history, on parity, to deter external aspirants (the US, Japan, Korea, India, Turkey and Saudi Arabia) and to keep the resources, territory, present socio-economic cultural and political regime in the Central Asia, Tibet heights and the Xinjiang Uighur province in line.

The next to consider is the Indian sub-continent’s grouping, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SAARC. This organization has a well-established mandate, well staffed and versed Secretariat. However, the Organization is strikingly reminiscent of the League of Nations. The League is remembered as an altruistic setup which repeatedly failed to adequately respond to the security quests of its members as well as to the challenges and pressures of parties that were kept out of the system (e.g. Russia until well into the 1930s and the US remaining completely outside the system, and in the case of the SAARC surrounding; China, Saudi Arabia and the US). The SAARC is practically a hostage of mega confrontation of its two largest members, both confirmed nuclear powers; India and Pakistan. These two challenge each other geopolitically and ideologically. Existence of one is a negation of the existence of the other; the religiously determined nationhood of Pakistan is a negation of multiethnic India and vice versa. Additionally, the SAARC although internally induced is an asymmetric organization. It is not only the size of India, but also its position: centrality of that country makes SAARC practically impossible to operate in any field without the direct consent of India, be it commerce, communication, politics or security.

For a serious advancement of multilateralism, mutual trust, a will to compromise and achieve a common denominator through active co-existence is the key. It is hard to build a common course of action around the disproportionately big and centrally positioned member which would escape the interpretation as containment by the big or assertiveness of its center by the smaller, peripheral members.

**Multivector Foreign Policy**

Finally, there is an ASEAN – a grouping of 10 Southeast Asian nations, exercising the balanced multi-vector policy, based on the non-interference principle, internally and externally. This, Jakarta/Indonesia headquartered organization has a dynamic past and an ambitious current charter. It is an internally induced and relatively symmetric arrangement with the strongest members placed around its geographic center, like in case of the EU equilibrium with Germany-France/Britain-Italy/Poland-Spain geographically balancing each other. Situated on the geographic axis of the southern flank of the Asian landmass, the so-called growth triangle of Thailand-Malaysia-Indonesia represents the core of the ASEAN not only in economic and communication terms but also by its political leverage. The EU-like ASEAN Community Road Map (for 2015) will absorb most of the Organization’s energy. However, the ASEAN has managed to open its forums for the 3+3 group/s, and could be seen in the long run as a cumulus setting towards the wider pan-Asian forum in future.

Before closing this brief overview, let us mention two recently inaugurated informal forums, both based on the external calls for a burden sharing. One, with a jingoistic-coined name by the Wall Street bankers - BRI(I)C/S, so far includes two important Asian economic, demographic and political powerhouses (India and China), and one peripheral (Russia). Indonesia, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Iran are a few additional Asian countries whose national pride and pragmatic interests are advocating a BRIC membership. The G–20, the other informal forum, is also assembled on the Ad hoc (pro bono) basis following the need of the G–7 to achieve a larger approval and support for its monetary (currency exchange accord) and financial (austerity) actions introduced in the aftermath of still unsettled financial crisis. Nevertheless, the BRIC and G-20 have not provided the Asian participating states either with the more leverage in the Bretton Woods institutions besides a burden sharing, or have they helped to tackle the indigenous Asian security problems. Appealing for the national pride, however, both informal gatherings may divert the necessary resources and attention to Asian states from their pressing domestic, pan-continental issues.

Yet, besides the UN system machinery of the Geneva-based Disarmament committee, the UN Security Council, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons – OPCW and International Atomic Energy Agency – IAEA (or CTBTO), even the ASEAN Asians (as the most multilateralized Asians) have no suitable standing forum to tackle and solve their security issues. An organization similar to the Council of Europe or the OSCE is still far from emerging on Asian soil.

Our history warns. Nevertheless, it also provides a hope: The pre-CSCE (pre-Helsinki) Europe was indeed a dangerous place to live in. The sharp geopolitical and ideological default line was passing through the very heart of Europe, cutting it into halves. The southern Europe was practically sealed off by notorious dictatorships; in Greece (Colonel Junta), Spain (Franco) and Portugal (Salazar), with Turkey witnessing several of its governments toppled by the secular and omnipotent military establishment, with inverted Albania and a (non-Europe minded) non-allied, Tito’s Yugoslavia. Two powerful instruments of the US military presence (NATO) and of the Soviets (Warsaw pact) in Europe were keeping huge standing armies, enormous stockpiles of conventional as well as the ABC weaponry and delivery systems, practically next to each other. By far and large, European borders were not mutually recognized. Essentially, the west rejected to even recognize many of the Eastern European, Soviet dominated/installed governments.

**Territorial disputes unresolved**

Currently in Asia, there is hardly a single state which has no territorial dispute within its neighborhood. From the Middle East, Caspian and Central Asia, Indian sub-continent, mainland Indochina or Archipelago SEA, Tibet, South China Sea and the Far East, many countries are suffering numerous green and blue border disputes. The South China Sea solely counts for over a dozen territorial disputes – in which mostly China presses peripheries to break free from the long-lasting encirclement. These moves are often interpreted by the
neighbors as dangerous assertiveness. On the top of that Sea resides a huge economy and insular territory in a legal limbo – Taiwan, which waits for a time when the pan-Asian and intl. agreement on how many Chinas Asia should have, gains a wide and lasting consensus.

Unsolved territorial issues, sporadic irredentism, conventional armament, nuclear ambitions, conflicts over exploitation of and access to the marine biota, other natural resources including fresh water access and supply are posing enormous stress on external security, safety and stability in Asia. Additional stress comes from the newly emerging environmental concerns, that are representing nearly absolute security threats, not only to the tiny Pacific nation of Tuvalu, but also to the Maldives, Bangladesh, Cambodia, parts of Thailand, of Indonesia, of Kazakhstan and of the Philippines, etc. All this combined with uneven economic and demographic dynamics of the continent are portraying Asia as a real powder keg.

It is absolutely inappropriate to compare the size of Asia and Europe – the latter being rather an extension of a huge Asian continental landmass, a sort of western Asian peninsula – but the interstate maneuvering space is comparable. Yet, the space between the major powers of post-Napoleonic Europe was as equally narrow for any maneuver as is the space today for any security maneuver of Japan, China, India, Pakistan, Iran and the like.

Let us also take a brief look at the peculiarities of the nuclear constellations in Asia. Following the historic analogies; it echoes the age of the American nuclear monopoly and the years of Russia’s desperation to achieve the parity.

Besides holding huge stockpiles of conventional weaponry and numerous standing armies, Asia is a home of four (plus peripheral Russia and Israel) of the nine known nuclear powers (declared and undeclared). Only China and Russia are parties to the Non-proliferation Treaty – NPT. North Korea walked away in 2003, whereas India and Pakistan both confirmed nuclear powers declined to sign the Treaty. Asia is also the only continent on which nuclear weaponry has been deployed.

Cold War exiled in Asia

As is well known, the peak of the Cold War was marked by the mega geopolitical and ideological confrontation of the two nuclear superpowers whose stockpiles by far outnumbered the stockpiles of all the other nuclear powers combined. However enigmatic, mysterious and incalculable to each other, the Americans and Soviets were on opposite sides of the globe, had no territorial disputes, and no record of direct armed conflicts.

Insofar, the Asian nuclear constellation is additionally specific as each of the holders has a history of hostilities – armed frictions and confrontations over unsolved territorial disputes along the shared borders, all combined with the intensive and lasting ideological rivalries. The Soviet Union had bitter transborder armed frictions with China over the demarcation of its long land border. China has fought a war with India and has acquired a significant territorial gain. India has fought four mutually extortive wars with Pakistan over Kashmir and has acquired a significant territorial gain. India has fought four mutually extortive wars with Pakistan over Kashmir and has acquired a significant territorial gain. India has fought four mutually extortive wars with Pakistan over Kashmir and has acquired a significant territorial gain. India has fought four mutually extortive wars with Pakistan over Kashmir and has acquired a significant territorial gain. India has fought four mutually extortive wars with Pakistan over Kashmir and has acquired a significant territorial gain. India has fought four mutually extortive wars with Pakistan over Kashmir and has acquired a significant territorial gain. India has fought four mutually extortive wars with Pakistan over Kashmir and has acquired a significant territorial gain. India has fought four mutually extortive wars with Pakistan over Kashmir and has acquired a significant territorial gain. India has fought four mutually extortive wars with Pakistan over Kashmir and has acquired a significant territorial gain. India has fought four mutually extortive wars with Pakistan over Kashmir and has acquired a significant territorial gain. India has fought four mutually extortive wars with Pakistan over Kashmir and has acquired a significant territorial gain. India has fought four mutually extortive wars with Pakistan over Kashmir and has acquired a significant territorial gain. India has fought four mutually extortive wars with Pakistan over Kashmir and has acquired a significant territorial gain. India has fought four mutually extortive wars with Pakistan over Kashmir and has acquired a significant territorial gain. India has fought four mutually extortive wars with Pakistan over Kashmir and has acquired a significant territorial gain. India has fought four mutually extortive wars with Pakistan over Kashmir and has acquired a significant territorial gain. India has fought four mutually extortive wars with Pakistan over Kashmir and has acquired a significant territorial gain. India has fought four mutually extortive wars with Pakistan over Kashmir and has acquired a significant territorial gain. India has fought four mutually extortive wars with Pakistan over Kashmir and has acquired a significant territorial gain. India has fought four mutually extortive wars with Pakistan over Kashmir and has acquired a significant territorial gain. India has fought four mutually extortive wars with Pakistan over Kashmir and has acquired a significant territorial gain. India has fought four mutually extortive wars with Pakistan over Kashmir and has acquired a significant territorial gain.

