

The Business

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## ECC approval for census

The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet has approved Rs 5 billion for the 7th census one day before the federal cabinet gave green signal. Now there's no reason for this exercise not to be completed sooner rather than later. It is a constitutional requirement, after all, and since the results of the last one were disputed, it was wisely decided to make this one a digital population and housing census carried out in accordance with international best practices by using the latest technology. Most likely the prime minister got a few calls from some of his allies in the short time between the ECC's mysterious delaying tactics and the cabinet meeting, which he presided over. Parties from Sindh, particularly Karachi, were especially upset last time and disagreements and disappointments even caused fissures all the way to the top of the previous coalition government. The pilot project was completed on August 3, 2022, so the delay, even before ECC chipped in, should have already raised questions. The biggest challenge is going to be ensuring real-time monitoring and geo-tagging of all structures at the block level when the actual project takes off.

So far there's been nothing unexpected or worrisome in the testing phase. Still, enough time must be left after it is complete to ratify results if they are right and correct them if they are wrong. A strange election season is all but upon us because already, while there's still some time before proper campaigning begins, it has become extraordinarily toxic and controversial. And the last thing anybody needs is more accusations and counter-accusations just because the government couldn't stick to its own schedule for the digital census. Let's not forget that the option to go digital was taken to remove all doubts and ambiguities that crop up every other time. If this process drags on endlessly and leaves very little time before the election, then it might also end up becoming part of the problem instead of the solution.

This is also one of those rare things that nobody should have any issues with. Everybody wants all elections to be free, fair and transparent where no party or group can tilt the scale by squeezing out unfair demographic advantages. When there's no census, it's not just electoral policy that gropes in the dark, but also economic planning, distribution of goods, climate policy, etc. Cash-starved third world countries have precious little money to throw at such things to begin with, which makes it even more important to get the data right. Just the other day the World Bank rattled the country by warning about an imminent explosion in the poverty rate because of the floods. If the government has only vague information to go on, there's no way it

# Kashmir dispute: A desired role of UN

DR MUHAMMAD KHAN

were manipulated in a way to give advantage to the successor state of British Indian (Baharat) while Pakistan was deprived from its basic rights and barred from having its due share from British India. The Muslim majority state of Jammu and Kashmir was invaded by India on the false claim of Instrument of Accession.



20th Century was marked by two devastating world wars; WW-I and WW-II, killings millions of human beings from across the globe. At the end of WW-I, League of Nations was established to maintain world peace by preventing wars through collective security and disarmament. Besides, this world body was to settle the interstate disputes and global issues through negotiations and arbitration. Unfortunately, it remained short of its objectives and pushed the world towards another world war; WW-II in 1939. WW-II was more deadly and total in nature. At the end of WW-II, the war victors established United Nations Organization (UNO) on October 24, 1945. It was anticipated to be more efficient and responsible international organization to control and regulate the global affairs for attaining international peace and cooperation. The process of decolonization and right of self-determination are considered to be the hallmark and biggest credits of UNO. Owing to decolonization and right of self-determination many new states came into being and colonized and enslaved communities were freed by colonial powers.

India and Pakistan were among those states which decolonized in the initial years after the establishment of UNO. Nevertheless, territorial boundaries of these newly independent states

In a way, Kashmiris were deprived from their basic right to join their dreamland the newly established state of Pakistan. It was the first violation of the UNO mandated right of self-determination by the last Viceroy of India. The people of Kashmir revolted over this violation of their right of self-determination and fought-out against the Dogra Ruler and invading Indian Army. Upon the revolt by Kashmiris and Pakistan's assistance to Kashmir's struggle for their right, India referred the Kashmir case to United Nations Organization on January 1, 1948.

UNSC immediately asked for the ceasefire and passed resolutions including two UNICIP resolutions for the solution of Kashmir dispute as per the wishes of its subjects. Owing to its resolution over Kashmir, UN is party to the dispute ever since 1948. On its part, Indian adopted policies of gradual relegation of Kashmir dispute and incorporating it into Indian union was accomplished on August 5, 2019 through annexation of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) as union territories. It is worth men-

tioning that, since 1990s, India even disallowed the 'United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP), to visit the Line of Control (LoC) from the Indian side of IIOJK to monitor the ceasefire violations. It is worth mentioning that, UNMOGIP was established in 1948 by UN Security Council for monitoring the LoC and any violations of ceasefire by either side between Pakistani and Indian forces deployed along the Line of Control.

In last three decades, India even tried to convince the UN members that, UN resolutions over Kashmir are no more valid, hence need deletion from the record of this world body. Besides, it wanted rolling back of the UNMOGIP from both India and Pakistan. India has been refusing any role of UNO by quoting Simla Agreement-1972. In fact, Simla Agreement-1972 did not reject or relegate the UN resolutions nor this agreement can undo the mandate of UNMOGIP and its role. This can only be done through another resolution by United Nations Security Council.

Regretfully, Kashmir is the oldest unresolved dispute on the agenda of UN. Whereas, over two dozen UN resolutions are calling for fair and impartial plebiscite for the decision of the dispute, India has resisted their implementation. Many a time UN even nominated the plebiscite administrators and aids, but India always acted a stumbling block to all these efforts.

