

# WORLD TIMES INSTITUTE

## **The Covid-19 crisis is accelerating the breakup of the UK**

Covid-19 is a great accelerator. In most of the countries it has struck, whatever inequalities, divisions and tensions were festering before its arrival have now sped into the political foreground. And so it has proved here. Race, class, gender, poverty, wealth, the north-south divide – even though it often feels it as if time has stood still, all of these things are now vividly in front of us, demanding attention. And one key issue has come roaring back: the fate of the United Kingdom itself. Brexit and the pandemic are pushing its countries and regions in strikingly different directions.

Clearly, nothing highlights our increasingly unsettled, estranged national condition better than the politics of Scotland. One should always hesitate before claiming that mere polls represent historic shifts, but in the last few months, a number of surveys have found support for Scottish independence running at more than 50%. Leaving aside undecideds, a Panel base poll last week put the for-and-against numbers at 55 and 45 respectively: an elegant inversion of the 2014 referendum result, and another excuse for stories about political shockwaves supposedly now spreading from Edinburgh to London.

It is remarkable that the possible end of the union has yet to enter England's political conversation, on left or right.

The superficial explanation is obvious. As one Tory put it to me last week, Nicola Sturgeon has succeeded in creating a contrast between her government's "cautious and communitarian" approach to Covid-19 and the idea that Boris Johnson's administration has been "chaotic and market-driven". As the UK government has lurched from crisis to crisis, she has presented an image of grown-up competence – even if, as evidenced by Scotland's exam results fiasco, an image is sometimes all it is. Brexit is also central to what is happening, not least in the sense that remain-voting Scots who backed the union six years ago have decided that independence is now the better option.

Elections to the Scottish parliament will take place in May 2021. Even if the Scottish National party has done surprisingly little with its 13 years in power, and governs in a narrow, cliqueish fashion, the most recent poll on voting intentions for Holyrood found 57% of the electorate planning to support Sturgeon and her party in the constituency vote, and the SNP heading for an outright majority. The Johnson government still insists that it will not countenance another referendum on independence, certainly not during the current parliament. But the current situation seems to point in one direction: towards a potentially historic showdown, and the fissures decisively opened in 2014 becoming unmendable.

For some of us in England, independence for Scotland is still a fascinating and exciting prospect. The idea may be laced with anxiety about what exactly it would mean for politics in our home country, but it also highlights basic notions of democracy and self-determination, and suggests a realistic chance for a modern kind of left politics that could jump away from cruel, reckless economic liberalism and the lunacies and nastiness of Brexit. From a more dispassionate perspective, what seems remarkable is that the increasing possibility of an end of the union has yet to enter England's political conversation, on left or right.

A sense of ignorance and complacency may go right to the top. According to a recent report in the Financial Times, Michael Gove recently warned the cabinet of the seriousness of the situation and outlined ideas about how to pull Scotland back, and the first minister to respond was Rishi Sunak. "I now understand why this is so important," he said. An odd thing for a holder of one of the great offices of state to say, but there we are.

Sleepwalking is one aspect of the English approach to the union; the other is a biting hostility, which mirrors some of the uglier aspects of Scottish separatism. A vocal part of English opinion still imagines Scotland to be a place full of entitlement and unjustified grievances, and therefore best let go – a belief cynically encouraged by David Cameron and George Osborne in the election campaign of 2015, when they pushed the idea that Labour might go into coalition with the SNP, and signed off billboards featuring Alex Salmond with the caption "Don't let the SNP grab your cash". In June last year, let us not forget, a briefly infamous survey found that 63% of Conservative party members agreed that Scottish or Northern Irish secession was a price worth paying for our exit from the European Union. Brexit patriotism

is a strange thing: always clad in the union jack but so defined by a crazed and zealous Englishness that it embraces a surreal contradiction: that in pursuit of a supposedly reborn United Kingdom, the UK itself can be written off as collateral damage.

For now at least, this is more the stuff of emotion than practical politics – and even if it still festers in the Tories’ collective soul, given that the end of the UK would surely spell the fall of Johnson and his ministers, the government wants nothing to do with it.

When I spoke to a senior Conservative minister last week, they acknowledged the gravity and urgency of the current situation, and outlined roughly what they may try to do next year. Even if the SNP won by a landslide, recession and a lingering pandemic would perhaps allow the government to play for time (“The question would be, ‘Do you want to call a referendum now?’ I don’t think Sturgeon would want to”) while it tried to re-emphasise the kind of cultural argument voiced in 2014 by Gordon Brown – that people should not be forced to choose between Scottishness and their place in the UK. Much would be made of steps Westminster had taken to fight the worst effects of the pandemic, such as Sunak’s furlough scheme. If the debate carried on for another two or three years, this source reckoned, tensions over Brexit might by then have receded, along with the idea of the EU as an “easy cushion into which you could rest” if an independent Scotland instantly faced big fiscal and economic challenges.

Whatever these arguments look like on paper, as Johnson holidays in Scotland and ministers are dispatched on PR trips, the idea of the government styling itself as the union’s great defender sits rather awkwardly with a plain fact. However much Tory voices may try to portray independence as a fiendish conspiracy worked up by the SNP, they and their party have played a huge role in weakening the union, and continue to do so.

Labour also has a case to answer – about the hatchet-faced, factional, macho politics that it embedded in Scotland over decades, and the fall into disgrace of the Blair government, not least on Iraq. But from the miners’ strike, through the poll tax to the bedroom tax, it has been Tory actions and aggressions that have most outraged Scots. By 1987 – 33 long years ago – the Conservatives were down to only 10 MPs in Scotland; a decade later, they had none at all. To have even tried to

rebuild any meaningful legitimacy would have required an emollient, open, progressive kind of Conservatism – to some extent, the kind of politics belatedly tried by the former leader of the Scottish Tories, Ruth Davidson. But in retrospect, Brexit killed that prospect, and now far too much of what the Tories do threatens to only deepen Scotland's estrangement from Westminster.

All this makes for a mixed-up and confusing political stew. Wreckers of the union are now desperately trying to save it, while the effects of the pandemic could conceivably fall in two contradictory directions – fomenting change but also convincing some people that in times as turbulent as these, the status quo remains the safest bet. So far, only one thing is crystal clear: that even as England dozes, British politics is now brimming with fundamental issues, and the fate of the UK will sooner or later prove to be the most fundamental of all.

**By: John Harris**

**Source: The Guardian**

*The writer is a Guardian columnist.*

## **The Indo-US relations and India's engagement with its neighbors**

The appeasement policy of the US towards India can very easily be equated with the appeasement policy of the allies vis-à-vis Nazi Germany during mid and late 1930s. By the time the allies realized enough is enough, it was already too little too late.

During the Cold War, India was neglected by the major powers of the world except Russia due to its anti-imperialist policies and leadership of the third world. Pakistan was its major contender in the region as its sibling rival. 1962 Indo-China war also kept India as a country of seclusion from others. However, after the Cold War, India broke its isolation and insecurity with a paradigm shift in its foreign policy orientation. Emerging from seclusion and gaining confidence, it transformed itself domestically as well as internationally (not regionally). Thus, the affix like rising India and shining India were attached to its new identity supported openly by the west.

