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ARTICLES & ESSAYS

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Pakistani Education System at Glance

Educational Trends

IN

PAKISTAN

In Pakistan, education sector has emerged in the recent years as the most promising business area. It has lately attracted the attention of masses from every stratum of society. Witnessing the prospects, people have come to the realization that education is the easiest means of earning—not necessarily confined in the hands of potential investors. It is why we cannot make even a vague distinction between true educationists and businessmen today. The concept of service in education appears no longer a valid idea. The engraving of Lord Macaulay’s “controlled education” on the face of Subcontinent could never literally be undone when it comes to Pakistan. In fact, our neighboring countries of India and Bangladesh have uplifted their educational standard to a healthy extent from the strands of Macaulay Doctrine. However, Pakistan could not prove lucky enough throughout its history to redeem its people.

The structure of education in the present history of Pakistan raises some serious questions. As we have two well-defined and well-described categories in our educational structure, public sector and private sector, the past performance of both requires to be critiqued in order to determine the healthy as well as unhealthy trends in the system. The imposition of English as the only medium of learning for Pakistanis can be justified on various grounds so much so it can be criticized with some real potential. The fundamental question is, however, related to the *raison d’etre* of Urdu in the wake of the Anglicizing-experiment of our education. Do we really need Urdu’s presence in our education or it is mere dust in the public eye? Private sector had already ignored Urdu in order to reap the commercial prospects of English as, allegedly, the best medium of learning. Now even the public sector has found the solution of our educational problem in replacing Urdu medium with that of English. It is here where the slave-mentality of our bourgeois society can be seen at its worst. The false impression of rapid success in life by dint of English has, to our depravity, developed into a devoutly held belief. If English were the only channel of development and modernization, China, Japan and Russia would not have been blessed with modern riches through the use of their own languages.

Another such problem is that of 'unique identity'. In the thrill of intense exposition mania, much akin to the breaking-news mania of electronic media, every private educational institution, particularly schools, attempts to set up its distinct appearance. The foremost thing that falls prey to such a negative approach is the uniformity of student-stratum. For instance, uniform is made different from others in every possible way; syllabus is not kept identical with other schools' syllabi; students are given such a mental treatment as to make them offensive towards the others; so on and so forth.

The noble profession of teaching has turned into an easy-to-abuse, least attractive profession in today's Pakistan. Generally, only such individuals like to serve as teachers who are good for nothing. Individuals with better caliber and skill prefer to drive on other avenues of economic life. Moreover, teachers are not well-paid, particularly, in the private sector, though the situation of public sector is not encouraging either. Can such a mindset with inherent drawbacks introduce healthy trends in Pakistan's extant education system and can it really cultivate a crop of inventive and free-thinking minds in such depravity? Certainly not. The whole ingenuity, in fact, gets badly affected in this type of environment.

We assume in our illusive perception that, by increasing the study hours and providing tutoring, we are educating our children in Western lines. However, this erroneous perception is immediately out when we take even a cursory glance into the Western education model. Schools and colleges have five working days a week in the West; and students are relieved with two holidays on the weekend. Furthermore, study hours at primary and secondary education levels hardly match our work routine. We far surpass them in our study labor, but with extremely poor results. Unfortunately, this notion has somehow found root in our society that we are doing a great service to our children by overburdening them with educational stuff and imprisoning them into the systematic clumps of a 10 to 14-hour study a day. Schools offering morning-till-evening teaching and coaching services are not only doing a handsome business, but they are also boasting an ever-increasing number of students enrolled every term.

In such objective circumstances of unhealthy educational atmosphere, the hurdles for Pakistani students are manifold. Such hurdles can be classed under three broad headings up until the secondary school. Thus, the problems our students face are: (i) non-native medium of learning, (ii) unskilled teaching, and (iii) mind-racking study burden of time and labor. Is there a solution to these problems? Indeed there is a solution to every problem; but, as it is taking us so long to fix the problems, we do not have it probably. Nay, putting it more appropriately, we do not have a solution, for we do not want one, and one must not forget in this current scenario that 'where there is a will, there is a way'.

TERRORISM: FACT, FICTION OR FIGMENT?

A burning question is before every sensible brain on the dawn of 2009, why terrorism? The interpretations given by the advocates of the global war against this so-called 'curse' are, indeed, mind-boggling—since media hegemony has transformed lie into truth, fantasy into reality. But, however impressive and heart-touching, we are under the obligation of researching an issue before approaching it traditionally. Our religion also enjoins that one must not believe in the appearance of a matter unless deeply investigated. The approach otherwise is quite akin to hail the mainstream slogan with no use of reason.

The world today, let us suppose for a moment, is free of terrorism and we are living in a peaceful international atmosphere. That is, of course, incredibly appealing. However, who will guaranty this peace being everlasting? Will nothing in the future of mankind plague global peace? Will the superpower guard everyone's rights equally? Will there be a universal justice with no disparity of race, color, language and religion? Conflicts and coercions are an integral part of the nature of human species, for the gift of free will brings us the desire to acquire an unlimited freedom. Of course, such a freedom is harmful not only to the fellowmen, but to the very being of ours. "Liberty must be limited in order to be possessed", as stated one of the British statesman, is a good example to delineate the rights and the responsibilities for the enactment of true independence. Responsibilities define what rights we own, and this definition of dues and duties is identically applicable to regional, national, and international levels.

Let us see the problem in the light of this above brief discussion to understand what elements have given root to the problem of terrorism in an age of developed human rights. A logical question is whether the world of today is completely independent and we are living in a new era of human freedom. If no absolute yes, is this granted freedom only an illusion with no real future? What are the nations or people that do not bother to honor the liberty of other, namely weaker, nations or groups? Why suppression is viewed by the Western hemisphere as their birthright and a repulse to their suppression an act of 'accurst' terrorism? Is this conception of 'true independence' merely bookish? Is the West still not feeding upon the circular thinking of "Whiteman's Burden"? Observably, it is not only a law of nature, but a social law as well, that all disorders bear certain fallacious origins wherefrom the problems come forth. A disorder cannot get birth on its own, and a human fallacy or fraud necessarily lies at the core of the problem. The case of terrorism is no exception either. It is an outcome of some human fallacy or fraud that, mistakenly or deliberately, took place sometimes ago in the recorded history. This is to suggest that the origins of terrorism are not in the skies but on earth with predominant possibilities that its engineers are its immediate targets.

Today's terrorism, in my opinion, is neither fact nor fiction, but a figment. There is no single terrorist on the face of earth, according to the Western definition of the word in question. The

word ‘terrorism’, having French root, was used for the first time during French Revolution in an entirely different context. Similarly, the other related term, ‘fundamentalism’, was introduced by a Christian denomination in USA (American Bible League) in 1902 in its 12 tracts, which claimed fundamentalism to be the beauty of Christianity. Neither of these ‘taboos’ have to do with the Muslims either in origin or implementation. Then, is it not surprising to observe that they bear an exclusive “Islamist” insignia? I personally divide the alleged terrorism of modern definition in two categories, whereof only one qualifies to be rendered as terrorism in a real sense. These two categories are (a) state-backed terrorism, and (b) individual groups fighting for a given cause. State-backed terrorism, cultivating the seeds of disorder in a neighboring or distant country for the sake of a state’s *absolute* interests, is, by all definitions, an unscrupulous act of ‘terror’. Ethically and legally speaking, no independent state, be this state the only superpower of the world, has the right to disturb or desecrate another state’s sovereignty and integrity. The second form of present-day terrorism is simply an effect of a cause, a reaction to an action. As of the former, we are sure that it is evident terrorism, while, to comment on the latter, we need a survey of the history. Such militant movements as those fighting for freedom or against inflicted aggression were in existence throughout the history of civilized mankind. These movements became very forceful after the Western colonization of the East, especially of Muslim territories. A repulsive reaction was indeed inevitable, for the Muslim Ummah was never before enslaved in its history and it was literally the enslavement of a master. The fall of Muslim Spain can be declared the initial point of this enslavement process. Europe that had recently drawn out of the millennial Dark Ages sniffed the wealth of East with the discovery of India, and thus all Western powers rushed to occupy the riches of the East. We term this leap of West as ‘colonialism’ in political history. In the post-World War II era, the colonization of 18th and 19th centuries breathed its last quickly and a new, entirely different world came into being. This was the world of Cold War, a world of two political, economic and military blocs namely, the US and the USSR, the Capitalist and the Communist. Soon there were over fifty Muslim states, but to say with regret that they could not cash their numerical strength at any platform. Since victory justifies the claims and the ends, the capitalist United States led bloc knocked out the giant of Soviet communism in Afghanistan and rendered the world as ‘unipolar’ for the ages to come. Many termed it the ‘end of history’. Nevertheless, it was not the end of history, for the history was soon to take another twist. A power-embracing Islamist movement grew from the remains of Soviet-Afghan War that had left a chaotic Afghanistan. The capitalists’ concerns immediately finished up with the collapse of communism; hence, US did no longer care for the inferno of Afghanistan. Taliban Movement was the eventual product of this inferno that claimed the right to rule and serve under an Islamic regime. Al-Qaeda has a rather old history, but the essentials of this movement, too, link the US-USSR battlefield, Afghanistan. Thus, it can be suggested with certainty that the edifice of modern, post 9/11 history was originally built on the debris of Soviet-Afghan War. The first Gulf War added fuel to this hazardous fire of hatred and the Arab world, which hitherto was a spectator, directly got involved in this geopolitical combat. It was, thus, the watering of the future enmity between the decadent West and the resuscitating Muslim world. In my opinion, this post-Cold War history is a history of “Ideological Conflicts”. ‘Clash of Civilizations’ is rather too sophisticated to be adopted for this particular age.

