

How can we benefit from a China-led globalisation?



MUHAMMAD AZIZUL HAQUE

EVEN as the US, under President Donald Trump, is withdrawing itself into the cocoon of isolationism, protectionism and ultra-nationalism, China is taking the US' place, supplanting it as the new global leader with a new and broad vision of globalisation. A new global economic order, characterised by regional and international openness and cooperation for a win-win outcome - and not for an outcome where the winner takes all - is emerging under China's initiative. The AIIB, NDB, and regional trade agreements like FTAAP, RCEP, led by China, constitute the wherewithal of that blossoming global economic order. It is the Asia-centric (more precisely China-centric) economic order that is gradually superseding the one founded by the West.

The new order is going to provide a fresh and massive stimulus to the process of globalisation that is now being buffeted by the West, despite the fact that globalisation was their concept and they have been the principal forces behind the extent of globalisation that the world has witnessed so far. The West is now showing protectionist and isolationist proclivities, for they are unable to match the current Asian competitiveness.

Against the backdrop of the fact that anti-globalisation dynamics are now gaining strength in the West, the world is witnessing China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which is truly a China-led Asian drive for a stupendous impetus to globalisation. Paradoxically, the efforts to revitalise globalisation are

being led by China, a communist country, against the background of the US' current anti-globalisation economic policies. China is investing billions of dollars bilaterally, as well as through the newly-founded China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the Silk Road Fund, in the Belt and Road countries to implement this signature project of President Xi.

The New Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB) will connect China's central and western regions to the huge markets of Eurasia (embodying the ME, Central Asia, West Asia and Europe) and East Africa, and help close the prosperity gap between the eastern and the land-locked western and central regions of China, while the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road will further boost the economic prosperity in the eastern and coastal regions of the country. The Belt and Road would immensely boost trade, investment, physical, digital and other forms of connectivity and cooperation between all the countries of the regions in diverse arenas and facilitate movement of goods and services and people-to-people interaction and integration.

The two-day Silk Road summit, held in Beijing on May 14 and 15, 2017, has given distinctness to President Xi's image as a new champion of globalisation and enhanced his stature as a world leader. Most countries of the world are endorsing the Chinese initiative and evincing interest to work with China on its transcontinental projects of connectivity out of a common aspiration for the continuance of an economically liberal and globalised world.

The massive project, of scope hitherto unknown in human history, when completed, will also serve as a conduit for interaction in diverse

spheres between different cultures and civilisations, and will help found a truly globalised world.

In a bid to reassure the world, in his inaugural speech at the Silk Road summit in Beijing, President Xi said, "We will not interfere in other countries' internal affairs. We will not export our system of society and development model, and even more, we will not impose our views on others. In advancing the Belt and Road, we will not retreat the old path of games between foes. Instead, we will create a new model of cooperation and mutual benefit." Xi said the new Silk Road would be open to all, including Africa and the Americas, which had no direct geographical link to the ancient Silk Road.

The mega-connectivity project would certainly have a geopolitical

dimension, as it would greatly enhance China's image and clout as a benevolent global power and further increase the country's capability to project influence abroad; for friendship, cooperation, genuine willingness to work together for common good, generosity, etc. naturally promote a big country's leverage among nations. However, like China's, the geostrategic clout of

and economic analysts have recently opined, BRI "represents an opportunity for India", and that it would be "a highly short-sighted and self-defeating decision" for India to not participate in it.

Connectivity and regional and global integration are now the most crucial tools for further socioeconomic advancement in Bangladesh. Bangladesh has a big

connectivity across the globe and make movements of goods and services and interactions between cultures and civilisations easy; and thus promote economic and cultural integration and globalisation. That would help Bangladesh create huge job opportunities for millions of her youths and boost further socioeconomic development.

Bangladesh needs smooth and unimpeded connectivity with her markets and suppliers. She could emerge as the most important connectivity hub in an economically integrated and globalised Asia and world by virtue of her geographic location. And she could serve the entire South Asia, Southeast Asia and the Far Eastern countries, through a network of highways and high-speed railways, and sea, air and digital connectivity radiating out of Bangladesh. However, Bangladesh can become such a hub and ensure the economic viability of the same, only with the cooperation of the neighbouring countries like India, China, Myanmar and others. And only if those countries cooperate between themselves on the Belt and Road and in other spheres.