India did this all under the fear that, an impartial plebiscite would pave the way for Kashmiris to decide their future away from India. Today, the peo-

ple of Kashmir question the role and credibility of United Nations for not giving them, their right of self-determination. Kashmiris believe that, UN and international community have done very little about their right of self-determination.

With the re-emergence of Kashmiri struggle in 1990, UNO and major powers could have acted decisively to break the impasse. But, nothing was done by this world body and civilized international community.

Rather, UNO and international community remained silent over the illegal Indian act of annexation of IIOJK into Indian Union by relegating the statehood of occupied parts of Jammu and Kashmir. Indeed, in the absence of any worthwhile response from UNO, India intensified its reign of terror over Kashmiris, killing those demanding their freedom and incarcerating the popular leaders in order to silence the opposition. In order to do so, India continued enhancing the strength and role of its security forces in IIOJK. Under its prohibited and discriminatory laws, Indian security forces are given sweeping powers to; kill Kashmiris at will and rape the women folk.

Today, the people of IIOJK are being killed, tortured, raped, and their land is illegally being handed over to non-Kashmiri Hindus from various parts of India. This all comes under gross violation of human rights, which has to be stopped. The people of Kashmir question the role of UNO and request this world body to take decisive step for the grant of right of self-determination to Kashmiris in the



## Nuclear armageddon

ROBERT C KOEHLER

“When militarism is addressed as a psychosocial disease, the absurd irrationality of its symptoms is clearly exposed.” These words are from a 1992 essay by N. Arther Coulter published in a journal called Medicine and War. Who would have guessed? They're as relevant now as they were three decades ago.

God bless Armageddon. As war wreaks hell in Ukraine – and the threat of a nuclear confrontation between superpowers continues to intensify – Nato is in the process of prepping for the end of the world. It's an annual two-week training event called Steadfast Noon – a nuclear practice run that gives European flight crews a chance to practice loading and dropping “non-strategic” nuclear bombs. Russia is expected to conduct its own annual nuclear drill, known as Grom (that is, Thunder), soon as well.

I can't read about this without summoning what I call “the big why?” from deep within. Endless resources are devoted annually to nuclear deterrence, a.k.a., the big bluff: “If you mess with me, you're gonna get it.” The point, allegedly, is to prevent war, which is absolutely paradoxical in a global political system based on the psychosocial disease of militarism, i.e., the pursuit of national interest and the maintenance of safety primarily via force and violence. No matter that this is the nuclear age, that force and violence could – oh so easily – go too far and wreak horror on everyone. The preparation for nuclear war continues unabated, while the voices of opposition remain merely cries from the political margins. There's no actual “debate” here, just a lot of powerless anguish, or so it seems. For instance, two years ago an open letter, signed by 56 former political leaders (including former prime ministers) of 20 NATO countries, as well as Japan and South Korea, was released to the world, pleading to current NATO

countries – to all the nuclear-armed nations – to sign the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which the U.N. passed in 2017 by a vote of 122-1. The nations represented by the letter's signatories have, of course, totally ignored the treaty, which was ratified last year, making nuclear weapons technically “illegal,” which seems to mean nothing at all. The letter concludes thus: “With close to 14,000 nuclear weapons located at dozens of sites across the globe and on submarines patrolling the oceans at all times, the capacity for destruction is beyond our imagination. All responsible leaders must act now to ensure that the horrors of 1945 are never repeated. Sooner or later, our luck will run out – unless we act. The nuclear weapon ban treaty provides the foundation for a more secure world, free from this ultimate menace. We must embrace it now and work to bring others on board. There is no cure for a nuclear war. Prevention is our only option.” Stunning words! They were signed by former leaders of the following countries: Albania, Belgium, Canada, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain and Turkey. They also wrote: “. . . we appeal to current leaders to advance disarmament before it is too late.”

“We appeal . . .?” And suddenly the whole letter crawled back into the political margins. These were former prime ministers, former defense ministers, speaking the deepest possible political truth, but seemingly they had no more power to bring about the change – global nuclear disarmament – than I do. Behind the formal language was a simple plea: “Come on, guys. Nuclear militarism doesn't work. You know it as well as we do.” But nothing has changed. Perhaps only when you're no longer in power do you become free of the psychosocial disease of mili-

