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Why we need a Non-Aligned Technologies Movement

It seems every few days we are reminded of how Big Tech companies have no qualms amassing profits while their products are used to incite violence and spread disinformation. The latest such reminder was the recent murder of two protesters in Kenosha, the US state of Wisconsin, by a member of a militant group active on Facebook - a group the company was aware of but refused to do anything about.

The problem is not only that Big Tech companies are converting our social lives into revenue streams, which in itself represents new forms of exploitation and appropriation. The problem is also that these dynamics perpetuate forms of discrimination, hatred, and oppression that have deep historical roots extending far beyond the recent history of online platforms, or even beyond the past two centuries of capitalism. That is why Nick Couldry and I call this phenomenon "data colonialism".

It is not only Facebook, Google, Apple and Amazon who are engaged in data colonialism. China, with its comprehensive systems of digital surveillance and artificial intelligence, is the other centre of power in data colonialism.

Where does that leave us, the rest of the world? When it comes to digital technologies, is there an option that allows us to safely navigate between the profit-motivated Scylla of Silicon Valley and the control-motivated Charybdis of the Chinese Communist Party?

Perhaps we need to take a page from the Non-Aligned Movement, a consortium of nations that, during the Cold War, attempted to forge a path beyond the equally inadequate choices of capitalism and communism. While the Non-Aligned Movement was not very successful for a variety of reasons, we can still learn important lessons to attempt something more ambitious.

What we need is a Non-Aligned Technologies Movement (NATM), an alliance not necessarily of nations, but of multiple actors already working towards the same goals, coming together to declare their non-alignment with the US and China.

Activists, researchers, hackers and NGOs have been devising these kinds of alternatives for years. It is time to collect them under a movement big enough to pose a challenge to the two neocolonial superpowers. This new movement is necessary for two important reasons.

First, it has become patently clear that the development of technologies in China and the US is exempt, on purpose, from any social accountability. How has this happened? It is universally accepted (one hopes) that a scientific experiment can only go forward if the researchers can demonstrate it will not negatively affect human subjects. And yet, in the world of technological development, no such expectation exists.

If technology is the application of science, its implementation needs to be held to the same scientific standards, especially when it is evident that technology affects society in profound and long-lasting ways, well beyond the "development" phase.

Traditionally, capitalism has told us that this cannot happen because it would delay and interfere with innovation. NATM is the first step towards rejecting that narrative, and saying that we no longer believe there is a sharp distinction between scientific research and technological implementation.

The two have become practically indistinguishable because modern digital technologies are constantly changing, and thus their impact needs to be constantly assessed and held to stringent ethical standards.

Second, it has also become evident that most governments and world organisations are incapable or unwilling to stand up to the Big Tech axis, even if it means imposing minimal taxes or protections for users. A Non-Aligned Technologies movement would empower civil societies across the globe to act in consort to meet their shared objectives while putting pressure on their respective governments to change the way they deal with Big Tech.

Let me sketch out the main goals of NATM before briefly discussing some concrete proposals for how to launch it.

The primary goal of NATM would be to transition from technologies that are against the interest of society to technologies that are in the interest of society. To implement this, we would need to define what is in the public interest when it comes to technologies, and evaluate technologies to see if they meet these criteria.

08-09-2020

Many efforts to do this have been happening concurrently, but NATM would allow us to form a global consortium to collectively support these tasks.

Realising that this is going to take time and effort to accomplish, a secondary goal of NATM is to promote the immediate regulation and taxation of technologies that are not in the public's interest. But here we must strongly affirm social good over individual benefit, and point out that NATM goes beyond the idea of paying individuals for their data.

An intermediate goal in this regard is the nationalisation of data so that Big Tech is forced to pay nations for the value they are extracting from their citizens. To be clear, I am talking about nationalising data not in the sense of transferring ownership of a commodified property to the state, but in the sense of asserting national control over a resource currently extracted illegitimately.

The taxes resulting from nationalisation need to be invested in programmes that benefit societies, not individuals, small collectives or elites. Again, individual governments are unlikely to adopt such measures on their own accord, but NATM can make evident the benefit of acting and exercising pressure as a global consortium.

The third goal of NATM is to create change that can involve anyone, anywhere. Global civil society needs to come together to effect the change, but it needs to be able to do so by uniting dispersed efforts.

If continents will not become non-aligned, nations can. If not nations, cities. If not cities, communities (onsite and online). If not communities, then individuals can become non-aligned. The goal is to create a new social order, and even individuals and small communities should be able to contribute to that order.

What specific actions could this movement pursue?

To begin, NATM as a block could conduct an analysis and decide which open-source platforms to support as a bloc. We now have plenty of options to replicate and improve most of the functions offered by Big Tech, including social networking, file sharing, data collection and analysis, mapping, publishing, etc. NATM could pick the most advanced and scalable solution in each case and commit to its development, providing support for NATM members to implement it.