This historic shift took place due to a drastic change in its economic, political, foreign and security policies. Economic reforms by successive governments; political stability and successive change of governments democratically without any announcement of "Emergency"; its policy of normalizing its relations with the West as well as its "Look East" strategy; and strategic policy of overt nuclear country during May 1998 brought it to the main stream of global politics. Needless to say, the US, for nuclear tests, sanctioned India economically and China also took a stern note of declaring it 'the enemy number one of India'. But strangely, this mustered it more economic impetus.

The appeasement policy of the US towards India can very easily be equated with the appeasement policy of the allies vis-à-vis Nazi Germany during mid and late 1930s. By the time the allies realized enough is enough, it was already too little too late

It was argued that India's rise took place due to its domestic economic, political, foreign policy and strategic reforms. This is too myopic approach. India's interaction with other states in balanced dynamic international contexts mattered a lot. Moreover, the west never loved India. Rather it hated China more. Hence, to belittle China's position globally and to make India a regional and neighborly

competitor, the west support India in all aspects vis-à-vis China. World looked at India from the lens of China as a threatening global economic power; rise of terrorism after 9/11 and Asian Economic crisis. Thus 'Shining and Rising India' was in the interests of the west. The US instrumental engagement was very blatantly and bluntly demonstrated diplomatically as well as militarily by signing 'Indo-US Nuclear Deal' afterwards.

No doubt the US engagement with India showed its serious intent after 1998. In fact, it, in true sense, began with military approaches back in the 1980s. The Reagan administration offered anti-tank missiles and howitzers to India that laid the underpinning for their future 1990s intimate relationship. The post-1998 era of relationship between India and the US was interesting and alarming. Initially, the US condemned the 1998 nuclear tests with some force and sanctions. Later on, Strobe Talbot negotiated with Jaswant Singh, the then foreign minister of India to sign and ratify at least the CTBT, if not NPT. Interestingly, President George Bush junior abandoned both positions in favor of a bilateral deal on nuclear energy in (Indo-US Nuclear Deal) 2005 and a special waiver from the NPT in 2008. This reversal of American foreign policy worked and facilitated in India's favor. Thus, India rose to global scene not because of itself but other states aided India's rise in ways that may not have been done by itself during the end of cold war.

The most important policy shift of the US in South Asia was to 'dehyphenate' Pakistan from India. America supported Pakistan, after 9/11, to deal with the menace of terrorism, militarily and economically. It reassured India that this support to Pakistan will not herald zero-sum game in South Asia. It developed its relations with both countries on individual basis and said good-bye to the past policies of 'even-handedness' and 'strategic balance in south Asia'. Thus an era of regional Indian dictation started. India acted more like a regional police man than one of the partners of the region.

With dehyphenation policy in South Asia, Americans accepted serious violations of international commitments and non-cooperation of India on international issues. After 9/11, the US never talked about the issue of Indian Occupied Kashmir and its resolution in the light of the UN resolutions. It came to this that last year, Kashmir was usurped by India and the US remained mummed. No international mediated resolution of the issue was talked about and no notice of the violation of human

rights in the occupied Kashmir was taken, despite Pakistan's hue and cry. Not only this, India also declined CTBT. India was not party to climate change treaty at Copenhagen. It also opposed western military action in Libya. Such flippant policies were not in the interests of the US rather it damaged its global position. But the US retorted very meekly. This boosted the Indian confidence.

The boosted Indian confidence today is too arrogant and haughty. Usurping of Kashmir on 5th August last year is an episode of the same. India's uncompromising attitude towards its neighbors is noticeable. Its non-compliance with international treaties like India-Pakistan-Iran gas pipeline (ultimately India's deletion from the project), its expulsion from the Chabahar project by Iran, its removal from the Chabahar-Zahedan Rail Link, and its violation of border region of Galwan Valley of China located in Ladakh demonstrate that India is moving towards a harder and violent era of its history. If its not stopped, the repercussions will be detrimental to the interests of those who projected India in the region and accepted all her good and bad demands.

The appeasement policy of the US towards India can very easily be equated with the appeasement policy of the allies vis-à-vis Nazi Germany during mid and late 1930s. By the time the allies realized enough is enough, it was already too little too late. India under Modi is also following the Nazi Germany path and the US is acting like the allies of the 1930s. Engagement is very important to keep the region from the horrors of the war.

Annexation of Kashmir on 5th August was a clear violation of international law. Good that Pakistan remained calm. Galwan Valley was a grim episode. Good that China restrained. However, no one can guarantee such cold peace but absence of war; resulting in the growing patience getting thinner. It was the US which gave confidence to India for violating rules of international relations. As Chairman Mao of China said, 'A fish can swim only in a friendly sea', India is increasing its enemies in its neighborhood and increasing its friends far-off. During the cold war, Pakistan also committed the same mistake by keeping its neighborhood hostile and thousands of miles away situated-America happy. Pakistan paid and is still paying the price of the past blunder. India must learn from Pakistan.

You can change friends but not neighbors. Engagement is important especially with neighbors. Nepal, China, Pakistan, Iran and Bangladesh are having cautious or hostile relations with India. An engagement for a friendly neighborhood and economic benefits is a security for the people as well as for the physical borders of a country. All South Asian countries especially India must learn.

**By: Prof Dr Syed Hussain Shaheed Soherwordi**

**Source: Daily Times**

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Mega Lecture



## The changing dynamics of the Iran-Israel conflict

General Qasim Solemani of Iran was assassinated after he, and Iran, was blamed for the death of many American soldiers. Soon after, American and Israeli forces deployed to punish Iran. Instead of direct confrontation, Iran preferred a 'strategy of deterrence'. According to this, "If Iran was attacked, the response would begin with massive use of free flight rockets, missiles and drones from several directions to degrade the iron-dome air defense system of Israel as well as the public morale, followed by explosive loaded vehicles to breach the barrier at multiple places and the suicide bombers rushing forward through the breaches, to cause fear, panic and rout to the enemy."

The deterrence forecasted an existential threat to Israel, forcing its retreat, including the fleet blocking the Persian Gulf. A 'Stealth Strategy' was therefore developed to harm Iran through punishing strikes at several targets. Reportedly, 5th generation F-35 air superiority stealth fighter aircraft was used against which Iran has no defence. It stated, "Israel has apparently been conducting what amounts to a slow motion, semi-covert military campaign against Iran's nuclear and missile programmes, and perhaps other industrial and infrastructure targets as well. Mysterious explosions and fires have struck a key centrifuge production facility; a military base where missiles are produced, as well as power plants, aluminium and chemical factories. A fire erupted at the port of Bushehr on the Persian Gulf, destroying seven ships."

Similarly, Hezbollah was targeted with a huge blast in Lebanon, as a punishment for defeating Israel in the 2006 war. The trilateral US-Israel-Arab Strategic Alliance, called Abraham Accord, is exploiting the Shia-Sunni divide in order to isolate Iran. Ever since the Iranian Revolution of 1979, the USA has demonised Iran as a threat to the Sunni Arab countries, who have been buying weapons and military hardware from the USA, worth billions of dollars. Now as the threat becomes more focused, there would be a spree of defence purchases from Israel in particular.

The diplomatic offensive of the Israel-UAE Agreement—the Abraham Accord—has ruptured decades of Arab unity. The deal also reverses the order of diplomatic offensive by the Arab Peace Initiative of 2002. Under this treaty, Egypt and Jordan recognised Israel but they stand cheated, now. As a matter of fact, a creeping annexation that would dash all hopes for the two-nation strategy is already

underway. Oman, Bahrain and Sudan appear more interested in establishing diplomatic ties with Israel. In fact, the trilateral US-Israel-Arab strategic alliance is shaping up against Iran, seeking a cynical alliance and not benevolent peace.