On the western edge of the Eurasian continent, neither France, Britain, Russia nor the US had a (recent) history of direct armed conflicts. They do not even share land borders.

Finally, only India and now post-Soviet Russia have a strict and full civilian control over its military and the nuclear deployment authorization. In the case of North Korea and China, it is in the hands of an unpredictable and non-transparent communist leadership – meaning, it resides outside democratic, governmental decision-making. In Pakistan, it is completely in the hands of a politically omnipresent military establishment. Pakistan has lived under a direct military rule for over half of its existence as an independent state.

What eventually kept the US and the USSR from deploying nuclear weapons was the dangerous and costly struggle called: “mutual destruction assurance”. Already by the late 1950s, both sides achieved parity in the number and type of
nuclear warheads as well as in the number and precision of their delivery systems. Both sides produced enough warheads, delivery systems’ secret depots and launching sites to amply survive the first impact and to maintain a strong second-strike capability. Once comprehending that neither the preventive nor preemptive nuclear strike would bring a decisive victory but would actually trigger the final global nuclear holocaust and ensure total mutual destruction, the Americans and the Soviets have achieved a fear-equilibrium through the hazardous deterrence. Thus, it was not an intended armament rush (for parity), but the non-intended Mutual Assurance Destruction – MAD – with its tranquilizing effect of nuclear weaponry, if possessed in sufficient quantities and impenetrable configurations – that brought a bizarre sort of pacifying stability between two confronting superpowers. Hence, MAD prevented nuclear war, but did not disarm the superpowers.

As noted, the nuclear stockpiles in Asia are considerably modest. The number of warheads, launching sites and delivery systems is not sufficient and sophisticated enough to offer the second strike capability. That fact seriously compromises stability and security: preventive or preemptive N–strike against a nuclear or non-nuclear state could be contemplated as decisive, especially in South Asia and on the Korean peninsula, not to mention the Middle East.

A general wisdom of geopolitics assumes the potentiality of threat by examining the degree of intensities and capability of belligerents. However, in Asia this theory does not necessarily hold the complete truth: Close geographic proximities of Asian nuclear powers means shorter flight time of warheads, which ultimately gives a very brief decision-making period to engaged adversaries. Besides a deliberate, a serious danger of an accidental nuclear war is therefore evident.

**Multilateral mechanisms**

One of the greatest thinkers and humanists of the 20th century, Erich Fromm wrote: “…man can only go forward by developing (his) reason, by finding a new harmony…”

There is certainly a long road from vision and wisdom to a clear political commitment and accorded action. However, once it is achieved, the operational tools are readily at disposal. The case of Helsinki Europe is very instructive. To be frank, it was the over-extension of the superpowers who contested one another all over the globe, which eventually brought them to the negotiation table. Importantly, it was also a constant, resolute call of the European public that brought a bizarre sort of pacifying stability between two confronting superpowers. Hence, MAD prevented nuclear war, but did not disarm the superpowers.

Admittedly, the III OSCE Basket was a source of many controversies in the past years, mostly over the interpretation of mandates. However, the new wave of nationalism, often replacing the fading communism, the emotional charges and residual fears of the past, the huge ongoing formation of the middle class in Asia whose passions and affiliations will inevitably challenge established elites domestically and question their policies internationally, and a related search for a new social consensus – all that could be successfully tackled by some sort of an Asian III basket. Clearly, further socio-economic growth in Asia is impossible without the creation and mobilization of a strong middle class – a segment of society which when appearing anew on the socio-political horizon is traditionally very exposed and vulnerable to political misdeeds and disruptive shifts. At any rate, there are several OSCE observing nations from Asia; from Thailand to Korea and Japan, with Indonesia, a nation that currently considers joining the forum. They are clearly benefiting from the participation.

Consequently, the largest continent should consider the creation of its own comprehensive pan-Asian multilateral mechanism. In doing so, it can surely rest on the vision and spirit of Helsinki. On the very institutional setup, Asia can closely revisit the well-envisioned SAARC and ambitiously empowered ASEAN fora. By examining these two regional bodies, Asia can find and skillfully calibrate the appropriate balance between widening and deepening of the security mandate of such future multilateral organization – given the number of states as well as the gravity of the pressing socio-political, environmental and politico-military challenges.

In the age of unprecedented success and the unparalleled prosperity of Asia, an indigenous multilateral pan-Asian arrangement presents itself as an opportunity. Contextualizing Hegel’s famous saying that “freedom is… an insight into necessity” let me close by stating that a need for the domesticated pan-Asian organization warns by its urgency too.

Clearly, there is no emancipation of the continent; there is no Asian century, without the pan-Asian multilateral setting.

The Importance of the Istanbul Process in Securitizing Afghanistan through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor

Edward Lai

The most highly visible and substantial investment expansion in the Central Asian region by China is the acquisition of control on Gwadar port in Pakistan. China Overseas Port Holdings Limited was able to purchase all the shares from the Port of Singapore Authority and its local partners under a deal approved by the Pakistani government on January 30, 2013. While some analysts have argued that China bought Gwadar Port shares after the Singaporeans wanted to cut their losses in building and financing the project, the Chinese have major plans to connect the Pakistani coast to Xinjiang with the upgrading of the 1300 km Karakorum Highway.

China has also invested heavily in the development of Pakistan Railways with the intention of building an international rail link to Xinjiang. To make the connection from Havelian in Pakistan to Kashgar in China requires crossing the Khunjerab Pass which is closed in the winter. An alternative route that is being proposed would link Chaman, Pakistan to Kandahar, Afghanistan through the Khojak Tunnel. If completed, this rail connection would eventually link Pakistan with Turkmenistan and then connect with the other Central Asian Republics and Xinjiang. China will be a main beneficiary once these new trade routes are developed and there are also plenty of economic opportunities present in developing Balochistan, which is the poorest of the four provinces in Pakistan.

However, insurgency remains a major problem in the Afghanistan and Pakistan border region and NATO forces will be needed to train the new Afghan National Security Forces. Even though China does not have a military role in Afghanistan, it is actively securitizing its political interests by working with all interested multilateral stakeholders through the Istanbul Process. Through the use of dialogue in the Istanbul Process and the securitization of Afghanistan, China can obtain the political capital needed to react proactively to the global forces which configure its Western border.

During the inaugural Heart of Asia Ministerial Conference in June 2012, foreign ministers from fourteen countries agreed on a set of confidence building guidelines among their states. The guidelines that became known as the Istanbul Process encouraged political consultation involving Afghanistan’s near and extended neighbours, a sustained incremental approach to the implementation of confidence-building measures identified in the Istanbul Process document, and greater coherence to the work of various regional processes and organizations. The Istanbul Process represents the coming together of an American-led initiative to develop a “Greater Central Asia Partnership for Cooperation and Development”, in which Afghanistan is defined as the “heart” of or centre of an enlarged Central Asia and a crossroad binding “the Greater Middle East” and “South Asia”.

Before the 2012 ministerial conference, there have been a few unremarkable mechanisms for cooperation and development such as the Uzbekistan “6+3” initiative which included the six Central Asian states, Russia, the US and NATO. At the same time, the Russians proposed a Dushanbe Mechanism which included Russia, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Tajikistan along
with two three-party consultations of regional counterparts (China-Russia-India and China-Russia-Pakistan). It can be argued that the American supporting role in leading regional dialogue is critical in expanding practical coordination between Afghanistan and led confidence-building measures such as Azerbaijan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, and the United Arab Emirates are now ministerial participants in the Istanbul Process. The result of this annual foreign ministerial conference is a framework that seeks to place greater responsibility for Afghanistan’s security in the hands of its Central Asian regional partners.

It has been the aim of the United States to shift the focus from military assistance to sustainable economic development in Afghanistan and drawing China into an active role in various multilateral groupings makes sense. US President Barack Obama’s Administration was less ambivalent about the virtues of greater Chinese involvement in Afghanistan, particularly on the security side where limited offers from Beijing had been rebuffed in the past. Since the beginning of the Obama Administration, China was involved in the early initiatives proposed by Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan Richard Holbrooke. Holbrooke visited Beijing in March 2009 and was a part of the US-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue that was held in Washington in July of that year. Further discussions led to a first round of dialogue on Central Asian and Afghan affairs as part of a larger framework in the Strategic and Economic Dialogue held in Beijing its regional partners. Outside partners who have played very little part in China- in March 2011. Besides hosting the first China-Afghanistan-Pakistan trilateral dialogue in February 2012, China also signed an agreement which allows for the training, funding, and the providing of equipment to the 149,000 strong Afghan police when security chief Zhou Yongkang visited the country in September of that year. In May 2012, China and the US jointly hosted a two-week training session for a group of some 15 young Afghan diplomats. While these actions are consistent with calls from the US and NATO for China to do more in Afghanistan, this stance from extreme wariness and reserve to active engagement shows that China wants to be a key stakeholder in the stability and development of Afghanistan. Even though China is initially concerned about the potential deterioration of Afghan security as it pertains to its national interests, a more proactive stance is required to ensure that political uncertainties are dealt with.

The New Silk Road policy under President Xi represents a conscious effort in the securitization and the politicization of China’s interests in Central Asia in the name of security. This requires the development of a process-oriented conception of security and the use of extraordinary means in capturing the political audience. For Chinese foreign policy experts, an understanding of China’s interests and role in new multilateral institutions will help in identifying this constructivist turn in re-defining security.

