

Disarming developments

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SINCE separation in 1971, Bangladesh and Pakistan have pursued different strategies for development, which in turn have had not only differing results for development but also for the security issues each nation has faced. Bangladesh has generally welcomed multi-lateral agency

west, and Central Asia; as a result, both of its position and of its simmering conflicts (including that with India), Pakistan, and its allies, have emphasized military over social investment. As a result of these trends, Pakistan, rather than Bangladesh, is now by some measures (e.g., the United Nations Development Programme Human Development Index) the less developed of the two leading Muslim nations in South Asia. Furthermore, many of these trends may even help make

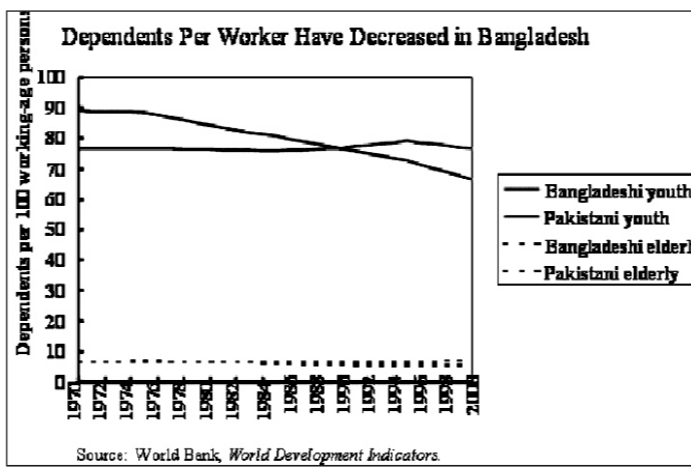
its GDP on its military. Although this percentage has decreased since 1990, it is still one of the highest in the world. By contrast, Pakistani public health and education expenditures are, as measured by proportion of GDP, among the lowest in the world and shrinking. Public health and education expenditures in Bangladesh are similarly low, but they are increasing, recently surpassing those for Pakistan not only in relative terms of GDP but also, because of faster economic growth in Bangladesh, in absolute terms as well.

Decreasing Fertility Rates

One reason for the larger health expenditure in Bangladesh may be its emphasis on reducing its rate of population growth. In part because of its extremely high population density (nearly 1,100 per sq km, more than twice that for any other nation with at least ten million persons), Bangladesh has a strong political commitment, boosted by aid agencies funding family planning programs, to reduce its rate of population growth. By contrast, Pakistani leaders have felt that deference to religious parties required ambivalence toward or refusal of aid for effective family planning programs. The results have been predictable. Contraceptive prevalence is higher and fertility rates lower in Bangladesh than in Pakistan. Fertility rates in Bangladesh have decreased from just over 6 children per woman in the early 1980s to just over 3 in recent years, while in that same time Pakistani fertility rates have decreased from about 7 to just under 5 children per woman. The population of Bangladesh, which, at the time of its 1971 independence (68.2 million) had been greater than that of Pakistan (62.5 million), was, by 2000, less (131 million) than that of Pakistan (138 million).

... and Increasing Life Expectancy

As fertility has decreased, so has mortality. Statistics on life expectancy at birth demonstrate not only changes in mortality but also help summarize health conditions for differing populations. By this standard, the health of Bangladeshis has improved more than, though still trailing, that of Pakistanis, while that of women in both nations has improved more than that for men. Reductions in maternal mortality have likely contributed to the increase in women's lifespans; in recent years, lifetime risk of maternal death decreased by about half in each nation. For both sexes com-



pared, life expectancy of Bangladeshis has increased 17 years since 1970, while that for Pakistanis has increased 14 years.