In response, Iran lost no time forging the Strategic Defence Partnership with China. This partnership has kicked-up a geo-political storm, defining the contours of the new world order. China has succeeded building a financial system that bypasses the US and its 'maximum pressure' policy. For the first time, the Chinese 'Economic Order' has created an economic deterrence which provides security to Iran, and to all those who come under the security umbrella of this order.

At present, Iran is vulnerable to Israeli attacks by its superior F-35 fighters and accurate intelligence. It is a matter of time that China develops the capability to counter this threat, which is so critical for Iran. The Chinese J-20 also is a 5th generation stealth jet fighter. It may or may not be able to challenge the American F-35, but given that China is able to shoot-down a satellite in outer-space, it should not be difficult for them to develop the capability to shoot-down the F-35. When that happens, the Israeli stealth strategy, which rests at the cutting edge of technology as of now, will fade away.

Our best wishes are for the Arabs, seeking peace with Israel but not at the cost of Palestinian blood. The movement of truth will soon arrive, when the Israeli Prime Minister visits UAE, and their national anthem is played, relaying a message from Tel Aviv: "Let those who are our enemy shudder, Let all the inhabitants of Egypt and Canaan tremble, Let the inhabitants of Babylon shudder, To loom over their skies, panic and terror from us, When we plant our spears in their chests, And we see their blood being shed, And their heads cut off."

**By: Gen (r) Mirza Aslam Beg**

**Source: The Nation**

## **Who is poisoning Russian dissidents and why?**

On Thursday morning, Russian opposition leader Alexey Navalny walked out of a hotel in the Siberian city of Tomsk and headed for the airport to catch a flight back to Moscow. His trip to the Tomsk region was part of his campaign to "nullify United Russia" by voting the party of Russian President Vladimir Putin out of power in the upcoming local elections.

At the airport, Navalny and a few members of his team had tea and boarded the plane. Shortly after takeoff, the 44-year-old politician started feeling unwell. He went to the lavatory and could not come out. The aeroplane was forced to do an emergency landing in Omsk. Fellow passengers heard Navalny screaming in excruciating pain before he was taken out of the plane by medical personnel. Shortly after he was hospitalised, he fell into a coma.

The intensive care ward where he was kept soon filled up with plain-clothes and uniformed security officers, who at some point seemed to outnumber the medical staff. Doctors and policemen gave contradictory information; first, they claimed a dangerous chemical was discovered in Navalny's blood, then that no such substance was detected. When Navalny's wife Yulia and press secretary Kira Yarmysh demanded that he be flown abroad for treatment, citing the substandard conditions of the hospital where he was kept and its lack of equipment to provide proper care, medical staff refused, claiming that any such move would worsen his condition.

On Friday evening, after a number of Western leaders concerned about Navalny's wellbeing phoned Putin, the hospital finally released him and he was flown to Germany for treatment.

Russian activist and founder of the media outlet Mediazona, Petr Verzilov said that all of this reminded him of what he went through when he was allegedly poisoned two years ago.

"Everything begins with a place which can be easily controlled, in the case of Navalny, this was the airport; in my case - the court," he told me. On September 11, 2018, Verzilov spent the whole day in court, where his girlfriend Nika Nikulshina was being tried for running onto the pitch wearing a police uniform during the World Cup. At 6pm, they headed home, where Verzilov had a nap. A couple of

hours later, when he tried to go out, he felt sick; his eyesight, speech and movement started deteriorating and he eventually slipped into delirium, unable to recognise his own girlfriend.

In the hospital, the same scene played out - a great number of security personnel preventing relatives and associates from seeing him. The Russian doctors also did not find any toxin in his blood and delayed his transfer abroad. He arrived in Germany for treatment on September 15. By then, his body is thought to have gotten rid of the poison, which made identifying it very difficult. German doctors hypothesised that hyoscine may have been used to poison Verzilov, as it is known to cause symptoms similar to those he displayed.

Another opposition politician, Vladimir Kara-Murza has also said the circumstances of Navalny's illness reminded him of what he believes were two attempts to poison him.

The first time was in May 2015, shortly after opposition politician Boris Nemtsov was shot and killed just a few hundred metres from the walls of the Kremlin. Before his death, he and Kara-Murza had supported the application of the Magnitsky Act, a bill aimed to impose sanctions on members of Putin's inner circle over human rights violations.

Kara-Murza survived, but doctors did not find a toxin in his blood and claimed he must have overdosed on anti-depressants - an idea rejected by independent medical professionals. Samples of his blood, hair and nails were sent to France, where experts found a high concentration of heavy metals.

The second attempt took place in 2017. Kara-Murza suffered similar symptoms as the first time - sudden deterioration of his health and multiple organ failure. It was a miracle he survived and again no toxin was found in his blood.

All of these cases seem similar to the suspected poisoning of famous journalist Anna Politkovskaya. In September 2004, while on her way to Beslan in North Ossetia, where terrorists had just taken hostage students and teachers at a local school, Politkovskaya fell suddenly sick after having tea and fell into a coma. She also survived but again, no poisonous substance was found. Two years later, she was shot dead.

Of course, there is also the poisoning of former double agent Sergey Skripal in the British city of Salisbury, with the nerve agent Novichok. Skripal and his daughter were found unconscious on a bench in the town centre. The British authorities later found traces of the chemical in his home and accused Russian military intelligence (GRU) agents of being responsible for the poisoning. Both Skripal and his daughter survived.

All of these cases have a lot in common - they seem to all involve a certain neurotoxin which gives the victim a chance to survive. They differ from other cases - such as ex-KGB agent Alexander Litvinenko's poisoning with polonium in London in 2006 or that of journalist Yuri Shchekochikhin, who was also possibly killed with a radioactive substance in 2003 - where the chemical of choice ensures certain death.

Thus, it is possible that in Navalny's case, like others similar to his, poisoning is meant to scare, not to kill. For Verzilov, that was a way to suggest to him that he needs to stop his investigation into the killing of three Russian journalists in the Central African Republic. For Kara-Murza - this was to tell him to stop lobbying for sanctions on people close to the Kremlin. For Skripal - not to cooperate with the British intelligence. For Politkovskaya - not to go to Beslan.

Navalny, like everyone else above, is a prominent critic of the Kremlin and the structures and people close to it. But he has been openly critical for a while and for a few years now has been mobilising political protests and conducting major investigations into high-level corruption, which have angered many in the Russian ruling elite.

So the question is, why send him a warning that he is no longer safe and should consider going abroad now? The answer is simple: Putin's rating has fallen to an all-time low and his decision to change the constitution to potentially extend his term beyond 2024 stirred so much anger that only the coronavirus pandemic managed to stop it from spilling into the streets.

Still, even in the current epidemic conditions, protests have broken out in some places. In Khabarovsk region, demonstrations against the removal of a popular governor have been going on for more than a month now.

More importantly, in neighbouring Belarus, ordinary people have mounted a major campaign of civil disobedience against longtime President Alexander Lukashenko. They have protested the rigging of the presidential elections en masse, engaged in labour strikes, defected from state institutions, persevered in the face of police brutality and torture, etc.