Wang Jisi, Dean of the School of International Studies at Peking University, says that China has now made a grand strategic proposal. This would be that China shift(s) its attention from the heated competition in East Asia and rebalance(s) its geographical focus westwards to the vast area from Central Asia to the Middle East, the area from which the US is pivoting.

Unlike in East Asia, common interests in economic investment, energy, anti-terrorism, non-proliferation, and regional stability allow the US and China be more cooperative in Central Asia. In this sense, Wang Jisi argues that the “march west” strategy of China will help recalibrate and build a “more balanced” relationship with the United States. The Istanbul Process is an ideal platform for the Beijing government to seek greater westward strategic depth and influence. For Chinese investments in Afghanistan’s nascent mining projects to be positive, China needs the stable presence of NATO troops training the Afghan National Security Forces in the short term. At the same time, the US and other western countries recognize that China can stabilize Afghanistan economically by allowing it to be a cooperative partner in building a more prosperous and independent country.

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In December, the Commonwealth of Independent States turns 25 years old. Already for a long time, one predicts the organization total oblivion and a way to the historical past. However, CIS continues to exist and, perhaps it has even more strengthened its position in the near future, given Russia’s chairmanship in the Commonwealth in 2017.

On the principle of equality, on a parity basis

Summing up the results of activity of the CIS, it can be seen that it is the most representative organization in the post-Soviet space. Its structure still consists of 11 of the 15 former republics of the Soviet Union. The Baltic states immediately refused to join the Commonwealth, they later became part of the European Union and NATO.

Georgia in December 1993, was adopted in the CIS, but in August 2008, came out for political reasons. It should be noted that, in accordance with the Vienna Convention of 1969, Georgia is a member state of 75 multilateral international agreements signed within the Commonwealth. In particular, the agreement on a free trade zone, judicial cooperation in criminal matters, and other still continue to be applied. Tbilisi is still willing to develop friendly and mutually beneficial relations bilaterally with other CIS member states “in compliance with the principles of the territorial integrity of States and taking into account bilateral interests”.

One reason for the longevity of the CIS is the fact that, according to the Alma-Ata Declaration, signed on 21 December 1991 in the then capital of Kazakhstan. The activity of the Commonwealth of Independent States is based on “the principle of equality, through coordinating institutions formed on a parity basis”. Commonwealth “is neither a state, nor a supranational entity”. This not only contributed to the so-called “civilized divorce” of the former republics of the Soviet Union, but also created the conditions for further mutually beneficial cooperation.

The flip side of this process was that the foreign policy and economic relations with the countries - participants of the Commonwealth began to be built more on a bilateral basis or within the framework of major international organizations: UN, OSCE, NATO, the IMF, the WTO and others. And the dominant direction of the foreign policy strategy of most former Soviet republics became a so-called multi-vector policy.

In addition, the Alma-Ata Declaration marked a respect for the states of the Commonwealth, which will aim to achieve a nuclear-free and neutral status, as well as “commitment to cooperate in the formation and development of a common economic space, European and Eurasiain markets”. This has contributed to, firstly, the elimination of nuclear weapons on the territory of Kazakhstan, Ukraine and Belarus.

Secondly, it helped Turkmenistan obtain the status of a neutral state. Third, it initiated the process of multi-level integration of the former Soviet Union, and not only in the economic sphere.

Defence and security

In May 1992, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan signed in Tashkent Collective Security Treaty (CST). In September of the following year Azerbaijan and Georgia joined the treaty, in December - Belarus. That is, nine of the eleven CIS states signed the CST.

However, the signing of the Collective Security Treaty did not rule out military-political cooperation within the Commonwealth. Especially in view of the failure in 1999 of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Uzbekistan to renew its participation in the Collective Security Treaty. One of the reasons of the CIS demand was the need to resolve regional security issues. In particular, the CIS Council of Defense Ministers was forced to intervene in the civil war in Tajikistan. This led to the creation there of the CIS Collective Peacekeeping Force, which played a role in the settlement of the armed conflict in that country.

In August 1994, by the decision of of the CIS Heads of State Council the CIS in the area of Georgian-Abkhaz conflict collective forces were deployed for a period of six months for peacekeeping mission (up to 3 thousand people). In reality, the duration of their stay in the conflict zone has exceeded the period of 14 years that prevented a full-scale military confrontation between Georgia and Abkhazia.

At the Commonwealth summit in 2004, it was decided to establish the CIS Security Council to combat terrorism in Astana. In addition, based on an agreement of ten CIS countries (except Azerbaijan and Moldova), signed in 1995 in Alma-Ata, integrated system of air defense (PVO) of the CIS countries is operating. In 1997, Georgia and Turkmenistan

CIS Second Breath: the Russian Presidency in 2017

Dr.Vladimir Evseev
actually came out of it, and Uzbekistan cooperates with Russia in the field of defense solely on a bilateral basis. But this does not prevent the holding of regular joint exercises in the field of air defense.

If one talks about the prospects of the CIS, it should be noted that currently the military structures of the CIS and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) partially overlap. Given the ongoing orientation of Georgia, Moldova (in the policy of the republic may be some adjustments, if its parliament in the near future qualitative changes) and Ukraine to the West, as well as the preservation of Turkmenistan’s neutral status, apparently, one should expect weakening of the military structures of the Commonwealth. Instead, similar to the CSTO framework will act.

**Mobile integration geometry**

The concept of economic integration of the Commonwealth of Independent States (adopted in 1997) was based on the principle of “the moving geometry” of multi-level and multi-cooperation. This allowed to create a common economic space, including a free trade zone, payments union, customs union and a common scientific and technological space. However, in practice, within the CIS it failed to be implemented because of the amorphous and the ineffectiveness of cooperation in certain areas.

As a way out of this situation, Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev proposed on the basis of the Commonwealth to create a Eurasian Union, with specific common goals. The effectiveness of the EAEC activity is significantly higher than that of the CIS. But it brings together at least half of the states - members of the Commonwealth. Consequently, there remains a need in the conservation area to resolve economic problems. From this point of view, the replacement of the CIS is still not in sight.

A major challenge was the Ukrainian crisis for the CIS, which is accompanied by a significant deterioration of the economic relations between the Russian Federation and Ukraine. But only the Western vector in the form of association with the EU has brought economic prosperity both to Kiev (and Tbilisi and Kishinev). In such circumstances, the CIS holds Ukraine in the orbit of the former Soviet Union, so one can expect the revitalization of Kiev in the organization (on the background of the coming to power of a new US Administration).

Achieving these goals will enable the Commonwealth to upgrade quality to match the current for both regional and global realities. But this requires serious support from all states - participants of the CIS.

CIS has not yet exhausted its potential, and the forthcoming Russian chairmanship in the organization will create good opportunities for the strengthening of the Commonwealth, and for the gaining in this space multi-level integration processes (primarily in the framework of the CSTO and EAEC).

Within the framework of the Russian Chairmanship it is planned to direct its efforts on the development of the Commonwealth as a regional intergovernmental organization, increasing its credibility on the world stage, in the further coordination of foreign policy activity of the states - participants of the CIS.

In addition, within the framework of the Commonwealth coordinated actions will be carried out to improve the efficiency of the executive bodies, the adaptation of cooperation in the CIS mechanisms to modern realities of integration development, to ensure political support for different levels of integration processes, the development of cooperation in the fight against terrorism, extremism, drug trafficking and other threats States - members of the Commonwealth, as well as the expansion of cultural and humanitarian cooperation.

Given the above, the Russian Federation’s chairmanship concept in the Commonwealth of Independent States in 2017 has been developed and the Action Plan for its implementation.

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Multiculturalism is dead? Not quite yet. (Recalibrate expectations and travel beyond Europe)

Alessio Stilo

Multicultural approaches and policies vary widely all over the world, ranging from the advocacy of equal respect to the various cultures in a society, to a policy of promoting the maintenance of cultural diversity, to policies in which people of various ethnic and religious groups are addressed by the authorities as defined by the group to which they belong. Two different strategies, as recently pointed out by Ms. Camilla Habsburg-Lothringen, have been developed through different government policies and strategies: The first, often labelled as interculturalism, focuses on interaction and communication between different cultures. The second one, cohabitative multi-culti does center itself on diversity and cultural uniqueness; it sees cultural isolation as a protection of uniqueness of the local culture of a nation or area and also a contribution to global cultural diversity.

A sort of “third way” between the two above-mentioned strategies has been traditioned and further enhanced by core Asian counties, e.g. Azerbaijan, where state policy has been accompanied, in a complementary way, to a certain activism of intermediate bodies (civil society, universities, think tanks).

Multiculturalism is a state policy of Azerbaijan and it has become a way of life of the republic ensuring mutual understanding and respect for all identities. The year 2016 has been declared the Year of Multiculturalism in Azerbaijan, as stated by President Ilham Aliyev on January 10. This decision was made taking into account the fact that Azerbaijan brings an important contribution to the traditions of tolerance and interculturalization dialogue.

Its peculiar location between Eastern Europe and Western Asia and its sociopolitical context – where people of various religions and ethnicities have lived together in mutual respect – have allowed Azerbaijan to adopt a multicultural-led agenda as a strategic tool of foreign policy.

Despite challenges due to the instability of the area and unresolved armed conflict with neighboring Armenia for the control of Nagorno-Karabakh, Baku has made an effort to create and foster the necessary political and social conditions for developing and strengthening the country’s traditions of multiculturalism and tolerance.

From a historical perspective, representatives of many ethnic and religious groups have lived together with Azerbaijani since the era of the Safavids’ empire and during the XIX-XX centuries, including the period of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic incorporated into the Soviet Union.