9/11 was an intensifier of this history of ideological conflicts. It was with little doubt a logical aftermath of the post-Cold War suppression of Christian West over Muslim East. Now, the stage was ready for the West to take on Muslim East in a literal battlefield. Again a

process of colonization began in 2002, but this time its end was manifestly twofold. Again one facet of West's 2nd colonial campaign was the acquisition of geographical advantages and occupation of natural resources, while the other glimpsed the Western fear of Islam; hence subduing the Muslim world. To these ends, two mass battles were engineered in the heart of the world namely, the lands that were the key routes of international sea and land trade. The neglected Afghanistan once again pulled US attention on the account of its regional importance linking Central Asia, the future prospect of the world. Iraq was obviously an oil-hunt, for her oil reserves are second largest in the world. In precision, this was the whole game plan and of course it was successfully meted out in its first phase.

The second phase of the game plan, unanticipated by the West when launching this campaign, has commenced with the retaliation of the 'suppressed weak'. Muslim masses are now on fire, although the rulers of the Muslim states have lined up in West's favor. Indubitably, so far as the ideology goes, Muslims devoutly believe in the absolute existence of peace, while their religion itself means 'peace'. Terrorism has been strongly condemned in Islam, as Quran emphatically asserts, "Terrorism is worse than murder (Quran 2:191)." Nevertheless, the post-Cold War history is in its 2nd phase and it is the juncture of a decisive combat between two diametrically opposed ideologies, between Muslim East and Judo-Christian West. Muslims are bound to respond to the call of the time. What is believed by the 90% world population as terrorism is only a figment of their minds that has cast a great deal of 'unreal' fear on them. It is merely the effects of an all-powerful media controlled by West that has the potential to spread lies so effectively as to make people believe in them as truth. World of today witnesses the existence of countless freedom/separatist movements, and it is injustice that only Muslim movements or individuals are held as terrorists. When the survivors of carpeted bombardment carry guns and sacrifice their lives to shake and awake Western conscience, they are dumped. US invasion on Iraq will naturally bring US public the gift of their sons' coffins. Israel's aggression in Gaza and rocket-rain on civilian population will put Hamas under the obligatory sense of bumping off Israeli soldiers and civilians with no distinction.

I am afraid that a global combat of these two hostile ideological forces is at hand. Only West holds the key to this deadlock, but this key will be useful only and only if the Judo-Christian Europe and US give up their adhesion to so-called 'War on Terror' and reconsider the whole situation with a promise to bring justice in the world.

EDUCATIONAL REFORMS

IN

PAKISTAN

Some Aspects & Prospects

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE EXISTING EDUCATION SYSTEM IN PAKISTAN

Education has always been the key phenomenon of a human society. Man always yearns for knowledge. And we thus use different techniques for the acquisition of knowledge and wisdom. Education is the most efficacious tool or technique towards the acquiring of knowledge. Man is inherently ignorant, for his innate is empty of any preexisting information. His state is of no worth without being gifted rationality and knowledge. Allah made Adam and gave him from His own knowledge, thus Adam became the father of a wise creature namely “mankind”. It is but a fact that man is no better than animals in case he lacks the faculty of knowledge.

We normally have two ways of getting knowledge i.e. i. formal education and ii. informal or daily experience-based education. What we are supposed to discuss in the current discussion is the “formal education”. We further particularize the subject and set it under the heading of “Reform of Educational System in Pakistan.” The subject is exhaustive and attention demanding. Many books, theses, and research papers have already been written on this subject, and therefore, my contribution in the form of this small piece of writing is no worthier than an addition of another drop in the sea.

Numerous factors are involved in the low performance of Pakistani educational system. I do not want to blame one; I would rather point to lapses on all major sides.

SOME SUGGESTIONS ON THE SYSTEM

I am going to propound a few suggestions on the improvement of the system, which may, to a few people, sound harsh or impracticable. However, these are my suggestions, after all, and that is why my words must be given respect as an individual opinion on the subject.

To achieve a radical transformation, we need to nationalize the whole educational structure immediately. The state should put an immediate ban on the private school systems. This is to secure a national unity. In the presence of a plethora of private schools with no staff coaching and low qualification, and mutually exclusive syllabi, the talent of

new generation is not only being undermined, but a culture of class distinction is being fed in Pakistan. In case it seems impossible, the whole private sector should be rendered as semi governmental to enact a “national accreditation policy”. This will allow only those private schools that, at first, come up to, and secondly maintain the prescribed standard of education and facilities. It is interesting that we have a minimum of 3 educational structures. First, the system that is for the elite exclusively, a totally English medium, westernized system with a strict ban on the use of Urdu; second, the system of private schools that serve upper middle class; lastly, government schools and charity institutions serving all and sundry, particularly the poor. I personally appreciate the step taken by our late Prime Minister Zulifqar Ali Butto that he nationalized all educational institutions.

The Punjab Government should have a long-term policy concerning the education department and such a policy should be implemented and regulated by the judiciary, so that no following government may dishonor the ruling of Supreme Court. Allowances, facilities, and similar offers for the teachers should be regulated and made more frequent. Refreshing courses to meet the latest developments must be conducted once a year. However, the teachers must not be given too much relaxation and their induction and inspection should be restructured and regulated. We have a better structure of teachers’ inspection at district level since the introduction of devolution plan in 2002. Now most affairs of the schools are dealt by Executive District Officers (Education), who are further assisted by District Education Officers. The very system, if enhanced, can produce higher performance.

In accordance with the concept of a modern welfare state, education should not only be free but compulsory for all. The minimum level for compulsory education should be high school education. Instead of using English as medium of education, we must promote our national language and the medium throughout the country should be Urdu. English, alongside all other languages including Arabic, Persian, and the regional ones should be declared only a secondary subject included in the curriculum. If English seems too necessary, it should be given a value equal to Urdu, not more.

SUGGESTIONS ON EXAMINATION SYSTEM

First of all, I have serious problems with the whole structure of examination. It is full of slips. Internationally, the system of examination is called “assessment and evaluation system”. But what we have in Pakistan is neither assessment nor evaluation, but simply a test of students’ ability to memorize things.

The deployment of regular teachers on examination centers involves several problems. Instead of the teachers, each board of secondary education and university should appoint regular invigilators with the exclusive function of conducting examination. They should be coached for this given end of their jobs. Secondly, the months from May to mid-August should necessarily be declared examination free because the temperature goes to extreme heights in these months. Since Pakistan does not have a very good air conditioning or cooling system in summer, it is always terrible state of mind for the students to sit in examination in scorching heat. Accordingly, the time duration for hundred mark paper should be extended to three and half hours. Since student has to

mark his attendance, sign different sheets, and some other similar activities are performed inside the examination center, the time is consumed with no profit of the student. The added half hour will greatly help the participants. The schools should conduct only one mid-term examination instead of a first term and second term examinations. This mid-term should be conducted 4 months before the final.

The most potential suggestions in regard to the examination system go herein. The secondary school certificate should not be based merely on the exclusive examination of matriculation. The whole record of all previous results should be registered with the school. At least 40% of the total marks of matriculation examination should be awarded on the basis of a student's previous performance in the high school career, code and conduct, discipline and the similar.¹ The right of awarding these 40% marks should be given to the concerned school and a jury of senior teachers should decide to give marks to a student with full independence. Computer labs should properly work in schools and the annual result of every student must be registered with the school. Similarly, the 60% remaining marks of the matriculation examination should be distributed in two categories i.e. subjective and objective categories. Subjective examination will help us evaluate a student's ability to create and write, whereas the objective method will help us check the accuracy of his memory. Only in this way, we can get rid of the famous cramming system in Pakistan.

IDEAS ON PAPER-SETTING

In case of a totally theoretical, subjective paper setting, the maximum number of the questions asked to be attempted must be no more than 4. The choice level should drop by 25%, coming down to only 25%. This is to suggest that a candidate will have to attempt 75% of the question paper instead of only half of the total question, namely 50%. Hence, the total number of questions will reduce to six and the candidate will be asked to attempt only 4. Every question should consist of two parts and both parts should have different context of writing, although bearing the same theme. Furthermore, we must now get rid of putting traditional type of questions in the question papers. Our question paper setting is extremely monotonous with nothing new whatsoever. This system must be systematized now, because it is a big need of the hour. We always place such questions in the question papers that are readily available in guide books and test papers for students' cramming (*Rattaa*). Due to this easily available material, the inspiration of working hard and writing creatively have died out. You will not be able to find a single student today who is capable of writing something on any given subject from his own. The fact is that this is not a student's deficiency, but the fault of the system.

Secondly, the objective type will be the second part of this examination system bearing the half of the total marks. As it is already in vogue, there should be no choice in such a type of examination. But, what I propose in addition is a verbal test or viva voce to be included in the objective type. This will greatly enhance the standard of our objective type questions.

¹ 340 marks out of the total 850 marks should be awarded on these bases.

A FEW WORDS ON MARKING SYSTEM

Marking of papers bears identical problems. There are, observably, a goodly number of lapses beginning right with the dispatch of answer sheets to the awarding of final marks. For instance, per paper allowance is far below the standards. The amount varying from 2 to 8 rupees is a mockery of the skills of a professional teacher. Education department needs to employ expert paper checkers/markers with the sole responsibility of assessing and evaluating the answer sheets. Regular stipends need to be granted to these professional checkers, whereas they should be given sufficient time within which they are made responsible to spend equal time on every paper. Paper checking should get on in fresh, early hours of the day.

The dispatch of the papers to markers' homes is the core problem of marking downturn. After having received answer sheets at home, markers distribute them among their friends and relatives to reduce the burden. Moreover, some corrupt markers seek a source of income in this procedure. Many a talented students are outclassed by dull and bankrupt students through bribery. Further, extra award for good handwriting is, in my opinion, destructive to industrious students, as it has nothing to do with the mental ability. Therefore, such a concept must be abrogated.

The marking of the scientific experiments—the so-called “practicals”—demands our immediate attention. The ratio of bargaining in this category is very high. Neutrals are supposed to assess students' ability, but what is done is diametrically opposite.