The scenes of mass demonstrations in Belarus have evoked much sympathy among various layers of society in Russia: from the urban intelligentsia to factory workers and even football fans. Navalny's trips across the country would have surely inflamed further anti-government sentiments.

Incapacitating Navalny could undermine the ability of dissenting Russians to organise, by depriving them of a charismatic leader. This could deescalate the situation and preclude mass protests, but it could also have the opposite effect. If the poisoning is proven, this could fuel further public anger and result in spontaneous mobilisation.

Nemtsov's murder followed the first scenario. The outpouring of anger following his death was contained in mourning rallies. In the case of Navalny, however, the second scenario is quite likely.

In the past few years, a new generation has come of age which is more tech-savvy and more politicised than previous ones, and have repeatedly demonstrated that they do not fear the Kremlin's repressive tactics.

Meanwhile, the Belarus example has shown that political mobilisation by far does not depend on one leader and can persist and grow even when opposition figures are imprisoned and forced into exile.

**By: Roman Dobrokhoto**

**Source: Al Jazeera**

*The author is a Moscow-based journalist and civil activist. He is the editor-in-chief of The Insider.*

## **The key to unlocking peace with North Korea for the United States is cross-border tourism**

To outsiders, the demilitarized zone (DMZ) dividing North and South Korea is a flashpoint, a scar, and a reminder that, 70 years after it began, the Korean War is not actually over.

But for some of us, the DMZ is also home.

Resolving tensions along the border and creating an environment where two countries can peacefully co-exist is an opportunity within our reach.

I am the Governor of the Gangwon Province -- a region cut in half by the 1953 Armistice Agreement. Our northern border marks the boundary between the two Koreas. Perhaps no other region of South Korea is more aware of the dangers of war -- or more open to possibilities for peace. One such opportunity is found in an unlikely place: Mount Kumgang, a resort town located just over the border in North Korea.

The "Diamond Mountains" -- as we refer to the region -- have inspired Koreans since ancient times, and for 10 years from 1998, it was a thriving tourist destination that welcomed two million South Koreans. Managed together by North and South, the resort was a precious example of cooperation between the two countries.

However, South Korea stopped taking people across the border in 2008 when a North Korean guard shot dead a tourist who entered a restricted zone. Today, the site stands as a reminder of what might have been.

But that opportunity is not lost. We're seeing the start of the return of tourism, with the hope and expectation that it will only increase as we put this pandemic behind us. So, it is not too early to discuss the idea -- counter-intuitive to some -- of tourism on the border of North and South Korea.

The benefits to both Koreas -- along with the United States and every nation with a stake in the stability of the Peninsula -- would be profound. It would promote peace, advance efforts at denuclearization, and increase US and South Korean leverage at the negotiating table.

First, a renewed partnership at Mt. Kumgang could strengthen economic ties between North and South -- and reverse the damage for private businesses that

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have lost \$1.3 billion since the site's closure. Renewed economic relations could also relieve wider tensions on the Peninsula. It is a fine thing to talk together, but even better to have a reason to work together. A partnership at Mt. Kumgang might provide a model for other efforts.

Cultural ties, too, would strengthen. For years, families torn apart by the Korean War have reunited at Mt. Kumgang. Parents have wept tears of joy upon seeing children for the first time in decades. Long-lost siblings have relived cherished memories. Reopening Mt. Kumgang would provide a powerful symbol of what unites us, and hope for achieving enduring peace.

This might sound like a lot to expect of a single tourist site. But Koreans understand the power of culture to connect us. At the 2018 PyeongChang Winter Olympics -- also hosted by my province -- North and South Korean athletes marched together into the opening ceremony during a historic display of unity. That moment opened the door to a series of meetings between Kim Jong Un and South Korean President Moon Jae-in, and the historic summit process between Kim and President Trump.

As with any issue concerning North Korea, risks must be frankly acknowledged. Our greatest responsibility is protecting our people, and a tragedy like the one that occurred at Mt. Kumgang in 2008 must never happen again. The resumption of tourism would require both governments to ensure the safety of visitors.

Partners of South Korea, including some US officials, have also voiced concerns and opposed tourist sites like Mt. Kumgang, claiming they undermine United Nations sanctions against the North. However, international law allows revenue from individual tourists to flow into the North, so this should not present an obstacle. Sanctions must and can be safeguarded under any agreement regarding Mt. Kumgang.

For 70 years, South Korea's alliance with the United States has been a force for peace and prosperity in the region. In that spirit, I urge the US to support reopening Mt. Kumgang.

This year continues to bring rising tensions between North Korea and the international community. In such a moment, small steps like this might seem unimportant. But I believe they are even more important.



The path to peace is sometimes taken in giant leaps. But other times the best way forward is through smaller strides.

It was an American President, John F. Kennedy, who said: "Peace is a daily, a weekly, a monthly process, gradually changing opinions, slowly eroding old barriers, quietly building new structures."

Mt. Kungang can serve as a bridge of diplomacy between North and South Korea. And that bridge, someday, might lead to lasting peace.

**By: Choi Moon-soon**

**Source: CNN**

Mega Lecture

## **Kamala Harris is Obama's natural heir: another moderate child of radical parents**

Joe Biden's selection of Kamala Harris as the Democrats' vice-presidential nominee for 2020 elevated to the pinnacle of national politics the heir of two migrants to the US, both of whom epitomised the political ferment of the global 1960s.

Moreover, such a figure has been entrusted with the party's future for the second time. Barack Obama, who as president first helped give Harris national recognition by asking her to speak at the Democratic national convention in 2012, is descended on his father's side from a strikingly similar lineage, and defined himself in relation to it.

It is not just a matter of Harris's family background. The dreams of Harris's father in particular – the Jamaican-born economist Donald Harris, who taught for most of his career at Stanford – have been rebuffed for decades by a Democratic party that now has a different idea of what a new phase of radicalism could mean.

The 1960s saw the decolonisation of vast swaths of humanity. After centuries of colonial rule, newly independent states and citizens suddenly arrived on the global scene. Jamaica declared its independence in 1962, the year after Kenyan Barack Obama Sr fathered the son who shares his name in Hawaii. At the heart of aspirations of the decade, in the air that the young Donald Harris and Barack Obama Sr breathed, was an anti-racist politics that was determined to abolish the global colour line.

It was no accident that economics became the master science of those who sought to build this postcolonial future. Both Obama Sr and Harris pursued doctorates in economics because that is where they believed the levers of the world order were located. It was only by taking control of natural resources, as well as managing the relationship between labour and foreign capital, that the new nations of the decolonising world could hope to seize the promise of new sovereignty.

Both Harris and Obama Sr were eager to put their US training to use on behalf of their new nations, though both also became gadflies in their intellectual worlds. As a young government economic planner in Jomo Kenyatta's postcolonial administration in Kenya, Obama Sr issued a withering report claiming that the government was simply replacing foreign elites with Kenyan ones, expropriating

the land for its private use, and paying lip service to “African socialism” when it intended to pursue nothing of the sort.

Meanwhile, settled in California, Harris and Shyamala Gopalan – a radical immigrant from Tamil Nadu, who mostly raised Kamala and her sister, and has justly attracted more attention than her former husband – joined the civil rights movement. They sought to apply the lessons of anticolonialism to the US.