In essence, NATM would create parallel platforms to those offered by the Big Tech axis, but without the extraction and dispossession. These platforms would cease to be niche solutions explored by hacker communities, but widely used solutions that offer non-aligned members alternatives to Big Tech.

NATM could also create a global laboratory for the study of Big Tech algorithms. I have been working on a small-scale prototype of such a concept called Algorithm Observatory, which is a combination of citizen science and media literacy project. The goal is to create a platform that NATM, as a bloc, can use to dissect the extractive algorithms of Big Tech. These technologies are not likely to go away anytime soon, and we need to be able to learn more about the way they work by analysing them, and exposing their faults.

Finally, NATM could institute a protocol for individual communities to grant approval of new and existing technologies. For technologies to operate within NATM communities and avoid heavy taxation, they would need to demonstrate that they do not endanger the interests of civil society. This initial determination and subsequent checks can be performed by a board, similar to what human subject boards do across scientific research institutions. But unlike human subject boards, NATM boards should include representatives from different segments of the population.

The boards should operate locally (each community needs to figure out if a particular technology goes against its specific interests), but NATM can provide training and facilitate discussions at a global level of how these boards should work. NATM boards can also make determinations of what portion of the data collected by technologies should rightfully be considered public domain. It is unlikely that Big Tech companies would submit themselves to this form of review, just as it is unlikely that governments would enforce any kind of penalties when they do not comply. At least for the time being. The point of a global movement of non-alignment is to show that another world is possible, and that change based on the principles of justice and equity can gain momentum until it is impossible to ignore.

By: Ulises Ali Mejias

Source: Al Jazeera

Indian Social Media Goes Nuts Over Fake Claim of Su-35 Shootdown

Early on Friday morning in India, a video purporting to show a Chinese Su-35, a Russian-built plane used by the Chinese military, shot down in Taiwan began to spread like wildfire online, promoted by military-oriented accounts with large followings, by quick-hit news sites, and throughout Indian social media as a whole. A confused—and irate—Taiwanese government strongly denied the claims, which, as of writing, has barely dampened the Indian enthusiasm for them. The story itself will probably burn out within a day or two, but its emergence shows how entangled nationalist fantasies are becoming in Asia, and how dangerous they might be.

It's unclear where the video actually came from, what it shows, or even how recent it is—but the most likely possibility seems to be an air accident in China itself. The plane involved may not even be a Su-35, but a J-10, a Chinese-built plane with a record of engine failures. Taiwan actually shooting down a Chinese plane would be an enormously significant, and risky, move. At worst, it could be the spark of a war; at best it would provoke economic and political retaliation from China—even if the Chinese had deliberately violated Taiwanese airspace. There was immediate worry inside the Taiwanese government that the video might have been a deliberate attempt to stir tensions. That seems unlikely. Instead, what happened is a compounding of bullshit on both the Chinese and the Indian sides.

The bullshit started with the Global Times, a Chinese nationalist tabloid run under the auspices of the Chinese Communist Party's newspaper, People's Daily. The bullshit started with the Global Times, a Chinese nationalist tabloid run under the auspices of the Chinese Communist Party's newspaper, People's Daily. That gives Global Times (where I once worked) a credibility it doesn't deserve; Global Times editorials, often dictated impromptu over the phone by the pugnacious editor Hu Xijin, sometimes presage actual government action but are far more frequently about Hu's own efforts to drum up traffic or troll the rest of the world. An editorial on Monday called for the Chinese air force to establish regular patrols over Taiwan and a declaration of war if Taiwan acted to defend its airspace. That would be a murderously idiotic move, but it's highly unlikely that even Hu meant it as a serious suggestion.

But Indian media takes the Global Times extremely seriously. India's own nationalist newspapers have a dysfunctional relationship with their Chinese

08-09-2020

counterpart; the Global Times prints some mad bullshit, often insulting India directly. Indian newspapers and websites pick up on it, often describing it as “China” or “the Chinese government” making those statements. The Global Times then writes more pieces in response to them. The cycle continues, and everyone’s traffic rises. (The English-language version of the Global Times isn’t really intended as a plausible commercial venture, but the editors are directly incentivized and rewarded not just for traffic as a whole, but for mentions of pieces in foreign media, whether good or bad.)

The idea of Chinese patrols, then, was already circulating in an Indian online media sphere that’s completely obsessed with China at the moment, following the clash in Galwan Valley that left 20 Indian soldiers and an unknown number of Chinese dead. Relations between New Delhi and Beijing are at a nadir not seen since the 1970s. More border clashes this week, apparently leaving at least one Indian soldier dead, had put Chinese aggression back in headlines again. Online Indian takes on China’s military power tend also to swing from the panicky—the Chinese military can crush India unless India redoubles its efforts—to the cocky: Our brave jawans can defeat the invader!

