



ISSRA PAPERS

(The Journal of Governance and Public Policy)



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Editor's Note

The ISSRA Papers (The Journal of Governance and Public Policy) 1stHalf 2015 is in your hands for your worthy readership. The contributors of the Journal have been seasoned writers, who have contributed policy relevant/ national & international governance related papers in this edition. It is hoped that their contributions will keep coming in future as well. The publication of the Journal has been receiving active support from the Faculty of Contemporary Studies, NDU, with specific reference to the Departments of Governance and Public Policy and Leadership & Management Sciences. The brief summary of papers and their contributors is given in the succeeding paragraphs.

The first paper 'Prospects for Sustained Economic Cooperation between India and Pakistan' has been contributed by Mr. Umar Farooq Baloch. In this paper the author aims to highlight the importance of bilateral trade between India and Pakistan. He has also endeavoured to explore the impediments towards co-operation and trade between both neighbouring countries.

The second paper 'Madrassa Reforms in Pakistan: A Historical Analysis' is contributed by Mr. Abdul Rauf Iqbal and Ms. Sobia Raza. A historical analysis of different reforms for the betterment of madrassa concept in Pakistan has been presented in this paper. The authors have also discussed certain reforms and ordinances.

'Mid-Term Elections in Israel: An Assessment of Netanyahu's Term in Office', written by Muhammad Shabbir, is the third paper. The writer has discussed and analysed the mid-term elections of Israel. The paper aims to give the scenario, aftermath, regional implications and key elements of 2015 Israel elections.

The fourth paper 'ISSRA's Discourse on Afghanistan Conflict' is written by Ms. Iffat Pervaz. The author brings out the outcomes of the ISSRA's discourse from 2009-2014, about the Afghan conflict. Involvements of stakeholders have been discussed, and recommendations proffered.

Next paper, titled 'Implementation of Disaster Risk Reduction Policy in Pakistan – An Evidence from Sialkot', fifth in line, is written by Ms. Afsheen Zeshan and Dr. Muhammad Bashir Khan. The study is about our State's approach towards disaster management, suggesting ways for its betterment also. Authors have highlighted the recurrent flood-hit area of Sialkot as a case study.

The sixth paper 'Drug Trafficking: A Non-Traditional Security Threat to National Security of Pakistan', has been contributed by Ms. Tehmina Maqbool. This paper aims to discuss the drug trafficking as a security threat for the national security of Pakistan. Drug trafficking is deemed as non-traditional security threat, and negative impact on the society is discussed in detail.

The last paper 'APS Peshawar Incident – An Appraisal' by Ms. Qurat-ul-Ain discusses the black day of Pakistan's history, the APS incident of Peshawar. The author has studied the plausible reasons, and has also taken into stock the National Action Plan which was devised after this horrendous tragedy.

At the end, the Editor extends his profound gratitude to all the writers and readers for pre-posing their trust in ISSRA Papers. Wish you all the best of luck and an intellectually rewarding reading.

Prospects for Sustained Economic Cooperation between India and Pakistan

(M. Umar Farooq Baloch)*

Abstract

Bilateral trade between India and Pakistan is considered by certain quarters on both sides of the border as the most important confidence building measure in normalizing the strained relationship. In this connection, trade being most important confidence building measure, is believed to be the only way to transform the overwrought bilateral relations to sustained bilateral relations. It is prophesized in this case study that bilateral trade can not only help normalizing the strained relations, but also can serve as fundamental constructive step in the peaceful resolution of all ongoing bilateral issues. Trade related legislation in both countries has already reduced the volume of trade, and has allowed bilateral trade, based on a restricted list. The study highlights that the traditional rivals should focus trade liberalization, keeping in view the common goal of socio-economic development. The study will explore the impediments of economic cooperation and the trade potential between India and Pakistan.

Key Words: *transform, bilateral relations, fundamental, legislation, economic*

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Pak-India Economic Cooperation: A Prelude

Not more than a year after the independence from a foreign colonial power, India and Pakistan entered a conflict-ridden course of relationship starting the first war over Kashmir in 1948. To address the questions that how and who started the war? Is beyond the purview of the study at hand, nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that due to this war the possibility of bilateral trade remained a remote course of action on the part of each warring state in the subsequent years. The period between 1947 and 1971, marked by three wars between the two countries, experienced the lowest level of bilateral trade.

However, there was a positive dimension in the bilateral relations right after the partition of British India too. Shortly, after the partition India happened to be the trading partner of Pakistan. The percentage of Pakistan's exports to India in 1948-9 was 56%, and 32% of Pakistan's imports were coming from India.¹ Two important developments resulted in the decline of bilateral trade and interdependence at that time: Currency devaluation in India and subsequent imposition of trade restrictions by Pakistan. Setting aside the old age interdependence, the two governments followed the path of diminishing interdependence to readjust the self-constructed political realities. Bilateral trade that started right after the partition halted as a result of 1965 Indo-Pak war. Furthermore, due to legal restriction, there has been a surge in the illegal trade through smuggling of goods from both sides. Even the security forces deployed on both sides of the border are accused to be involved in trans-border smuggling. This illegal trade has been, however, beneficial to the villages bordering on both sides.²

Policy Rationale & Comprehension: A Glance

The situation of bilateral trade improved as a result of a trade agreement in 1975 between the two states. This improved the level of bilateral trade but did not lead to complete mutual agreement encompassing all aspects of bilateral trade. However, it was the government of Pakistan that proactively announced a positive list of 40 items for trade. During the 1990s, a period which saw a return of civilian rule in Pakistan after more than a decade, the bilateral trade increased often punctuated by fluctuations. This increase in bilateral trade was a result of two important policy decisions aimed at liberalizing bilateral trade: Both India and Pakistan joined World Trade Organization in 1995 and in 1996 India granted MFN status to Pakistan.

These developments were followed by another important development when both India and Pakistan signed South Asian Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA). By signing this multilateral agreement the developing countries in the SAARC region agreed to decrease the tariffs to a 0-5% level by 2013. Coupled with General Pervez Musharaff's initiation of trade talks with India, this agreement helped bilateral trade reach a record high figure. A major development since 2011 has been the annulment of the Positive list and announcement of a negative list by the government of Pakistan. This negative list enables more products to be traded through road and increased from 40 to 137 products.³

However, Pakistan has still not been able to reciprocate the Indian decision to grant MFN status to Pakistan in 1996. Pakistan's reluctance to grant the MFN status to India is viewed by the latter as a violation of the SAFTA. The PPP-led government decided principally to reciprocate the Indian gesture by giving her MFN

status but this has still not been realized and the official bilateral efforts are still minuscule and limited.⁴

Since the last few decades, both Pakistan and India have proved more open economies. Indian GDP's share of global imports and exports has risen from 10% in 1970 to 32% in 2010.⁵ Similarly Pakistan's share has also increased from 12% to 34%. A realization of gains from the global trade has been observed on the part of both countries.

Nevertheless, increasing global trade of the two countries has not reflected in case of their bilateral trade. The table below elicits that Pakistan's exports to India are small both in scope and magnitude - only one percent of the country's global exports and a small amount of Indian imports. Similarly Indian exports to Pakistan constitute only 1% of its total exports. There has been no advancement in potential trade because of the strained political relations between the two countries.

Table - 1: Trade between Pakistan and India

Pakistan's Exports to India

Year	Exports (US\$ million)	A percentage of exports	A percentage of Indian imports
2000/03	56	0.8	0.1
2004/07	344	2.6	0.1
2008/11	268	1.9	0.1
2012/Present	264	1.0	0.1

India's Exports to Pakistan

Year	Exports (US\$ million)	As percentage of exports	As percentage of Pakistani imports
2000/03	238	0.4	2.7
2004/07	1236	1.1	5.1
2008/11	1226	0.9	4.2
2012/Present	1734	0.9	4.9

Source: State Bank of Pakistan

Current Scenario as a Case Study

The feat of normalization of Indo-Pak relations received momentum when Modi led BJP came into power in May 2014. Pakistan had announced in 2011 to extend the MFN status to India to reciprocate a similar extension by the latter in 1996. Pakistan has renamed the MFN to Non-Discriminatory Market Access (NDMA) in a bid to detach the pejorative meaning attached to the MFN in the state and society of Pakistan.⁶ To reach a consequence, on granting India MFN or NDMA, the talks between the two countries have been underway but so far, have not been able to produce any tangible results, because of the recurring tension on LoC and heating up debates by anti-trade lobbies.

A prominent round of talks after the resumption of composite dialogue in 2012 took place in New Delhi, thereafter, Pakistan's High Commissioner invited Kashmiri Hurriyat leaders ahead of Pak-India talks. Consequently, India cancelled the bilateral talks on accusing Pakistan of interfering in India's internal affairs. Variety of hindrances remained underway while granting India as full NDMA status, however, the clear understanding on both sides to normalize bilateral relations through unhindered trade enabled by open borders seems to be a matter of time now.

Tariff & Policies as Striking Barriers

One of the major factors behind the low trade between Pakistan and India is the less diversified export base of Pakistan, and 60% of its exports are accounted for two products: agricultural and textile items. Moreover, these similar items also account for a large amount of India's exports too. It is against this backdrop, that free trade between the two countries is inevitable.

Tariff policies adopted by India have so far precluded the possibility of intra-industry trade. The intra-industry trade is also affected by the support provided by India in the form of relative large subsidies, especially in agriculture.⁷ The table given below compares the level and pattern of import tariffs in the two countries, showing that custom duties on agricultural items are notably higher in India.