But Harris believed the colonial analogy had its limits when applied to the US. “It stretches the imagination to see why,” he wrote in 1972, “black workers should in any way be better off under black owners than under white owners.” If radicals did not work to dismantle or reform the capitalist system, Harris argued, they would accomplish little for black people. “The colonial analogy might be seen as playing a useful ideological role for those who stand to benefit from the ‘transfer of power’ which this is expected to bring about,” he wrote. “It plays another role also for those whites who see the black struggle as a vicarious means for waging their own, failing thereby to understand the nature of their own struggle as well as that of blacks.”

For Donald Harris and Barack Obama Sr, the politics of recognition were hamstrung without an agenda to achieve downward economic redistribution. The 1963 March on Washington was, according to their view, as much about decent wages as it was about soaring oratory. In a Jamaican newspaper, Harris saluted Malcolm X’s intellectual journey through black nationalism to a more internationalist form of socialism.

Which is not to say that he has downplayed his Jamaican roots. When Kamala Harris ingratiated herself with a radio host with a riff about how of course she smoked pot when she was younger – “half my family is from Jamaica” – her father excoriated her for resorting to a stereotype. The chiding went beyond what was necessary for a daughter on a gruelling campaign trail, but it also evinced an unwillingness to surrender an inch of dignity.

Three decades ago, the thinker Paul Gilroy attributed to diasporic figures, like the parents of the Democratic party leaders, a kind of privileged insight. They were more likely to see what others missed, and mix perspectives usually kept apart. If this is true, it is telling that the Democratic party now gravitates towards candidates

whose very intimacy with this legacy has only made them more skilled at deflecting it.

President Obama thought his father was a tragic case – an unwitting enemy of promise. As a brash, outspoken progressive in an increasingly politically regressive Kenya, he was by all accounts a professional failure when it came to achieving his dreams. It seems plausible that some of Obama's politically moderate, technocratic mindset was developed in response to his father's loftier visions.

Likewise, Kamala Harris appears a much less cantankerous figure than her father, who devoted his career to criticising mainstream economics. "I'm not trying to restructure society," she told the New York Times last year. Notable too was how her fortunes in the Democratic party climbed at the very moment when the congresswoman Karen Bass, the only VP candidate who herself participated in the global 1960s, fell from grace.

A law-and-order Democrat who is a favourite with Wall Street donors, Kamala Harris seems like a natural heir of Barack Obama's legacy. It is too early to say whether her other legacy – the explicitly egalitarian agenda that animated her parents – will register in her political future. But a usable past is a usable past, whether you use it or not.

**By: Thomas Meaney and Samuel Moyn**

**Source: The Guardian**

*Thomas Meaney is a fellow at the Max Planck Society in Göttingen. Samuel Moyn is a professor of law and history at Yale.*

## Notes on inequality

The pandemic has increased inequality between workers. Lockdown policies enacted by many governments to suppress the spread of the virus have particularly hurt the working poor in developing countries. For these workers, who depend on a daily wage and casual work, the inability to travel to their places of work has led to a significant loss of earnings, with no protection and high levels of insecurity about the future of their livelihoods.

Consider a street vendor selling vegetables in the streets of Delhi. As the pandemic hit India and the government issued stay at home orders, the street vendor suddenly found herself out of a living. In contrast, for the professionals who are able to work from home, the pandemic has had a more limited effect on their earnings.

The vast majority of workers in developing countries are in informal jobs, without access to the types of support that workers in rich countries get from their governments, such as furloughing schemes. While many developing countries have increased the scale of social protection measures in response to the pandemic, this is clearly not enough. Nor do these measures reach the majority of the poor.

The pandemic is contributing to an acceleration in technological change, helping certain businesses stay open digitally and enabling many people work from home who were previously unable to. Those countries whose citizens have access to the internet and are well educated will gain from the move to online technologies such as Zoom for virtual meetings.

So for workers in Singapore and Taiwan, the shift to online technologies will be a boon. But countries that are still lagging in the digital race, including many in Sub-Saharan Africa, will fall further behind.

While both men and women must stay at home due to lockdown policies, women are more likely to take care of children and domestic chores, leading to an unequal distribution of household duties within the family. Women across the world are much more likely to hold jobs in retail and hospitality where remote working is less possible, and which are particularly hit by lockdown-induced job losses.

The closure of schools and day nurseries may force women to withdraw from employment. In times of economic stress, girls are often the first to be withdrawn from school (or to miss classes) as they substitute for working mothers. With many schools closing during the pandemic, girls are at a greater risk of not returning once they reopen. This effect on their education will, in turn, lead to worse long-term employment and earnings prospects.

Coronavirus has hit at a time of weak levels of international cooperation.

**By: Kunal Sen**

**Source: The News**

*Excerpted from: 'Five Ways Coronavirus Is Deepening Global Inequality'*

Mega Lecture

## Siachen is ours

The Siachen Glacier was discovered in 1907 and is the world's largest glacier outside of the polar regions. It is 72 kilometres long and 3 kilometres wide. The glacier emanates near the Indra Koli Pass, on the Pak China border, 37 nautical miles southeast of K2. Then, it runs along the Saltoro Range in a south eastern direction until it joins river Nubra.

The Siachen Glacier can be accessed through five passes: Sia la (23960 feet), Bilafond la (20210 feet), Gyong la (18500 feet), Yarma la (20000 feet) and Chulung la 19000 feet. Its surrounding region was not demarcated in the 1949 Karachi Agreement which defined the ceasefire line (CFL). Beyond NJ 9842, the ceasefire line was identified as "thence north to the glacier". NJ 9842 is located about 12 miles north of river Shyok in the Saltoro Mountains of the Karakoram Range. From this point, the north of the Chinese border area was left un-demarcated due to inaccessibility and extreme inhospitable terrain.

According to the Indian Line of Control (LOC), which extends northward beyond NJ 9842, along the Saltoro Range and up to Sia Kangri, the entire Siachen Glacier belongs to them. Pakistan stands with its boundary alignment beyond NJ 9842 eastward, up to the Karakoram Pass. Even in the 1972 Simla Agreement, there is no mention of the area beyond NJ 9842. Pakistan controlled and administered this region since 1947, as India, as well as the international community, acknowledged its de facto control in the area. Accordingly, several mountaineering, trekking and hiking expeditions to the Siachen Glacier were authorised by Pakistan. Foreign expeditions kept coming to scale the Karakoram Range.

Atlases reflecting Pakistan's version of the Line of Control (LoC) were produced in the US and UK by National Geographic and Encyclopaedia Britannica (1979). It was also reflected in the maps produced by the prestigious American Alpine Journal and Hugh Swift's Classic Trekkers Guide to the Himalaya and the Karakoram. Martin A Sugarman has mentioned in his book, War Above Clouds, that Sir Owen Dixon, the first UN representative in Pakistan and India, also mentioned that the Siachen Glacier falls within the Northern Areas (Gilgit-Baltistan) of Pakistan in his report to the Security Council. Former analyst Ravi Rikhye in his book, The Fourth Round, included a map putting the Siachen Glacier clearly inside Pakistani territory. The

book, *The Western Front*, published in India in 1984 by Lt Gen K.P Candeth (R), includes several maps that support Pakistan's claims as well.