Wherever the video originated, it dropped into a perfectly receptive atmosphere: an Indian audience primed for news of both Chinese aggression and Chinese failure. The Taiwanese, meanwhile, were left scratching their heads. As Asian geopolitics get hotter and online nationalisms meaner, more such misinformation will spread. Most of it will burn out into nothing—but the bit that doesn’t could be the spark that gets people killed.

By: James Palmer

Source: Foreign Policy Magazine

Covid-19 has exposed the reality of Britain: poverty, insecurity and inequality

After the catastrophe of the past eight months, a new political consensus seems to be emerging. The government has to get a tighter grip of the country and the crisis we are facing. Taking back control now means that Boris Johnson must change his management style. Instead of remaining an aloof chairman of his government, he must become its hands-on chief executive.

Ministers need to discover misplaced competence – from the reopening of schools to securing a Brexit deal (or preparing for no deal), and from reigniting a beleaguered economy to supporting the tens of thousands of people who will lose their jobs when the furlough scheme ends. And Covid-19 will have to be kept in check through a judicious mix of personal hygiene measures, physical distancing, mask-wearing, testing, quarantine and targeted short-term lockdowns.

But none of these measures recognise the true scale of the social pathology underlying Britain's national crisis. They do not constitute a strategy for national revival, or offer a long-term vision for our nation. And they do not deliver any prospect for hope and regeneration, let alone the promise of "levelling up" the country.

Science cannot guide the government in formulating this strategy. A plan for Britain's future must be guided instead by our values and the lessons learned from the human consequences of this pandemic. It's time for Johnson's government to stop saying it is simply "following the science". By this, I don't mean that ministers should ignore the advice of scientists as they manage the continuing presence of coronavirus in our communities, but that we don't elect scientists to lead our nation.

We elect politicians to offer and deliver a vision for our country and a practical plan for our collective future. As summer fades, it's becoming clear that our government has no vision and no plan for the future of the nation it was elected to protect and strengthen.

The writer Elif Shafak, in her recently published essay *How to Stay Sane in an Age of Division*, recalls seeing signs in public parks during the pandemic asking: "When all this is over, how do you want the world to be different?" She points out that we

are suffering from a widespread disillusionment about our bewildering predicament, and describes how people are feeling anxious and angry. She argues that alienation and exclusion are breeding mistrust, that communication between people and politicians is broken, and that despite the crisis we face we are nowhere near being able to answer a question about how we want the world to be.

How do we begin to answer that question? First, we must understand the true nature of the crisis that confronts us. Our nation suffers from a political disease of historic proportions. The bonds that once held communities together are fraying. The confidence we once felt that generations after our own would have greater opportunities has ebbed away. And the beliefs we once embraced about the inherent strength and resilience of our national institutions and welfare state have been exposed as mere illusions. The coronavirus pandemic has exposed the reality of contemporary Britain: the country is defined by poverty, insecurity and inequality.

To solve this crisis, we must begin by hearing the stories and listening to the experiences of those who have borne the brunt of Covid-19, especially the families who have suffered grievous losses and those who fell ill on the frontlines of the response. Illness and death have been concentrated among the elderly, those living with chronic disease, people from black, Asian and minority ethnic communities, and those who have been working in frontline public services, from health and social care to transport, food production and distribution. The closure of schools has placed a particular burden on children and young people. And a shadow pandemic has harmed women and children, who have suffered rising levels of violence and domestic abuse at home.

A more equal society is a safer, kinder and more prosperous society. Specific policies to meet the urgent needs of these groups can lay the foundations for economic recovery and build resilience to future crises. We must demand parental support to improve prospects for child development and policies to advance adolescent physical and mental health. We should have stronger assistance and legal protections for women and children at risk of domestic violence and abuse. And we need more interventionist disease prevention and health promotion campaigns across people's lifetimes, prioritising cancer prevention, heart disease

and severe lung disease – and recognising the role that poverty and insecurity play in determining ill health.

Working conditions must be improved, and frontline workers must receive a wage that respects and recognises the critical role they have played in protecting our communities from collapse. It was these frontline workers who did not have the luxury of staying at home. Thousands of women and men, working on zero-hours contracts or in dangerous factory conditions without sick pay, had no choice but to work in environments that put them at the highest risk of contracting infection.

At the heart of this vision would be a new settlement to achieve intergenerational and socioeconomic equality. The pandemic has exposed how brittle our society is at the extreme ends of the age spectrum. We have systematically neglected our older citizens by denying them the esteem and material needs they have earned from their lifetimes of work and care. We have hurt our children by outsourcing their futures to a hopelessly flawed mathematical algorithm. We have to take education as seriously as we do healthcare; and, currently, we do not.

We have spent decades underinvesting in education, leaving generations of children to struggle, with little hope and dwindling prospects. And the time for integrating adult and children's social care within the NHS is long past.