... Have Reduced the Number of Dependents per Worker

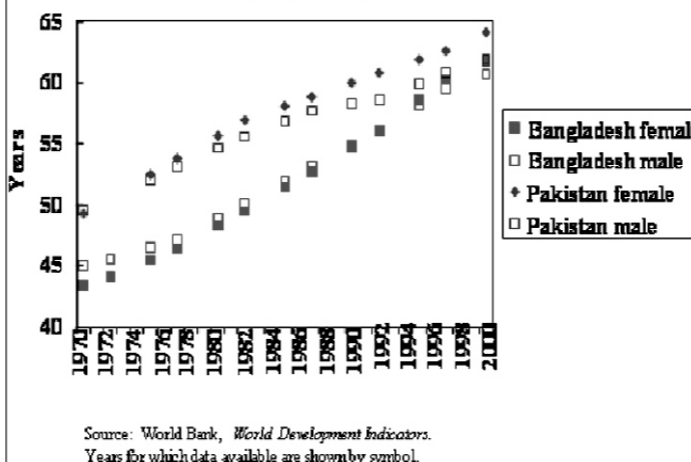
The sharper decreases in fertility in Bangladesh have led to a considerable decrease in its dependency ratio, its number of persons of dependent ages (less than 15 or more than 64 years of age) to its number of working age, whereas

able skills and there are good jobs available to them. Should fertility in Pakistan continue to decrease, it, too, could soon have the opportunity to reap a demographic dividend.

Can These Trends Change?

These trends may become self-perpetuating. World Values Survey data indicate Bangladeshis are more likely than Pakistanis to believe the chief aim for their country should be a high level of economic growth, while Pakistanis are more likely to view the need for

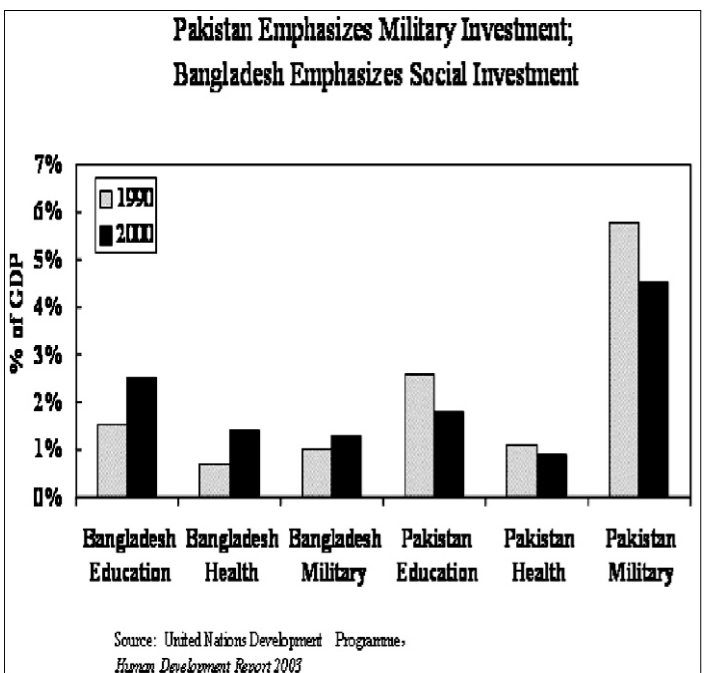
Life Expectancy Has Increased in Both Nations, Especially for Women



this ratio has barely changed in Pakistan since 1970 and has been higher than that in Bangladesh since 1990. (As the figure indicates, nearly all dependents in both nations are youths.) As a result, Bangladesh is in better position to reap a "demographic dividend" that can follow a decrease in fertility, which leads to relative growth in the working-age population and more resources for social investment if the additional workers have market-

strong defense forces as the most important aim for government. The continuing paths of development for these nations merit monitoring for the lessons they offer regarding development and conflict in South Asia and in other nations of the Muslim world.

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The authors are from the United States Institute of Peace and RAND.