Table - 2: Trade Items: Comparison between Level & Pattern of Import Tariffs
MFN-applied tariffs by product group in India and Pakistan

Product Group	India	Pakistan
Animal products	33.1	14.6
Dairy products	33.7	30.0
Fruit, vegetables, plants	30.4	18.2
Coffee, tea	56.3	12.8
Cereals and preparations	32.2	18.8
Oilseeds, fats, and edibles	18.3	8.8
Sugars and confectionery	34.4	17.2
Beverages and tobacco	70.8	52.5
Cotton	12.0	7.0
Other agricultural products	21.7	6.7
Fish and fish products	29.8	10.6
Minerals and metals	7.5	12.4
Petroleum	3.8	10.7
Chemicals	7.9	9.6
Wood, paper etc.	9.1	15.5
Textiles	14.7	16.7
Clothing	13.4	24.8
Leather, footwear etc.	10.2	14.9
Nonelectrical machinery	7.3	9.3
Electrical machinery	7.2	14.7
Transport equipment	20.7	24.7
Manufactures, n.e.s.	8.9	13.1

Source: *World Trade Organization, country tariff profiles*

It is worth mentioning that India also operates a wide range subsidy regime in agriculture. According to Institute of Public Policy, subsidies on agricultural inputs such as fertilizers, water, power, tractors and seeds etc, exceed 5% of its GDP. And yet the concomitant percentage in case of Pakistan is just 1% of GDP. However, there is no denial of the fact that the agriculture subsidies of India are compliant with WTO standards. An account of Non-Tariff barriers between the two countries are explained in succeeding paras.

Non-Tariff Barriers

The prevalent perspective in Pakistan reflects that India restricts her trade with other countries not only through tariff barriers but Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs) as well.⁸ Some of these NTBs have more strictly been applied to Pakistani items. The following points explain Pakistan and India's operated NTBs.

➤ **Indian NTBs**

According to the World Trade Organization, India operates the following significant NTBs:

- Sanitary and phytosanitary measures are harmonized with international standards and that engulf mostly food items.
- Complex nature of obtaining import licenses and permits.
- Blockade is imposed on imports of animals and plants.
- Certain goods can only be traded through some specific ports or trade routes and particular agencies.
- Antidumping and countervailing measures are taken actively by India.

➤ **Pakistan's NTBs**

In comparison with the aforementioned NTBs operated by India, Pakistan operates fewer and less rigorous NTBs that are described below:

- Unlike in India, the main trade policy instrument operated by Pakistan is the tariff regime including sanitary and phytosanitary measures rather than NTBs.
- Clearance of items such as pharmaceuticals, agricultural products and engineering goods require clearance from the relevant ministries/industries.
- Restriction on imports is applied for health, safety, security, religious and environmental reasons.
- A dominant role is played by state agencies, TCP in case of Pakistan, in the import of agricultural items.
- Unlike India, Pakistan seldom embarks upon antidumping and countervailing measures.

Together with tariff barriers, NTBs seem to have impeded and have major impact on the trade between the two countries. At lower level some steps have been taken so far to clear the situation, whereas, there is still lack of higher level efforts in this connection from both sides. Hence, it is clear that NTBs are more restrictive in India than in Pakistan, especially on agricultural items. In addition, there are several other impediments to bilateral trade, given they are removed, can lead to a significant enhancement in bilateral trade.

Further to the technical barriers to bilateral trade, the element of internal politics has a significant impact on trade liberalization related endeavors as well. The concern also includes pursuit of internal politics.

Pursuit of Internal Politics

Domestic politics, both in Pakistan and India, have a great impact on their respective foreign policies when it comes to the bilateral relationship, Kashmir issue, the main cause for adversarial relations has taken a stronghold in domestic politics. Certain parties and quarters such as rightist parties in both countries champion the issue of Kashmir coupled with nationalistic fervor in their electoral campaigns. The groups and parties on Pakistani side develop a pressure group conditioning in soothing the relations with India on Kashmir issue resolution.⁹

Moreover, in the current scenario after coming into power of business friendly Nawaz Sharif, there appears to be cross-party consensus to a certain extent about easing and strengthening of trade relations with India. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has been an ardent supporter of friendly relations with India and called for peaceful resolution of all ongoing issues peacefully. It was also a BJP government in India last time when Nawaz Sharif was in power in 1999 and he successfully held Lahore Summit with Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpai, who came to Lahore through '*Sadai-Sarhad*' dosti bus. Again with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in power for the third time in Pakistan, in India BJP has once again come in power with Narendra Modi at the helm. Though Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has been promoting an agenda of friendly relations with India and even went to the swearing in ceremony of Narendra Modi, there has been no reciprocal response from India.

Nevertheless, Narendra Modi is also trade friendly and wants to see the bilateral trade increasing, on the one hand, while his anti-Muslim actions in past place him at an antagonistic position with Pakistan. Nevertheless, both countries seem determined to proceed

further and make things happen at least about issues regarding business and trade. At a recent meeting in New Delhi, the commerce ministers of India and Pakistan discussed several measures to accept liberalization and facilitation actions.

Most Favored Nation Status: Apprehensions

When the World Trade Organization was established in 1995, both India and Pakistan joined it as members. It is enshrined in the first article of GATT that all the signatories to the agreement are bound to undertake trade with one another in the light of MFN principle. India complied with the GATT and extended MFN status to Pakistan soon after joining WTO, however, Pakistan has not been able to reciprocate this so far.

The MFN treatment ensures non-discriminatory trading terms among the WTO members. It is based on the principle of guarantee that if favorable tariff rates are given to one trading partner then all the member countries will get the same terms. The principle does not require extending extra advantages to any trading partner, but rather uniform terms for trading for all member countries of WTO.

Hence, there is no uniformity among the member countries in obliging these principles and not all countries fulfill this obligation. There are few clauses in GATT that allow one country to discriminate against the other in addition to the permission to form Preferential Trade Agreements.¹⁰

It was 2011, when Pakistan took principle decision to accord MFN status to India under a new name, Non-discriminatory Market Access. In 2012, it was decided that the two countries will enjoy mutual MFN treatment from January 2013; however, this has not been materialized. It is expected that the current government of Pakistan will soon fulfill its promise to grant MFN status given the

pressure from business community within the country and international donor agencies.

India imposed Non-Tariff barriers, as those serve as one of the main hurdles in Pakistan's reciprocity of MFN treatment to India. These Indian imposed NTBs are complex and range from quality assurance, physical inspection by custom officials to visa issuance. NTBs constitute a significant proportion in the composition of the Overall Trade Restrictiveness Index (OTRI) of India. So, here seems a paradigm shift in both countries and the hurdles in the way must be removed for the realization of free trade between the two countries. India needs to shun her policy to impose NTBs on one hand, while Pakistan on the other hand needs to expedite the process of realization of MFN treatment to India.

Impediments and Opportunities: Rhetorical Situation

It has been observed that Trade-Liberalization would result into benefits for both the trading partners, though, in case of Pakistan and India the opportunities are coupled with some threats as well. Following concerns take into account certain business modalities that can be faced with threats as a result of trade liberalization between Pakistan and India.

- **Textile and Clothing:**

The industry of textile and clothing is a major industry in Pakistan and India that plays an important role in the economic dynamics of both the countries. The goods produced by this industry account for a large portion of trade in both countries and contribute 18.8% in India and 65.6% in Pakistan, as per the total value of exports in previous fiscal years¹¹. Both countries rely hugely on these sectors for the creation of employment opportunities and

export revenues. As of now, trade in textile and clothing between India and Pakistan is so much low as to be considered non-existent. In both countries, the textile and clothing sectors elicit different levels of specialization. In Pakistan, the specialization of this industry is in cotton textile intermediate goods including towels and bed linen, while Indian firms have developed high expertise in fiber production and garment manufacture and packaging. Firms in both countries are not vertically integrated and most of them are operating as privately owned small and medium size firms. However, in recent times both textile and clothing industries, to some extent, have vertically integrated.

- **Agriculture:**

Therefore, India is the leading producer of wheat and sugar, Pakistan would be in a position to tap substantive gains from trading with it in these items. In addition to major crops such as wheat and sugar, both countries can explore a number of trading opportunities in other food items. Moreover, India also can tap the potential so that it can export the products that Pakistan has been importing from destinations other than India.

- **Automobile:**

The automobile industry of Pakistan is characterised by protective measures for a long time. The industry was given a boost towards growth through the Automobile Industry Development Plan (AIDP) from 2008. Hence, the automobile industry stands second largest in terms of its contribution to custom duty and sales tax, its contribution to

the GDP in terms of exports has been relatively small and is growing on a slow pace.

Indian automobile Industry is, to the contrary, one of the most rapidly growing automobile industries in the world where India has been bringing forth innovations. Indian automobile industry is technologically more advanced and sophisticated as compared to Pakistan's corresponding industry.

Despite Indian automobile industry's sophistication and increasing global auto exports, Pakistan has not been able to get benefit from this through imports, because various barriers in the way of free trade are being operated by both countries over various different products. If the trade liberalization is realized, Pakistan would be able to import not only Indian cars and tractors but Pakistan's automotive industry can also benefit from the increased exports to grow the national economy also.

In addition, Pakistan can also serve as a potential destination for outsourcing the Indian automobiles. Pakistan's policy of protection in the case of automobile industry has not brought benefits to the industry and it has been unable to make the industry competitive enough to equalize with the global automobile industry.

- **Pharmaceuticals:**

In pharmaceutical sector, India holds an advantageous position as compared to Pakistan. Currently, India has the third largest pharmaceutical industry in the world. The number of pharmaceutical units in India is much larger than in Pakistan, such as India has over 200,000 pharmaceutical

manufacturing units while there are only 400 units operating in Pakistan. The foreign investment in the Indian pharmaceutical sector is also huge with multinational companies investing over \$6 to 10 billion within the last decade exclusively.

On the other hand, though Pakistan's pharmaceutical sector and healthcare sectors are expanding and evolving rapidly, there is still half of its population that does not have access to modern medicines and pharmaceuticals. Given this, Pakistan can benefit from huge and growing Indian pharmaceuticals through free and liberalized trade with it. As well as, Pakistan can also learn from India in the field of pharmaceutical industry as Indian machinery used in pharmaceutical industry is cheaper than half of the other international suppliers from whom Pakistan imports these equipments.