This pandemic has dehumanised us all. The effects of Covid-19 have been described in terms of mortality statistics, rates of infection, epidemiological models and league tables. The biographies of those who lost their lives to this virus have been largely forgotten. But they can be recovered and brought into the political foreground by fashioning a new vision for our nation that puts their lives and sacrifices at its centre. These priorities will not be achieved with mere changes in the style of government. They require an accurate diagnosis not of what went wrong in the response to the pandemic – that will come later – but of who has endured the greatest harm. We don't need a public inquiry to tell us who has suffered the greatest burden of Covid-19. There will of course be vigorous, even rancorous, political debates about policies to advance the welfare and wellbeing of our most vulnerable communities.

But those debates should at least be forged in the service of a coherent, determined and optimistic plan for national rejuvenation. Covid-19 is not our

destiny. It's time to look beyond this appalling, cruel pandemic and towards a more optimistic future.

By: Richard Horton

Source: The Guardian

The writer is a doctor and edits the Lancet

Mega Lecture

How Biden is pressing a two-front war against Trump

Joe Biden has described himself as a "bridge" between the Democrats' current and future generations of leaders. But he may also be a bridge between its present and future on the electoral map.

Exactly eight weeks before Election Day, Biden has strong opportunities to recapture states that President Donald Trump won in 2016 both in the Rust Belt and the Sun Belt. But public and private polls consistently show that Biden is running slightly better in the former group of battlegrounds -- centered on Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin -- than the latter, which include North Carolina, Florida and Arizona.

That's something of a surprise, because Trump has focused his message and agenda so precisely on the priorities and resentments of the older, rural and non-college Whites who dominate the electorate in Rust Belt states, while the Sun Belt states are adding many more of the younger non-White voters who increasingly compose the Democrats' base.

Through the 2020s, many Democrats believe that the party will need to make greater inroads in both congressional and presidential contests across the diversifying Sun Belt -- including not only this year's targets but also emerging opportunities led by Texas and Georgia -- to offset the likelihood that Republicans will compete more effectively throughout the preponderantly White Rust Belt.

But if Biden can regain enough ground in the Rust Belt in November to win the White House, he'll buy time for Democrats to allow increasing racial diversity and a steady influx of college-educated White professionals to strengthen their hand in Sun Belt states that have leaned reliably Republican for decades.

That's how Biden could offer Democrats a bridge: His potential to improve on Hillary Clinton's showing with older and blue-collar Whites means that even if falls short in some or all of the Sun Belt states that many in the party see as its long-term future, he could still reach 270 Electoral College votes by recapturing Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, the three big Rust Belt states that Trump dislodged from the Democrats' "blue wall."

As on many fronts, Biden's electoral strategy may not define the Democrats' long-term direction, but he may revive just enough of the party's past to sustain it until

08-09-2020

that future comes more clearly into focus. "You don't want to be in a position of having to make the Sun Belt work [this year]," says Ruy Teixeira, a veteran Democratic electoral analyst who's a senior fellow at the left-leaning Center for American Progress. "You want to be in a position of having a lot more degrees of freedom than that. That's the beauty of Biden in this election."

The electoral battlefield this year offers almost perfect symmetry between the Sun Belt and the Rust Belt. The six states noted above, which both sides consider the most competitive, split evenly between the regions. So does the next tier of possibly competitive states.

Though facing longer odds than in the first group, Democrats see opportunity in four more states Trump carried last time: Iowa and Ohio across the Rust Belt, and Georgia and Texas in the Sun Belt. Meanwhile, the two states carried by Hillary Clinton that Trump is most hoping to pry loose -- again at longer odds -- also divide between the Rust Belt (Minnesota) and Sun Belt (Nevada).

A geographic shift

The equal number of contested states in each region is in one sense unexpected. Over the past generation, Democrats have consistently run better in both presidential and congressional contests in the Rust Belt than the Sun Belt. Of the potentially competitive Rust Belt states this year, Democrats carried four of them in all six elections from 1992 to 2012 (Michigan, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and Minnesota), Iowa five times and Ohio four. By comparison, they won Texas not at all, Georgia, Arizona and North Carolina only once and Florida three times; only in Nevada (four wins) did they prevail most of the time.

But the 2016 election -- shaped by Trump's polarizing message and persona -- rattled this alignment. Behind big gains among Whites without college degrees, he surged forward in the Rust Belt, routing Clinton in Ohio and Iowa, narrowly capturing Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin and significantly reducing the margin in Minnesota, which Clinton held by less than 2 percentage points. Trump benefited from big gains in small-town and rural places, and his strength in those communities remains formidable to this day. Even now, "there is a huge urban-rural divide" across the Midwest, notes Craig Robinson, the former political director of the Iowa Republican Party.