POSTWAR IRAQ: STRATEGIC CHALLENGES

An Introduction to the Problem

Since the day of Ba'thist regime's fall in 2003, the US led grand alliance has been fighting a potential kind of violence. This violence may be termed as a religious war, hidden war, civil war, or a proxy war allegedly substantiated by Tehran, the situation inside Iraq remains to be a challenge. The abstruse postwar Iraq, as I personally like to call it, is a strategic challenge for the whole world of today. In fact, it is the unscrupulous Iraq surge that has distanced Muslims from the West, especially from the United States of America. The peace and integrity of the world as a global civilization is, although partially, linked to the solidarity, integrity and peace of Iraq. This challenge is by no means a monolithic threat, but a multifaceted problem having diametrically opposite spheres of orientation. There is no doubt, however, that the centrality of all problems necessarily belongs to the same nature of affairs. Besides peace, financial stability, for instance, is another hot issue relating postwar Iraq's stabilization as an independent democratic state. Iraq has been under a long dictatorial regime, therefore, only a nominal civil society exists in Iraq even today with no clear-cut agenda. Infrastructure is, too, lacking as the war has ruined almost everything. Moreover, the empowerment of democratic and civil institutions would be another daunting task.

In fact, the above listed problems are only a few major dimensions where work is desperately needed. There is a plethora of minor problems that automatically emerged as a byproduct of the war. However, the good news about all such problems is that when once the major problems are gotten over, the minor ones will no longer exist on their own.

We have three hot issues to discuss in the present instance. Indubitably, all of the three are intertwined topics also having independent existence. Let us have a look at them below:

1. Postwar Reconstruction in Iraq
2. Economic Crisis
3. US Grand Forces Exit Strategy

The reconstruction of Iraq is one of the major needs-cum-demands of the Iraqis. And of course, the coalition, especially the US, is under a moral obligation to undertake the mega project of reconstruction. Intense US-Iraq war succeeded by a domestic violence has rendered Iraq as a ruinous country, and it is why the present Iraq is deficient in the ability to stand by the world to keep pace with development. Of course, Iraqis' inability to hold their own has a direct linkage with the economic crisis which actually emerged in Iraq half decade prior to the moment the world sustained its initial effect. Lastly, the strategy of coalition forces' exit from Iraq needs a critical examination to see if it is feasible as described. Let us now consider these issues one by one.

Postwar Reconstruction in Iraq

The act of reconstruction in Iraq embarks on with the building of infrastructure in the war-torn country. Historically speaking, once, the Iraqi society came almost to a halt during and immediately after the war with no vistas of hope. They were, in fact, ensnared between hope and fear regarding their own existence on the very land of their own. The Iraqis, however, courageously responded to the call of the hour and forged a way to a bright future through the extant consternation and chaos. Critically, US only added to the problems of the Iraqis instead of fixing them. Since we have to deal in the current thesis only with the present destruction and reconstruction in Iraq, we will not pay a visit to the past problems of the Iraqis inflicted by the superpower in 90s.

Coalition air force started a massive campaign of bombing Iraq on March 20, 2003. Although, the US and British aircrafts never wholeheartedly respected Iraq's sovereign borders even before war and violated several hundred times her independence creating no-fly-zones inside Iraq, the 20 March bombing had a different effect being an aftermath of the declaration of formal war. This first carpeted bombardment came about against the backdrop of the announcement of an all-out war participated by all three i.e. land, aerial and naval forces. Destruction was, thus, anticipatable. Hence, it is interesting to note that the plan of Iraq's reconstruction was conceived and formulated sometimes before the outbreak of war in Iraq.² The assignee of the reconstruction task was the US Agency for Internal Development (USAID), whereas the project was to be carried out under the surveillance of Defense Department.

USAID has been working for the reconstruction of Iraq in conjunction with UN, World Bank, IMF, Coalition Partners, and international and local NGOs. There are four major ends to be achieved by the USAID in regard to the reconstruction of war-torn Iraq.

- a. Restoration of Essential Infrastructure
- b. Supporting Essential Health and Education
- c. Expanding Economic Opportunity
- d. Improving Efficiency and Accountability of Government³

Although it has been claimed by certain US resources that the influx of refugees spilling over into the neighboring Kuwait, Jordan and Syria did not transpire, for no 'acute humanitarian crisis' materialized as speculated before, the ground facts remained somewhat different. Although no 'acute humanitarian crisis' rose, a humanitarian crisis of considerable intensity did emerge to invite international community's attention. Indeed the situation darkened due to extensive military campaign and resulted into humanitarian crisis due to mass movement of population and rising humanitarian needs. The situation of Iraqis during the war period invariably resembled Jewish Diaspora, though Iraqis were quickly able to return their homes.

² http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/iraq_recon_intro.htm

³ http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/iraq_recon_intro.htm

From May 2003 to June 2004, Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) under Paul Bremer was the UN-recognized body responsible for governing, directing, and mediating the state of affairs in Iraq. The work of reconstruction, therefore, continued under the direction of CPA until it transferred the power to an interim sovereign Iraqi government on 28 June, 2004. CPA was then officially dissolved and, thus, the transitional period of Iraq began. According to Global Security's official website, "Under Iraq's transitional law, the transitional period included the completion of a draft constitution in October 2005 and two subsequent elections—a referendum on the constitution and an election for a permanent government."⁴

After the dissolution of CPA, Department of State is directly responsible for all reconstruction activities in Iraq. Iraq Reconstruction and Management Office (IRMO) represents State Department in Iraq. IRMO has been assigned the duty to plan and prioritize the logistic requirements for reconstruction in addition to coordinate with military and monitor spending. This representative body is further assisted in its activities of reconstruction by the American Army Corps of Engineers.

A major phase in the reconstruction of Iraq was the creation of an 18 member Constitutional Drafting Committee to formulate an interim constitution for the country. This constitution consists of 64 articles, which enshrine freedom of speech, economic and religious freedom, and allows civilians to control military. It was this constitution that served as the baseline for a future constitution as well as a timeline for January 2005 elections.

An interesting step in the appendage of Iraq's reconstruction was the inclusion of women in the government machinery—from a town council to the national parliament. She was first time ever assigned the duty to actively participate in the reconstruction and development of her country. As expected, it was viewed as a milestone in Iraq's history. Wilson Center's Conflict Prevention Project and Middle East Program have thoroughly focused on the employment of Iraqi woman and her progressive role during the period of Iraq's reconstruction.⁵ The world welcomed such rapid change in the definition of Iraqi woman's role from a homebound woman to a competing sociable lady.

Economic Crisis and Its Influences on Iraq

The economy of Iraq heavily suffered due to the war waged on the Iraqis. As I have already stated, the economy in Iraq sank in crisis almost half a decade ahead of the time when rest of the world witnessed economic recession. Immediately after the war, for instance, the Iraqi Dinar witnessed the worst plummeting of its history. The exchange rate between a US\$ and ID was 1 = 1950; thus, so grave was the crisis of the economy of a country in the possession of rich oil resources. The second Iraq war (i.e. 2003) does not, however, wholly account for the decline of Iraqi economy. The UN sanctions after Gulf War and almost a whole lost decade are some other

⁴ http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/iraq_recon_intro.htm

⁵ http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=news.item&news_id=62480

intriguing factors at work in the suffering of Iraq's national economy, which thence boiled down to the doom of *per capita* economy.

The worst form of Iraqis' suffering struck them during recent international economic crisis. Since US is actively managing and monitoring Iraq's affairs, and since the employees were paid in the US\$, the plummeting of Dollar seriously struck the Iraqis. Iraq's national economy although gained strength from the rise in ID's value, *per capita* economy grievously suffered. For instance, those getting paid in US\$ were initially able to secure a good much of Iraqi Dinars when converting the currency at the rate of 1 = 1950; however, the situation in recent years changed and the rate came as low as 1 = 1400. This situation shows that the Iraqis, although apparently getting the same amount from the government, had lesser amount in their own currency, whereas due to the global economic crisis they had to pay twice as much amount for their daily necessities.

On the other hand, it was observed by the world that the economic recession began in the United States of America.⁶ It was indeed the worst recession of last hundred years after the "Great Recession" of 1930s. Although the situation of economic crisis began to develop in 2007, it abruptly trammelled the world in 2008. The crash of the US stock markets and default of internationally reputed banks shrank the US economy plaguing directly the economies linked with US\$ in trade and indirectly to the non-US\$-based economies, especially those of Europe. Critically evaluating, the storm of economic crisis rose from the house mortgage in the US. In addition to the house mortgage, as almost everything in the US is mortgaged, automobiles and other expensive facilities of life i.e. luxuries also contributed in the recession. Those banks that were previously earning huge profits in mortgages were rendered defaulters when they were unable to recover even the originally invested/loaned amount. The property that was mortgaged lost its value going down the real price of an item mortgaged. Thus, the banks had a real disadvantage in the situation when the lenders let the mortgaged properties go to auctions in banks' custody and enjoyed a more beneficial transaction. The mass indifference of US public to pay the loan and no care for the mortgage doomed the world economy. Indubitably, Iraq being a US colony came under a direct influence of this loss. Thus, Iraq sustained the double loss, i.e. destruction of war and a subsequent economic crisis. Moreover, the expanses of Iraq War were met by the US government, which did not have in it a good deal of things for the Iraqi population. Although US was ready to pay for the war, there was no real compensation for the Iraqis suffered. Hence, it was necessary for the Iraqis to face the situation courageously.

The economy of Iraq, nevertheless, soon afterwards began to stabilize as it was seen in the imminent period that Iraqi Dinar began to gain value against US\$. Economy seems to gain the very momentum in recent times that is peculiar to an oil-rich emirate's economy. The unemployment level has radically gone down and people not only have better jobs today, but a much improved *per capita* economy. Today's Iraqi society is open for competition to everyone, for the basis of it has been

⁶ It must be born in mind that 'recession' is a state exactly opposite to 'inflation'. The modern crisis can in no way be termed as 'economic inflation', for the money did not unscrupulously abound but shrank.

redefined by the US as a more 'equitable' capitalism. Of course, such an economic liberty could not be witnessed in Saddam regime. His was an authoritarian rule, which did not and could not assure any fundamental rights to any of his citizens. Even the very citizenship of an Iraqi was exposed to several dangers under Saddam Hussein. Economy was a mix up of capitalism and socialism. Hostility with neighboring Islamic countries, especially with Iran, was another eminent feature of Iraq's foreign policy, which did not pay homage to Iraq's sacred past. Moreover, the volatile nature of Saddam regime had nothing really to ensure either to his own masses or to international community. However, in spite of this plethora of evils, we cannot legitimize Iraq War in the civilized world of today.