- **Manufacturing:**

The overall share of manufacturing sector in GDP of Pakistan has been higher than India in the year 2009-10, 18% in contrast to 16 % in India.¹² Despite the growing energy shortage and rising inflation domestically, manufacturing industry of Pakistan has shown some positive growth over last five years. There has been 31.3% growth in India's manufacturing sector. Chief Indian exports in terms of manufacturing sector are cellular phones, data processing machines, aircraft parts and air conditioning machines. Pakistan has developed special expertise in manufacturing highly developed and famous sports goods and surgical instruments. Apart from these products, Pakistan is also

able to export light engineering products to India. In other Pakistani manufacturing sectors, there are various pitfalls arising from the weaknesses such as obsolete machinery, lack of standardization, poor quality control practices, meager R&D and the small amount of market capacity. Unless these weaknesses are addressed properly, Pakistan's manufacturing sector will continue to face the challenges in realm of export competitiveness, especially against India.

Prospects of Sustained Economic Cooperation

The prospects of economic cooperation between India and Pakistan are given with the socio-economic needs and geographical proximity of both the countries. The volume of trade between India and Pakistan could reach up to \$9 billion, which currently is around just one billion dollars. But the important question is that in the environment of military rivalry marked by huge mistrust how can and how much these two countries could strengthen their economic ties? As discussed earlier, the current era is of economic cooperation and, through economic ties, the old rivals can become today's allies. The world has transformed in a manner where even the enemy states are doing trade with each other despite all the political differences.

Ever since the beginning of composite dialogue between India and Pakistan, both countries were on the right track and serious chances prevailed of substantial economic cooperation between both the countries. Therefore, the developments following the Mumbai attacks have overshadowed the trade ambitions. But later, in the following years, the relative peace has prevailed; as both the countries have broken the ice and have formally resumed the composite dialogue. The change of governments in both India and

Pakistan has proved as a good sign for the trade relations between India and Pakistan. Prime Ministers, Nawaz and Moodi are considered to be the pro-trade personalities. To prioritize the economic sector and improve economic relations with other countries was also the major goal in their election manifesto. The Prime Minister of Pakistan also declared the policy of having good relations with India during his election campaign.

Nirindra Moodi's decision to invite Pakistani counterpart on oath taking ceremony and subsequent visit of Nawaz Sharief denoted a positive beginning for the normalization of relations between India and Pakistan. Though, nothing significant has been achieved thereafter and the formal resumption of composite dialogue is still awaited and the current trends in Indo-Pak relations reflect persistence mistrust between the both nations. Although improving the economic sector has been the major priority of both governments but achieving this goal from enhancing trade with the neighboring country seems the option not being considered.

The economies of both India and Pakistan have huge potential to extract benefits from increasing trade with each other. The economic relations can not only be strengthened at bilateral level but also strong regional economic forum could come into existence by using the platform of SAARC to enrich potential benefits of trade and impediments in economic cooperation.

Economic Integration: Trade Liberalization Paradigm

It is a positive sign that both India and Pakistan have opened up their economies, relinquishing the old import-substitution policies favoring autarky, and adopted a policy of economic integration with the world economy. The reforms carried out as a result have placed

the two countries in a better position to follow preferential trade liberalization.¹³

Pakistan and India, along with other South Asian countries, signed South Asian Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA) in January 2004 that came into force in January 2006. The main purpose of SAFTA was to reduce and subsequently eliminate tariff barriers, facilitate cross-border movement of goods, promote intra-regional fair competition, and create an effective and efficient framework for regional cooperation. However, the efficacy of the agreement is still impeded by the restrictive sensitive lists adopted by the member countries.

A recent study has showed that India is increasingly shortening its sensitive list under SAFTA. Out of five SAARC member countries covered in the study, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bhutan have already signed bilateral trade agreements with India. Bangladesh has been given a Least Developed Country (LDC) status and only 331 items are placed under the operational list applicable to it.¹⁴ These leave Pakistan to be the only state with a non-LDC status and resultantly the sensitive list applicable to Pakistan contains the largest number of items, 868.

If implemented in their true essence and spirit, the regional trade agreements like SAFTA are destined to produce a positive effect on trade, growth, technological dissemination, and increased Foreign Direct Investment. Intra-regional trade will unchain innovative technology, lower domestic prices, ensure the market expansion. There are several fronts on which joint ventures can be successful under SAFTA, for instance, in pharmaceuticals, chemicals, petrochemicals, automobiles, agro processing,

technology transfer among Information Technology firms and joint gas pipelines.

Different studies have shown different results about the prospects of regional trade in SAARC area under SAFTA. Empirical studies carried out on the subject have elicited mixed results given the smaller size of the member countries that are either landlocked or very small in size in comparison with a huge economy like India. Research studies based on computable general equilibrium model simulations suggest that the policy of unilateral liberalization would benefit the South Asian countries much more than under SAFTA, as in this case smaller countries would gain little or even lose.¹⁵

However, a different and opposite to the above comprehension is reached by a European Study Group (ETSG) report regarding trade in South Asia using the gravity model.¹⁶ During the course of its analysis, the study showed that there is a significant trade-creation effect with the outside world under the South Asian Preferential Trade Agreement (SAPTA). The report does not find any evidence of the trade diversion effect with the rest of the world, and states that increased regional integration may bring substantial benefits to the SAARC region and the agreement will enhance intra-regional trade though the elimination of tariff barriers and non-tariff barriers among the member countries.

Indo - Pak Trade Potential: Recommendatory & Policy Posture

The trade potential for mutual trade between Pakistan and India is significantly high. According to Dr. Ishrat Hussain, a renowned economist of Pakistan, “India-Pakistan is a win-win situation,” arguing that even a 10 per cent share of a 300 million-strong Indian middle class market would double the market share of Pakistani

companies and businesses.¹⁷ It is evident from the economic advantage pointed out by economists that the bilateral trade is advantageous to both countries.

Out of these advantages, the major advantage for both Pakistan and India is the cheaper transportation costs due to shorter distances thus reducing the costs of trade. If the trade of \$1.5 Billion carried out illegally is brought under the official trade it will increase the revenues of the state. If the process of trade liberalization continues, in the longer term there is potential for increased investment including joint ventures.

Comparing with India, the advantages for Pakistan as a result of trade are greater. Trade with India would result in the growth of Pakistan's economy, the growth which stands stalled now. There are two ways through which economic growth can take place: through major structural transformation or through trade. In case of Pakistan, the economic structure has remained unchanged for at least 40 years; the only way left is economic growth through regional trade and investment. In this backdrop, India can be a major trading partner to flourish the economic growth of Pakistan as Pakistan's textile and food industries can find markets in northern India, while India can meet her energy requirements through tapping Pakistan's huge reserves of coal, the world second largest reserves.

Both countries enjoy advantages in different items. India has an advantage in rice, maize and grains while Pakistan enjoys advantage in Basmati rice, cotton and fruits and these items easily find markets in India. Pakistan's agriculture has become more efficient in recent decade and is in a competitive position with Indian agricultural sector despite the latter's huge input.¹⁸ In addition,

there is a relation between the Indian success and Pakistan's benefit as Pakistan's farmers would significantly benefit from the Indian success in raising yields per acre through improvements in seed, irrigation and mechanical technologies.

Such views that underscore the resultant mutual benefits of trade are held by most of the mainstream political spectrum. The mainstream political parties favor enhancement of trade with India which they believe would bring enormous benefit to Pakistan and help it meet the worst energy crisis. In this way, both countries have to find ways for greater economic cooperation, without losing principle stances on Political realities and issues.¹⁹

In order to revamp the benefits of trade liberalization and economic cooperation, Pakistan and India need to introduce visa regime changes. It is comprehensible that without the movement of people there is no thinking of movement of goods. Both India and Pakistan have many tourist destinations and tourist trade can account for a huge amount of trade and exchanges between the neighboring countries. However, the current visa regime of the two countries imposes severe restrictions on trans-border travel, including long processing time; a single-entry limit; city specific authorization, with a three city limit; police reporting requirements; and the same entry and exit points.²⁰ In relation to visa regime changes, the Islamabad-New Delhi dialogue has provided some progress with both parties agreeing, in principle, to a more liberal visa regime for the business community. This principle understanding needs to be materialized so that the pace of trade should increase.

Moreover, in the meantime the governments and business communities from both sides should form more contacts of

potential traders and investors, for instance, through organizing trade exhibitions that could provide an environment facilitating access, interaction and sharing of information and goods alike. Softening of visa regime would ensure an easy cross-border movement that in turn would enable potential investors to gauge opportunities. This would also increase the Indian FDI in Pakistan and vice versa.

Although Pakistan has already been allowing incoming Indian FDI, Indian businessmen have been showing hesitance in investing in Pakistan given the political instability and security related problems. A major part of Indian business community wants to invest in Pakistan on the one hand while they fear to come to Pakistan because of security fragility on the other hand. Many prospective investors in Pakistan distanced themselves from such a venture after the Mumbai terror attacks and terrorist activities in Pakistan after 9/11. Ultimately, the prospects of Indian investment in Pakistan depend upon the security and democratic transition in Pakistan that would ensure stability.

The Public Policy Concern: A Futuristic Picturesque

The study has recommended policy options for both countries that are imperative for the purpose of gradual increase towards the path of economic cooperation between India and Pakistan in the environment of hostility and mistrust. The first step towards a peaceful and economically developed region is that both countries need to indulge in negotiations to seek the permanent solution of all bilateral outstanding issues between the both countries.

The major factor for failure of negotiations has been the inability of both countries to sustain the dialogue process. During the last few decades it is seen that a single incident can disrupt the

whole process of dialogue. Only a sustained peace process can guarantee any significant development in the solution of bilateral issues.

Moreover, the leadership of India and Pakistan needs to understand the significance of economic cooperation for the regional peace and stability. The initial steps on behalf of the governments could include the softening of visa restrictions and providing the suitable environment for investment to the people from each other's country. In this regard, track-II channel of diplomacy needs to be effectively utilized.

Now, it is the time when the NGOs from countries, leading economists and civil society representatives need to play their respective role for bringing both countries towards the path of peace through encouraging and promoting the economic agenda that includes the close cooperation between India and Pakistan.

The outcomes of the study narrates that there are huge prospects for economic cooperation between India and Pakistan and this cooperation would not only help these two nations but would also contribute significantly towards the regional peace and stability. In this context, strong policy making as well as implementation to, urge between both the governments to increase the trade and other economic linkages between India and Pakistan. However the political differences are causing the major hindrance in the enhanced economic relations.