The picture in the Sun Belt was more complex. Clinton solidified earlier Democratic gains in well-educated and diverse Virginia and Colorado, moving them from swing states toward a deeper shade of blue (to the point where neither side considers them seriously in play this year). And she significantly improved on President Barack Obama's 2012 showing in Arizona, Georgia and Texas, three other states also being reshaped by increasing racial diversity and an influx of college-educated suburbanites, though she ultimately fell short in each. But with Trump's strength among his core groups of older, non-college and rural Whites as the battering ram, Clinton lost ground relative to Obama in Florida, North Carolina and Nevada, winning only the latter.

Those results -- combined with Trump's strategy of targeting so much of his agenda and rhetoric at blue-collar and rural Whites on issues such as immigration and trade -- seemed to establish the conditions for a historic geographic shift between the parties. When Trump took office, many Democrats feared he might consolidate his 2016 beachhead in the Rust Belt, forcing the party to make greater inroads across the Sun Belt if it hoped to beat him this year.

Instead, since taking office, Trump and the Republican Party have demonstrably lost ground across both regions. But because Trump began with less margin for error in the Rust Belt states, the consequences of that erosion have been more severe for him there than in the Sun Belt.

That was evident in the 2018 elections.

Roaring back after Trump's 2016 inroads, Democrats convincingly won both the governor's and Senate races in Minnesota, Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin and a Senate contest in Ohio; although Republicans held the governorships in Iowa and Ohio, Democrats also ran much better in both contests than Clinton had in those states.

In the Sun Belt, the picture remained more mixed. Democrats broke through to win Senate seats in Arizona and Nevada and the governorship in the latter. But even with charismatic candidates who inspired huge turnout -- and significant gains in white-collar suburbs around cities such as Atlanta, Dallas and Houston -- the party fell just short in high-profile races for the Senate in Texas (behind Beto O'Rourke) and the governorships in Georgia (Stacey Abrams) and Florida (Andrew Gillum).

Veteran Democratic Sen. Bill Nelson also lost in Florida. And Democrats were routed in the Texas and Arizona governor's races.

Something of a surprise

While Biden has clear opportunities in both regions, public polls and internal surveys by his campaign again show him in a slightly stronger position across the Rust Belt battlegrounds than those in the Sun Belt. In their internal rankings, the Biden campaign and other Democratic groups such as the super PAC Priorities USA all place the three central Rust Belt swing states as slightly better opportunities than any of the three Sun Belt showdowns.

That's not a prospect that all Democrats or analysts (myself included) expected when the campaign began.

"When the cycle started, I was of the belief that Arizona was going to be easier for Democrats than Wisconsin," says Democratic pollster Andrew Baumann. "I thought those were the two states that were going to be the tipping point states."

The Road to 270: Interactive Electoral College maps

These assessments are shaped by the core tension in the modern electoral landscape: While changes in the underlying demography are more favorable for Democrats in the Sun Belt, their capacity to win White voters remains much greater in the Rust Belt.

The nonpartisan States of Change project, which Teixeira helps to direct, projects that since 2016 minorities have increased much more as a share of eligible voters in Arizona, Nevada, Texas, Georgia and North Carolina than in Michigan, Minnesota, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. By the project's forecast, Trump's best group, which is Whites without college degrees, will remain a majority of the eligible voters in all of the big Rust Belt battlegrounds (except Pennsylvania, where they will fall just below half) but make up no more than 41% of the eligible population in any of the most contested Sun Belt states -- or, for that matter, Virginia and Colorado.

Yet the Rust Belt states may still prove somewhat easier for Biden because considerably more White voters -- both with and without college degrees -- appear willing to vote for him there. Recent public polls by CBS News and Fox News in

Wisconsin; Quinnipiac University and Franklin & Marshall College in Pennsylvania; and Monmouth University in Iowa earlier this summer all showed Biden winning at least 40% of Whites without college degrees in those states and holding his deficit with Trump among that group there to about 10-15 percentage points.

By contrast, recent Monmouth polls in North Carolina and earlier this summer in Georgia; summer Quinnipiac surveys in Texas and South Carolina; and a new Dallas Morning News/University of Texas at Tyler survey in Texas each showed Biden attracting no more than 28% of Whites without college degrees in those states and trailing Trump by margins that stretched as high as 50 percentage points. (A Fox poll in North Carolina put Biden at 31% with those voters there.) Only in Florida (Quinnipiac) and Arizona (Fox) did Biden approach the 40% mark in the recent public polls with those blue-collar Whites, which he routinely reached in the Rust Belt.

Political experts offer several explanations for these huge disparities: More non-college Whites in the South are evangelical Christians, fewer have experience with labor unions and more may be receptive to Trump's overt appeals to racial resentment. But whatever the cause, Trump's towering margins among Southern non-college Whites, even if potentially slightly diminished from his 2016 levels, remain a huge obstacle for Democrats hoping to flip North Carolina, much less Georgia and Texas or, at some future point, South Carolina.