Today Azerbaijan, a country which established the first secular democracy in the Muslim world in 1918 and offered women the right to vote in 1919, acts as a model for peaceful coexistence of members of different cultures.

It hosts one of the oldest mosques in the world, in the city of Shamakhi, dating from 743, and also one of the oldest Christian churches, an Armenian church from the 12-13 century. Not to mention one of the oldest churches in the Caucasus near the city of Sheki – the Church of Caucasian Albania, and a Zoroastrian temple, a temple of fire worshipers, not far from Baku. Azerbaijan has been inhabited by representatives of different religions and cultures throughout history, demonstrating a deep heritage of coexistence among different religions.

Indeed, currently there are more than 649 registered religious communities in the Republic of Azerbaijan, among which 37 are non-Islamic. It has 13 functioning churches. The building of the Jen Mironosets Church (built by Hadji Zeynalabdin Tagiyev in 1907) was granted to the Russian Orthodox Church in 1991. Aleksi II, Patriarch of Moscow and all Rus’, who was on a visit in Azerbaijan in May 2001, granted the status of church to this temple. Currently there are three Russian Orthodox Churches in Baku, one in Gandja and one in Khachmaz. The Catholic community was
registered in Azerbaijan in 1999. A special building for the conduction of religious ceremonies was purchased for the community and it became a church in 2000. According to the agreement between the Azerbaijani Government and Vatican, the Roman Catholic Church has been constructed in 2007 in Baku. It is more than 2500 years that the Jews have settled in Azerbaijan, never suffering religious intolerance or discrimination; currently six Jewish religious communities are registered and seven synagogues are functioning. Azerbaijan contributes also to the world heritage. Restoration of Roman catacombs, Strasbourg Cathedral Church, ancient masterpieces in Versailles (Paris), Capitoline Museum (Roma), Louvre Museum (Paris), Trapezitsa Museum (Bulgaria) etc. by Heydar Aliyev Foundation are typical example of these contribution.

Development of multiculturalism and tolerance at the level of State policy in Azerbaijan is based on ancient history of statehood of the country and on development of these traditions. Nowadays, thanks to efforts of the government, this political behavior has acquired a form of ideology of statehood and political practice (state policy), whereas the political bases of these concepts have found their reflection in relevant clauses of articles of the Constitution, legal acts, decrees and orders. Regarding one of the facets of this conception – religious freedom – it is also worth noting that article 48 of Azerbaijani Constitution ensures the liberty of worship, to choose any faith, or to not practice any religion, and to express one’s view on the religion. Moreover, the law of the Republic of Azerbaijan (1992) “On freedom of faith” ensures the right of any human being to determine and express his view on religion and to execute this right. According to paragraphs 1-3 of Article 18 of the Constitution the religion acts separately from the government, each religion is equal before the law and the propaganda of religions, abating human personality and contradicting to the principles of humanism is prohibited. The above-mentioned laws make Azerbaijan a modern de jure secular state, as well as de facto.

As a consequence of this public support, expressed through material and financial assistance from the budget of Country and Presidential foundation, there are dozens of national-cultural centers functioning at present. They include “Commonwealth” society, Russian community, Slavic cultural center, Azerbaijani-Israeli community, Ukrainian community, Kurdish cultural center “Ronai”, Lezgin national center “Samur”, Azerbaijani-Slavic culture center, Tat cultural center, Azerbaijani-Tatar community, Tatar culture society “Tugan-tel”, Tatar cultural center “Yashlyg”, Crimean Tatars society “Crimea”, Georgian community, humanitarian society of Azerbaijani Georgians, Ingiloyan community, Chechen cultural center, “Vatan” society of Akhyska-Turks, “Sona” society of the women of Akhyska-Turks, Talysh cultural center, Avar society, mountain Jews community, European Jews (Ashkenazi) community, Georgian Jews community, Jewish women humanitarian association, German cultural society “Kapelhaus”, Udin cultural center, Polish cultural center “Polonia”, “Mada” International Talysh Association, “Avesta” Talysh Association, Udin “Orain” Cultural Center, “Budug” Cultural Center, Tsakhur Cultural Center. Not to mention the club-based amateur societies, national and state theatres, amateur associations and interest-focused clubs in areas with compact minority populations. The State also supports dozens of magazines, newspapers, radio and television programs which are expression of language minorities.

Declaration of the Year of Multiculturalism in Azerbaijan took place against the backdrop of religiously motivated ethnic conflicts in the Middle East. This kind of State-led multiculturalism, which could be considered as a form of soft power, is intended to be introduced as a model of multiculturalism elsewhere, especially to states and societies of the Middle East, where radicalism has spread rapidly over the last 20 years.

In recent years Baku has hosted numerous international events, starting from the Baku International Humanitarian Forum. The capital of Azerbaijan has hosted this Forum since 2011, which aims to build an authoritative international platform for world scientists and culture figures as well as acclaimed experts to discuss pressing global humanitarian challenges. The Baku International Humanitarian Forum is attended by well-known statesmen, public figures and prominent scientists, including 13 Nobel Prize winners, as well as journalists, representatives of non-governmental organizations and other distinguished guests.

Since 2011 Baku has hosted the World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue, in partnership with UNAOC, UNESCO, UN World Tourism Organization, Council of Europe and ISEESCO. Through this initiative known as “Baku process”, Azerbaijan acknowledges the power of intercultural dialogue and the
possibility to create the conditions for positive intercultural and inclusive relations. At the same time, hosting the first ever European Games in 2015, Azerbaijan will conduct the Islamic Solidarity Games in 2017.

This year Baku has hosted the 7th Global Forum of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (April 25-27), which aims to reach a more peaceful and socially inclusive world, by building mutual respect among people of different cultural and religious identities, and highlighting the will of the world’s majority to reject extremism and embrace diversity.

With the same purpose, in 2014 was established the Baku International Multiculturalism Center, aimed to preserve ethnic, religious and cultural diversity of the country. It has also been created to introduce Azerbaijan as a centre of multiculturalism to the world, and carried out research into and promoted existing multicultural models of the world. One of the mainstream projects of the Centre is promoting a special University course entitled “Azerbaijani multiculturalism” at local and foreign universities. The promoters already managed to incorporate this course into the teaching programs of some top ranked universities (Sapienza University in Rome, Charles University in Prague, Fribourg University in Switzerland) across Europe, as well as in Russia, Georgia and in Indonesia. The Center has also initiated the publication of a series of books under the title “Sources of Azerbaijani Multiculturalism”.

Within the framework of the Year of Multiculturalism, Baku International Multiculturalism Centre launched the Summer School and Winter School programs every year for students and researches interested in enhancing and deepening their knowledge in this issue (theoretical and practical knowledge), and explore new topics regarding Azerbaijani multiculturalism.

In a recent visit to Baku (October 2016), Pope Francis praised Azerbaijan as a place of religious tolerance after meeting with Azerbaijan’s President Ilham Aliyev and after a private meeting with Sheikh ul-Islam, the region’s grand mufti, before the two men held an interreligious meeting at the country’s largest mosque with Orthodox Christian, Muslim and Jewish leaders.

A significant activism of civil society in this issue is also demonstrated by many initiatives and projects created by Azerbaijani think tanks and academic groups. One of the most interesting and relevant is the International Multicultural Network (IMN) founded and headed by Dr. Khayala Mammadova, which is “an online presence to connect researchers and practitioners with an interest in multiculturalism, aimed at promoting and disseminating research on the multifaceted multicultural agenda and for comprised of scholars, state and community actors specialising in the fields of multiculturalism, intercultural and interreligious relations across diverse disciplines and geographical regions”.

It connects researchers from all ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Likewise, it appoints Country Representatives, and promotes publications (books, journal articles, research reports), discussions and events in order to advise, educate and inform on subjects related to multiculturalism and cultural diversity. We can mention, among the most significant international partners of the International Multicultural Network, “The Prisma – The Multicultural Newspaper”, a London-based newspaper which “works for the elimination of racial and cultural prejudices, and is committed to social justice and equality of opportunity”, and is aimed at promoting and defending these values of the multicultural society of the UK, especially in the case of Latin Americans.

Using its peculiar way to multiculturalism as a strategic tool of foreign policy and defending itself from religious and political extremism, Azerbaijan represents a country’s success story that could give Europe a contribution in its difficult approach to this issue.

Multiculturalism is a divisive subject of debate in almost all European nations that are associated with a single, national cultural ethos. As the latest datas confirm, European Union is facing unprecedented demographic changes (ageing population, low birth rates, changing family structures and migration) which are likely to change the internal structure of its member states over the next 50 years.

Despite Europe has always been a mixture of different cultures, unified by the super-position of Imperial Roman Christianity, the ideology of nationalism (XIX-XX century) transformed the way Europeans thought about theirselves and the state. The new nation-states sprang up on the principle that each nation is entitled to its own sovereignty and to engender, protect, and preserve its own unique culture and
Social unity, according to this ideology, is seen as an essential feature of the nation, understood as unity of descent, unity of culture, unity of language, and often unity of religion. The European nation-state, at least until the mid-twentieth century, constitutes a culturally homogeneous society, although some national movements recognize regional differences.

Bearing in mind this context, during the latest decades some of the European countries – especially France – have tried to culturally assimilate the regional minorities, or any other ethnic/linguistic/religious group different from the national majority, while ensuring them every individual and group right. Nevertheless, after the economic crisis of 2007-2008 and the increasing of migration resulting from riots and civil wars within the Arab-Islamic world, criticism of multiculturalism has become stronger and stronger in the Old Continent. This position questions the ideal of the maintenance of distinct ethnic cultures within a state and sometimes argues against cultural integration of different ethnic and cultural groups to the existing laws and values of the country. Alternatively critics may argue for assimilation of different ethnic and cultural groups to a single national identity.