The complexity of nature of such political issues denotes the normalization of relations between India and Pakistan which seems an uphill task but the progress on the issues can easily be resolvable. The major bone of contention between India and Pakistan; Kashmir issue will remain a source of conflict and its solution seems

impossible. In such situation, the substantial breakthrough on economic cooperation between India and Pakistan seems ordinary.

Therefore in spite of great prospects for economic integration the volume of trade between India and Pakistan would remain low and no significant improvement is sighted in foresighted future. The sustained thaw of peaceful relations of both countries is prerequisite for any positive outcome related to enhance economic cooperation between India and Pakistan.

Advocating the Conclusions

The 21st Century in international politics is considered to be the era of economic cooperation and integration among the regional states. The old rivals have become the partners due to their common goal of socio-economic development through the economic cooperation at regional as well as at bilateral level. Though the economic integration is being witnessed throughout the world but the South Asian region is still the least economically integrated region of the world. The region has huge potential of economic integration but the rivalry between India and Pakistan is the major hurdle in the process. The enhanced economic cooperation would make the stakes high for both parties to indulge in hostile activities against each other. But the chances of close economic cooperation between India and Pakistan should not be expected in near future. There are multiple factors that have squeezed the prospects for trade liberalization between India and Pakistan.

The political issues between India and Pakistan are very complex and these issues would remain the cause of tension between the two neighboring nuclear armed countries. The study has identified that the issue of Kashmir is the major obstacle for normalization of relations between the both countries. The

terrorism factor has added a new dimension to the hostile relationship of India and Pakistan. In the backdrop of all these issues of divergences and the resulted mistrust the close economic cooperation seems a difficult goal to achieve in near future.

Finally, the study has identified that economic cooperation between India and Pakistan would not only be beneficial for the social development in both states but it would also significantly contribute towards regional peace and stability. The benefits of economic cooperation would equally be great for both countries. For Pakistan, economic cooperation with India would help in recovering its economy hard hit by the energy crisis. For India, Pakistan could provide a link to its market in Central Asian states through Afghanistan. The economic cooperation would also be a blessing in disguise for the Afghan people as well. This development would not only decrease the chances of proxy war between India and Pakistan in Afghanistan but would also bring economic prosperity in the country as a result of economic stability in the region.

End Notes

¹Dr. Ijaz Nabi, 'Integrated Report and Summary of Findings, Pakistan India Trade Study', Ministry of Commerce, Government of Pakistan, September 1996, p.2.

²Op.cit , 41-42.

³ An S.R.O. No. 280 was issues by Pakistan's Ministry of Commerce on March 20th, 2012, which entails the list of 1209 items not importable from India. It also has the list of 137 items which are allowed to be traded via land route. To find out the list see <http://www.tdap.gov.pk/.php> In Jan

2014, an item Petroleum Coke was also permitted to be traded through Wagah-Attari border. See <http://www.dawn.com/news/1079280/import-of-petroleum-coke-allowed-by-road-from-india>.

⁴Nabiha Gul, 'Enhancing Indo-Pak Trade', Issue Brief, Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, September 2009. 2-4.

⁵ Hafiz A. Pasha, Muhammad Imran, "The Prospects for Indo-Pakistan Trade", *The Lahore Journal of Economics*, Vol.17, (September 2012), 293-313.

⁶ J. Whalley, Non-discriminatory Discrimination: Special and Different Treatment under the GATT for developing countries, *The Economic Journal*, 100. 20.

⁷ ibid

⁸ ibid

⁹ F.S. Aijazuddin, "Divided Attention," *Dawn*, September 20, 2012.

¹⁰ See Article XX and Article XXI for general exceptions in the text of The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade formulated in Geneva.

¹¹ Implications of Trade Liberalization between Pakistan and India, Working Paper for Conference on Pak-India Trade Potential, Punjab Board of Investment and Trade, 03, May, 2012.

¹² Ibid, 23.

¹³Zareen Naqvi, "Pakistan-India Trade Potential and Issues" (Unpublished Paper), 2008. 12.

¹⁴Nisha Taneja and Saon Ray, Neetika Kaushal, Devjit Roy Chowdhury, "Enhancing Intra-SAARC Trade: Pruning India's Sensitive list Under SAFTA," ICRIER Working Paper 255, New Delhi, (April 2011).

¹⁵ J.S. Bhandara, "How Desirable is the SAFTA? A Quantitative Economic Assessment," *The World Economy*, 2003.

¹⁶ S.W. Hirantha, "From SAPTA to SAFTA: Gravity Analysis of South Asian Free Trade", European Study Group, 2004.

¹⁷Ishrat Hussain, Prospects and Challenges for Increasing Pakistan-India Trade, Issue Brief, Atlantic Council, November 2011. 15-16.

¹⁸ Ibid, 25-26.

¹⁹ Pakistan's Relations with India: Beyond Kashmir, International Crisis Group, Asia Report, No.224, (May) 2012. 16.

²⁰ Ibid, 19-20.

Madrassa Reforms in Pakistan: A Historical Analysis

(Abdul Rauf Iqbal & Ms. Sobia Raza)*

Abstract

Madrassa is an old and customary idea of teaching. This article addresses diverse changes which occurred after the formation of Pakistan. It will likewise manage the historical assessment of madarssas. In the absolute starting there were a little number of Madrassas existed in those areas which constituted Pakistan however over recent decades, particularly after Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, it picked up prominence and became fundamental feeder to the Afghan Jihad against Soviet control. In the first instance an ordinance called the Pakistani Madrassas Education Ordinance was promulgated on August 18, 2001. Its aim was to secure the registration, regulation, standardization and uniformity of curricula and standard of education of Madrassa imparting specialised Islamic education in Pakistan with the general education system. There were different reforms and ordinances introduced time by time for the betterment of madarssas system.

Key Words: *assessment, fundamental, standardization, sectarianism, religious*

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Introduction

Madrasa, plural Madrassas, is the Arabic word. In literal terms it means a place for education; school either secular or religious.¹ It is an age-old institution, which over time came to be recognised as a place for Islamic religious education. At the time of independence very few prominent Madrassas existed in territories constituting Pakistan but over past few decades, especially after Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, this institution gained prominence for the fact that it became main feeder to the mainly US-Saudi Arabia and other Western and regional powers sponsored Afghan Jihad against Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. Approximately 1000 madrassas were established for the purpose with aid from Middle Eastern countries. Many of these Jihadis came from madrasas. Therefore, mushrooming of madrasas was witnessed in Pakistan during 1980s. After abrupt withdrawal of USA sponsored international help and support in 1989/90, Pakistan was left alone. It had to confront the severe fallout consequent to Afghan infighting. In that security vacuum the phenomenon of Taliban was evolved. Taliban, the students of these madrassas, took control of major part of Afghanistan. In Post 9/11, the madrasas became the target of US led, supported by 42 countries, coalition operation duly authorised by UN. Pakistan decided to support this operation, which was named Enduring Freedom (OEF). In a rebound phenomenon to this, Pakistan started facing terrorist attacks by the Taliban. This time again the madrasas came into focus, but a negative one: the

¹Christopher M. Blanchard, "Islamic Religious Schools, Madrasas: Background" (DTIC Document, 2007), <http://oai.dtic.mil/oai/oai?verb=getRecord&metadataPrefix=html&identifier=ADA463792>.

Washington Post articles since 9/11 have portrayed the Pakistani madrassas in derogatory manner and addressed them with severe criticism. At the time of independence in 1947, Pakistan inherited just 200 madrassas, which have grown now close to approximately 40000. Majority of them are like nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) feeding and teaching the orphan and poor children.

Few of the madrassas fuel sectarianism, and proxy war of external and internal hardliner Sunni and Shia factions. A meager percentage of these are reportedly involved in feeding the fighters and suicide bombers to the terrorists fighting the state of Pakistan. There have been reports of some of the Madrassas of Tribal Areas of Pakistan sending fighters for Afghan Taliban (Daniel S Markey, 2014). As per P.W Singer (2001), approximately 10-15% of the Madrassas are involved in feeding the militancy. Madrassa education provides their finances, and their sway in the society has been a subject of appraisal inland and abroad. Demands to harness these and bring them under strict governmental control and reform their education system have come regularly from scholars, academicians, Law Enforcement Agencies, the policy makers and even from the *Ulema* (religious scholars) themselves. The issue of their reforms assumed greater significance post 9/11.

With this in the backdrop this essay is aimed at tracing back the history of Madrassa as an institution, the role these played in pre and post independent Pakistan, especially after 1979 Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan. The perceptions that haunt this institution today and realities of its functioning will also be discussed. More importantly why was the need felt to reform these? The steps and legislation done for the purpose, impact of the governmental efforts made and the way forward will also be focused at in this essay.

Literature Review

Post 9/11, international focus on countering extremism and terrorism has generated a new debate about the role of madrassas. One can find a variety of literature on the subject in the form of books, journals and newspaper articles. Jamal Malik has done the first comprehensive and in-depth study on the subject. He concludes that the Ulema (religious teachers) of different schools lack a unanimous approach on the syllabus, role and financing of Madrassas. These differences are deeply rooted in society because students and the teachers of madrassas represent different segments of society”.² He also highlights that some madrassas have left their actual role of imparting religious education and have engaged in preaching extremist views projecting their school of thought, which then fuels sectarian militancy. Tariq Rehman relates the rising militancy to Afghan Jihad that was conducted post Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. He not only identifies that the curriculum is too old but also highlights the role of madrassas in promoting sectarianism by refuting each other’s beliefs.³

Mohammad Qasim Zaman in his book discusses the reform plans and their failures also. He argues that opposition to the government agenda of reforms exists to varying degrees among the Ulema. His study contains dissenting views regarding the issue and the motives behind them.⁴ A leading book on the subject in India by

²Jamal Malik, “Colonization of Islam: Dissolution of Traditional Institutions of Learning,” *New Delhi, Manohar*, 1996.

³Tariq Rehman, *Denizens of Alien Worlds: A Study of Education, Inequality and Polarization in Pakistan*, vol. 17 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

⁴Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam: Custodians of Change* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2010).