Insofar as the evidence goes, the present situation is very encouraging—especially when the Iraqi economy is in question. Unemployment has reasonably been overcome; industry restituted; small businesses grown, to name a few developments. We can on good grounds hope that Iraq will continue to flourish in the coming phase of her history.

US Grand Forces Exit Strategy

Multi National Force-Iraq (MNF-I) is the epithet employed for the multinational alliance led by the US in fighting insurrectionists after the main Iraq War. The US media, however, employs a different phrase namely, 'US-led Coalition', to describe the same force. MNF-I replaced the central fighting force Combined Joint Task Force 7, the veterans of the war.⁷ NATO Training Mission and United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq are other independent military entities that are primarily concerned with military training and humanitarian services. The embattling forces were hugely reinforced during the 2007 Iraq War Troop Surge.

The MNF objectives were expressed by the then Secretary of State Colin Powell in his letter to UN Security Council.

"The MNF under unified command is prepared to continue to contribute to the maintenance of security in Iraq, including by preventing and deterring terrorism and protecting the territory of Iraq. The goal of the MNF will be to help Iraqi people to complete the political transition and will permit the United Nations and the international community to work to facilitate Iraq's reconstruction."⁸

A total of 40 nations from different continents mustered their forces under the US-led coalition for Iraq invasion. The number of troops mounted to 290,000 on the occasion of invasion. However, 37 nations have withdrawn their troops during the four year span from 2003 to 2007, while only three nations, USA, Romania and Australia, are currently maintaining their presence in Iraq. United Kingdom was the last to withdraw her troops from Iraq.

An official statement was issued by the British Defense Ministry on the eve of the withdrawal of troops from Iraq, saying: "The role of British ground forces is

⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Multinational_force_in_Iraq

⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Multinational_force_in_Iraq

finished. Today's Iraq is a success story.”⁹ Although not true *in toto*, the statement does contain positive signs for the future of Iraq setting a path for the withdrawal of US ground troops. Gordon Brown also appreciated British ground forces' role in Iraq declaring it an “unforgettable legacy”. In a like fashion, US President Barack Obama's Camp Victory announcement in Baghdad also gives an inside view of the Obama Administration's mindset concerning Iraq issue. Obama's 7 April announcement is viewed by the international think tank circles as a roadmap to the Middle East's future and a strategy for the US ground forces' exit from Iraq. The timetable shows that, apart from the US military trainers, the last ground forces personnel will leave Iraqi soil before 1st January, 2011. This will certainly lead to a brighter future of Iraq.

There is no doubt that, unlike former US President George Bush, Obama has taken a very clear stance. The issue of Iraq seems in the preference list of Obama that he quickly wants to finish up. There is no delay of ground forces on the part of Obama, nor does he plan to defer his agenda. The victory has already been achieved; reconstruction has been completed; transition of power is almost done; therefore, no more efforts are required on the part of the US to farther Iraqi issues. Obama's roadmap is, thus, a good hit in a good time. Since his candidacy was based on the same slogan he is trying to materialize, Obama will be the happiest man on earth if he succeeds in his plan of withdrawing US troops from Iraq. Obama has reiterated his strategy for the exit of troops from Iraq, which displays his determination on the issue despite severe opposition and criticism. This very determination will make him into a hero of Iraqis as well as many Americans. Further, the US should also take care of the matter that no peace forces under the banner of UNO be deployed in Iraq, for there would be no practical use of it. Iraqis need their own army with their own Arabic speaking personnel. Thus, a quick training program should be meted out and Iraq's own army be established on strong infrastructure. In addition to a strong army, an effective command and control structure will be the second incumbent requirement of the country to avoid any future *coup d'état*. If all these issues are addressed, this will indeed make the exit of the US forces into a successful completion of the mission.

⁹ <http://www.newser.com/tag/25085/1/iraq-exit-strategy.html>

OBAMA ADMINISTRATION AND THE IRAQ PUZZLE

(An article written for a research magazine in March, 2009)

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Iraq has proved an inferno for the US-led coalition during recent past. In other words, the land of Iraq is a sort of swamp for the forces of the West, wherefrom, despite their desperate efforts, they have been unable to free themselves. The gradual transfer of power and American haste in showing indifference to Iraq is only one side of the problem and it depicts how eager are the Americans for leaving off. Iraq became a rather difficult place than it was ever thought by the American think-tanks. The propaganda of Saddam's possession of the notorious "Weapons of Mass Destruction" and his 'heinous' act of providing safe havens to international terrorists in Iraq served as the pretext for the American invasion of Iraq in 2003. Although no weapons were ever found—before or after the fall of Baghdad—despite the utmost efforts of IAEA inspectors and the Americans themselves, the Bush Administration was never apologetic on the unscrupulous Iraq War. When the issue of WMD was criticized by the American political circles, the Bush Administration shifted the emphasis from WMD to the very person of Saddam Hussein, saying that Saddam was in himself a danger for the world and to his own people. Thus, Saddam was tried in court and sentenced capital punishment.

The Iraq debacle has a two-decade long historical background. The problem emerged in 1990 when after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, US immediately jumped into the war, thus, rendering this regional conflict as a multinational conflict named Gulf War. It is a historical secret that the annexation of Kuwait was, in fact, instigated by the US herself and the go-between US President George Bush Senior and Iraqi President Saddam Hussein was the then US ambassador to Baghdad, April Glaspie.¹⁰ Hence, what apparently turned as Saddam's 'shameful' act was originally an interplay of international actors. Saddam was only a puppet used by some unknown masters to pave the way for the sole superpower of the post-Cold War scenario to land into the region heavily blessed with oil reserves. Thereafter, when once Saddam had gone out of his international borders, instead of supporting Iraq, the catalyst condemned the attack and launched a counterattack at the head of a huge coalition on January 16, 1991. The operation and coalition both had a license of legitimacy obtained from the UNO. The Gulf War, nicknamed Operation Desert Storm, terminated on 11 April, 1991, on ceasefire between the opponents.¹¹ Saddam Hussein was granted the permission to continue his dictatorial regime, for he would serve the end of US interests in a certain future moment. The miserable situation of Iraqi people did not radically change even after the war, as Iraq had to face UN sanctions. The only option granted by the UN to the Iraqi population for their survival was the UN program of "Oil for Food". Therefore, for almost over a decade, Iraq had to sustain the effects of the Gulf War.

¹⁰ Mingst, Karen, *Essentials of International Relations*, New York, 2001, p.58

¹¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2003_invasion_of_Iraq

The second Iraq War began on 20 March 2003 and ended only a month and half later on the 1st of May.¹² However, the story did not end with the end of the war. A sharp insurgency appeared within a few days of chaos in Iraq. Mahdi Militia, Ba'ath Party fighters and many other militant groups vowed to revenge on the Americans. Although, this insurgency was effectively weakened and, to some degree, quashed by the end of 2008, the Americans had to pay a heavy price for this success. According to the official figures, some 4500 coalition soldiers were killed in the postwar violence.

The Iraq War was originally a campaign of 43rd US President George Walker Bush. It was his desire that the Middle East region be freed from the so-called Weapons of Mass Destruction. Therefore, being able to find an excuse after 9/11 attacks, a massive military campaign was launched against Iraq on the very pattern of Afghanistan. George Bush left Oval Office on 19 January, 2009, after a long tenure of eight years, and his administration abdicated outright. On the 20th of January, Barack Obama entered the office as 44th President of the United States of America and his administration took the charge of the US government after Obama's oath. This was seen as a change not only in the US but also around the globe, as Obama himself had promised 'change' during his presidential campaign.¹³ Since we are concerned in this thesis with Obama's Iraq policy, we will now focus only on the changed US stance on Iraq.

Iraq and Obama—Before and After US Elections

In February 2007, Barack Obama declared his candidacy for the president and announced that his candidacy was partly based on his promise of troops' withdrawal from Iraq.¹⁴ According to a statesman, "Obama's political career was launched out of opposition to President George W. Bush's Iraq policy."¹⁵ It was, in turn, welcomed by a majority of the US population, who, according to political psychologists, had already been fed up with bizarre Iraq fiasco. Hence, the US public responded to the call of Obama and voted him for the change he was going to bring.

It is indeed interesting that after having been elected, Obama has publicly announced the fulfillment of his promise, giving a timeframe for the return of US brigades from Iraq. The announcement came in February only after a few days of his inception, whereas it was reemphasized in April. The timeframe for the return being 16 months, and that only a handful of American forces would be placed in Iraq for the training of Iraqi Security Forces (ISF)—promised President Barack Obama.¹⁶ This stance of Obama on Iraq has been subject to divergent opinions and light political criticism. Of course, the public's response to such an announcement of troops' withdrawal is mixed. Those families that have suffered with the loss of their beloved ones have welcomed the official announcement and those not under a direct effect have criticized it. However, US political circles did not warmly welcome Obama's new policy and criticized his indifference to Iraq. According to the United States Institute of Peace, "it appears that the

¹² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2003_invasion_of_Iraq

¹³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barack_Obama

¹⁴ http://www.newyorker.com/talk/comment/2008/07/07/080707taco_talk_packer

¹⁵ http://www.politico.com/blogs/bensmith/0509/Obama_and_Bush_in_Iraq_and_Afghanistan.html

¹⁶ http://www.usip.org/pubs/usipeace_briefings/2008/1218_iraq_obama.html

President would like to leave Iraq's internal problems to the Iraqis and treat Iraq as part of overall regional concerns rather than being his central focus.”¹⁷ The Institute of Peace demands immediate attention of Barack Obama towards the points that they enlist under the most attention demanding categories. Let us have a look into these points:

- a. Obama must restore US credibility, prestige and capacity to act worldwide
- b. Improve regional stability of Iraq
- c. Limit and redirect Iranian influence
- d. Maintain an independent Iraq as a single state
- e. Prevent Iraq from becoming a haven or platform for international terrorists¹⁸

According to George Packer, a columnist in a New York-based magazine “The New Yorker”, “Obama’s rhetoric on the topic seems outdated and out of touch.”¹⁹ He further terms Obama as a “cold-eyed, shrewd politician”. This criticism of the columnist entirely gets roots from Obama’s Iraq stance. On the other hand, the admirers of Obama have cordially welcomed Obama’s policy on Iraq. According to many, the US has been too deeply immersed in the Iraq issue, and it is due to the Iraq problem that a number of other issues of regional and international importance were constantly being ignored by the Bush Administration. Furthermore, even the US Army under Gen. David Petraeus has begun to show the symptoms of a ‘positive’ change. A number of political analysts of the United States of America believe that it was primarily due to the military campaigns against Afghanistan and Iraq that the US economy heavily suffered. The golden days of Clinton era changed into the period of dismay while Bush’s presence in the Oval Office. A huge number of American citizens ran off jobs and industry subverted.