"In Texas and Georgia, North Carolina, the White non-college margins are like a mountain," says Teixeira. "That's something you always have to take into account."

Not only this year, but through the 2020s, the Democrat prospect of overcoming those deficits with Sun Belt working-class Whites will likely depend on following the same formula that moved Colorado and Virginia reliably into their camp: benefiting from growth in the minority population while improving their performance among college-educated suburban Whites.

The most recent round of polls almost all show Biden substantially leading Trump among college-educated White voters across the key Rust Belt states; both the Quinnipiac and Franklin & Marshall surveys, for instance, showed Biden ahead with them in Pennsylvania by more than 20 percentage points. In the Sun Belt, his position with college Whites isn't as strong or as consistent.

The latest polls show him establishing leads of around a dozen percentage points with them in Arizona and Florida, which would likely be enough to win those states, and a narrow edge in North Carolina that leaves the state at the tipping point. But in Texas and Georgia, Biden is still struggling to push much past 40% with those voters, about the same level of support O'Rourke and Abrams drew in their narrow defeats.

Shifting foundations

Another big uncertainty is whether Biden can inspire a large turnout among minorities, especially young people. That would improve the Democrats' fortunes in both regions, but especially in the Sun Belt states where people of color dominate the new voters who turn 18 each year.

Though Biden struggled with young people during the Democratic primaries and public polls have offered contrasting pictures of their enthusiasm for the general election, a poll Baumann released last week for the advocacy group NextGen America found unexpectedly high levels of interest among young people, with Blacks and Hispanics as engaged as Whites. Among young people, because of their strong antipathy to Trump, "there is no question [Biden] is better positioned in terms of both margins and turnout than Clinton," Baumann insists.

Biden's own unique strengths and weaknesses reinforce these underlying regional dynamics. Polls have repeatedly raised questions about whether Biden, who also struggled with Hispanics during the primary, will match Clinton's margins with that growing voter bloc; Trump, some in both parties believe, may be positioned to slightly improve his 2016 showing, particularly with Hispanic men. Conversely, strategists on both sides agree that Biden doesn't alienate nearly as many Rust Belt non-college White voters as Clinton, whom many perceived as an elitist who looked down on them.

"Some of those White non-college, particularly older, voters who had moved toward Trump are coming back to Biden in the Rust Belt, which has blunted that movement which we saw moving away from Democrats," says Baumann. "And it does certainly seem that Biden is a little weaker with Hispanics than Hillary was, which blunts his potential gains in the Sun Belt. So you put those things together and the Rust Belt still seems a little stronger."

A Presidential race like no other

With the political foundation shifting in both regions, the range of possible results is multiplying. On Election Day in 2016, I wrote: "The risk for Hillary Clinton is that her party's foundation in the Rust Belt is fracturing before the twin forces of diversity and rising education levels have advanced enough to provide Democrats a secure foothold in the Sun Belt."

That's exactly what happened to Clinton: She fell just short in the key Sun Belt battlegrounds and lost by even smaller margins in the decisive Rust Belt contests. That remains the nightmare scenario for Democrats this year: Trump mobilizes just enough non-college Whites to squeak by again in the Rust Belt, while Biden fails to energize quite enough non-Whites (and/or convert enough well-educated Whites) to flip the big Sun Belt battlegrounds.

But Trump now faces the risk of the opposite scenario. Biden could recapture the key Rust Belt battlegrounds by reeling back just enough older and non-college Whites while advancing further in white-collar suburbs and improving minority turnout even slightly. Simultaneously, the latter two dynamics could allow him to flip some of the Sun Belt battlegrounds, even if blue-collar Whites there remain overwhelmingly behind Trump. That would produce a blowout election.

Most troubling for Trump is that Biden can reach an Electoral College majority even if he breaks through on only one of these fronts.

"One of the benefits of the map that exists now is we have multiple paths to 270," says Katie Drapcho, director of polling and research at Priorities USA. "Of the six [big swing states] we can win some of them, not win some of them, and still deny Trump a path to reelection."

Of course, even though Biden's position looks stronger at this point than Clinton's, it's worth the footnote that Democrats felt that way for most of the final weeks in 2016 as well.

By: Ron Brownstein

Source: CNN

Post-Corona pedagogical challenges!

Being an academic at the lower field-formation of Education Punjab, one can feel the impact of Corona on Education significantly, especially the way it has changed the modes of teaching in class rooms. With just one stroke of New-Normal, the student and teacher both disappeared from the class room and instead virtual media became the tool for transmission of information and knowledge. It did pose its own issues and problems. Added to this is the new situation in which we are going to enter as soon as Government opens the educational institutions. So, it's necessary to consider about the challenges the education in classroom may pose.