Yoginder Sikand is an invaluable contribution and perhaps unrivalled among the contemporary works. He has discussed Madrassa reforms in historical perspective. This study has valuable information regarding different aspects of reforms. It also carries the detail of reformed madrassas in India that can serve as guidance for madrassas in the entire region.⁵ Another article which is highly informative about the role of madrassas in the socio-political life of Pakistan is written by Christopher Candland. The author believes that a section of the Ulema also favours reforms in order to adjust themselves to modern needs. He advises that the religious and social services of the madrassas should be recognized by the government and they may be assigned appropriate role to ensure peace in the society.⁶ Other contributions by the same author on the same topic can be found in Robert M. Hathaway's recent anthology. They contain details of recent government initiatives of reforming Islamic education. These writings make valuable suggestions for policy makers in this regard.⁷ Maqsood Ahmad Shaheen, Dr. Farish Ullah Yousafzai and Amna Yousaf have conducted an analysis of Religious Madrassas in Pakistan being on 231 articles published in Washington Post since 9/11. As per them, most of these madrassas have been portrayed in a negative tone. Malik Mohammad Tariq in 'The Rise And Impact of Islamic Fundamentalism In Pakistan After the Soviet Invasion In Afghanistan With Special Reference to KPK

⁵Yoginder Sikand, *Bastions of the Believers: Madrassas and Islamic Education in India* (New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 2005).

⁶Christopher Candland, "Religious Education and Violence in Pakistan," *Pakistan*, 2005, 230.

⁷C. Candland, *Pakistan's Recent Experience in Reforming Islamic Education, Extracted from Madrassa in South Asia: Teaching Terror? Abingdon* (United Kingdom: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2008).

and Balochistan' has conducted a detailed research on the Madrassas including their history specially after Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan and role that was played by them and possibility of their linkages to terrorism and extremism in Pakistan.

Madrassas - A Historical View

As was the practice since the days of Prophet (PBUH), mosques served as the centers of Muslim education for almost three centuries. It was during the Abbasid period (750 - 1258 AD) that the need for a more organized educational system was felt because of the rapid expansion of knowledge and to meet the administrative needs of the empire. This gave birth to the Madrassa as a separate institution. It is believed that the first Madrassa in the Muslim world was established in the ninth century in the city of Fas (Fez) in Morocco.⁸ The syllabi of earlier madrassas included the teaching of the Qur'an and Hadith with increasing emphasis on *fiqh* with the passage of time. The emphasis on *fiqh* was aimed at providing trained people for the imperial courts. The subjects of mathematics, astronomy, and other human sciences were also taught in these madrassas. Thereafter, Muslim rulers, nobles and wealthy traders established madrassas in different areas. This system of Muslim education spread elsewhere in the Muslim world and Turkish rulers brought it to India when they consolidated their rule there. This leads to religious and socio-political transformation on Indian soil afterwards.

Madrassas in the Indian Subcontinent

The consolidation of the Muslim empire in the subcontinent facilitated the establishment of an organized educational system.

⁸Sultan Ali, *Madrassa Reform and State Power* (Islamabad: FNF, 2012).

Royal patronage was always available for this purpose. After the fall of Baghdad in 1257 A.D, a large number of scholars were attracted towards India. The courts of the Delhi Sultans were flooded with scholars and intellectuals from Central Asia. Some of the Sufis and scientists also migrated from Central Asia. They started preaching and teaching on their own without seeking royal patronage. They contributed to the conversion of large number of people of Indian Subcontinent to Islam.⁹ The traditional madrassas in India mostly taught Hanafi fiqh. The descendants of Central Asian 'ulema' were preferred for teaching. These institutions taught specially prescribed courses, which were not too rigid. Changes were introduced at different times, and, in some places, certain subjects were given more importance than others. But these changes were not affected in consequence of official interference.

Madrassas under British Colonial Rule

After the decline of Muslim political power had begun in the eighteenth century, the Europeans in the Subcontinent rapidly introduced modern education. In the changed context of socio-political life in the Subcontinent with the establishment of British Rule, the Ulema's role was also to be seen from a different context. Under Muslim rule, the Ulema had enjoyed special privileges. With the collapse of Muslim political authority this source of patronage, which strengthened their claim as representatives and leaders of the community, was lost. In the changed political context the ordinary Muslim also became more conscious about the survival of his faith. Therefore, a new relationship between the Ulema and the common

⁹Mohammad Hamid Uddin, *History of Muslim Education (712-1750 AD)*, vol. 1 (Academy of Educational Research, Karachi:1967).

Muslim was established under which the source of strength for the Ulema were common Muslims rather than the rulers of the time. Most of the reformist movements during the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century were led by Ulema with support from ordinary Muslims.

Growth of Madrassas in Pakistan After Independence in 1947

At Independence very few madrassas existed in Pakistan. Leading centers of Islamic education were situated in other parts of India. Pakistan inherited around 200 madrassas, which, as per the government's conservative estimates, and a BBC report has now increased to over 17,000, although some analysts put this number at 25–40,000. These religious schools cater for 2.5 to three million students and employ thousands of mullahs as teachers, mentors, and instructors.¹⁰ There are five Islamic schools of thought in Pakistan which operate their own systems of madrassas. They are Deobandi, Bareilvi, Ahl-i Hadith, Jamat-i-Islami, and Ahl-i-Tasheh. Each school of thought organized madrassas under different boards that are responsible for registration, examinations, and syllabus.¹¹

- **Wafaqul-Madarisul-Arabiya:** Central board of Sunni Deobandi institutions; established at Multan in 1960.
- **Tanzimul-Madaris:** Central board of Sunni Bareilvi institutions; established at Lahore in 1960.
- **Wafaqul-Madaris Shi'a:** This board of Shia institutions was established in 1959 and has its centre in Lahore. Shia madrassas

¹⁰M. Ismail Khan, "Inside the Booming Madrassa Economy," *The News*, July 21, 2007.

¹¹Ali, *Madrassa Reform and State Power*.

teach fiqh Jafariya named after Imam Jafer Sadiq, while other madrassas in Pakistan teach fiqh Hanafia.

- **Rabitahul-Madrisul-Islamiya:** This board was established by the Jamaat-i-Islamiat Lahore in 1983, and recognizes the madrassas of all Islamic thought. They teach more modern subjects
- **Wafaqul-Madarisul-Salafiya:** This board was established by the Ahl-i Hadith at Faisalabad in 1955.

Curriculum of Traditional Pakistani Madrassas

The syllabus in almost all traditional madrassas conforms to the basic structure and scholarly standard of the Dars-i-Nizami. The course of study in all madrassas except that of the Shia, revolves around the teaching of Hanafi fiqh. Most of the texts are 500 years or more old. These texts are taught with the help of commentaries and marginal notes penned by medieval Hanafi Ulema for South Asian students, who did not know Arabic well. They no longer explain the original text. They have to be learnt by heart, which makes students use only their memory, not their analytical powers. Thus the system functions with the effort that the old traditions are preserved. This led to the stagnation of knowledge which earned criticism not only from Western critics but also from Arabic-knowing Pakistani Scholars.¹²

Students of Traditional Madrassas

While traditional madrassas attracted people from all social classes during the Mughal and Sultanat periods, now these madrassas cater for the children of the lower middle class, the

¹²Rehman, *Denizens of Alien Worlds*.

peasantry, and the poor with few exceptions.¹³ This shift in student composition owes largely to the fact that education in a traditional Madrassa is no longer seen as providing its students with skills needed for lucrative occupations. Well-off Muslims send their children to regular schools or might arrange for a religious teacher to come to their homes to teach the Qur'an, and Islamic rituals, but few send them to full-time madrassas.¹⁴ As the Muslim education system characterizes rigid dualism between traditional madrassas and modern schools, it is important to note that a fairly large number of middle-class families send one of their wards to madrassas and the rest to regular schools. Some families known for their Islamic scholarship also carry on in an ancestral tradition by having at least one son trained as a religious teacher, while others are educated in schools and colleges.¹⁵

The students of madrassas belong to families having emotional attachment with a particular school of thought and send their children to the Madrassa of same fiqh. The followers of different sects mostly oppose each other due to which, the sectarian divide has become sharper and more violent in the society.¹⁶ Because of weak economic and social backgrounds the students are often reactionary and inflexible in their attitude and seek extremist ways for the realization of their ideological goals.¹⁷ Their understanding

¹³Vivek Kumar Mishra, "Madrassas and Extremism in Pakistan: Post 1977," 2014, <http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/handle/10603/29510>.

¹⁴Sajjad Hussain et al., "Theoretical Analysis of Socio-Economic and Political Causes of Terrorism in Pakistan," *Pakistan Journal of Criminology* 6, no. 2 (2014): 2002.

¹⁵Ali, *Madrassa Reform and State Power*.

¹⁶Pervez Hoodbhoy and Amir Ali, eds., *Education and the State: Fifty Years of Pakistan* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1998).

¹⁷Ibid.

of the modern world is limited because teaching of modern subjects, games, literature, art and extracurricular activities are always ignored in most of the madrassas.¹⁸

In addition to madrassas in rural areas, the majority of students in madrassas in major cities of Pakistan also hail from rural areas. In Karachi, the Madrassa students represent all the districts of Pakistan.¹⁹ Pashto-speaking students always outnumber any other community.²⁰ The graduating students are normally 17 to 27 years old. The girl students are on an average younger than the boys. One reason for this is that their course duration is shorter than that of boys.²¹ Larger madrassas attract students from different parts of the country and from different communities.

Admission to a traditional Madrassa is relatively informal. While some have an entrance examination and fixed quotas at each level, others are more flexible. Larger madrassas have specific dates for application for admission, usually soon after the month of *Ramzan*. The schedule of admission is advertised through leaflets and wall posters. In smaller Madrassas, the procedure is much simpler and the students can join at any time of the year. They may not be able to afford to issue advertisements, and news of open admissions is spread simply by word of mouth. Most madrassas have a somewhat open admission policy with no rigid entrance requirements. Most madrassas charge no fee and also provide food,

¹⁸Maj Gen Nasurrullah Dogar, "Madrassa Reforms - Problems and Prospects," *NDU Journal XXIII* (2010): 1–25.