Another interesting twist in the global US foreign policy is the change of the appellation of fight against terrorism. Bush Administration named their fight against terror as “War on Terror” or “Global War on Terror”. However, Obama Administration has changed this campaign into “Overseas Contingency Operation”. Moreover, an official letter was sent by White House to all concerned departments to abandon the use of the phrase ‘War on Terror’. Another important decision of Obama Administration is the closing of Guantanamo Bay Detention Camp as soon as it appears ‘practicable’. Guantanamo Bay is the very notorious camp which got fame for being a camp exclusively used for the persecution of the Muslims. This clearly depicts the difference of approach to the issue of terrorism by Obama Administration. Although, the plan of combating terrorism has not radically changed even after Obama’s inception; however, his position on the issue is rather clearer and straight—a characteristic that Mr. Bush remained unable to display. The historical fact is that Mr. Bush had clearly lined himself up against the Muslim bloc to unite Western Christians against the menace of Islam. He was probably influenced by the ‘Clash of Civilizations’ thesis of Samuel Huntington that predicts the emergence of

¹⁷ http://www.usip.org/pubs/usipeace_briefings/2008/1218_iraq_obama.html

¹⁸ http://www.usip.org/pubs/usipeace_briefings/2008/1218_iraq_obama.html

¹⁹ http://www.newyorker.com/talk/comment/2008/07/07/080707taco_talk_packer

Muslim bloc as a potential challenge to the modern West.²⁰ His speeches were full of invocations to God and religious intonations. This exhibits the chivalric spirit of Mr. Bush and his crusading determination when going at war against the Muslim world. Once in an off the record statement on 13th of September, 2009, Mr. Bush even went to the far of terming the war against Islamic terrorism as a “Crusade”. Nevertheless, on the other hand, Obama does not seem to have suffered with any kind of Christian prejudice against Islam. He is precise on the eradication of Al-Qaeda and Taliban within the boundaries where the US is already fighting terror with no proposals of launching new campaigns anywhere in the world. Afghanistan and Pakistan are now the regions of Obama’s preference for the decisive battle against Taliban-al-Qaeda coalition.

Now let us closely see how Obama views Iraq in the present scenario. Iraq will be discussed here as apart from the problem of Afghanistan despite the fact that Mr. Bush had enchaind both of them into the rosary of the same problem. On April 7, President Obama formally announced his wish that the Iraqis undertook their responsibility of looking after their country. This wish rolled up the official stance of Obama Administration on Iraq. He was quoted by BBC on April 7, saying:

“It is the time for us to transfer to the Iraqis. They need to take responsibility for their country.”²¹

Obama passed this statement in Baghdad during his first i.e. unannounced visit to Iraq. He appreciated US troops for their ‘extraordinary achievements’, although he added that the coming 16 months could be a ‘critical time’. When meeting the top Iraqi government officials, he also reiterated his plan to withdraw US troops from Iraq by the end of 2011. His meetings with the Iraqi leaders were seen by many as the final phase of the transition of power. The return of the serving 140,000 US troops in Iraq will eventually transfer the whole state of affairs into the hands of the Iraqi administration and army. The event as well as the statement in question precisely depicts that the rhetoric of Obama is less confused than the rhetoric of Bush. Moreover, Obama has a very practical approach towards important issues with the possibility of considering all peaceful options including dialogue. We are unable to see, however, a similarity of approach during the 8 year rule of Obama’s predecessor, George Bush, who had a preference for the option but to rely on the use of power exclusively. There is no doubt that Iraq held the preference of Mr. Bush. And this political hypothesis was later on literally proven when Mr. Bush refused to shift marines from Iraq to Afghanistan in spite of a potential resurgence of insurgency in Afghanistan. Bush family was most probably chiefly concerned with the riches of oil rather than the image of the country.

On the eve of Obama’s inception in the presidential office, the Middle East was once again aflame. Israel was at war against Hamas in the Strip of Gaza. History was once again at the juncture of inaugurating a major Arab-Israel conflict. Iraq has been a part of the situation, for the US surge of Iraq was, in one way or another, a preemptive strike to forestall any future damage to Israel by Iraq. However, Obama’s inception cooled the situation down without exhaustive diplomatic efforts. There is no doubt that former

²⁰ Huntington, Samuel P., *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, New York: Touchstone, 1997, p.210

²¹ http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7988065.stm

president George Bush was an unscrupulous supporter of Israel's legal as well as illegal activities. But what has been observed in Obama's stance on the Middle East is a difference of approach. Of course, Obama cannot ignore this piece of land which has been a burning point since the 2nd World War. It is also beyond doubt that Israel exercises a great deal of influence on the US, and any of the US president cannot ignore such an influence on the account of the presence of an influential Jewish community in the United States of America; however, Obama being a realistic politician in the office is more optimistic of bringing the warring world peace and a gift of friendship to the Muslim world.

A Critical Look into Obama's Global Policy

A critical analysis of Obama's agenda will help us understand his overall policy that constitutes the core of his plans. It appears that Obama is more concerned with America's inner problems. He is keen to transform heavily stratified American society into one nation. His is the aim of annihilating racial, cultural, linguistic, and color-oriented disparities of the USA. Another intriguing issue before Obama is the economic crisis, which has equally undermined American economy second time in history. Economic recession has, in fact, broken the backbone of American economy, as a number of banks have declared default. Therefore, what a political scientist can deem from Obama's role in the situation is what one can proverbially term as 'a Daniel leading his people out of difficulty'.

In another perspective, Obama's stance on Iraq can be understood within the spectrum of his overall policy for the Muslim world. Restoration of friendly relations is what constitutes the bedrock of Obama's Muslim world policy. United State of America has been extremely hostile to the Islamic Republic of Iran since the Islamic Revolution of 1979. Nevertheless, it was first time ever in the modern American history that a US President forwarded a hand of goodwill towards Iran. This position of Obama is, beyond any doubt, a fantastic turnaround in American foreign policy. Iran has been among the Bush Administration's 'axis of evil', thus, a probable next target. Obama's inception has, nevertheless, dramatically changed the whole diplomatic scenario. Similarly, when coming to the socialist front, Obama seems to have appeared more open-minded toward the 'otherworld' issues than any of his predecessors. This turnaround may be understood by the conservative US historians as a U-turn—hence infidelity—to the longstanding national stance. Nevertheless, the fact is out that the superpower in today's unipolar world can in no way suffice to view only one side of the picture. The presence of an all-powerful media is what matters and distinguishes present day world from the age of Cold War. Awakening of the realization of establishing and maintaining good relations with the world is a cordial desire of the superpower's diplomatic sphere. For instance, a strange situation developed during a summit in Latin America when Obama hastened to shake hand with Hugo Chavez, the socialist president of Venezuela. Therefore, it seems a major concern of Obama's policy that he is striving hard to restore the prestige of the United States as an effective, sole superpower of the world. One must not forget while examining Obama's act that Hugo Chavez has been critical to the United States and Israel and once in a speech the Venezuelan President declared Mr. Bush as 'devil'. Of course, the world has warmly welcomed such change in the US foreign policy.

The transition of power in Iraq came about in 2004.²² It was a difficult decision for both sides, for the US could not afford to set an independent government in Iraq, whereas the Iraqis lacked the ability to run the state-affairs on their own. Therefore, despite the change of regime, the interim government in Iraq was nothing worth than a dummy. Furthermore, it was plagued by a number of other internal as well as external threats. Ronald Paris, assistant professor of political science in Colorado University, warned the then Bush Administration in the words quoted immediately below.

“A whole series of decisions made by the US has put the White House in a very awkward and difficult situation in Iraq. On one hand, opposition in Iraq to the US presence is growing, but on the other hand, the US can’t afford to cut and run. Reconciling these two things is the heart of the challenge.”²³

In the scope of our current thesis, this analysis of Ronald Paris is very relevant. President Obama has almost exactly followed the statesman from Colorado in carrying out his policy on Iraq. Previously, there was a resonance of a US plan to divide Iraq into three i.e. Sunni, Shi’ah and Kurdish lands. However, the plan for the disintegration of Iraq somehow went into anonymity and with the change of regime in the US from Republicans to Democrats, it appears beyond doubt that President Obama has no interest in the division of Iraq. He is ambitious to see Iraq as what the United States Institute of Peace called “an independent Iraq as a single state”. It is, thus, a positive rift.