On line teaching forced the students to look for the available sources of information in the world of the international network of computers (Internet) and so they got access to the flood of information regarding their subjects of studies. Being better informed than pre-corona times, they will expect their teachers now to provide them the instructions beyond that they already know. It means these are the people better equipped with information and other critical materials and so need to be dealt with accordingly.

Same is the case with the teacher that he, instead of simple lecture delivering device, has been taking support of the online software and sometime, remained totally hidden from the students, especially when he worked through WhatsApp. Now, in the class room, he shall have to devise strategies that are as engaging as the strategies the students of corona times have witnessed in the videos of teachers worldwide via YouTube web. The new challenge in the classroom for a teacher will be to bring his IT world with him and teach the students by using the devices that he forced the students to use. For the backup purpose teachers will still be required to keep recording audio or video of their lectures and make these available to their students on line. So, the work of the teacher has increased and he needs to not only cater to his responsibility but also remain engaged with his students.

Examination patterns adopted by the universities and colleges, sometime called online or open book exam, has changed the pattern that students followed while they appeared in in-person examinations and were required to be free from any materials in possession and were punished if they had any. But now they have passed exams by consulting the sources available to them. Reverting in-person

08-09-2020

examination will raise the demands of similar patterns followed during Corona Times. So, the examining authorities must be on constant watch to incorporate any such changes in their traditional set up.

Online teaching has removed the book from the hands of the students and has rather put a cell phone or tablet in the hands of our students. Book is no more the source of information and knowledge and has lost its traditional sway in the education system. Now cell phone is the source of all types of information. But this has addicted us to the screen and more and more screen time is being spent on screen rather than the book. The ban on cellphone in educational systems will have to be revisited because of the addiction caused by the CORONA Times use of these devices. The demands on the part of the students can be more for the digital world rather than a physical teacher. The classrooms will have to be digitally well-equipped which is a Herculean task. The world is gradually adopting itself to the new Normal and so Pakistan will have to do the same to keep pace with the rising educational progress and development.

Online teaching has removed the book from the hands of the students and has rather put a cell phone or tablet in the hands of our students

Moreover, the Corona times have also paved the way for the skill holders rather than for the degree holders. Now, the individuals who had the life skills expertise have become more successful rather than the degree holders. The demand for a worker who can perform better is increasing rather than a degree holder with no skills. So, the society demands of the education systems to produce people who have the capability to the things rather than the people who have degrees but they do not know the skills. A huge change of mind setup and progressive approach can become the need of the hour.

Above all the SOPs for opening educational institutions show that Corona exists and has not disappeared. Following of SOPs in class room is going to create new issues and troubles. Making the classroom disinfected, making the students follow the SOPs, Making the teachers to make these things sure is a new-normal-trouble to be solved on war footing. This situation becomes even worse in the absence of any infrastructures in our schools and colleges, especially in the far-flung areas. Not only this is going to over burden the already burdened financial sources but also it

is going to increase the educational expenses of the parents and the government both.

Pakistani classroom is not the only classroom facing this New-Normal, rather it is a worldwide phenomenon and many countries have started to adopt their classroom as the need of the hour is. Same should be the attitude of the Pakistani nation, if it needs to compete with the world.

By : Prof. Dr. Zia Ahmed

Source: Daily Times

The writer is working Principal Govt. Emerson College, Multan, Pakistan. He earned his PhD in 2012. He is serving as Adjunct Faculty at ISP, Multan, as Visiting Faculty at NUML, and BZU, Multan and Chairman Dept. of English at GEC, Multan

Mega Lecture

The Abraham Accord: A new Catch-22

After Egypt's peace treaty with Israel in 1979, followed by Jordan's in 1994, Abraham Accord makes the UAE the third Arab country to normalise relations with Israel. It is the first of the six Arab Gulf states to do so. Oman, Bahrain, and possibly Morocco are widely expected to follow thereupon. Discrete contacts between the UAE and Israel had been underway for years but still, the details and timing of this normalisation deal were kept secret right up to the last minute whereof. There were no consultations between the UAE foreign ministry in Abu Dhabi and its Arab neighbors therein. Almost everyone was taken by surprise, most of all the Palestinians, who called it "a stab in the back" since they have yet to come close to getting a state of their own or ending Israeli occupation.

Moreover, the risk is it could make the UAE leadership highly unpopular in the wider Arab world where some social media postings have been calling it "a sell-out". Despite the apparent Israeli promise of halting annexation, the Palestinian leadership rejected the accord and recalled its ambassador from Abu Dhabi. From the perspective of the Palestinians and their supporters, the agreement reflects mala-fide on the part of Israel, the UAE, and the United States thereto.