Current Asian economic milieu abounds with opportunities for the nations of the Asian region. A challenge for Bangladesh would be to have the ability to avail herself of those opportunities and to consolidate them to her benefit. She, therefore, needs to remain firmly and unwaveringly involved in China's drive for attaining worldwide connectivity, integration and globalisation - an initiative that has no parallel in history in respect of its scope and potential - so that the immense benefits of it is likely to generate do not bypass her.

The writer is former Ambassador and Secretary.



Chinese President Xi Jinping poses for a group photo with delegates and guests at a welcoming banquet for the Belt and Road Forum in Beijing.

PHOTO: AFP

Masculinity vs. Equality



RAFIA ZAKARIA

MOST men in the Middle East do not believe in women's equality. This was what can be concluded from a recent survey conducted by UN Women. The 10,000 respondents who were questioned belonged to Morocco, Lebanon, Palestine and Egypt.

Questions included whether they believed men should get preferential treatment over women (most thought so), whether efforts should be made to increase women's equality in the economic and political spheres (no), and in some cases whether it was okay for a man to beat his wife (over half of the men in Egypt said yes). Almost all men (90 percent) in Egypt believed that men deserve to have the final say in matters of the home.

We don't, of course, need a survey to know that gender equality does not have a lot of supporters among the men of the Muslim world.

Iterations of this belief can be found in the newspapers of the region. Men who do not believe in equality go on to inflict punishment on the women who anger them; they belittle and harass others who share their workplaces, and generally mistreat those they encounter. In this sense, none of the details of the survey are at all surprising, not the approval of

abuse and not the condoning of discrimination in jobs and at home. Here is what is surprising. A large number of the women questioned in the survey believed the same things as the men who would like to discriminate against them. In Egypt, 58.5 percent women believe that men "should have the final word" in decision-making related to matters at home.

Similarly, just less than a third of Egyptian women agreed that it is okay to sometimes beat a woman. Nearly three-quarters of women, like men, believed that men should be given preferential treatment over women in jobs. A little less than a third of women did not think that women should have the option to work outside the home after marriage.

These are shocking results, not simply because of the attitudes they point to but also because they lay bare the cultural architecture that continues to enable the poor treatment of women in Muslim countries. Women currently brought up in Middle East nations - and in the Muslim world at large - surveyed, are essentially being schooled in self-hatred, and are being taught to think constantly and consistently like men so that they never identify with or support other women.

When a woman hears a story about another woman being beaten, she does not rail at the injustice or cry out at the cruelty; instead, she blames that woman. She must have done something to provoke the man,

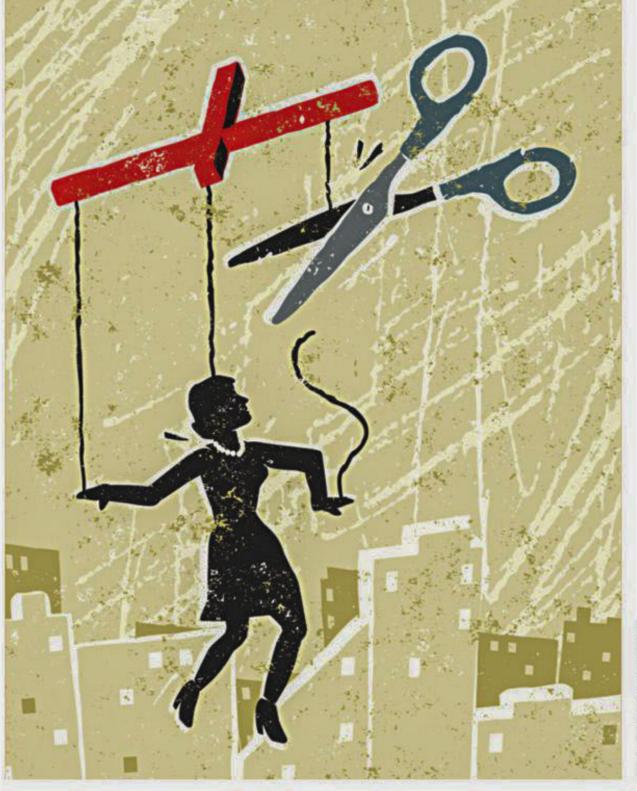


IMAGE: WOMENOLOGY

she must be the one at fault and not the one actually wronged. A similar logic is evident in questions of who deserves what - the woman at the office is the enemy of the woman at

home; there is no solidarity, no feeling of sisterhood. There is only a male mentality and male morality; women suffer but sympathise with men.