The Siachen Glacier is important for the defence of Ladakh as it guards routes to Leh also overlooks the Shaksgam Valley. Control of the glacier by India, according to Happyman Jacob, is "mostly symbolic and political, not strategic or military". India's attention was caught only after mountaineering maps placed Siachen inside Pakistan after which it sent several expeditions to. The first mission was sent in 1978, followed by another in 1980 to Sia Kangri and Saltoro. In 1981, another mission was sent to Indra Col and Bilafond la as well.

Today India controls Sia la, Bilafond la and the Gyong la, the three passes of the Saltoro ridge located west of the glacier. In contrast, Pakistan controls the glacial valley west of the Saltoro ridge.

The tactical advantage gained by India in occupying two key northern passes was neutralized when Pakistan deployed forces to three southern passes along the Saltoro range. Pakistan's army blocked Indian access to K2 by establishing one of the highest military posts, Conway Saddle (6032 meters), at the junction of the Karakoram and Saltoro Range. Pakistan controls the Baltoro glacier, the third longest glacier of world outside of the Polar Regions, which houses some of the world's famous peaks. Four of the five peaks are located in Pakistan -K2, Broad Peak and Gasherbrums.

Pakistan also controls Sia Kangri, located adjacent to Conway Saddle, close to Gasherbrums. Sia Kangri overlooks the Baltoro Glacier to the west, Chinese territory to the north and Indira Col, Sia la, Siachen Glacier to its east and south east respectively. In 1987, the Pakistan army launched a successful operation to gain control of some heights of the Saltoro range and occupied an area called Quaid post at 21200 feet. India occupied this post after several unsuccessful attacks only when five SSG personnel ran out of ammunition and supply to the base was logistically impossible at the time. They fought to death, killing 54 Indian soldiers before embracing shahadat. In May 1989 another attempt was made in Chumik, when there were indications of Indian intentions to occupy some heights in the sector. In a daring operation, a key observation post at 21300 feet was occupied by Lt. Naveed and a Non-Commissioned Officer, suspended from a lama helicopter. They repulsed several Indian attacks.

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With the recent success of the Chinese PLA in occupied Ladakh, where they have a 15-20-kilometre area in Galwan, Depsang and Pangong Tso, the glacier has been seriously threatened from a joint operation by the Chinese and Pakistan army. Talks to settle the issue were held from time to time. The issue was discussed during the 5th round of defence secretary level talks in 1989, where it was agreed to withdraw all troops. However, the next day, India backed out of the commitment. In 1992, another agreement was concluded during the visit of Rajiv Gandhi to Pakistan. However, once again, the Indian side came out with a plea of “authentication of the current position” which Pakistan refused to accept as it would amount to legalising Indian aggression. In 2004, again India insisted on the authentication of their current position while Pakistan stressed on the implementation of the understanding reached in 1989. In 2006 it was agreed to establish a zone of disengagement in the area.

According to Khursheed Kasuri’s book, ‘Neither a Hawk nor a Dove’, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said, while visiting that, “Siachen should be turned into a mountain of peace”. However due to opposition from the defence minister of the time, Antony, nothing progressed. Let us salute the sacrifices, valour and spirit of the soldiers of the Pakistan Army who are defending the motherland despite extremely difficult odds in the world highest battlefield.

**By: Masud Ahmad Khan**

**Source: The Nation**

## Ties with Israel

The recent decision by the UAE and Israel to normalise ties is testament to a fast-changing landscape in the Middle East. While the deal should not come as a surprise, it carries at least four implications for Pakistan.

The first is that it has necessitated that Pakistan clarify its own position on the question of Israel-Palestine. The Foreign Office affirmed that while peace and stability in the Middle East continue to be a key priority for Islamabad, the question of Palestine would continue to condition its approach to the region. The prime minister reiterated that Pakistan would not recognise Israel until Palestinian rights are upheld.

These clarifications are important, given speculation in Haaretz last year that Pakistan was considering a potential opening with Tel Aviv. But the situation on the ground is complicated. Any external realignment by Pakistan must first contend with sensitivities to anti-Israel sentiment on the street, anchored in deep-rooted public sympathy with the Palestinian cause. While Israel and the UAE have sought to window-dress their recent deal in a promise by the former to suspend annexation in the West Bank, in truth annexation is already a de facto reality.

High-level policy statements clarifying Pakistan's official position and opposing any normalisation of the status quo thus telegraph continued principled support for the Palestinian cause, emerging geopolitical pressures notwithstanding.

India may find succour in an Arab détente.

Second, the deal is likely to further cleave the Middle East, with Gulf states led by Riyadh and Abu Dhabi on one side, and Iran and Turkey on the other. It is clear that the latest US-sponsored deal is a vessel for firming up opposition to Iran's growing regional power and influence, which the Gulf states, Israel and the US view as a threat. Both the Saudis and Emiratis view the Sunni Muslim Brotherhood backed by Turkey, and Shia Iran's perceived regional expansionism, with hostility. Impressions of growing geopolitical confluence between Turkey, Iran and China have heightened these fears.

Iran is negotiating a \$400 billion 25-year strategic partnership with China, which may allow Tehran to circumvent US sanctions and access a large basket of funds in return for the oil it sends to Beijing. Islamabad's historical and strategic association

with Saudi Arabia, and its geographic proximity to Iran, make it necessary that Pakistan avoid selecting parochial binaries either in West Asia or in the Indian Ocean that place additional demands on its foreign policy choices in the region. Good relations with both continue to be a strategic necessity; forgoing either at the altar of great power gambits can spur extremist impulses both inside Pakistan and the neighbourhood.

**Third, Pakistan needs to be worried about India's deepening engagement with the Arab Gulf, which has come at the expense of Arab support against India's atrocities in occupied Jammu & Kashmir.** The muted reaction in Arab capitals to India's attack on Balakot has legitimated some of these concerns. Pakistan's relations with Riyadh have been affected by the kingdom's hedging on Kashmir. Meanwhile, New Delhi's stand-off with Beijing and its cooling relations with Tehran, exemplified by the potential loss of Chabahar Port to China, suggest India may edge even closer to the Arab Gulf and find succour in an Arab détente with Tel Aviv, a key Indian defence partner.

It is no secret that Indo-Israeli defence cooperation has been steadily ratcheted up against Pakistan since 2008, most notably in the Balakot encounter. For Pakistan, the worry is that India's growing influence in the Middle East will compel fewer buyers in West Asia outside Turkey and Iran to take up the Kashmir cause at the risk of upsetting equations with New Delhi. Pakistan must thus dispassionately rework its diplomatic toolkit in the Gulf if drumming up support for Kashmir is to stand any chance.

**Fourth, in the shadow of retreating multilateralism, the UAE-Israel deal symbolises a further decline in the Muslim world's relevance as a flag bearer of its traditional political causes of Palestine and Kashmir.** While Pakistan has been aggrieved at the slowness with which the OIC has responded to the Kashmir issue, the OIC's indifference is symptomatic of a broader apathy and shift from its original objectives to constituent geopolitical compulsions. This has created space for non-Arab Muslim countries, such as Malaysia and Turkey, to attempt to take up the mantle of Muslim leadership.

Last year's Kuala Lumpur Summit sponsored by the two is a case in point. The implication for Islamabad is that while it recalibrates its expectations of any blanket Muslim solidarity on both the Kashmir and Palestine causes, it can potentially stand

to benefit from new opportunities that allow it to clearly define its own role in the Muslim world, either as vanguard or a follower of the leads of others.