¹⁹Tahir Andrabi et al., "Religious School Enrollment in Pakistan: A Look at the Data," 2005, http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=667843.

²⁰Mumtaz Ahmad, "Madrassa Education in Pakistan and Bangladesh," *Religious Radicalism and Security in South Asia*, 2004, 101–15.

²¹Ali, *Madrassa Reform and State Power*.

hostel accommodation and books free of cost.²² Thus, madrassas also serve as a kind of orphanage for those having no elders or relatives.

Management of Madrassas

Traditional madrassas are individual enterprises in Pakistan. Larger madrassas are, however, run by an elaborate hierarchy of functionaries. At the apex is the *Sarparast* (Chancellor), who is also often the founder of the Madrassa or his successor, in such case he is generally a direct descendant of the founder. Below him is the *Muhtamim* (Vice Chancellor), who is followed by the *Sadar* (Dean) and teachers of different subjects. The senior most teacher is the *Sheikh-ul-Hadith* who teaches the books of Hadith to senior students. The rector of the Madrassa is assisted in his work by a committee of elders (*shura*) consisting of senior Ulema and teachers, and sometimes of notable Muslims including rich traders, philanthropists and important donors. In theory, elaborate rules govern the management of madrassas and all decisions are supposed to be taken through discussion and consensus. In practice, however, things are always very different. The managers and administrators often override the decision-making process for their personal interests.²³

Madrassa Finances

²²Ibid.

²³Muhammad Akram, "The Authority of Ulama and the Problem of Anti-State Militancy in Pakistan," *Asian Journal of Social Sciences* 42, no. 5 (2014): 584–601.

Traditional madrassas run on self-help. These rely on a variety of sources to meet their expenses. The vast majority depends on local funds, which are generated from within the community. Many madrassas have land or property endowed to them as *waqfs* from which they earn some income. Madrassa authorities regularly issue appeals to Muslims to contribute in cash or in any other kind. Such appeals appear in the publications of madrassas. Some people make donations to Madrassa as an act of piety. This is done in different ways, i.e. constructing a room in a Madrassa or donating fans or coolers or any other items of common use to madrassas simply to earn the blessing of Allah for living or deceased. The peasants of the localities also contribute in kind of grains after harvest. In smaller madrassas, teachers and even students are sent to neighbouring towns and villages to collect donations in cash and in kind. Larger madrassas appoint special staff to collect funds for the Madrassa on commission.²⁴ Beside this the administrators also accept financial help from those who earn money illegally, which negatively impacts the integrity of Ulema. The proper use of funds is also not ensured often.²⁵

Need for Madrassa Reforms

Reforming madrassas is a major concern. New developments at international level, especially the events of 11th September 2001, increased the importance of Madrassa reforms not only for Pakistan but also for the whole Muslim World. The Government of Pakistan and countries in the West, particularly America, are now eagerly seeking to enforce changes in the Madrassa system with the belief

²⁴Muhammad Amir Rana, "Choking Financing for Militants in Pakistan," *Pakistan's Counterterrorism Challenge*, 2014, 149–68.

²⁵Ibid.

that non-reformed madrassas are rapidly emerging as major training grounds for terrorists. In addition, many Muslims, including the Ulema, are also at the forefront of demand for change in the Madrassa system. The different actors in this complex game have widely differing understandings of reforms, each reflecting their own particular agenda.

Agenda of Reforms and the President Musharraf Regime

The government policy towards reforms dates from August 2001, prior to the 11th September terrorist attacks on the USA. General Musharraf, the then President, underlined the need to curb the influence of religious institutions. His proposals included widening the Madrassa curricula and bringing them within the mainstream of education and prohibiting madrassas accepting students from other countries. As a part of the Madrassa reform program of the government, the National Education Policy 1999-2010 had envisaged the major objectives in the context of the Madrassa. It included bridging the existing gulf between formal education and the madrassas; equating their degrees with the formal education system; recognising them and providing valuable and related books for research and reforms; and evolving an integrated system of national education by bringing madrassas and modern schools closer in the curriculum.²⁶ In line with these objectives the government initiated certain revolutionary steps for improvement of the working conditions of madrassas across the country.

The Pakistan Madrassa Education Board Ordinance, 2001

²⁶Ali, *Madrassa Reform and State Power*.

In the first instance an Ordinance called “The Pakistani Madrassas Education (Establishment and Affiliation of Model Dini [Religious] Madaris [Madrassas] Board Ordinance, 2001) was promulgated on August 18, 2001. The aim of this ordinance was to secure the registration, regulation, standardization and uniformity of curricula and standard of education of Madrassa imparting specialised Islamic education in Pakistan with the general education system.²⁷ The ordinance afforded representation of the different schools of thought in the Board. To start with, a Pakistan Madrassa Education Board under the provisions of this Ordinance was setup on 8 September 2001 under the control of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The Ordinance, however, could not be properly enforced, as religious circles did not cooperate with the government. In this backdrop, the government reviewed its policy and initiated additional steps in the context of registration of madrassas, rationalizing of their syllabus and mainstreaming them.

Societies Registration Ordinance of 2005

This ordinance is also called the “Madrassas Voluntary Registration and Regulation Ordinance, 2005”. Under its provisions “no Madrassa shall operate without getting itself registered; every Madrassa shall submit an annual report of its educational activities and performance to the registrar; every Madrassa shall cause to be carried out the audit of its accounts by an auditor and submit a copy of its audited report to the registrar; and no Madrassa shall teach or

²⁷Mumtaz Ahmad, “Madrassa Reforms and Perspectives: Islamic Tertiary Education in Pakistan,” 2009, <http://ir.nmu.org.ua/handle/123456789/145284>.

publish any literature which promotes militancy or spreads sectarianism or religious hatred”.²⁸

Madrassa Reforms Project (MRP)

The Madrassa Reform Project (MRP) is a part of the government comprehensive program for the reform of religious institutions in the country. The aim of the project is to teach formal subjects such as English, Mathematics, Pakistan Studies/Social Studies, and General Science along with religious education. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) agreed between the federal, provincial and regional educational authorities for executing a multi-million rupees project for reforming 8,000 madrassas within five years was a ground-breaking event.²⁹

Concerns about Militancy by Foreigners in Madrassas

The role of the madrassas in national political developments and armed conflicts has been a subject of intense debate in Pakistan since 1980. Much of the armed resistance against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan was initially organised in the then North Western Frontier Province (now Khyber-Pakhtun Khwa) and Balochistan. Afghan and Pakistani madrassas students were in the forefront of the jihad movements against the communist regime. Dar ul-Ulum Haqqania of Akora Khattak near Peshawar and several other Deobandi madrassas played an important role in the mobilizing and recruitment of the thousands of volunteers for the Afghan jihad. The vast amounts of funds from Muslim countries

²⁸Syed Manzar Abbas Zaidi, “Madrassa Education in Pakistan,” 2013, http://strategiskanalyse.no/publikasjoner%202013/2013-03-04__SISA3_Madrassa_Education_-_Syed_Manzar_Abbas_Zaidi.pdf.

²⁹Ghulam Shabir, M. U. F. Abbasi, and Amant Khan, “Reforming the Madrassa System,” *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences (PJSS)* 32, no. 1 (2012): 147–56.

received in the name of Afghan relief, and jihad projects were used for recruiting more students, expanding the madrassas, and also for sectarian activities, including the acquisition of weapons.³⁰ Later in the 1990s, these madrassas became major centers for training of foreign and indigenous warriors for jihad. According to Ahmad Rasheed, the Taliban primarily evolved from the dozens of madrassas established in the refugee camps along the Pak-Afghan border territories.³¹ Besides teaching, these children received hands-on training on some of the most lethal weapons in the world. The Taliban, as a result, soon became an invincible force.³² According to government sources, the madrassas that impart training to militants to fight the security forces also included the madrassa of Maulana Fazlullah, a key leader of the Tehreek-i-Nifazi-Shariat-i-Muhammadi (TNSM) Swat. A similar reference was also made to the madrassa of Maulana Liuqat in Bajaur. The same madrassa was later destroyed as a result of a drone attack.³³

Response of Madrassas to Madrassa Registration Ordinance

According to Madrassa Registration and Control Ordinance 2002, promulgated in August 2002, no Madrassa would function without government permission. The officials of the Madrassa Authority would monitor the activities of madrassas, and no Madrassa would accept foreign financial help without government

³⁰Ahmad Mumtaz, Craig Baxter, and Charles H. Kennedy, "Continuity and Change in the Traditional System of Islamic Education: The Case of Pakistan," in *Pakistan 2000* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2001).

³¹Noman Ahmad, "Do Madrassas Need Revamping?," *The News*, April 20, 2008.

³²Ibid.

³³Umer Cheema, "Over 12 Madrassas Training Militants: Official," *The News*, July 11, 2007.

permission. The representatives of madrassas of four schools of thought rejected the said ordinance. They were of the opinion that ‘measures like registration, change of curriculum, and mainstreaming madrassas were aimed at depriving them of their independence and to destroy their Islamic identity.³⁴ They claimed that all such measures were a part of the American agenda to secularize the educational system, which madrassas would resist at any cost’. However they assured their support to the government against madrassas involved in sectarianism, terrorism or possessing weapons, provided solid proofs existed in this regard.

Prospects of Reforms

An analysis of the response of madrassas to state-sponsored reforms during the last eight years has attracted deep suspicion among the madrassas. How to address this challenge is a big question? A number of options are available which require strong steps by the government that are accompanied by potential political risks. For these reforms, there should be a formal regulatory mechanism, developed with due understanding and after a legislation. It should encourage registration, create concomitant statutory obligation on the registered entity and its sponsors by way of governance, financial accountability, and responsibility towards society.³⁵ The reform efforts should build around following:-

- Registration of Madrassa as well as private schools for quality control purposes is essential. However, to give more credibility to the efforts, this process could be best managed

³⁴Ali, *Madrassa Reform and State Power*.