# EU and ASEAN: Inspiring regional organisations with SAARC at the Learning Curve —II

AMBASSADOR (RETD)  
SHAHID MASROOR GUL KIANI

The Summit Imbroglio: The holding of summits is an uphill and challenging task for any host country, but no member state stonewalls its convening. SAARC has the rare distinction where India continues to obstruct the holding of the SAARC Summit; it is Pakistan's turn to host the summit and has been waiting since 2016. It is India's hegemonic arrogance which is reflected in its off-repeated feeble explanations not to attend the summit. There is still no consensus that would permit holding of the summit. Foreign policy professionals around the globe are at a wit's end trying to understand the reasons for SAARC's stagnation which had the promise of maturing into a tall cedar tree, reflecting dynamism, but instead, it turned out to be a bonsai tree in a pot; it has resigned not to grow and remain small. SAARC growing into a model regional organization remains a dream. In sweeping the past lies the mystique of rejuvenating this regional organisation. Ambassador Javaid Husain, a seasoned diplomacy practitioner, must have been quite disappointed at the stagnating SAARC, when he commented, “Unfortunately, in South Asia, barring geographical proximity, none of the other necessary conditions for the success of regional economic integration are fulfilled”. Pakistan, being the founding member of SAARC, attaches great importance to SAARC and has always played a proactive role to make SAARC a useful organization for regional cooperation, based on the principle of sovereign equality. Pakistan hosted the 4th and 12th SAARC Summits in 1988 and 2004 respectively. SAARC summit process has been compromised when India and on India's instigation other South Asian members declined to participate in the 19th SAARC Summit. The postponement of the SAARC Summit

has established the longest gap (between the two Summits) in the history of SAARC. Pakistan has a strong position that it is committed to hosting the SAARC Summit when artificial obstacles created in its way are removed. Member State Nepal, the current chair of SAARC, has been advocating the early convening of the SAARC Summit. There is much frustration among all member states on the matter of SAARC Summit as many important issues await the decision of the SAARC leadership.

The Reasoning: Let the Ember Glow: The success of the EU and ASEAN is indeed a model of success and worth emulating. SAARC trails far behind.

On August 5, 2019, Indian Prime Minister Modi's government made the ill-advised revocation of Articles 370 and 35-A from the country's constitution, which annulled the decades-old grant of the state to IIOJK. This shooting in the foot by India dealt a severe blow to the promise by the UN to hold a plebiscite in the IIOJK and aggravated the already tense India-Pakistan relations and heightened violence in the region. Pakistan's flip flop policy to rescind its decision in April 2021 to allow a partial resumption of trade was followed by Pakistan allowing India to send humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan. These mixed signals are of little help and clarity for the long term is the sine quo non for the Pakistan-India relationship. Quaid-e-Azam understood the significance of Pakistan and India living in peace and advised that some nations have killed millions of each other's and yet, an enemy is a friend of tomorrow. That is history.

Multiple reasons contribute to forstalling SAARC to be a robust organization. These include rigid economic policies of the individual SAARC member states, and Indian politics in the SAARC region. As India has the advantage of sharing borders with all other South Asian states, it enjoys a strategically inspired political advantage at regional and multilateral

fora regarding all other countries. Since the other member states do not share borders, the geographical gap translates into political limitations. This is one of the primary reasons for a dysfunctional SAARC, where the Indian desire to dominate its neighbors coupled with the absence of a robust dispute resolution mechanism has impaired the organizational potential of enhanced cooperation.

The idea of SAARC is to promote peace, harmony, and economic growth through the cooperation of South Asian states by sharing the available resources to build trust among parties and also by facilitating collaboration and regular contact between political leaders. The lingering Jammu and Kashmir dispute has remained a great hurdle in the process of progress and cooperation. Indian academician Vandana Mohla's prognosis on what ails SAARC is, “The most chronic problem that persists is that of Kashmir between Pakistan and India, the solution of which alone can lead to the smooth functioning of SAARC.” It is tough and challenging that the subcontinent can carve out its destiny following its genius if foreign powers permit it and if the two nations take the initiative to look within, not without. Indian hegemonic designs, mistrust, and a mix of negative and aggressive attitude towards the smaller states of South Asia hamper all the efforts for greater regional integration. Nepal and Bhutan continue to feel the dominating heat from India and they share it in their diplomatic exchanges with major powers. Sri Lanka continues to elicit support from countries outside the region for India's intervention in its internal affairs. India's 1998 military intervention in the Maldives continues to be a cause of serious unease among SAARC member states. This state of misgivings and mistrust has to end and end now if SAARC has to grow from a Bonsai to a Cedar. Now and then, member states share ideas, even though they are workable for connectivity and trade, but they

miss out on connecting or trading with each other, and the bane of the problem is exactly what member states are forgetting; trade and connectivity touch the common folk, who are the harbingers of goodwill and their bridge can convince the most naysayers to walk on it.

SAARC has the potential to provide a shade against the heat of poverty and suffering of the teeming millions living in its member states; their candle of hope needs to be protected by the cover of courage to ward off the gust of cynicism. There is a glimmer of hope over the lengthening shadows over SAARC and the greatest achievement of SAARC is that, for the first time, it brought together those nations who distrust each other the most, which are politically the most explosive and are at different levels of development. The counteracting forces were prominently controlling the situation, but it was a strong desire for collective benefits and an acute feeling of coming together that prevailed, and SAARC was born.

SAARC, unfettered, can accelerate its progress by establishing its linkages with other regional organisations like the EU and ASEAN. Determined and sustained efforts would be needed to let SAARC grow and that can only happen if regional disputes which are vitiating the SAARC environment are discussed among member states behind closed doors. For SAARC to bloom, borrowing Mao's “Let a hundred flowers blossom” may be the right step. SAARC has the potential to emulate the successes of the EU and ASEAN and beseeches to be allowed to be given an honest opportunity to remain in the learning curve.

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