Thirty years ago, many Europeans saw multiculturalism as an answer to Europe’s social problems. Today, according to multiculturalism’s critics, it allowed excessive immigration without demanding enough integration, a mismatch that has eroded social cohesion, undermined national identities, and degraded public trust. However, as argued by Kenan Malik on Foreign Affairs, multiculturalism in Europe has become a proxy for other social and political issues: immigration, identity, political disenchattement, working-class decline. “As a political tool, multiculturalism has functioned as not merely a response to diversity but also a means of constraining it”, writes Malik. “And that insight reveals a paradox. Multicultural policies accept as a given that societies are diverse, yet they implicitly assume that such diversity ends at the edges of minority communities”.

In his luminary book ‘Europe of Sarajevo 100 years later’, prof. Anis Bajrektarevic diagnosed that ‘multiculturalism in not dead but dread in Europe’. “There is a claim constantly circulating the EU: ‘multiculturalism is dead in Europe’. Dead or maybe d(r)ead?... That much comes from a cluster of European nation-states that love to romanticize – in a grand metanarrative of dogmatic universalism – their appearance as of the coherent Union, as if they themselves lived a long, cordial and credible history of multiculturalism. Hence, this claim and its resonating debate is of course false. It is also cynical because it is purposely deceiving. No wonder, as the conglomerate of nation-states/EU has silently handed over one of its most important debates – that of European anti-fascistic identity, or otherness – to the wing-parties. This was repeatedly followed by the selective and contra-productive foreign policy actions of the Union over the last two decades.” – writes prof. Bajrektarevic on the most pressing issue of today’s Europe.

Thus, as it seems to look for the multiculturalism one has to search beyond Europe. Starting from this theoretical point, the traditional and modern reinvigorated Azerbaijan experience about multiculturalism could teach Europe an important lesson: addressing issues and policies on multiculturalism requires an approach that combines state policies with resourcefulness of civil society and intermediate bodies. An approach which would avoid, on the one hand, the distortion of local peoples and migrants, and on the other hand would waste assimilationism. In other words, a new “foedus” (pact, alliance) which would preserve rights and culture of minorities, while ensuring the values of the majority of the population.

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The (Trans-Siberian train of) Heartland or (Mare Liberum of) Rimland? Mega structures for the next century

Filippo Romeo

This year marks the centenary of the creation of the legendary Trans-Siberian railway of Russia. By an ironic twist of fate, this falls right in the middle of an epochal change in geopolitical and geo-economical scenarios, whose main powers involved are also responding by creating and planning great infrastructure works. There is actually no doubt that in the profiled context the continental infrastructures constitute an essential moment for recovery, able to affect both technological modernisation processes and foreign affairs stability. This is true if one considers a nation’s economic development, and by effect its geopolitical clout on a global scale, depends heavily on ‘voluntary geography’ improvement via implementing a modern, technologically advanced transport infrastructure system able to face and overcome the ‘distance’ factor.

As well as works broadening the Suez Canal and Panama, which surely highlighted the role maritime connections are playing, one must in no way ignore the importance of the land ones, which see the Asian continent as one of the main players. Asia is actually the continent most concerned and involved in these projects foreseeing the creation of Roads, tunnels and railways that should pass it from one line to another. And for some years now China - playing a main role in this process - has got down to creating some.

The economic power developed in the latest periods by the Chinese colossus is actually supported a series of strategic infrastructural projects that are useful in accompanying, protecting and raising the Country’s spread ability. These surely include the great land and sea ‘New Silk Road’ project, devised by Peking and with the main objective of bringing China closer to the rest of the Euro-Asian continental mass, as well as developing the inland zones that are still behind the coast band. There is no doubt that full realisation of such an ambitious project will have weighty geopolitical repercussions if one just considers it aims to link Europe and Asia in infrastructure and economy and at the same time contrast US replacement on the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

These routes are split through the middle by the Trans-Siberian, which is weekly passed by tens of freight trains, leaving Moscow to reach the Chinese city of Manzhouli and vice versa, and generating a 700% increase in container traffic coming from China and heading for Europe, according to data provided by the Russian State.

As well as China, the Indian government is also seeing to setting up new transport infrastructures, useful in propelling the Country to an industrial economy. It was recently reported that New Deli is working on developing a vast infrastructure network able to link India to Central-Southern Europe, passing through Iran, Central Asia and Russia, so circumventing Pakistan, a historically rival State, whose geographical position constitutes a heavy obstacle for the Ganges Country. This project would let one save various days’ travel, allowing Indian freights to reach European markets swiftly.

Russia is doing no less: it is still busy creating the Razvite megaproject, which recovers the tradition of Great Plans to promote Russia’s industrialisation in the last century and also aims to recompose the European-Asian continent as the
foremost active subject on the worldwide scene.

More in detail, this is the project for a multi-infrastructural corridor, to be created over 20 years, aiming to link via a completely new system the Pacific Coast with the Baltic Sea and Atlantic, involving countries like China and Japan in the East and numerous European states in the West. This corridor will cross the European-Asian continent and will be made up of a mix of rail, road and motorway links, electric lines, cable lines, petrol and gas conducts, and water channels; moreover, the path will be accompanied by the foundation of technological parks and (at least 10) new cities. This project faces ambitious challenges and aims for environmental sustainability. These ambitions will be supported by a technological platform with its terminals in the East, in China and Japan, with lengthenings in South East Asia, aiming to express real change prospects, relating to development and exchange dynamics, like in fact those expressed in its time with the Trans-Siberian and Suez Canal creation. In 2013, Moscow also placed 17 billion dollars to modernise the Baikal-Amur tract of the Trans-Siberian itself, aiming to raise and increase the business exchange volume.

Beyond the lasting mega dilemma pinned down by prof. Anis Bajrektarevic as “the (Trans-Siberian/Maglev train of) Heartland or (Mare Liberum of) Rimland?”, this current development should be seen as an opener not a dividing line. No doubt, these projects could be a good opportunity for Europe too, and in particular more so for the enterprise system, including those operating in the technological sector, which could work for modern infrastructure creation, smart cities and technological poles the project foresees.

For Europe, especially the Mediterranean, it could also turn out to be a valuable chance to finalise its infrastructural projects, including the TEN T corridors. This completion would make the European transport network more organic and would especially help develop outskirts areas, including the Balkans, via interconnection. Improving transborder connections with this area could indeed favour both its concrete, real stabilisation and integration with Europe’s Eastern part, and work as a bridge to the effervescent European-Asian area and the Pacific which, as is known, are living a period of unstoppable growth and expansion.

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From Friday, January 20th 2017, the United States have a new President – for many, not only in America, still at least controversial and in the extreme version: totally unacceptable Donald John Trump. In a precise ceremony in front of the Congress Trump gave his oath and delivered his first speech as head of state. And for everybody who is not biased or has not become prisoner of prejudices, he announced a complete turn in regard to the US policy, as it was until now. This turn can be detected in a couple of key messages which are, admittingly, populist, but not without a deeper political contents.

First of all, Trump confirmed that he is a convinced enemy of political elites, accusing them of prospering while ordinary Americans suffered. To the “forgotten men and women” of America he promised: “You are not forgotten any more and you will never be forgotten again”, adding that the day of his inauguration marks not the transfer of power from one political party to another, but from Washington DC to the people. Then, using – historically speaking – the slogan of American isolationists, he stressed that from this day in deliberating on any decision only one principle will be applied and that is: America first! (accepting that every state in the world has the right to put its interests above everything else). After that, more clearly than ever before, he repeated what he said for the first time accepting the nomination of the Republican party as presidential candidate. Last summer, namely, he announced that the US will stop imposing regimes. In his first presidential address he was even more precise: America will not impose her way of life to anybody. It is worth noting that the “American way of life” was until now sort of a sacred cow in the vocabulary of American politicians. Trump added that the US will be a shining example and the other will follow...
Had he said nothing more, this speech should be remembered. Therefore it is absolutely wrong when the reporter of the German public TV (ARD) says this was not a presidential speech at all, but only a continuation of the election campaign. By the way it would be interesting to hear what would this so called liberals say had he after the inauguration changed his rhetoric and contents. They would lament about hypocrisy and not-consistency. But, as Trump remained consistent, they wrote him off as somebody who did not grasp at all that he is the President and is just continuing his campaign. But, objectively speaking, the messages we mentioned have – for everybody willing to hear them – mark not only the beginning of what Trump described as the necessity to turn form empty words to deeds. The core of his economic policy can be detected from the short slogan “buy American and hire American”. And only after being 30 minutes in office he put into question the multilateral trade agreements for American continent and Pacific region, confirming what he announced during the campaign, namely that he prefers a net of bilateral trade agreements instead of those multilateral.

He did not mention any of the concrete problems he will confront as President, such as relations with Russia or health insurance system in the US. But, it was a programmatic speech, based on crucial messages and principles. He did, however, mention radical Islamism (not Islam, but radical Islamism), promising that he would eradicate it from the face of the Earth, for which he will without any doubt need cooperation from Russia.

He repeated that he will create new jobs in America, he spoke again about the decline of former US industrial centres (“inspiring” the German television to say that this is simply not true, but forgetting how many times we had seen the empty fabric hales in Detroit and empty streets in the now declining and many years ago prosperous American cities). And he promised, once again, that he will change this situation, that he will build new highways, new bridges, new railroads. Some objected immediately that he did not say: how. It would have been almost a miracle had he done so in a situation when many of his planned members of the US government still lack the Congressional approval and when even some of them voice opinions quite different in regard to his own.