³⁵Saleem H. Ali, *Islam and Education: Conflict and Conformity in Pakistan's Madrassas* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2009), <http://espace.library.uq.edu.au/view/UQ:282660>.

at the provincial level with minimum interference from Federal Government.

- Construction of madrassas on public lands must be scrutinized more carefully.
- Inclusion of local council representatives in the management committee or board of directors of madrassas in order to ensure that locals are involved in the working of madrassas.
- There is a need to set up an interdepartmental committee to steer the reform agenda.
- Measures to ensure that the local students representation is more than the external students in urban madrassas.
- Job provision to the Madrassas graduates through apprenticeship programmes to make them more productive members of the society.
- Curriculum to ensure that hatred based on sect and language does not develop, and the students get balanced education.
- English, General Science, Social Studies, Social Sciences, Literature, modern Philosophy, Computer, Mathematics, Accounts and Economics etcbe included in Madrassa syllabus. This will broaden their mental horizon make their thinking logical and respect others' thought, lives and values.

Conclusion

The institution of the Madrassa is about a thousand years old. As a system of Muslim education, it has always played an important role in teaching and preservation of Islam. It also played this role in the lives of millions of Muslims of the Subcontinent from eighth century AD on wards. However, after establishment of British colonial rule here, a modern system of education was introduced.

That modern education system, by default, became a rival of Madrassas. They opposed it tooth and nail, and it was regarded as European (non-Muslim) and a privilege of modern and rich Muslims. The modern education also threatened the traditional hold, role and authority of the religious leaders. The polarization between the two institutions increased manifold with the passage of time. This schism impacted every aspect of Muslims of Subcontinent lives and shaped two politically opposed ideologies amongst those who studied in the different educational systems. The same bi-polar system of education was inherited by Pakistan after its independence in 1947. The Madrassas were playing an important role in the social and religious lives of Muslims, and still act as NGOs, looking after poor and orphan. But after the negative focus in post 9/11 scenario the madrassas feel isolated and perhaps unduly targeted. They cautiously guard their turf and regard the modernisation, integration measures and calls for increased transparency in their financial matters as interference.

Being predominantly a Muslim country, Pakistan cannot simply ignore this important educational cum social welfare system. In order to counter the negative perceptions about them and reported negative role of few of these, Musharraf government took multiple steps including introduction of two ordinances, to monitor and regulate their activities and to reform their syllabi. Such moves did not bear desired fruits as Madrassas owners became more critical of these measures with the passage of time. The Madrassas Reform Project (MRP) initiated for reforming the curriculum of Madrassas during Musharraf Regime almost failed to achieve its objectives, partly because of opposition from madrassas, but mainly because of the insufficient preparation and lack of determined implementation

of the legislations due to the fear of violent reactions from Madrassas.

After ongoing operation against the terrorists the environment is considered more conducive for renewing the reform efforts. The present government should therefore not abandon the efforts of reforming Madrassas. It should proceed further after strengthening the laws and regulations on the subject. After ensuring better coordination amongst all relevant state organs, the government must give Madrassas a chance to come under governmental control. Their finances should be kept transparent. Their syllabus should be a balanced mix of religious and modern education. Madrassa students should be awarded appropriate degrees opening avenues of progression, higher education and better job security for them. Government's absolute sincerity and determination for the reform agenda will be essential for better future of Pakistan. Before moving further all political parties and Madrassas' administration should be taken into confidence.

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Mid-Term Elections in Israel: An Assessment of Netanyahu's Term in Office

(Muhammad Shabbir)*

Abstract

In the aftermath of mid-term elections, the incumbent Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu narrowly succeeded in forming a right wing coalition government, fourth in a series. Although the current regional environment favours Israel, Netanyahu is likely to face a multitude of challenges. The opportunities emerge from the neutralization of most if not all militaries in the region, besides Israel's standing as undeclared nuclear power. Concurrently, the same regional chaos that played a role in neutralizing most of regional militaries in Israel's favour and a potential US-Iran nuclear deal pose challenges for Israel. The impact of these elections becomes more significant, as Israel's status of undeclared nuclear power established. The elections in Israel and their results although do not directly impact Pakistan, the economic and strategic significance of Middle East as well as close military relations of India and Israel require us to study the current trends. In this context, this study gives a rundown of election scenario and its aftermath. It also talks about Netanyahu as prime minister along with underlining the regional implications of these elections.

Key Words: *environment, neutralization, strategic - significance, negotiations*

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Introduction

The mid-term election process in Israel has been completed as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu established a right wing coalition government with the bare-minimum majority. Netanyahu though succeeded in forming a coalition for the fourth time, is likely to face a multitude of challenges in his current term. The elections were held amidst economic issues at domestic front and rapidly changing regional and global environments. The impact of these elections becomes more significant, as Israel's status of undeclared nuclear power is ingrained in the establishment's posture towards its neighbours and most of its adversaries in the region have fallen.

The elections in Israel and their results do not directly impact Pakistan. However, a political dispensation in Tel-Aviv remains relevant as the Middle East is significant for Pakistan from psycho-social, economic and religious standpoints. Concurrently, India's close military cooperation with Israel, its regional ambitions, and hardliner ideas of Prime Ministers Modi and Netanyahu unfold security concerns for Pakistan. In this context, an analysis of these elections in the backdrop of Netanyahu's time as prime minister is carried out in this study to assess its future implications for the region and Pakistan.

This study gives a rundown of election scenario and its aftermath and discusses the key elements of 2015 elections in Israel; Israeli standing amidst the region-wide changes; and the country's foreign policy posture. It also talks about Netanyahu as prime minister along with underlining the regional implications of these elections.

A Rundown of Election Scenario and its Aftermath

The early elections for the twentieth Knesset were held in Israel on 17 March 2015, nearly two years before time. Disagreements, particularly over the budget and a "Jewish state" proposal within the governing coalition, had led to the dissolution of the government in December 2014.¹ In the elections, the Labour Party and Hatnuah formed a coalition, called Zionist Union, with the hope of defeating the Likud Party, which had led the previous governing coalition along with Yisrael Beiteinu, Yesh Atid, The Jewish Home and Hatnuah. The incumbent Netanyahu of Likud, declared victory in the election with his party picking up the highest number of votes. President Reuven Rivlin granted Netanyahu an extension until 6 May 2015 to build a coalition when one had not been finalized in the first four weeks of negotiations. Netanyahu's Likud Party formed the coalition with Jewish Home, United Torah Judaism, Kulanu, and Shas, with the bare minimum 61 seats.

To recall, Israeli politics is characterized by short-term coalitions in which big parties make concessions to smaller parties in exchange for their participation. Except for a short period in 1969, when the Labour Party merged with the leftist party Mapam, a single party has never held a majority of seats in Knesset. The outcome of the elections was however something of a surprise. After a lacklustre run-up to the polls, Israelis cast their votes amid uncertainties or predictions of defeat and a slender win for Benjamin Netanyahu. Nevertheless, if PM Netanyahu completes his current term in office, he will become the longest serving prime minister in the country's history. In this context, it is prudent here that key elements of the Mid-term election scenario are reviewed.

Reviewing the key elements of 2015 mid-term elections

The campaign for 2015 mid-term elections was driven by domestic and foreign policy concerns. Issues such as, Palestinian peace process, Iran-US nuclear deal and economic issues remained at the forefront of political parties' agenda.

Likud at the domestic front called for "free market economy with social sensitivity", suggesting that in order "to remain competitive in a global market, there is a need for budgetary discipline, lowering taxes, an effectively managed stock market and growth of the private sector".² On international front, Netanyahu's main focus remained on the prevention of Iran from obtaining nuclear capability by trying to convince the world to maintain and expand economic and diplomatic sanctions against it.³ Moreover, backing-up from previously accepted position of two-state solution, Netanyahu also stated during his election campaign that if he was elected, "there will be no Palestinian State".⁴

Maintaining its position firmly within the Israeli peace camp, Zionist Union (Labour and Hatnuah) pledged to reignite a process with the Palestinian neighbours based on a regional platform, foster unique and special relationship with Washington and 'rescue Israel from its international isolation'. It also focused on economic issues by the country, and lowering the costs of education, healthcare and basic goods.⁵

Despite the official anti-Zionism stance by some sections of the Joint List, the party's platform on the Middle East peace process made an effort to stake a moderate position. The Joint List's policy on the peace process called for a just peace based on UN resolutions, termination of all occupied land captured in 1967 by Israel, dismantling of all Israeli settlements and the security barrier,

releasing all political prisoners and forming a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital. It also called for full equality in state budgeting for Jewish and Arab municipalities and institutions, as well as affirmative action to help the poor – who are disproportionately Arab.⁶

Threats and Opportunities for Israel in the Changing Regional Environment

The changing dynamics of the Middle East over the last decade or so have favoured Israel's standing in the region as well as posed some threats to the country's security. The opportunities emerge from the neutralization of most if not all militaries in the region, besides Israel's standing as undeclared nuclear power. Concurrently, the same regional chaos that played a role in neutralizing most of regional militaries in Israel's favour and a potential US-Iran nuclear deal threaten Israeli policy makers.

The incidents as: dismantling of Iraq's army, Arab Spring, violent regime change in Libya, similar unsuccessful attempt in Syria, sectarian polarization and consequent power vacuum in both Iraq and Syria have favoured Israel. As a result of violent regime change in Libya, the US dismantling of Iraqi army and Syria in turmoil, most of the armies in the region that could have challenged Israel have been neutralized. The sectarian strife and interjection of IS in Shia Crescent provides Israel a space to advance its national security interests and the crisis offers an opportunity to marginalize Hamas and prevent solution of Palestine. Moreover, the Islamic State besides serving an engaging point for Iran also represents a cap on the Iranian influence and may function as its buffer with the Israeli domain on to the west. One scholar very succinctly puts the same concept in these words:

"When viewed in the current context, the war on Iraq, the 2006 war on Lebanon, the 2011 war on Libya, the ongoing war on Syria, not to mention the process of regime change in Egypt, and developments in Yemen, Bahrain, annexation of Arab areas in West Bank and oppression and isolation of Gaza must be understood in relation to the Zionist Plan for the Middle East. The latter consists of weakening and eventually fracturing neighbouring Arab states as part of an Israeli expansionist project."⁷

With regards to the challenges, since the last major Arab-Israeli War in 1973, Israel had retained the three advantages, backed either implicitly or explicitly by the US: overwhelming conventional military superiority; formally ambiguous but universally presumed regional nuclear weapons exclusivity;⁸ and de facto or de jure understandings with the authoritarian leaders of its Arab state neighbours aimed at preventing interstate conflict. Although Israel's conventional military advantages are clear, the other two advantages could face threats from the regional dynamics. They are therefore subjects of serious concern among Israelis.