**By: Fahd Humayun**

**Source: DAWN**

*The writer is a PhD Candidate at Yale.*

Mega Lecture

## **Why are rape victims being denied therapy in the UK?**

I first visited the United Kingdom in 2013. I was 20 years old with a sparsely stamped passport, intending to spend the summer in London studying acting. I arrived five months after Frances Andrade, a 48-year-old professional violinist, committed suicide after being accused of lying on the stand during what would become an infamous rape case against conductor Michael C Brewer.

Andrade's death led to a national conversation about how rape victims are treated by the criminal justice system and launched a brief dialogue about why police had advised against Andrade seeking therapy until after her trial was complete.

Brewer was eventually handed a six-year sentence and stripped of his OBE. Andrade was laid to rest.

The media reported on Andrade's death as if she had been one of the unlucky ones lost through the cracks of the justice system. In May 2019, Baroness Shami Chakrabarti, acting Shadow Attorney General for England and Wales, wrote an article for Vice addressing the legal hurdles a victim must navigate in order to receive aid in the UK. Once again, national dialogue was started. Once again, the outrage was fierce but fleeting. Public outcry alone is not efficacious.

Access to therapy by qualified professionals is stretched thin in the UK. It is estimated that the average wait time to access a therapist through a rape crisis centre in the UK is nine months, with a 20 percent increase in demand since 2018, despite funding remaining the same since 2013. Once therapy is secured, the services that can be offered to victims of rape who are going through court cases are limited.

In 2001, the UK's Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) updated its guidelines under the Provision of Therapy for Vulnerable or Intimidated Adult Witnesses Prior to a Criminal Trial. These are as follows: "Any detailed recounting or re-enactment of the offending behaviour may be perceived as coaching and the criminal case is almost certain to fail as a consequence of this type of therapeutic work."

These guidelines, according to rape crisis centres throughout the UK, must be adhered to. It is increasingly common for rape victims to be told that having therapy will adversely affect the chances of their rapists being successfully prosecuted.

Even when the police do not advise victims of rape against therapy, reporting a rape to police is an effective gag order on the victim. Enter "Pre-Trial Therapy" (PTT), a limited therapy that forbids the victim to speak of anything she may have mentioned in her victim statement. A victim of assault can talk about how they feel but cannot talk about the root cause of why, for fear that any mention of the actual assault may hamper the success of the case.

In rare instances the prosecution can even subpoena the notes from the victim's counselling, even if they adhere to these guidelines.

This has become a law that pigeonholes a victim and their therapist, encouraging a formal dance around 'The Crime That Must Not Be Named' in counselling sessions that should be free of restriction or judgement.

In January 2019, a petition advocating for a change in therapy laws in the UK was closed after failing to reach 10,000 signatures, the required minimum to receive a government response.

In September 2019, a second petition was closed after receiving 13,380 signatures calling for a review of the CPS Guidelines, spearheaded by a rape victim whose case had been dropped by the CPS. The Attorney General's Office (AGO) responded to the petition stating: "With the assistance of the police, government departments and voluntary sector providers, the CPS is currently updating its guidance on this subject. A consultation has taken place and the guidance is due to be published later this year after the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) reports."

As it stands, limited PTT is still all that can be offered to victims of rape. While the AGO insists that counselling notes will only be requested if it is believed there is information pertinent to the case, victims - fearing privacy violations - are still being faced with the dilemma of dropping their investigations rather than consenting to their counselling notes or personal digital data being turned over to the police.

Meanwhile, the UK is in the throes of a rape epidemic. In 2019 it was reported that half of all reported cases are dropped, even after the suspect has been positively identified. Between 2014 and 2018 the UK saw a 173 percent increase in reported rapes, but there was a 19 percent decline in police referring cases on and a 44 percent drop in cases being prosecuted by CPS.

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Three years after Andrade's death, I was raped. Like many victims of rape, I document time less by the passing of the seasons and more by the relentless coverage of rape in our media.

In February 2016, Michael Brewer was released from jail after serving half his sentence. On June 3, 2016, Emily Doe's Victim Impact Statement (known to the world now as Chanel Miller) went viral after being published on BuzzFeed.

The next day, I was raped in my own home by an Englishman visiting Dublin for a stag-do. At the time I was wrapping up a year of life in the city, having moved from the United States to Ireland in Spring 2015 to produce and tour my play "By the Bi" with my colleague Caroline Downs. I had just been accepted into graduate school in London at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama. Over the course of 24 hours I went from feeling on top of the world to being set adrift in an endless sea.

At the time of my rape, abortion was illegal in Ireland. Some of my most vivid memories of that time are of being on the top floor of FlyeFit, a 24-hour Dublin gym, staring out the window at the view of Dublin Castle in the early hours of the morning with the heaviest kettlebell I could muster pressed against my abdomen. Like a trapped animal, I was desperate and manic until my next menstrual cycle came to ensure that my rapist had not left any part of him lingering inside me. I was fortunate and did not have to travel across the Irish Sea to maintain my bodily autonomy, although 3,265 women and girls did make that trek in 2016, joining ranks with 168,705 women and girls who had made the journey since 1980.

I moved to the UK in September 2016 and did not go back to Ireland for almost a year after moving because I did not think I could bear it. It would be two years before I would report my rape. It would be a year-and-a-half before I decided to stick with therapy.

In 2018, I entered therapy for the fourth time since my assault. I was living in Los Angeles while finishing my graduate dissertation remotely. I had spent the previous eight months running away from the UK and Ireland. I wanted to put as much geographical distance between myself and my rapist as possible. I was still refusing to speak to the police.

I was also on a severe mental decline; shedding weight, sleep and tears in a stubborn attempt to hold myself together on my own. I was fortunate to find a godsend of a therapist when I needed one most. I was notorious for dropping therapists for superfluous reasons up until that point; I did not like their voice, their tone, their gaze, relentless deflections from the poison mounting inside me.

In April 2018, I wrote an article that went viral documenting my reasoning for not reporting my rape. The response was overwhelming; two years later, I am still receiving emails from victims thanking me for speaking up. I was afraid of telling my story on the Internet, so notorious for its penchant for cruelty under the mask of anonymity. I was shocked to see an army rallying behind me, encouraging me to report.

So, in May 2018, with my therapist by my side, I finally reported my assault to the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD). I was told my case would be transferred to the Garda (Irish police force), but that since my assailant was British, it may be covered by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS).

Any apprehension I had once harboured towards the police and the justice system as a whole was briefly replaced by the monumental relief that had come from finally being able to speak candidly about the night of my assault. No one told me I had unwittingly put a stopper on access to the one resource that was keeping me afloat.

I returned to the UK a month after reporting to finish graduate school. I applied to continue counselling at a London-based rape crisis centre. I was told there was a 10-month waiting list. I never heard back from the centre. The second time I applied, a year later in June 2019, I was told there was an eight-month waiting list, and that group therapy had openings but that I was disqualified because I had reported my assault and had an open investigation pending.

By now, the healing bandages that my therapist and I had so carefully crafted were starting to lift. I applied for therapy a third time in September 2019. It was then that I was told that even if I was matched with a counsellor, I was only eligible for PTT since my case was still open. I could speak with a therapist but could not speak about my rape itself.



"I'm aware that the news about the restrictions on therapy may be new to you and is frustrating," the email I received in early October 2019 read. Rape is not a palatable subject. While I believe that it is a necessary dialogue - I would not be opening myself up like this if it were not - the precise details of my own rape were not something I wished to unload on my loved ones.