Be it, as it is, Trump has his vision of the future and he outlined the corner-stones on which he intends to build his vision, despite his critics who were not hesitating to say that he does not understand today’s world. Some analysts heard in his words the echo of the inaugural speeches of the most famous American president of the 20th century, Franklin Delano Roosevelt and some said they had the impression that Bernie Sanders, the “apostle” of the democratic socialism in America is speaking through Trump’s mouth. We would dare to go even one step further. If we put aside Trump’s person and the fact that he is extremely rich, and if we forget his repeated mentioning of God at the end of his speech, we can come to one conclusion only: what was said by Donald Trump should be embraced by every liberal leftist in the world. Caring for ordinary, forgotten people, wealth for everyone, equality between all people (“we can be black, brown or yellow, but we all have the same red blood”), transformation of a system which benefited the politicians, while the middle class suffered, starting of new production, the transfer of power, it is worth repeating, not from one political party to another, but from the Washington elite to the people, all this can be seen, let us not deny this, as a populist, if not even a nationalist approach. But, at the same time it is closer to the left side of the political scene, than to the right one. These are the first impressions based on Trump’s inaugural speech.

But, let us make one thing crystal clear. This is not a noncritical pledoayer for Donald Trump, who has many minuses – from the total lack of political experience, the unnecessary and potentially dangerous antagonizing of the People’s Republic of China to the very dubious hints about his energy policy or his standpoints about the global warming phenomena. But, at the same time it is a pledoayer for much needed and long overdue change of American policy which made the world unstable and insecure and which made the global terrorism a real threat for everybody and everywhere by accepting the protagonists of this terrorism as allies in its projects of toppling the regimes in the Middle East. Yes, such a change, even if it would be Trump’s turn, would be mostly welcome. Of course, if he delivers, what he had promised: it stops here and it stops now. In only a few months we will know if he would be able to transform into reality his vision of America and its new role in the world. Not more: just a few months. After that we will know if Trump’s turn can become a success, or not. And his voters will know if he was right, when he promised them on the Inauguration day. “I will never let you down”.

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Varela’s past before the presidential function

Juan Carlos Varela Rodríguez is the 49th current President of Panama, as a member of the political party PP (Partido Panameñista / Panamanian Party). He was born on December 12, 1963 in the capital Panama City. He scored first successes in his career in the private sector, where he led the Panamanian company with over 100 years of tradition – Varela Hermanos, S.A. – which produced thousands of jobs in the country. Varela supported projects aimed at the development of culture, sports, education, folklore, traditions and the environment. His most important position before he took over the presidential office was the function of the Vice President of Panama from July 1, 2009 to July 1, 2014 as well as the Foreign Minister from July 1, 2009 to August 2011, when the then President Ricardo Martinelli got rid him of this function. On March 17, 2013 Varela officially announced his candidacy for the President and on August 25, 2013 he has been declared as a presidential candidate of the alliance called El Pueblo Primero (People First) composed of the Partido Popular and his Partido Panameñista, which leads since 2006. Against him was a coalition of parties known as Unidos Por Más Cambios (United for More Change), led by CD.

The public and political critics supposed that Varela, if elected, will have a real chance to raise the prestige of Panama in international forum and in case of avoiding corruption scandals or political incidents can prepare the way for his candidate from the PP for the next presidential elections held in 2019. Varela had a fundamental and huge advantage in comparison with his opponents during a battle for the presidential chair, which was his acting as the Vice President of Panama throughout the previous parliamentary term and before that several years as the Foreign Minister of Panama. These two functions made him more visible in public awareness, he constantly used to appear on television, newspapers and Internet media and he has been having a real benefit and impact on the Panamanian population, as well as the position of Panama in an international environment abroad. Not only he has been gaining prestige over the years, and has been quietly preparing for his presidential campaign in the years 2013/2014, but principally through the aforementioned two functions has been obtaining the necessary experiences and skills in the political, diplomatic and social environment that now help him very well while being the President of the country.

Development of the presidential elections

Presidential elections in 2014 were exceptional for the country, because Panama was the first country in Latin America where its citizens from abroad could vote in elections via Internet, taking the example of France and the other developed European countries. The elections themselves were held on Sunday, on May 4, 2014, when Varela with almost 40% of the votes defeats his opponents, takes the oath and takes up the Presidency from July 1, 2014. After elections in 2014, Panama’s Vice President became Isabel de Saint Malo Alvarado as historically the first woman in the history of Panama elected to this position.
whom Varela simultaneously appointed to the position of the Foreign Minister of Panama. Panama has thus become one of the Latin American and world countries, where one of the key high-level governmental functions belongs to a woman.

Before Panama voted and chose Varela as its President, there has been a challenging political battle of several candidates aspiring for the President, so let's make a recap step by step. Seven candidates decided to candidate in the presidential elections of 2014, three of whom had decisive word in advance and the public already knew that one of them will eventually make it to a successful conclusion. The other four candidates were there as they were only a number, maybe to achieve splitting the votes of the electorate. The first of the main candidates was the current President Juan Carlos Varela Rodríguez as a member of the political party PP (Partido Panameñista / Panamanian Party). The second one was Juan Carlos Navarro as the current leader of the PRD (Partido Revolucionario Democrático / Democratic Revolutionary Party) and defeated presidential candidate in 2009, the third one was José Domingo Arias as the leader of the CD (Cambio Democrático / Democratic Change) and former Deputy Minister for Foreign Trade. Navarro already had experience with the pre-election battle of past elections, while both Arias and Varela were new in the process.

Varela obviously did not enter this election campaign as a political beginner, since he has been serving as the Vice President, previously as the Foreign Minister and he was involved enough in the political, social and business life. His electorate thus did not vote for a cat in a bag, but they know what to expect from him in case he is elected. His election campaign was primarily based on four important areas: reducing the cost of living, building a safe neighbourhood for residents, making water accessible to all residents and, of course, last but not least, eliminating corruption and clientelism, as all candidates. During one of his speeches during the presidential campaign he made the following statement: "We will implement deep inspection of all expenditures and actions of the government, to let all the experts and professionals of the working class of our country know how their money from their taxes are spent. And all those who have taken what belongs to our citizens, they will have to return it. " Such and even more accurate identification of issues associated with clear solutions of such problems lifted Varela’s electorate.

Leading any political campaign in Latin American countries is vastly different from what we Europeans are used to see. Elections wins charisma of the candidate, his identification with population, pre-election populist promises associated with the most serious problems in the country, traveling of the candidate across the country and meeting with ordinary citizens, his participation in all cultural events such as festivals and carnivals, and last but not least, strong slogans and mottos that can pull down a voter right on his side and can get not only his vote, but also his heart. Latin American people see their leaders not only as statesmen who lead their countries, but they also see them as the gods, icons and life models, without whom they could not exist. It is determined because of different culture, human values and historical development of the respective countries.

Varela’s campaign had been taking place across all the country, he had been appearing on hundreds of election posters, residents had been wearing T-shirts, shirts and caps with the name and logo of his political party, singing his songs and his supporters had been promoting him everywhere. Varela has his own website on Internet (www.juancarlosvarela.com) and he is also extremely active in his personal profile on Facebook, where he shares countless posts from all areas of life in which he operates. What is important is a regular interaction between him and the Panamanians right via his Facebook profile, where he very often reacts and responds to the comments of the citizens of Panama. The more a leader gets closer to his citizens, the faster he will win their sympathy, hearts and above all the necessary votes.

Shortly before the elections took place, the Electoral
Tribunal was expecting something less than 2.5 millions of voters, out of whom just over 320,000 will be first-time voters and about 70,000 people are adolescents. The results were as follows: out of the nearly

2.5 millions of the eligible voters came to the polls and voted nearly 1.9 millions of the Panamanians = turnout was just over 50%. **Varela won the elections with 724,762 votes** (39.1% of all votes), ahead of the second Arias with 581,828 votes (31.4% of all votes) and third Navarro with 521,842 votes (28.1% of all votes). The fourth candidate Genaro López received only 11,127 votes (0.6% of all votes), where we see a huge gap between the three dominant candidates and the rest.

**Varela’s presidency**

Varela’s presidency now at the beginning of January 2017 has flipped into its second half after two and a half years of the presidency. He will remain as the President of Panama until July 1, 2019, thus still two and a half years, if everything remains going well and he won’t be associated to any scandal or if any revolution won’t take place in Panama in order to depose Varela by someone else which is very popular in the Panamanian history. But as of now there is no indication that this scenario will happen and it is believed that Varela will successfully carry on his term until the very end. The Panamanian public also considers him as a respectable President who will lead his country until the expiry of the parliamentary term.

One of the biggest problems of the Presidents and leaders of the Latin American countries during the election period is corruption, which is closely related to the bribery and nepotism. In the pre-election promises of all the candidates, not only in the case of Panama, we can observe mottos and slogans concerning right the solution of this serious problem, but a scythe crashes to a stone paradoxically after the candidate is chosen by the people as their President and he himself, respectively with the help of his government and staff, is the main protagonist of corruption scandals that eventually are revealed, thus people are forever dissatisfied and this problem in these respective latitudes is somehow not solved yet. Speaking of Panama, a typical example is the former President Ricardo Martinelli, who promised resolute actions in terms of corruption, but he has done countless corruption scandals, which led to a deep dissatisfaction of the Panamanians, so finally in the presidential elections in 2014 they elected the candidate of the opposition group believing and hoping that Varela will bring a needed change. It is not supposed that Varela can’t find the word ‘corruption’ in his dictionary, but a decline can be observed in corruption scandals as well as an overall improvement of the atmosphere in the Panamanian politics.