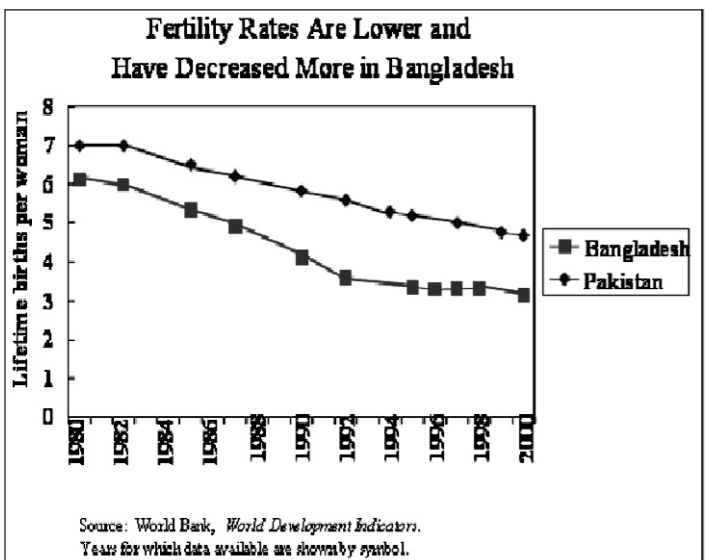


assistance with its development, particularly in reducing its population growth. Pakistan framed its relationship with the international community within the context of its strategic relevance to South, South-

Pakistan less secure in spite of its military investments.

Pakistani "Guns" and Bangladeshi "Butter"

Pakistan spends nearly 5 percent of



DRESDEN

Act of war or war crime?



More than 90% of the city centre was destroyed in a fire storm.

PHOTO: INTERNET

The sequence of using HE and incendiaries was deliberate and designed to cause maximum damage. The HE blew the roofs off buildings exposing the timber which the incendiaries set on fire. The hot air (as much as 1,500C) above the bombed area rose quickly, to be replaced by cold air rushing in from outside the zone. This created a ground level firestorm that sucked the oxygen out, asphyxiated those in cellars and propelled people into the inferno "like leaves into an autumn bonfire."

MUMTAZ IQBAL

WAS the firebombing of Dresden in WWII a legitimate act of war or a war crime? First, the facts. During 15 hours over 14/15 February 1945, about 1,200 Allied planes raided Dresden as part of Operation Thunderbolt approved by British wartime leaders under Churchill.

Two attacks in the early hours of 14 February by the RAF's Bomber Command using 805 Lancasters and 9 Mosquitoes (as Pathfinders) dropped 1,360 of high explosives (HE) followed by 1,090 tons of incendiaries. The American Eighth USAAF used 311 B 17s to unload 771 tons of bombs during daylight hours 14 February and another attack with 84 B 17s on 15 February released 470 tons.

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About 15 sq. kms of the beautiful and cultured medieval city of Dresden known as Elbflorenz, or Florence on the Elbewas totally destroyed along with 14,000 homes, 72 schools, 22 hospitals, 19 churches and numerous commercial and government buildings. How many Germans died? Historians estimate 35,000 to 60,000 perished. Brit author Frederick Taylor in his authoritative Dresden: Tuesday, February 13, 1945 puts the figure between 25,000-40,000. This is much less than the 100,000 claimed by the now-discredited Holocaust denier amateur historian David Irving.

The fire bombing of Dresden was part of the RAF's policy approved in September 1941 of bombing towns and cities to make them uninhabitable, terrify the population and break civilian morale as a means of achieving victory.

This policy of area bombing urban centers (Germans called it terror bombing) was put into effect from February 1942 when Air Marshal Arthur "Bomber" Harris took over Bomber Command. Firebombing was a mutant of area bombing which was first inflicted on a massive scale upon

Hamburg in July 1943 in which 45,000 civilians died but the RAF lost 87 aircraft and 600 crew. The difference between the Hamburg and Dresden raids is that the

latter occurred when the end of the war in Europe was in sight -- Germany surrendered on 8 May 1945, leading many to argue that bombing Dresden was unnecessary, especially as it was not a major military center.