Iran's possible achievement of a nuclear weapons capability, either for direct use or to exercise indirect but decisive influence on the region, could worsen security dilemmas for Israel. Israeli leaders have asserted that even if Iran does not use, intend to use, or even manufacture a nuclear weapon, its mere capacity to do so will increase its deterrence by raising the potential costs Israel and others would incur by acting against it or its allies (i.e., Hezbollah and various Palestinian militant groups). The resulting intimidation could lead Arab Gulf states in proximity to Iran to adopt more quiescent or pro-Iranian policies or to pursue nuclear capabilities of

their own. In turn, this could open the way for increased Iranian influence and/or nuclear proliferation throughout the region.

Prime Minister Netanyahu reportedly fears that such intimidation could lead to a mass exodus of Jews from an Israel under nuclear threat, weakening the state and compromising the Zionist dream."⁹ Moreover, ungoverned or minimally governed spaces are proliferating near Israel's borders in Syria, Lebanon, Egypt's Sinai Peninsula, and Libya. These areas attract or could attract terrorists, weapons traffickers, criminal networks, refugees, and migrants, and contribute to trends that appear to threaten Israeli security.¹⁰

Israel's interface with the region and international community

A qualitative change in the US posture towards Israel during the last few years was being marked. This started perhaps as early as 2009 when President Obama first demanded a halt to the construction of Jewish settlements in Israel's occupied territories.¹¹ Particularly, the events that unfolded over the past few months have the potential to make a tense situation even worse. The invitation from John Boehner, the Republican speaker of the House of Representatives, for Netanyahu to address Congress reflected a deep bipartisan schism in American politics. It was also a sui generis situation in international relations that defied traditional diplomatic protocol. The tactic had multiple motivations. It was an attempt to torpedo the negotiations with Iran over its nuclear program, to strengthen the Republican campaign for additional sanctions against Iran, and to boost Netanyahu's profile prior to the elections.¹² The Obama administration's disapproval over Netanyahu's speech was perhaps indicated in Obama's

congratulatory phone call to Netanyahu, in which he clearly stated that the US would “reassess” its approach to the peace process—and therefore its overall relationship with Israel.¹³

In the run-up to the election, Netanyahu had declared that there would never be a Palestinian state, at least not on Netanyahu’s watch, although later he retracted his statement.¹⁴ However, his fourth term with weak government may provide the Palestinians with even greater momentum and create a critical mass for a solution to the regional crisis, “two-state” or otherwise. On the other hand, there could also be another spell of aggression against Palestinians to keep away the attention from the weaknesses of the government. The Israeli leader has been undoubtedly emboldened and will step up his efforts—along with mobilizing sections of the US Congress—over the coming critical weeks. The open letter sent by 47 Republican senators to the Iranian leadership, questioning the credibility and reliability of their own president was merely one of many potential tactics that can be expected.¹⁵ Concurrently, India has been improving its ties with Israel as well as with Iran, without sacrificing one for the other.

India’s ‘major power syndrome’ sets the pace and direction of the country’s interface with power centres in the Middle East, proceeding with Iran and the Arabs besides Israel, in an apparent equi-distant approach. The Indian policy in broader terms reflects continuity, unaffected by the change of government. India and Israel cooperate in security and defence sectors and both have signed agreements related to homeland security. The bilateral relations between the two countries have seen a flurry of activity after the new Narendra Modi-led government took power at the Centre and India stands “Israel’s largest buyer of defence

equipment”.¹⁶ Besides economic and energy linkages with Arabian and Persian flanks of the gulf, India’s traditional relationship with Iran carry twin objectives: secure a foothold in the rear of its neighbour Pakistan, and to find a ladder for its access with the Central Asian and European markets.

While India has been increasing its influence in the region, during recent years, Pakistan’s erstwhile influence in the Middle East has been lessening due to its preoccupation with War on Terrorism and internal instability. This coupled with its vast population and burgeoning economy, India has been trying to fulfil the vacuum created by Pakistan’s weakening position and regional instability in the contemporary scenario. Previously, India’s engagement with the region was economic while Pakistan maintained both economic and security relations. In almost all military doctrines in the Gulf, “Pakistan was seen as pivot for their defence”.¹⁷

Implications for the Region and Pakistan

The implications of Israeli elections on the region may be viewed with a six-fold focus:

- First, it seems that this time possibly, Netanyahu will be more focused on internal issues. Having the bare minimum majority means that he will be constantly required to tow the line between pushing policy and ensuring that his coalition remains happy. For instance, any agreement on the rights of the Palestinians might be enough to push Jewish Home away, and even the loss of one of the smaller ultra-orthodox parties would be enough to topple the patchwork coalition.
- Second, a diplomatic pressure is now likely to build on Israel to offer gestures to the Palestinians in return for which the

Palestinians would re-enter negotiations. Therefore, this can be the right time for the Palestinians to mobilize their efforts for the peace process.

- Third, with Netanyahu spearheading the mindset in Israel that refuses to take the peace process further, or to give Palestinians the right to decide their fate, the region carries the potential for an extended violence. These activities may be carried out by Palestinians or IS like entities.
- Fourth, the results of these elections and their aftermath are perhaps the most compelling indication possible that change in the status of the West Bank and the Palestinians, will not come from inside Israel. This places even greater pressure on the United States, if it hopes to affect real change in the region.
- Fifth, as the things currently stand, there is a possibility that US-Iran deal will get some sort of acceptance with or without Israel's acceptance. With Obama serving his second term, he would surely like to leave some legacy in the foreign policy domain.
- Sixth, the current regimes in India and Israel are headed by hardliners. considering the level of military and intelligence cooperation between the two countries, it is possible that both undertake covert activities in Pakistan to further destabilize it.

Conclusion

To sum up, the change in the government underscore a new government in Israel but with the same leadership and policies. Netanyahu's bear minimum majority coalition signals a weak future government. This coupled with economic challenges faced by the

country spells trouble for the future of new government. The composition of the new government in terms of parties and individuals represents a determination to resume the settlement and Judaisation policies and a refusal to respond to the conditions necessary for a political settlement for the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. There are also factors that portray that Israel will plunge deeper into settlement and Judaisation initiatives and become harsher in terms of its relationship with Palestinians and Arabs in general.

Meanwhile, the region faces numerous challenges: Palestinians remain hostage to a repressive occupation, the state of Iraq sits somewhere between a police state and civil war, fragmented by ISIS, a military-and possibly nuclear- standoff exists between Israel and Iran, and extremism threatens the entire region as well as the whole world. These foreboding factors have the ability to cause immense strife and conflict in the region if not confronted using all the resources and ingenuity of the collective Arab states. Moreover, if Arab states use these complex issues to place blame and acquire power rather than assist weaker neighbours and develop the region, hardship and violence may well prevail.

End Notes

¹Elie Leshem and Ilan Ben Zion, "Accusing Lapid and Livni of attempted 'putsch,' Netanyahu fires them, calls elections", *The Times of Israel*, 02 Dec. 2014.

² Gil Hoffman, "Israel politics: Platforms for the politically perplexed", *Jerusalem Post*, 28 Feb. 2015. Accessed on 16 Apr. 2015 from, <http://www.jpost.com/Israel-Elections/Platforms-for-the-politically-perplexed-392386>

³Ibid.

⁴Nicholas Casey and Joshua Mitnick, "Israel's Netanyahu Says No Palestinian State If He's Re-Elected", *The Wall Street Journal*, 17 Mar. 2015.

⁵ Gil Hoffman, "Israel politics: Platforms for the politically perplexed", *Jerusalem Post*, 28 Feb. 2015.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷Aftab Ahmad Khan, "The Zionist Plan for the Greater Israel by dividing Middle East: Oded Yinon Plan", *Defence Journal*, 18.9 (Apr 2015): 35-48.

⁸ Israel is not a party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and maintains a policy of "nuclear opacity" or *oramimut*. A consensus among media and analysts' reports is that Israel possesses an arsenal of 80 to 200 nuclear weapons. See, e.g., Timothy McDonnell, "Nuclear pursuits: Non-P-5 nuclear-armed states, 2013," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, vol. 69(1), 2013.

⁹ Leslie Susser, "Spy vs. Spy," *Jerusalem Report*, 26 Mar. 2012.

¹⁰ Leslie Susser, "Strategic dilemmas," *Jerusalem Report*, 20 May. 2013.

¹¹ Jim Zanotti, "Israel: Background and US Relations", *Current Politics and Economics of the Middle East*, 5.3 (2014): 229-291.

¹² Rachelle Marshall, "Netanyahu's Speech to Congress Causes Tremors in the "Unshakable" Alliance", *The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, 34.3 (May 2015): 8-10.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Jodi Rudoren and Michael D. Shear, "Israel's Netanyahu Reopens Door to Palestinian State, but White House Is Unimpressed", *The New York Times*, 19 Mar. 2015.

¹⁵For complete text of the letter see, "Text of GOP Senators' Letter to Iran's Leaders on Nuclear Talks", *Washington Wire - WSJ*, 09 Mar. 2015. Accessed on 12 Apr. 2015 from, <http://blogs.wsj.com/washwire/2015/03/09/text-of-gop-senators-letter-to-irans-leaders-on-nuclear-talks/>

¹⁶Mirza Mohammed Ali Khan, "Balancing in the Middle East: India's relations with Iran, Israel", *Hindustan Times*, 17 Feb. 2015.

¹⁷Amb Arif Kamal, "Pakistan's Interface with the GCC Region: A Perspective", *Center for Pakistan and Gulf Cooperation*, 2013.