The general postwar elections of Iraq were held on January 30, 2005. Not long after the process of the making of a new constitution of Iraq began. The interesting fact about these elections was that, for the first time in Iraqi history, all religious and ethnic groups were given the opportunity to contest the elections. Some 7000 candidates contested for 275 seats. Same government continues today under Iraq’s own leadership. However, a vital difference between the Bush era and the present one is the likelihood of Iraqi government’s full-fledged freedom. The government in the regime of Mr. Bush was wholly dependent on the Bush Administration. Nevertheless, Obama has removed all such reins and there has appeared a gradual granting of freedom. Obama’s concern for the restoration of America’s status of a just although lone superpower of the world is the very vision that has pulled his attention away from Iraq being a US colony. Iraq nowhere stands in his preference while carrying out his Overseas Contingency Operation. It may appear strange to a number of readers that Obama has been a strong opponent of the Iraq War from the very beginning of the US operation in Iraq. Let us get back into history to explore how Obama opposed the Bush Administration’s solution of Iraq problem by waging war on Saddam Hussein. He addressed in a high-profile antiwar rally in Chicago in 2002, saying:

“I suffer no illusions about Saddam Hussein. He is a brutal man. A ruthless man. A man who butchers his own people to secure his own power. He has repeatedly defied UN resolutions, thwarted UN inspection teams, developed chemical and biological weapons, a coveted nuclear capacity. He is a bad guy; the world and the Iraqi people would be better off without him. But I also know that Saddam poses no imminent and direct threat to the United States, or to its neighbors, that the Iraqi economy is in shambles, that the

²² The event in question is also known as the 30 June Plane of the Transfer of Power.

²³ <http://www.colorado.edu/news/releases/2004/179.html>

Iraqi military a fraction of its former strength, and that in the concert with international community he can be contained until, in the way of all petty dictators, he falls away into the dustbin of history.”

The then senator Barack Obama further added to his speech:

“I know that even a successful war against Iraq will require a US occupation of undetermined length, at undetermined cost, and with undetermined consequences. I know that an invasion of Iraq without a clear rationale and without international support will only fan the flame of Middle East, and encourage the worst, rather than the best, impulses of the Arab world, and strengthen the recruitment arm of Al-Qaeda.”²⁴

These excerpts from an old speech very clearly exhibit Obama’s distrust in the Bush Administration and a strong opposition for the surge against Saddam Hussein. He believed that Saddam did not pose a direct threat to the US or her interests anywhere in the world; hence Saddam could be left on his own to meet the end of a disastrous fall. His opposition continued during the remaining years of Bush Administration and on no occasion in his political career he appreciated Mr. Bush’s campaign. He was firm in his conviction that war was not a plausible solution for any or every riddle. This very monotonous track of the US foreign policy is one of the factors that compelled him to declare his candidacy for ‘change’. After having been elected, he ‘cleaned up the eight year Bush-mess’ within only first hundred days of his rule. He indeed appreciated the courage of the American soldiers and their incredible achievement, for it was, according to some military analysts, no less than a miracle that the Iraq plan worked. According to Thomas Rick, “When American military leaders launched surge in Iraq, they were deeply skeptical of its success.”²⁵ But to the American fortune, the plan worked and the critics of Iraq War became a little mild. Obama in his very first visit of Iraq also announced a timeframe for the return of the soldiers, showing that how firm he was on his opposition of Iraq War despite its success. He did condemn war being a campaign of Mr. Bush; however, he appreciated American army for the victory and considered this victory a milestone in American history. When hearing the promise of Obama, the US soldiers in Iraq greeted him with the slogans “we love you Obama”.

Iraq for Oil or Iraq for Democracy?

Iraq surge under Bush could be termed as a pursuit for oil, for there was neither a timeframe for the disengagement of the US from Iraq nor a will to do so. However, the campaign towards its end under Obama appears to be a successful mission for democracy. Obama’s own statement on the issue in question can be used as a reference. He addressed the US soldiers deployed in Iraq, saying:

“From getting rid of Saddam, to reducing violence, to stabilizing the country, to facilitating the elections—you have given Iraq the opportunity to stand on its own as a democratic country. That is an extraordinary achievement.”

Although war, even if used for positive ends, cannot be appreciated, the functioning of democracy in a country like Iraq which had witnessed long nights of dictatorship is

²⁴ http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Barack_Obama's_Iraq_Speech

²⁵ http://www.politico.com/blogs/bensmith/0509/Obama_and_Bush_in_Iraq_and_Afghanistan.html

appreciable. The end of a sad campaign is what can be called a happy end. Iraqi people now have a will as well as right to vote and choose whomever they like. There is no more Saddam, nor Weapons of Mass Destruction, nor insurgency, nothing in short that may halt the pace of democratic systematization. So, no blame should go to the Iraqis now for not being given a chance to run their own state of affairs. Americans should indeed now quit Iraq as a civilized people who simply came to liberate Iraqis from a vicious dictator. Of course, this is the very motto with which the war was begun. Although the campaign was a reminiscence of “Whiteman’s Burdern”, it can be justified by its end.

Now we will see a shift of focus from Iraq to Afghanistan. The situation of the change in attention has already been predicted by many and one even commented that ‘Afghanistan is to Obama what Iraq was to Bush’.²⁶ A reversal of stance is still not far from being possible, as Obama has been previously promising to ‘refine’ his views after consulting the military commanders on the issue. Therefore, Iraq can still occupy a degree of importance to later receive more attention. In fact, a steady shift of focus and a quick withdrawal of marines can, according to some military experts, pose serious threats to the very integrity of the redefined democratic Iraq. This is the point where many of the statesmen call Obama for reconsideration.

Measuring Obama’s overall difference from Bush’s policies will paint a difficult situation before us that is not radically different. Obama has certainly cleared up the ‘Bush mess’, but to a certain degree, he has retained some points of the foreign policy, especially on Iraq, of Bush Administration. The leftover of some 35000 to 50000 US marines in Iraq for an undetermined lag of time is what critics call a suit of Mr. Bush. Here is an example of the situation. Wall Street Journal quotes that Obama was once asked by a Turkish student if his policies were fairly close to the policies of George Bush. He replied in his peculiar style: “Well, just because I was opposed at the outset, it doesn’t mean that I don’t have now responsibilities to make sure we do things in a responsible fashion.”²⁷ However, Obama calls it a need of time and this need being primarily related to the training of the Iraqi soldiers and to take an immediate counter step in case of a future insurgency. The part of the Bush’s Iraq policy was to respond to the ground needs in Iraq, whereas Obama has not only fulfilled his promise of withdrawing the majority of the soldiers, but he is also committed to see Iraq stable with a future presence of a limited number of US troops around Baghdad. This is, of course a smart plan, and Obama has been so far very successful in addressing the circumstances. He is not only looking after the ground needs in Iraq, but also maintaining his original stance against the Iraq War.

Conclusion

Barack Obama is a very mature politician. He is more realistic than his predecessor in many ways, as he understands the feelings of the nations around and their growing hatred for the Americans. Therefore, he has shown flexibility in almost every issue to bring a durable peace in the world. His stance shows that he is very much inclined to respect the sovereignty of other nations. Iraq still remains a colony of the Americans, but Obama’s promise has lit the candle of hope that the Iraqis will have not only the freedom but also

²⁶ <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/is-afghanistan-going-to-be-obamas-iraq-1515332.html>

²⁷ <http://hedgehogcentral.blogspot.com/2009/04/george-w-bush-barack-obama-iraq-policy.html>

sovereignty—chief characteristics of a free nation. This is the promise which Mr. Bush did not make, and thus eventually had to receive shoes thrown by an Iraqi journalist. According to some, it is only a political leap and shows a discrepancy with Obama's previous plan. They believe that Obama followed the direction of the tide and carried out whatever he found feasible. In a critical examination of the situation, this may not be a pure speculation and there may possibly be some truth in it.

Obama's plan can either be ridding of the Iraq puzzle or sincerely granting them full freedom to return like a civilized nation. In whatever way you take it, the plan is indeed beneficial for the Iraqis. Now the focus will essentially turn to Afghanistan and Pakistan, for the major part of the 'Great Game' will be played in these regions.

Our thesis only deals with the present situation. What is the future of Obama's promises is only a matter of conjecture. We cannot predict anything when it comes to the terms of politics. We can simply hope that the promises will be addressed and fulfilled. Now we have to be a good spectator to see if the proposed 16 months are really the final timetable or Obama sees a possibility of extending the stay of the US soldiers in Iraq due to some compelling affairs.

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DEMOCRACY IN PAKISTAN

Democracy, a compound of two Greek words namely “Demos” meaning “people” and “Kratos” meaning “rule”, stands for the government of the public. It is said to be a ‘government of the people, for the people, by the people’. More plainly, this is to suggest that the real power, which is termed as “sovereignty” in political language, lies in the hands of common people in a democratic system. It is indeed a matter of deep interest that the only true application of democracy was the political system of ancient Greece itself. The ideal form of democracy was implemented and enjoyed exclusively by the people of ancient Athens. Being a small city—that we term as city state today—Athens had a very small population, limiting to a few thousands. Therefore, it was easy enough to officiate democracy in its theoretical form there. There were several hundred elected members of the parliament serving different offices of the government for a fixed tenure. Hence, every free citizen of Athens had an equal opportunity to contest and be elected.

The future of democracy in Pakistan as a political system is not secure. The Western mode of democracy is neither a choice nor redemption of the people of Pakistan. Political history of Pakistan has portrayed a completely negative picture of democracy and that is why our layman has always appreciated and prayed for a military regime. Indeed desiring military regime is a tragedy in a modern state, but this is what we have been up to after 60 years of independence. Critically speaking, it is relatively an acceptable state while still being so young a country. West took many hundred years to arrive at the stage of current political stability and matured judicial traditions. History witnesses that West has warred for centuries and cut one another’s throats. Once, West had been a volcano of enmities, and there had been no apparent redemption for their homicide of their own people. However, after Renaissance, their effort to unify a whole warring continent and the subsequent contribution in the making of scientific civilization are extremely appreciable. It was this realization that paid them off.

Nonetheless, today, it has reversed in what we call the only ideological state of the world. The rule in Pakistan is “the richer, the better”. The power of purse always stands as a decisive factor in the arena of politics. Accordingly, even if you are polled only 30% of the total cast votes, but you stand above the rest of the candidates in number, you win the constituency. Thus, one representing only 30% of adult population turns out to be the legitimate emissary of the whole public. This is, so to speak, our mode of democracy.