Thus Nobel Prize winning German author Gunter Grass and former editor of London's The Times Simon Winchester have referred to Dresden bombing as war crime.

The RAF justified Dresden on the grounds that "severe bombing would not only destroy communications vital to the evacuation from the east, but would also hamper the movement of troops from the west." This would help the Red Army's operations in eastern Europe. A RAF briefing note mentions a desire to show "the Russians, when they arrive, what Bomber Command can do."

Does this statement reflect pride in the RAF's abilities, or show the Soviets that the Western Allies were doing all they could to aid the Soviet advance, or an early cold war warning? Probably all three. In his memo of 29 March 1945 to the Air Ministry, Harris stated that "Attacks on cities... are strategically justified in so far as they tend to shorten the war and preserve the lives of Allied soldiers."

As an aside, this was the same logic Truman gave for dropping the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945 that also sent a message to Stalin. The fact the Japanese were not white Europeans like the Germans is also an unacknowledged consideration, just as it is in the establishment of the torture centers of Bagram, Guantanamo or Abu Ghraib.

Harris further said: "Dresden was a mass of munitions works, an intact government centre, and a key transportation point to the East. It is now none of these things."

In response to the widespread unease Dresden aroused among British informed circles, Churchill tried to distance himself from the bombing. In his note of 1 April 1945 to the British Chiefs of Staff, he wrote: "... the moment has come when the question of the so called 'area-bombing' of German cities should be reviewed from the point of view of our own interests. If we come into control of an entirely ruined land, there will be a great shortage of accommodation for ourselves and our allies."

Dresden has been used extensively by pretty well everybody for propaganda purposes. Goebbels spin doctors exaggerated the number of civilian casualties by inflating fourfold to two million--the number of refugees fleeing the advancing Red Army into Dresden and promising swift retaliation.

After the war, the GDR authorities

cited the raid to show the nastiness of Nazis, Brits and Americans while extolling the Soviet liberation of Germany.

The west Germans, forced by the Anglo-Saxon powers to atone for Nazi crimes, couldn't really denounce their destruction of Germany's cities and focused on condemning the rape and pillage of the Red Army while pursuing reunification.

In the 15 years following the Berlin Wall's collapse in 1989, most Germans see the airborne destruction of Germany's cities including Dresden that killed 0.6 million and destroyed six million homes as a consequence of war and not a crime in and of itself.

But an emerging group of right wingers especially neo-Nazis is challenging this view. Their numbers are small. Their attempt to place on par or link the destruction wrought by RAF/USAF with the Nazis' wartime atrocities Auschwitz minus Dresden equals zero is troubling but unlikely to make much headway, especially if Germans pay heed to chancellor Schroeder's call to end "keeping a historical score sheet" and leave well enough alone.

Against this is a view amongst some historians that a proper appreciation of the evils of Hitlerism requires a knowledge, and an understanding, of the urban havoc wreaked by area and fire bombing raids in a war brought about by the Germans themselves.

This interpretation is not unreasonable, as also the position that an element of revenge for Coventry and London underlay the Dresden firebombing.

In his autobiography Bomber Command published 1947, Harris writes: "Here I will only say that the attack on Dresden was at the time considered a military necessity by much more important people than myself."

This sounds suspiciously like the Nuremberg defence (only carrying out orders) of Nazi leaders.

Harris deputy, Air Marshal Robert Saundby offered a more sophisticated but devious defence. Admitting "Dresden was a great tragedy" he says that "What is immoral is war itself" and "not so much this or the other means of making war that is immoral or inhumane."

The debate over Dresden as part of the larger issue of the morality of air attacks against civilians is likely to remain with us as long as war is.

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Maoist Insurgency in Nepal

MEHA DIXIT

MAOIST insurgency in Nepal is a fairly new phenomenon that rose like a livid blaze from age long privations buried deep in the oppressive, undemocratic annals of the 'kingdom'. Ironically, far from alleviating the abysmal state of the people, Maoist People's Movement lapsed into a rationale for people's grievances. The insurgency possesses the propensity of spilling into other South Asian states, hence, the urgency to deal with this crisis.