Varela approached more the Panamanian people as if he was one of them, unlike his predecessor Martinelli. It is a strange phenomenon that two politicians from two different political spectra were able to act as the President and his Vice President, although the period 2009-2014 was marked by the multiple disputes between them, let alone ordering Martinelli to depose Varela from the function of the Foreign Minister. Panama is currently recording the economic growth, building the necessary roads and highways across the country, the Panamanian production of various materials rises, the Panama Canal reports positive numbers and earnings going to the Panamanian treasury, the poverty rate has been steadily decreasing, the country records a constant arrival of the foreign capital, international companies and multinational corporations, especially in the capital city and the population is relatively satisfied, although there are still lots of things that desperately need a change or improvement. Overall, however, we can say that Varela has shown himself in a positive light so far, whether in his own country in front of his own citizens or during his working visits abroad. As long as he will continue
A Common Populism: Trump, Le Pen and Putin: Do they Portent the Beginning of the End for the EU?

Dr. Emanuel L. Paparella

“T
he Brussels wall will have come down just like the Berlin wall came down. The EU, this oppressive model, will have disappeared. But the Europe of free nations will have been born... The EU should not last more than two minutes longer.”

Marine Le Pen

Marine Le Pen, leader of France’s far right National Front, seems poised to become the next President of France in 2018. Political pundits are predicting her victory following Donald Trump’s victory in the US. They aver that Trump’s populism has paved the way for a veritable political revolution in Europe which portends to reshape the existing world order.

How so? Well, for one thing, Le Pen wants the EU to withdraw from NATO, alleging that it would end American dominance in Europe. She repeats Trump’s assertion that NATO is now obsolete, and has in fact declared publicly that Trump’s victory makes such a feat quite possible now. To her way of thinking, NATO is a “tool for making sure countries that are part of it comply with the will of the United States.” She finds this unbearable. What would she substitute it with? She has some interesting proposals in this regard. She has called for “cooperation agreements” with Russia with close cooperation between European capitals and Moscow. In other words, Washington gets substituted with Washington. She claims that there is “absolutely no reason we should turn systematically to the United States.”

This may sound a bit incoherent. She sees Trump’s victory as an additional stone in the building of a new world order but at the same time wants the EU to take its distance from the US. How does Le Pen square this circle? Thus: “Obviously we have to compare this victory [Trump’s] with the rejection of the European constitution by the French people, of course, with the Brexit vote, but also with the emergence of movements devoted to the nation—patriotic movements in Europe. All these elections are essentially referendums against the unfettered globalization that has been imposed upon us, that has been imposed upon people, and today has been clearly shown to have its limits.” That is to say, she sees Trump’s victory as a “victory of the people against the elite.” This of course is populism at its best, or perhaps its worst.

What is most intriguing about the above glaring statements is that they seem to reveal a mind-set quite similar to that displayed by Trump and Putin. All three seems to have quite a few affinities and seem to like each other. The major affinity seems to be this: they see the political struggles currently going on as struggles of civilizations against each other. Le Pen is on record as saying that next year’s presidential election in France would “establish some real choices of civilization.” She made such a statement in the context of a lashing out against the EU and its immigrant policies based on open borders. She added: “Do we want a multicultural society, following the model of the English-speaking world, where fundamentalist Islam is progressing...or do we want an independent nation, with people able to control their own destiny, or do we accept to be a region, managed by the technocrats of the European Union?”

She has gone as far as comparing the European Union to the Soviet Union: “I don’t see why we should recreate, virtually, this wall between European countries and Russia, unless to obey the orders of the United States, which up until now, have found an interest in this.” She has moreover blamed
the EU and the US for destabilizing Europe’s relations with Russia, and has claimed that there is not “a hair’s breath” between her party and the UKIP regarding immigration and the European Union. Keep well in mind that Russia is currently footing the bill for her campaign expenses.

What can one conclude from the above analysis? It could prove useful in answering this crucial question: is this the beginning of the end of the world order established after World War II with its culmination the formation of the European Union and the NATO Alliance? Professor Anis H. Bajrektarevic rightfully asked: “…is this unionistic condominium the best of Europe, or Europe itself? Is this Reality or metanarrative of dogmatic universalism?”

To put it another way: is this now the beginning of the breakdown of overall pan-European stability? Let’s attempt an answer beginning with some historical background in a rather personal mode.

Back in the 50s, when I was a teen-ager, still living in Italy, when the EU institutions were still fragile, I remember writing an essay launched by the lyceum I was attending at the time, where I opined that I was rather skeptical that the Western Alliance and the European Union would ever take off. In the 70s I was living and studying in the US (where my father was born) and lived through the Vietnam War and read the news about the Red Brigades, and began having doubts again about the survival of the West. I was then in college and was reading books like “The Decline of the West” by Oswald Spengler. That might have influenced me. But in all my adult life I am hard pressed to remember a dramatic moment such as the one we are now witnessing. All we need now is for good men to do nothing and the decline and possible destruction of the West is pretty much assured.

I hope I am wrong, but, following Trump’s inauguration on January 20, 2017, with a President, so called, totally uninterested in “shared values” with our allies (“not worth American lives” as he puts it), seeming to prefer the company of dictators such as Putin with whom he can make deals, to that of democratic allies, deeming the geo-political world as a huge transactional stage to be exploited on which to negotiate deals, incapable of conceiving the greater good, it would appear that we are two or three bad elections away from the end of NATO, the end of the European Union, and possibly the end of the liberal world order. The almost inevitable consequence will be the return of nefarious ultra-nationalism and fascism in Europe and the loss of democracy in America. Putin and his Trojan horses all over Europe are waiting in the wing. Their strategy is simple: divide and conquer.

To repeat the urgent question: are the lights going out; is it the end of the West as we presently know it?

What I call “the Caligua Presidency” constituted by political entertainment and double talk, has begun, people unfortunately end up getting the government they deserve and the monsters they have created. The omens are bad, but let’s not forget Le Pen. She is now the front runner in next year’s French presidential elections and she also finds alliances burdensome. Some of her campaign commitments are that she will withdraw from both NATO and the EU, will nationalize French companies, will restrict foreign investors, will promote a special relationship with Russia, the same Russia whose banks are funding her election campaign.

The question persists: is Le Pen at least partially right in considering what is going on a civilizational breakdown? More specifically: once France is out of the EU too (after Brexit), possibly followed by other copycats, can Europe’s economic single market survive in any shape or form? Will NATO and the Atlantic Alliance crumble? Trump of course will not be sorry for that, as his misguidedly appealing rhetoric to his misguided followers has made clear; indeed, the short term cost of alliances is easier to see and assess than the longer-term benefits. Let’s not forget that his span of attention is that of the time needed to write a tweet.

There is little doubt that shared economic space, nuclear deterrence via the NATO alliance, and standing armies, while being costly short term, produced more than half a century of political stability and prosperity in Europe and North America. We all take those benefits for granted now, until they are gone for good.

Those who have ears to hear, let them hear.

The writer is academic analyst.
Pakistan-Shanghai Cooperation Organization Business Council - Initiative of Pak-SCo Friendship Forum, LALA Textiles in collaboration with Embassy of Uzbekistan to Pakistan organized Reception in honor of H.E Mr. Ulegbek, Deputy Prime Minister of Republic of Uzbekistan and the visiting high powered delegation of dignitaries from Uzbekistan. The event was attended by Ambassadors from the permanent member countries of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, Observer States and Dialogue Partners along with other representative from different diplomatic missions. Large number of potential Business partners, Representative of Chamber of Commerce’s and Industries participated in the event to reflect the keen interest of enhancing business partnerships between Pakistan and Uzbekistan in particular and Shanghai Cooperation Organization in general. Speaking on the occasion H.E Mr. Furkat Siddikov, Ambassador of Uzbekistan highlighted recent several steps taken by government of Uzbekistan in order to increase the trade relations between Pakistan and Uzbekistan. He said that presence of H.E Mr. Ulegbek, Deputy Prime Minister of Republic of Uzbekistan in Pakistan with the delegation reflects the great brotherly relations that two countries enjoy. Mr. Pervez LALA, CEO, LALA Textiles and President, Pakistan-SCO Business Council, in his remarks highlighted the LALA Textiles along with sharing the reason of creating the Business Council. He said that Business community in Pakistan is ready to collaborate with the counterparts in Uzbekistan and the countries of SCO and Business Council will provide all the related support. Ms. Farhat Asif, President, Pak-SCO Friendship Forum highlighted the role and responsibilities of the council and forum to the gathering.
Embassy of Republic of Uzbekistan and Institute of Peace and Diplomatic Studies (IPD) jointly organized book launching ceremony of “Zaheer Uddin Babur” written by Mr. Pirimkul Kyderov and translated & printed by National Book Foundation in Urdu Language at the Embassy. People from academic circles, government officials, diplomats, mass media and students of different universities attended the ceremony. Ambassador of Republic of Uzbekistan H.E Mr. Furkat Siddikov in his welcome address noted that the two brotherly states Pakistan and Uzbekistan shared the affinities of culture, faith and customs which strengthen the diplomatic relations. He further called such small but positive initiative must be continued to show the gesture of goodwill in order to enhance more good bilateral relations. Associate Professor, Department of History, Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) Mr. Abdul Basit explained the insight of the writer and historical perspective of the book. Senior Research Fellow, National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad Dr. Sajid Awan shed comprehensive light on the essential aspects of the book in a variety of poetic diction largely grabbed the attention of the audience. He also provided the brief but insightful overview of the book by reading the different segments from the remarkable excerpt of translation of Mr. Pirimkul Kyderov phenomenal work. Addressing the concluding session, Director, National Book Foundation, Government of Pakistan, Prof. Dr. Inam ul Haq Javed, Managing praised the speakers on their efforts to provide intuitive analysis about Mughal emperor Zahir Ud Din Babar. Dr. Haq assured to continue such erudite gatherings to benefit those who interested in learning history from the past. President IPD, Ms. Farhat Asif in her closing remarks pointed out the need to establish people to people contacts, cultural linkages and academic excellence between brotherly countries of Central Asia.
Advisor to Prime Minister on National History and Literary Heritage, Irfan Siddiqui, inaugurated ‘Hafez Shirazi Literary Corner’ at National Book Foundation (NBF). Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Pakistan, Mehdi-e-Honar Doost, Managing Director NBF, Prof. Dr. Inamul Haq Javeid, and Cultural Counselor, Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Shahaboddin Daraei, Mr. Asif Noor, Book Ambassador National Book Foundation, and Mr. Azeem Iqbal were also present.