Pakistan being an extremely important geopolitical country is but a ‘necessary evil’ for the US and allies. Americans have great interests in this region. The best auspice for the sole superpower’s interests is an individual-based democracy in Pakistan. They have always empowered individuals—acting against their own dedication to democracy—in our country rather than strengthening institutions. They are aware of the fact that strong institutions in Pakistan-like third world countries will shatter their dream of global dominance. We will have to admit that the American policymakers have been pretty much successful in the delineation of ‘New World Order’, as they have manifestly changed the mind of a whole East with a particular reference to Pakistan. Of course, the people of Pakistan vote for individuals, and not for ideologies. They have no interest in

the change of system, nor do they bother for the ideological destination of Pakistan. Slogans like “we want democracy” are raised by those unfortunate folks who do not have even the least bit understanding of democracy. In fact, they get killed for nothing, as they are geared and eventually duped by tricky politicians.

A psycho-analysis of the people in East, especially Pakistan is a crucial call of time. It has been observed that the democracy of West is not a psychological match for the mind of East, provided that this mind accommodates a completely different set of behaviors. The most primary mistake in this regard was the selection of parliamentary system of government for Pakistan on the British pattern. It has been no less than a deadlock for all over the history. The exposure to Martial Law has been one of the weakest aspects of the vulnerable parliamentary system. Plethora of parties comes into existence when parliamentary system is the game-court. Given the vulnerability, this system bears a number of fallacies and inevitable evils such as horse trading, king-making, and critical role of presidency. However, a better solution within the bounds of democracy is the presidential form of government. It may have its own sophistications, but it is still a rather workable system befitting the power-governed people of Pakistan. The four Martial Laws and other authoritarian regimes have divulged the fundamental defect of Pakistani public that they obey authority. Similarly, we cannot bypass our ideology working behind the creation of the country that “There is no god but Allah” when formulating a political system for our country. If we make a blend of presidential system and Caliphate, this will be the ‘archetype’ of democracy for the East. In a point of fact, Caliphate being a resemblance to presidential system is doubly democratic in the traditional sense of the word. The soul of democracy is the obligation of being answerable to some authority. In the Western form, the elects are answerable to the voters. Nevertheless, Islamic Caliphate admits to be answerable to God and masses simultaneously. This indeed guards the conscience as well as the appearance of every elect; hence a perfect fortification of *Shari’ah*-oriented politics.

The dysfunction of our current political system requires a radical deliverance and transformation. A strong system under Caliphate can alone redeem the monotheistic people of Pakistan. No foisting of a foreign democracy, however impressive, can deal with the confusions of a brain grown on the agrarian land of this country. The damage of such an imposition is manifold, as we have already seen. Political instability does not limit to its own problems, but it handicaps national economy and public psyche. The consequences can emerge in the forms of chaos and civil disobedience leading once again to the East Pakistan situation.

THE MYTH OF DARWINISM

This is apropos to Q. Isa Daudpota's "*Darwin's year: time to reflect*", published in daily Dawn on January 11. In his article, the learned physicist has emphasized to rediscover Darwin in the present age with an objective reflection on his theory. He asserts, "Today all true scientists accept his theory of evolution" and that "power of evolutionary thinking" can pose serious challenge to the anti-Darwinism stances held by people like Harun Yahya. It is unfortunate that some naturalists propagate Darwin's theory of evolution as a religious doctrine and are by no means ready to consider it less than a fact. Let me first clarify that *Darwinism* and *evolution* are two entirely different linguistic conceptions. However, after the publishing of Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* in 1859, both began to be rendered as identical, thus written both ways as *Darwinism* and *Evolutionism*. Theory of Evolution was a demand of thirsty 19th century Western society that had already rebelled against the clergy's farfetched, unscientific interpretations of universal scheme and existence of life on earth. The presentation of this thesis was *per se* a tugboat to pull the scientific thinking from ancient to modern. Nevertheless, Darwin's *Origin of Species* is, after the revolutionizing discovery of DNA code and unprecedented research development in biochemistry, worthy to be thrown in a dustbin. His book including the theory propounded inside is outmoded and obsolete today and all "true scientists" are explicitly fed up with the dying giant of Darwinism. His book was, of course, the "Bible" on natural history up to some two decades ago, but its today's status is diametrically opposite. Had Darwin been able to foresee today's revolution of biochemistry, he would have never decided to publish his work. A huge number of scientists in the West, especially in America, concede that they are compelled to base their research on Darwin's Theory of Evolution, for there is no alternative view apart from that of religion. The best available book in the market on the death of Darwinism is Michael J. Behe's *Darwin's Black Box* published by Free Press, New York. Michael Behe has extensively investigated Darwin's case and intensively excavated the flaws of Darwin's "Natural Selection".

Isa Daudpota's stance also stands in opposition to the creationism preached in Quran and Judo-Christian Bible. In this particular view, the learned writer of that article instigates to annul the Semitic position on life and endeavors to invalidate the belief of billions. If we put our trust in Darwin, God shrinks to become a god of nothing, let alone considering him omnipotent Creator.

Darwin's *Evolution* is after all a theory, unable to be tested in time-space. The *a priori* nature of *Evolutionism* makes this theory more into a philosophical deduction rather than an *a posteriori* i.e. scientific fact. The wall paintings in natural history museums do not stand in themselves enough evidence to be reckoned as substantial reason to believe in what Darwin proposed more than a century ago. If so, it is very much like the "stagnation" of thought; hence unwise and unscientific. While cursing the priestly class for forcing on people what is superstitious and preaching what is irrational, the naturalists themselves hold a view that owns no legitimacy in the empirical world. The belief that man evolved from a fish or something similar is, in fact, more irrational than any of the

myths of ancient divinities.

I am glad to state that all modern scientific researches, including those in physics and astronomy, point to the existence of a central force that is the principle of creation. It is a ripe time to “reflect” on Darwin’s stance in the light of a highly advanced science and dethrone *Darwinism* once for all as an incongruous theory that has been hijacking the discipline of biological sciences for around 150 years.

ARE PAKISTANI PEOPLE A NATION?

The topic we have before us is the qualification of “nation-hood” in regard to its application on Pakistani people. The question is whether we can class Pakistani people as a monolithic nation or not. The question is indeed demanding and laborious. Let us explore it critiquing all possible facets of the subject. Insofar as my humble opinion, Pakistani masses cannot be considered a single, homogeneous nation. There are a number of factors at work behind this theory. A mass of 170 million cannot be declared a well-knit nation on the sole grounds of political unity and superficial religious shell. There is no doubt that ever since the birth of nation-state, the ideology of a political nation has been gaining a great deal of popularity. There is no other theory that can, presently, challenge this conception of a people’s status of being a nation on solely political grounds. For instance, Germans have many nations i.e. races within them. However, they define themselves today as “German” exclusively. Further, the British are, historically, a plethora of many mutually distinct nations, such as Angles, Saxons, and Normans. However, we class them as “English” people today with a great much of respect. This can be a case study of modern state concept with the formula applied and judged against several other possibilities. The most number of countries falling under this category belong either to Europe or to Americas. When coming to Asia, we have only a few instances, such as China, Korea and Japan, becoming nations through a systematic politico-historical transformation.

Now let us turn to Pakistan. Neither Pakistanis nor Indians are a nation. Both of the countries are ideological and historical states rather than nation states. There is a big deal of polarization in almost every facet—be it a religious, linguistic or ethnic side of our socio-political life. Historically speaking, the Indian Subcontinent has welcomed and accommodated almost every invader coming from western and southern directions. The layers of invaders beginning from Aryans to end with Europeans all brought with them new cultures and languages. These linguistic-cultural elements were deeply absorbed by the land of India in such a way that, in fact, transfigured the original shape of those cultures. The process of the assimilation of foreign cultures in this region—particularly present Pakistan—developed into a strange social system of heterogeneous—instead dichotomous—characteristics. The best example of the current debate may be sought in the dialect change of Pakistani land taking place once every ten miles. The same is the case of India, for India has hundreds of sub-cultures and sub-castes.

On the eve of partition, Indian Subcontinent was a piece of land where 587 independent principalities existed with local autonomous or semi-autonomous rulers. The example of such principalities being Kashmir, Bahawalpur, Qalat, Sawat, Jonagarh etc. Thus, forming those 587 mutually distinct people into one homogenous people was by no means possible. Whatever formula you apply, whatever education you provide, the millennial culture of Subcontinent cannot change in such a desired rapidity. One of the tragic ultimate of this cultural diversity was seen in 1971, when Bengali speaking

minority forced West Pakistan to surrender them their rights solely on the basis of their distinct identity. Identically same is the case with today's remaining Pakistan.

Let us now have a more empirical look into our nation. Major ethnicities of Pakistan are Pathans, Punjabis, Balochis, Sindhis, Hazaras, Gojris, Saraikis, and similar. The case becomes really interesting when we try to compare them in socio-historical framework. None of these races shares respective culture with another. The only common factor among all of them is religion, Islam. Indeed, Islam can be used as a common threshold to save the concept of single identity in Pakistan, but not politics. OF course, we are called Pakistanis wherever we go in the world, but the fact is that being "Pakistani" is only a false, superficial identity having no well- grounded roots whatsoever.

Let me therefore conclude that Pakistanis are but a disorderly crowd by every definition of a crowd and not a nation by any definition of the word 'nation'.

“Greek Foundations of Western Civilization”

The Western Civilization is certainly a brainchild of Aristotle, for Aristotle is the peak of Greek genius. History witnesses that the millennial Greek intellectual rise that hypothetically began with Homer stopped on the person of Aristotle and then suddenly declined—never to rise again. Greek civilization did produce great men like Pythagoras, Xenophanes, Socrates and Plato before Aristotle; it could not, however, give birth to a single man of an identical stature after Aristotle. Apart from philosophy, even Grecian art and literature vanished after the age of Alexander’s teacher. It is, therefore, safe to assert that Aristotle’s death marks the subsequent downfall of the Hellenic Civilization.