I did not want to burden my mother or my sisters. My best friend had shared a room with me - the room in which the assault took place - and had cleaned up the heaps of broken glass and bloodied condoms she found after I had left. My then-boyfriend had accompanied me to the hospital.

Our traumas were shared and, while they continue to be some of my strongest pillars, it is unfair and unconscionable to ask those people to bear the burden of my memories. Those, rightfully, should be hashed out with a licensed professional. My healing had begun when I was shown a safe place and open arms to speak candidly about what I had experienced. It is not just frustrating to be silenced; it is maddening, and in cases like Andrade's, it can be deadly.

Shortly after the UK locked down due to COVID-19, the lead detective on my case in Ireland called me, two months after I had written to him expressing growing concerns about my mental health. He told me that the police in the UK were not being cooperative and that he had filed motions to help push things along but he could not make any promises.

"These things are slow-moving," he told me, a month shy of the two-year anniversary of reporting the rape. He asked me to consider if it was worth continuing with the investigation if it meant not being able to attend therapy. There is no winning when you pursue justice, it seems; you are either barred from resources that can keep you alive or you recuse yourself and allow a man to be positively rewarded for his crimes just so you can be extended a lifeline.

Playing into an archaic system built on a foundation of rape apologist myths will not undo my rape.

As I write this, my case is still open. I am still barred from receiving full therapy.

I am living in a purgatory crafted from uncertainty. A part of me died four years ago in a tiny flatshare in Dublin when a man felt so entitled to a woman's body that he decided his sexual gratification meant more than my autonomy, my consent, my future. The necrosis that took root in my soul did not begin to be dealt with until I asked for (and was given) help.

As I wait for my case to reach one of two endings - being dropped for lack of evidence beyond all reasonable doubt or being progressed to trial - I wonder if I would still be here today if I had not been allowed access to full therapy.

As the CPS vows to review the guidelines set down for rape victims, I must ask the UK, the CPS and the world: How do you mourn the death of yourself when the law insists those best qualified to aid in your recovery turn a blind eye to the relentless battering that preceded it?

**By: Morgan Barbour**

**Source: Al Jazeera**

*The writer is an activist, movement director and circus artist based in Los Angeles and London.*

## Daunting path to Afghan peace

It was never going to be simple or easy. But the impediments encountered at every step of the way to launch intra-Afghan talks have been far more challenging than expected. This has not only delayed a process that was planned to begin on March 10 under the Feb 29 Doha agreement between the US and the Afghan Taliban. It has also underlined the long and grinding road that lies ahead for the parties to reach any semblance of agreement on the country's future once negotiations do begin.

The prisoner exchange between Kabul and the Taliban continues to be the immediate obstacle. The Taliban have insisted that before intra-Afghan talks can begin what was agreed by the Doha accord should first be implemented — the commitment by the Afghan government to release up to 5,000 Taliban prisoners. After freeing the detainees in several tranches, a prolonged impasse on releasing the remaining 400 has followed, with President Ashraf Ghani claiming that they were dangerous militants who he was averse to release. However, under immense pressure from the Americans Ghani was urged to call a Loya Jirga to find a political cover and face-saver for the prisoner release.

Winning the peace remains a formidable challenge even though the stakes are so high.

Once the Jirga cleared the way for the release by its Aug 8 declaration, the Taliban signalled readiness for talks to begin as soon as Aug 10. That is what they conveyed to US special representative Zalmay Khalilzad. Preparations got into swing to convene the inaugural meeting in Doha. Discussion also took place about whether that meeting should be held virtually or in person on Aug 16 for which the Qataris wanted Khalilzad's attendance. Tentative information about a Doha meeting was conveyed to many countries including Pakistan, the plan being to invite 22 states, mostly virtually.

But then Kabul again demurred despite the fact that Ghani signed an order for the release following the Jirga's decision. His justification for refusing to free the remaining 320 Taliban prisoners was the same — they would pose an 'international' security threat and confront Western countries with a "new wave of drugs". Rejecting this argument, the Taliban in a statement on Aug 15, declared

that the accusations against these detainees were unfounded and merely an attempt by Kabul to create hurdles in the peace process and stoke international concerns.

The latest impasse has further vitiated the environment for the peace talks. But it has also fuelled some media speculation that the Afghan government may be dragging its feet and deliberately delaying the talks until the US presidential election, just over two months away now. The aim may be to try, if Joe Biden wins, to persuade his administration to change course or to at least slow down the US military withdrawal from Afghanistan. If true, this represents a grievously mistaken assumption. Apart from banking on an uncertain electoral outcome it also presupposes that Biden would reverse course on a process well underway, especially with Washington's recent announcement that by election time American troops would go down to less than 5,000 in Afghanistan. This suggests that any delay-till-elections tactic would leave the Ghani government in an even weaker position than it is in now.

US officials can be expected to mount renewed pressure on Ghani to relent even as the Afghan president continues to stir up concerns among European countries about the release of so-called hardcore Taliban fighters. Washington has already made it evident that it wants to speedily get intra-Afghan talks going given President Trump's desire to bring the bulk of US troops home by the November election and deliver on his previous campaign promise.

Developments over the past several months, since the Doha agreement, have magnified the challenges intra-Afghan talks will face considering the obstacles that have been encountered to initiate them. Even on who the Taliban say they are prepared to negotiate with is a source of contention. On several occasions the Taliban have said they will not negotiate with the Kabul government but with the wide spectrum of 'all parties to the conflict'. It reiterated recently that "The Islamic Emirate does not recognise the Kabul administration as a government but views it as [a] Western imported structure. We only accept negotiations that were described in the historic Doha agreement ... that cover all parties to the Afghan conflict".

On the two big agenda items in future negotiations — a framework agreement and a 'comprehensive and permanent ceasefire' — the positions of the two parties are

as far apart as they can be. So also, is mutual mistrust. The Afghan government has already set a number of pre-negotiations 'redlines' for the talks. They include the demand for a 'humanitarian' ceasefire during or before the talks, no compromise on the democratic and human rights 'gains' made in the past decades, and 'respect' for the Republic's constitution. The Taliban can be expected to push back against many of these redlines.

On a ceasefire, the Taliban's preference seems clear — that agreement on a permanent ceasefire should follow and not precede the successful conclusion of negotiations on the political road map and power sharing. Only recently Taliban representatives apparently told UNAMA officials that the historical experience of similar negotiations elsewhere indicate that a ceasefire comes after and not before agreement on other substantive issues.

Reaching a framework agreement or a political settlement will pose an even greater challenge. Consensus will not be easy to evolve on vexed issues such as provisional power sharing, the Afghan constitution and human rights, and equally contentious matters relating to demobilisation of Taliban forces and their reintegration. It is hard to envision any middle ground, for example, between the Afghan government's position to preserve the republican character of the constitution and the Taliban's insistence on declaring Afghanistan an Emirate or Sharia state.

Therefore, if talks commence in coming weeks the peace process is expected to be long and tough with little guarantee of a successful conclusion if the parties stick to their well-known positions. Win-n--ing the peace in Afghanistan remains a daunting challenge even though the stakes will be much hi--gher for all parties in post-America Afghanistan.

**By: Maleeha Lodhi**

**Source: DAWN**

*The writer is a former ambassador to the US, UK and UN.*