Addressing the ceremony, Advisor to Prime Minister, Irfan Siddiqui, thanked the Iranian embassy for establishing the Hafez Shirazi corner at NBF. He said that Hafez Shirazi is a national poet of Iran, but his poetry is also equally liked in Pakistan. He stated that similarly, people of Iran like Allama Iqbal’s poetry and are famous with the name of ‘Iqbal Lahori’ in Iran. He commented that Pakistan and Iran are enjoying very close cultural, literary, and brotherly relations, adding that such relations can be further strengthened by activities like this. Irfan Siddiqui announced that a similar Iqbal Corner would be established in Iran, adding that in the cultural sector, more such schemes can be introduced.

Ambassador of Iran, Mehdi-e-Honar Doost, said that personalities like Hafez Shirazi and Allama Iqbal are liked in both brotherly countries Pakistan and Iran. He said that “We are proud of poets like Iqbal and Shirazi. He highlighted the literary contributions of Hafez Shirazi in his speech. Cultural Counselor, Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Shahaboddin Daraei, said that “I appreciate the sincere cooperation of NBF”. He lauded the services of Mr. Asif Noor, Book Ambassador, National Book Foundation, and Designer of the Hafez Shirazi literary corner, Muhammad Azeem Iqbal, for their valuable contribution in making this monument happen. Managing Director NBF, Inamul Haq Javeid, said that Hafez Shirazi corner is a gift for the research scholars and students of various educational institutions from the brotherly country Iran. He also appreciated the dedicated efforts of Mr. Asif Noor, Book Ambassador, and Mr. Azeem Iqbal, project designer, for the priceless work.
Institute of Peace and Diplomatic Studies organized a Round Table on 25th anniversary of Independence of Kazakhstan and Kazakhstan-Pakistan Relations. H.E Mr. Waheed Ul Hassan, Special Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Govt of Pakistan was the Chief Guest of the occasion. The speakers at length discussed the past, present and prospective diplomatic relations between two countries since the independence of Kazakhstan in December 1991. A large number of people from Academic circles, Business community, Students, Journalists and government officials attended the event.

Special Secretary Foreign Affairs Mr Waheed ul Hassan highlighted the potential areas of where bilateral cooperation could be enhanced in the fields of education, science, culture, art, tourism pharmaceutical, cotton, surgical instrument, sports and also through the cultural exchange programs. He further elaborated the importance of cooperation between Pakistan and Kazakhstan in promotion of regional security and stability highlighting Pakistan’s extensive role in counterterrorism to achieve peace imperative for the regional peace and security. He has also reminded from the past Pakistan’s early recognition of Kazakhstan as a sovereign state in the map of world symbolizes the strong bonding between Pakistan and Kazakhstan.

In addition to, Dr. Nazir Hussain, Associate Professor at School of Politics and International Relations emphasized the significant benefits of enhanced people-to-people contacts which might play a pivotal role in improving cooperation between Kazakhstan and Pakistan. Moreover Dr. Muhammad Khan, Renowned Analyst, pointed the Kazakhstan’s praiseful role during the long process of Pakistan’s accession to Shanghai Cooperation Organization remained commendable. From the historical perspective of handing over nuclear bombs to Russia and later signed the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), for that reason, Dr. Khan called Kazakhstan the most responsible nation in state of affairs. Ms. Saadia Said Niazi, Lecturer, Department of International Relations, NUML highlighted the role of Kazakhstan in the modern Silk Route concept. While concluding the Seminar, Ms. Farhat Asif, President, Institute of Peace and Diplomatic Studies said that potential do exist from both sides for extensive cooperation but there is a need for substantial steps should be taken and materialize the agreements as early as possible. The Round Table concluded looking on bright side of progress, prosperity and cooperation between the two countries.
On the eve of celebrating the 58th Anniversary of the Triumph of the Cuban Revolution, our National Day, it is an honor for me to address the people and Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, on behalf of the Government and the people of the Republic of Cuba. January 1, 1959 marked the beginning of a new stage in Cuba and the conclusion of our battle for independence to become a free and sovereign country.

In these 58 years, Cuba has demonstrated that it is capable of achieving great success, as evidenced by achievements in education, public health. Social security, culture, sports and scientific and technical development, recognized throughout the world. He has also shared his modest progress with other needy peoples.

Cuba has not escaped the global economic crisis, deficiencies persist but the Cuban people have known and will succeed in their great effort. The Cuban economy, foresee for the next year an increase of the Gross Domestic Product in the environment of 2% against a decrease of 0, 9% in 2016, which is very flattering. The proposal of the 2017 investment plan has as its principles to support the priority programs and investments that include the tourism development program of Havana, Varadero, the northern coast of Holguin, and the infrastructure of the Special Development Zone of Mariel.

Its gradual rise continues not only in the aspects indicated but also in the defense of its sovereignty, dignity and independence.

Cuba extends its sincere gratitude to the Government and people of Pakistan for their continued support in the annual United Nations General Assembly vote calling for an end to the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States of America, still in force. We cannot forget the negative effects that this measure causes to our economy and the development of our country. An example of this is that Cuba is still unable to conduct international transactions in US dollars, which prevents the advance of multiple and important future businesses.

This year we have celebrated the 61st anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations and 11th of the presence of the Cuban Medical Brigade following the terrible earthquake that hit Pakistan in 2005. Moreover, Cuban medical schools have graduated more than 950 doctors Pakistanis with sufficient capacity to provide the necessary medical care to the Pakistani people. We cannot forget the noble gesture of the Prime Minister, on behalf of the Pakistani people, to offer a gift of 15,000 tons of rice to the Cuban people, a ceremony that took place last October 14th. Despite geographical distance, Cuba and Pakistan maintain excellent relations based on friendship and mutual cooperation, and we hope that earlier than later, economic-trade relations can be successfully developed for the benefit of both countries.

The demise of the historic leader of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro Ruz, on November 25, has been painfully sad for our people. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to thank the authorities and the people of Pakistan, our friends and the media for their affection and solidarity towards our commander-in-chief.

Finally, I would like to express my warmest greetings to the Pakistani people, with the desire to put an end to the arms race and that peace prevails on the planet, to enjoy the happiness and prosperity we all deserve for this upcoming New Year 2017.
Iqra University in collaboration with Diplomatic Insight organised a cultural festival titled ‘Colors of Pakistan’ at Islamabad Campus here Thursday, says a press release. The event celebrated the diversity of Pakistani cultural heritage showcased through folk music, artifacts, traditional Pakistani foods and clothes. The distinctive cultural festival was attended by a large number of diplomats, prominent figures who thoroughly enjoyed and highly applauded the display of Pakistani traditional exhibits. The main objective of the event was to display the brilliant work done by the students of Fashion Design department at the University. Dr Muhammad Islam, Dean of the Islamabad Campus, welcomed the guests and highlighted the achievements of Iqra University. The Dean also highlighted the interest of Iqra in academic collaboration with foreign universities. On the occasion, prominent educationist Hunaid Lakhani said that Pakistan has been blessed with rich cultural heritage. The diplomats while taking keen interest in the displayed art work stated that Pakistan is a peace-loving country, land of hospitality. “People to people contacts and linkages in the higher education sector could be greatly helpful in strengthening bilateral relationship between Pakistan and the other countries,” they remarked. Meanwhile, founding Editor of the Diplomatic Insight Ms Farhat Asif also shared the vote of thanks.

Those honoured at the event included Vice Chancellor of University of Punjab Professor Dr. Zafar Mueen Nasir, Vice Chancellor of Muhammad Nawaz Sharif University of Engineering and Technology, Multan, Professor Dr. Muhammad Zubair, Vice Chancellor, University of Sargodha Professor Dr. Ishtiaq Ahmad, President, Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Raja Amer Iqbal and newly elected Vice President of National Press Club Islamabad Myra Imran. All were distinguished alumnus of Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad.

Speaking on the occasion, Barrister Zafarullah Khan, Special Assistant to Prime Minister lauded contribution of Quaid-i-Azam regard. Prof. Dr. Mohammad Nizamuddin underlined the collaborative efforts and experience sharing for promoting higher education and brining Pakistani universities at par with international standards. Vice chancellor QAU Professor Dr. Javed Ashraf lauded contribution of QAU Alumni Association for extended every sort of possible help to its alma mater. The newly appointed vice chancellors and President Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce termed their attachment with Quaid-i-Azam University as one of best experience of their life. They vowed to bring about positive changes in their respective fields and contribute for development of the country.
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H.E Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, President of State of Palestine