The Mycenaean Civilization was the precursor of the Hellenic Civilization. It was the race of the Mycenaean people that laid down the foundations of every such cultural element that was to be identified in the succeeding times as Hellenic (Greek) and Hellenistic (Greco-Roman).²⁸ Mycenaeans, on the other hand, being highly skilled navigators, imported their civilization from the Orient across the Mediterranean, from the Medo-Persian soil—an expansion of Mesopotamian geography. The same had been done by the Cretans and Minoans before them. Medo-Persia was geographically so important that it was located at the crossroads of ancient civilizations; hence it naturally became the hub of the politico-economic activity of the ancient world. As it is the law of nature that the rise of one is the fall of other, the rise of Greek Civilization therefore crushed the grandeur of the Mycenaean Culture and marked its end.

The relativity of the Greek culture, which is more frequently referred to as Hellenic culture, in the present times needs to be revisited and rediscovered in order to understand the nature of the Western Civilization. In other words, we need to investigate as to what extent we owe our “present civilization model” and its page and pageantry to the Greek. A logical question pops up at this stage: if Aristotle was the sealer of the ageing Greek Civilization, how could the Greek ideal be still relevant after the elapse of over two thousand years?

Although the Orient has remained the cradle of civilization, the present model comes from the Occident. Modern culture is beyond doubt the apex of human history of civilization; but its cornerstone, rediscovered in the 16th century movement of Renaissance, is the very Greek *Oikimune*. Modern Western languages bear a good deal of Greek influence. The dominant discourse and culture of the modern world appears, in the simplest language, a leftover of the Greek civilization. Putting it in the right way, every aspect of modern Western life, from a tiny feature to a titanic one, is a reflection of Greek civics.

After the fall of Roman Empire, Europe immediately sank into oblivion forgetting its grand past. The golden age of pleasure-giving gladiatorial sports was over and now Europe was in the quest of survival and internal peace. The remnant of Roman Empire, the Byzantium, exiled itself from the land of Europe and while seating in the Asia Minor, it locked its doors on the European world. This oblivion of Europe continued for about a millennium and the sun of ancient learning and glory could not shine again until the Italian Renaissance—hence rendering the period as “Dark Age”. This infamous period of

²⁸ Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy*, London: Routledge, 2000, p.28

Dark Age was not going to end soon and the rebirth of knowledge on European soil was partially conditional to the rediscovery of Aristotle. Interestingly enough, a rich culture was booming on the other namely eastern side of Mediterranean. Muslim lands were bounteously blessed with every facility as well as luxury of the day during the same period. Their civilization exhibited some of the most refined features ever witnessed by mankind. Muslim Spain, popularly known as Andalus among Muslims, was geographically not cut off from the rest of Europe, although culturally it did. The Andalusian cultural penetration towards the mainland Europe had been successfully checked and repulsed by Charles Martel at Tours in AD 732, which, rather than being a redemption, in fact, delayed Europe's awakening and civilization-engineering for another seven hundred years. As Dark Age remains a total waste on the horizontal line of European history, the same era can be marked as the "brightest" period of Muslim civilization. Europe being inquisitive and intolerant in the clutches of rigid Papacy could not embrace the so-called "pagan" wisdom of the ancient. On the other hand, the Muslims, being tolerant and responsive, welcomed the legacy of the ancient that Heaven was about to confer on them. Therefore, they held it dear and soon afterwards they were able to transform the "deductive logic" of Greek science into "inductive rationale" of Muslim science. So was Aristotle saved by the Arabs and his work preserved in Arabic language.

The frenzy of waging war in the name of religion has always plagued and paralyzed human cultures. No such wild or civilized community has lived on the face of earth that has not tasted murderous warfare in the name of God/gods. While warring Europe was attempting to drag itself out of the Dark Age, the international political scene suddenly became bipolar as a result of a religious edict issued from Rome. The close of 11th century AD saw the clash of two mighty Creeds for a small piece of land—both believing God to be on their side. Driven in intense religious fervor and extreme hatred for the "infidels", the zealots of the Cross and the Crescent, asserting their claim for the Holy Land, ran into each other in AD 1095. Never before had Christendom attacked Islamdom, for the Muslim forces had thus far penetrated the lands previously occupied by Christian rulers, and Christendom was always on the defensive. The awakening of Christendom to reclaim the Holy Land of Christ's crucifixion gave birth to the first Crusade—the inception of a series of holy wars that was to mount to eight Crusades in the following two centuries. It was in literal terms the first world war, fought on a large scale not between two hostile kings or states, but between two continents. The Crusades indubitably proved fruitless and devastating on both sides in terms of lasting ground gains. The real gain was, however, in the belated harvest of the Crusades, for the Crusades were, in fact, a meeting point of two worlds hitherto unknown to each other, the Orient and the Occident. It is this juncture in history to which we owe our Renaissance. Pope Urban the Second's call for freeing Jerusalem from the "infidel" Mohammedans was, in one way or another, a pretext for the cultural exploration of the East. And so was dawned upon the West in the mist of huge misconceptions regarding the "barbaric Saracens" that the Muslim East had an extremely refined culture rich in every aspect. The gift of Crusades to the Christian West was, so to speak, Greek philosophy, Muslim science and their sophisticated jurisprudence. Books and culture were imported from the Middle East with a newfound enthusiasm and most importantly Aristotle was brought

back to Europe. Europe was now preparing to redefine itself as the chair of civilizations again, but this time the civilization being unmatched in human history.

Critically analyzing, the Crusades left an ineradicable mark on human history. The new learning so shattered the ideal of the Dark Age that the submissive Europe embarked on sedition against the sacred holds of the very Pontiff whom it previously expressed devout allegiance. It was a ripe time to cut the shackles and move ahead rationally and independently. The new learning from the East had thus far brought Europe to the doorsteps of the modern civilization. The ideal of "Chivalric Knighthood" magically appealing during the medieval ages had been replaced with the cultured status of "University Wits". In this transitional period, the metamorphosis of Europe was taking place under the influence of a unique psyche unheard of before. Religion seemed to have become misfit in the transforming psychology of the European world, for the tight hold of the Church for centuries had suffocated all strata of the people. European spirit, being restless and adventurous by instinct, could not solely feed upon the mysterious interpretative system of the Catholic Church. It has been, thus, inherent in the psychology of modern civilization to repel and repulse religion at every level. Reformation, Renaissance, Enlightenment and Age of Reason, for instance, were all the products of this psychomorphosis. It would be wise indeed to expound that the innate nature of modern civilization has remained secular at the lowest ebb and atheistic at the uppermost flow. Morality and piety, both being obsessions of religion, gradually died out in the inhospitable new world. Religion could only apparently change the texture of European life in the medieval ages and no inner transformation could literally take place. The actual man of Europe forthwith came out of the superficial shell when once loosened.

The Greek were secular and democratic, and their gods were much like the humans subject to fate. Olympian gods were not almighty beings and they were accorded the designation of a race only superior in some respects. Today, the role of the fate had been taken over by Nature, a word commonly accepted in every circle of people, and the world being secular and democratic. Man has acquired himself the features of Greek gods and attained the rank of superman—an equilibrium with Olympian race of gods. In its disposition, modern civilization can in no way be compared with any civilization in history other than that of Hellenic, for it was solely the Grecian *Sophia* that dared go beyond gods and what was considered humanly possible. The most common feature among all ancient civilizations was their adherence to supernatural namely, religion. Religion constituted the bedrock of socio-economic and political spheres in every ancient culture. Kings were the images of gods, their incarnations and representatives on earth. Politics was thus an institution consecrated. The Greek soil, however, could not cultivate the sense of submission to this tradition and set up a homo-centric political system of their own choice disregarding gods: democracy.

Since Arabic served as only an interim language in the blank-period of European history and Greek language alongside its successor Latin was much more coherent to the European linguistic system, the European scholarship, once having come to its own, broke with what was bequeathed to them by the Arabs. Although they had to detour in order to bypass the Arabs, they successfully managed it through intensive as well as extensive labor in the search of ancient manuscripts scattered throughout Europe. The consequence of such a quest was indeed amazing.

With the end of European Dark Age, the Muslim Dark Age sets in. As soon as Muslims disowned the intellectual legacy and dynamism of their own ancestors and adopted theological rigidity, the doorways of progress closed on them and their civilization-model became misfit for the subsequent times. Even today, the Muslims are equally at odds with the West as they were a millennium ago; however, the difference being reversed. Ibn Khaldoon's thesis of the rise and fall of cultures and civilizations perfectly fits here, for indifference to learning and innovativeness, complete absence of exploration, and fixity of ideological thought cause such stagnation that eventuates the fall of a high profile culture into the nadir of ignorance and chaos. The fate of the Muslim civilization was, at large, not different, and the Muslims of today have an absolute right to express their historical frustration. They were indeed destined to turn prejudicial towards the West, for their civilization had nothing in common with that of Europe. Moral decadence and decline in spirited affiliation proved the death-blow for the grand Muslim civilization in its second millennium. Today's mess of Muslims is a reactive force against the secular nature of Western worldview. Their uneasiness with the mismatching, globalizing forces of Western skepticism, scientific wonders and economic might is visible in their violent reaction to all Western icons. This "violent reaction" has systematically been crystallized into a "permanent behavior" of the whole Muslim world. They always find asylum in the medieval past with a recurring nostalgic recourse to the "golden age" of Ummah. Such a formation of fixed ideals is possible only in an environment of religious fundamentalism, where radical rhetoricians play with laymen's emotions exploiting their love for one to arouse hatred for another. It passes off when a religious community formulates its hierarchy, which, in turn, briskly manipulates the society and assumes the status of godhead with multiple hypostases. It is now the Muslim world that is inquisitive and intolerant, whereas Europe had learnt to become tolerant and responsive centuries ago. Having come this far, I would like to remind you the famous lesson of history i.e. "history repeats itself". History indeed repeats itself, but in different angles in order to maintain its universal character. Europe's religious fundamentalism, under papal authority, bore the carnage of Crusades in the Dark Age and modern Muslim fundamentalism has given birth to a global violence that the dominant discourse of the time has branded as "terrorism". Both of the causes remain an aftermath of fanaticism, implying that no doctrine other than the one majority approves of can be revered or professed in a given space and time.

Insofar as the tense global air is the question of the day, it is indeed a clash of civilizations—the clash between the secular Western and nostalgic Muslim civilizations.

END