The results of a similar survey in Pakistan would likely not have been much different. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan has reported horrific crimes against women, including rape, gang rape, acid attacks, beatings, torture and, of course, 'honour' killings. According to HRCF figures, a number of women commit suicide in the country and hundreds of others are killed in the name of honour. Laws passed in recent times to curb violence against women have not been effective in actually doing so.

The general acceptability of domestic violence in Pakistani culture was recently underscored when a commercial for a washing machine featured a man making light of domestic violence. That commercial, which featured a well-known actor, was never aired but it could easily have been. As in Egypt, Lebanon, Palestine and Morocco, domestic violence is considered a man's right, the basis of jokes, but never ever a crime.

Within this dark reality, it is difficult to imagine change as a possibility. Gender discrimination and hatred and poor treatment of women obviously have wide acceptability in society. Similarly, dismantling the cultural apparatus that would enable women to think like women, identify with other women and resist the dominance of men, is very difficult. The result is a world in which women have few rights, are often mistreated but yet say nothing and do nothing. Dependence

enables apathy and cultivates hopelessness; self-hatred enables malice and cruelty.

The repercussions are evident in every corner of every home - mothers-in-law pitted against daughters-in-law, sisters against sisters, aunts against cousins. With women pitted against women, their enslavement is perceived as acceptable, even recommended and praised.

Pointing out the dynamics that reveal how women are pitted against other women is not to exonerate the men who dominate the system, who make and enact the rules and means via which women are sentenced to lifelong inequality and perpetual dependence.

In the end, men who treat women badly rob the latter of their humanity, reduce them to the status of an animal, a being who cannot make decisions, who can be beaten and disciplined, and whose capacity never extends beyond carrying out orders.

Change requires an understanding that morals and society can never be constructed on the architecture of discrimination; bossing women around can make men feel good and powerful for the moment, but it can never lead to justice or progress or virtue. Giving up on gender equality means giving up on the quest to be good, and many of those who live in these parts of the world seem to have done just that.

The writer is an attorney teaching Constitutional Law and Political Philosophy. © DAWN (Pakistan)

QUOTABLE Quote

WALTER BLOCK
AMERICAN AUSTRIAN SCHOOL ECONOMIST

It is easy to be an advocate of free speech when it applies to the rights of those with whom one is in agreement.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Comfy home
- 5 Running
- 11 Radius partner
- 12 One-of-a-kind
- 13 Nervous signs
- 14 Handles
- 15 School worker
- 17 "Far out, man!"
- 18 Check for weapons
- 22 Stirs up
- 24 Yard surrounder
- 25 In the past
- 26 Drinking spree
- 27 You're reading them
- 30 Loses focus
- 32 Like some questions
- 33 Lobed organ
- 34 Source of sudden

DOWN

- 1 Pearshaped instrument
- 2 "Put -- on it!"
- 3 Without interest
- 4 Knave
- 5 Lascivious desire
- 6 Singular event
- 7 South Dakota capital
- 8 Mensa entry
- 9 Bolt's partner
- 10 Earthy prefix
- 16 TV spots
- 19 Harmful
- 20 Wound reminder
- 21 Gun-powder holders
- 22 Risque
- 23 Lascivious look
- 28 Hlah
- 29 Oklahoma native
- 30 Garden area
- 31 Letter after kappa
- 35 Young girl
- 36 Shaving mishap
- 37 Fraternal group
- 38 Long time
- 39 Harry's friend
- 40 Director's cry

BEETLE BAILEY BY MORT WALKER

THIS OFFICE IS STILL FILTHY!

I TOLD BEETLE TO CLEAN IT!

WELL, HE DIDN'T! YOU HAVE TO APPLY MORE PRESSURE ON HIM!

SARGE WANTS ME TO CLEAN THE OFFICE AGAIN

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

JADE CAMELOS
OXEN APOLLO
ELMS RANKED
LEO BACK
TEETH DAB
ALICE ENEMY
POOR OVER
SUNUP FRONT
EDS UBOAT
FROG ICE
REFLEX MOOR
AROUSE INCA
GREET S ASKS

BABY BLUES BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT

NOW HERE'S A PRACTICAL ONE!

IT HAS KNOBS, WHEELS, BUMPEES, FENS, BROOMS...

DID YOU SAY 'BROOMS'?

NEVER MIND.