Genesis of Maoist Insurgency

Ironically, the 'Democratic Era' that commenced in 1991 was marked by undemocratic culture. Feudalism remained in place. Poverty, unemployment, injustice, political instability and corruption got deeply entrenched. Shortly after Nepali Congress Party (NCP) came to power in 1991, the leftists began to face isolation by the former. The United People's Front (UPF) chairman, Baburam Bhattarai, disillusioned with the political system decided to embark on an armed struggle renaming his group Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-M). Finally, the "People's War" was announced in February 1996.

Led by Pushpa Kamal Dahal, Maoists demand an end to feudalism and a new constitution. The insurgency began from the least developed areas of Rolpa, Rukum and Jajarkot. Success of the Maoists in backward areas is perhaps due to the neglect of these areas by the centre leading to poverty and unemployment with increasing number of youth joining Maoist uprising. Successive governments have treated Maoist insurgency as law and order problem opting for military solution of the crisis. However, in 2001, PM Deuba took measures to engage the Maoists in negotiations. Soon, peace talks collapsed and Royal Nepalese Army was deployed against the Maoists.

Much of the Maoist sympathy has been attributed to the police high-handedness. Since 2001, however, local sympathy for the Maoists is on the wane when Maoists escalated military operations engaging in increasing human rights violations.

India and the Nepal Crisis

The Maoists are developing ties with Indian insurgent groups and have penetrated into six Indian states extending upto Andhra Pradesh, laying out a Compact Revolutionary Zone (CRZ) and have further established an umbrella group called CCOMPOSA. The porous border between Nepal and India has



facilitated cooperation between the Nepalese Maoists and Indian insurgent groups. India needs to be vigilant of cross-border activities of Maoist insurgents and must take effective action against Indian insurgent groups that have ties with the Nepalese Maoists.

Resolution of the Conflict

The source of the Nepal crisis can be traced to undemocratic, iniquitous culture of the state insinuating all levels of the system - economic, social and political. Hence, human needs model can be applied to Nepal.

At economic level, Nepalese society bifurcates into few haves and burgeoning have-nots resulting in alienation of the masses especially in rural areas ignored by the state. This has been one of the reasons for the local sympathy for the Maoists. The state must work towards alleviating the squalid life of its people. This might contribute to the withdrawal of politicized youth from the Maoist armed struggle.

In the social sphere, lack of access to education, unemployment, gender inequality and caste discrimination are prevalent. Ethnic

minorities are marginalized. The state must take effective measures to accommodate backward communities into the national mainstream and education should be prioritized.

As far as the Nepalese political culture is concerned, it transgresses the democratic space of its people. Durable settlement of the state is brought within the framework of political, social and economic processes and are given the opportunity of equal participation in the governance of the state, which is a hallmark of a genuine democracy.

The question arises, how can a settlement be possible considering the conundrum of diverse social and political interests? Maoists favour elections to the constituent assembly and eventually a new constitution, most left parties support this position whereas other political parties seem to be content with mere constitutional amendments. Here, Conflict Transformation might be an effective approach. An essential prerequisite to resolve this crisis is to transform mutually exclusive position of various political actors into a cooperative one. All major political actors have impinged upon the

democratic space of the people. Maoists barely allow other political parties to be active in the areas captured by them. Both the RNA and the Maoists are indulging in human rights violations.

Emergency measures taken by the government in November 2001 and takeover of executive powers by the king in October 2002 have corroded the democratic fabric of the state. Peace is possible if destructive conflict behaviour of all protagonists is transformed into positive, reasonable behaviour. Political pressure of diverse groups like human rights organizations and civil societies can be conducive to shaping public opinion and altering the behaviour of major political contestants paving the way for mutual consonance. Violent action is not the solution, it merely negates lasting peace silencing the peaceable voices to the din of violence further plunging the state into a near dystopia.

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