Thereafter, this criticism is not uncalled-for. Israel has demonstrated little interest in negotiations with the Palestinians as it has tightened its grip on the West Bank and, along with Egypt, maintains a tight cordon around the Gaza Strip. The Trump administration has moved the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, ended or significantly curtailed aid to Palestinians, and produced a peace plan that Palestinians regard as grossly unfair to their national aspirations and rights. At the same time, leaders in Ramallah regard the ongoing normalisation of ties between Israel and the UAE as an indication that Abu Dhabi has betrayed the Palestinian cause.

Furthermore, within the region, Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, and Oman publicly welcomed the Abraham Accord. Saudi Arabia has remained silent, though there is significant speculation among analysts that this non-reaction is a sign that Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman supports the agreement but is constrained because his father, the king, opposes normalisation with Israel. Iran, Qatar, and Turkey have all criticised the accord, with the latter threatening to withdraw its ambassador from Abu Dhabi. Civil society organisations throughout the region remain steadfast

08-09-2020

in their opposition to normalising relations with Israel. These include groups in the Gulf, which have spoken out specifically against the Israeli-Emirati agreement.

Amid countries in the Gulf, Bahrain is most likely to follow the UAE. King Hamad has overseen steps toward normalisation, including allowing Israeli officials to attend a regional security meeting in the country. Additionally, the Israeli foreign minister has met with his Bahraini counterpart. Oman is another possible candidate for normalization. Netanyahu met with the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said in Muscat in late 2018. However, Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, who came to power in January 2020, could act more cautiously regarding relations with Israel as he consolidates his power. Morocco and Sudan might also seek to establish diplomatic relations with Israel thereon.

However, the question is what about Pakistan? Pakistan and Israel came into existence almost at the same time; Israel through America offered millions of dollars for official recognition as a state. PM Liaqat Ali Khan rejected the offer and gave a ruthless response and that is the answer to the question “Gentleman our souls are not for sale” and our leadership will own this statement as apt and befitting.

By: Asfan Tariq

Source: The Nation

Debating the SNC

A robust debate has started in the media regarding the Single National Curriculum (SNC) – and that is a good thing. I cannot remember the last time so many people were talking and writing about education.

While discussing politics is our national pastime, and takes an inordinate space in our media, discussing and debating fundamental national issues gets more people involved and leads to a more informed decision-making. It is for this reason we placed the draft of the SNC on our website and have been greatly enlightened by the views expressed, however negative in some cases.

As an example of some changes that we in the Federal Ministry of Education have made to our plan since the debate started, I would like to quote two. It was our original plan to teach Math and Science in English besides of course teaching English as a subject. To discuss the language issue, we convened a national conference in which we invited eminent educationists. The overwhelming advice was that besides English, which should be taught as a language, all other subjects from grade 1 to 5 should be taught either in Urdu or in the mother language. We accordingly made changes and now the provinces have the option of choosing either Urdu as a medium of instruction or any other mother language.

This was the case too when it came to textbooks. Our original plan was that SNC implementation would also mean a single textbook on all subjects, bar any other, in every school. While we still think that the model textbooks being prepared collectively by the provinces and the federation best reflect the curriculum and should be compulsory, we have not put any bar on any school using additional material or text books. Of course, the textbooks prepared by independent publishers would need approval from the provincial governments to ensure that they adhere to the curriculum. These are just two examples and we will continue to request for more comments and suggestions since that would help us refine our attempt at a single national curriculum.

At this stage it would be appropriate to explain our fundamental precepts and respond to some of the criticism. The first question that needs an answer is: why a single national curriculum? Why not let the status quo prevail, do nothing basically, as many are comfortable with whatever segmentation exists in our education

system? But this would be a cop out. The basic inequity in our education stares us in the face.

A small proportion of private schools with foreign certifications and a curriculum catering to it service the educational needs of the elite. The rest, whether low fee-paying private schools or government schools and madressahs, have different curricula and different certification teaching mostly in Urdu. This has divided the nation on class and income lines. Education provides the lens to see the world and it is not a surprise that the same phenomena are interpreted differently in our country depending on the kind of education received.

We have paid a heavy price for this disparity of perceptions. I am not saying that our internal conflicts, which have cost us so many lives, were only because of this but clearly different worldviews contributed to it. As a stark example I often say that if you put a child of a madressah and an elite school in the same room, they would have difficulty even talking to each other let alone agreeing on issues. Their frame of reference, language, values, narratives would all be different and reflective of a deep fracture in our collective national psyche.

To some writers this diversity is good and should remain to show the polyglot nature of our polity. They use terms like 'majoritarian religious nationalism' being imposed by the state to decry the attempt at reducing divisions within society. This is effete intellectualism that does not take into account realities on the ground. As a nation divided by perceptual walls we are weaker and unable to come up to many challenges that confront us including poverty, hunger and disease. The SNC is no panacea for all the ills that beset the nation but it is at least the beginning of an attempt to reduce the ideational collisions that we have faced.

This is not all. Our divided system perpetuates class division as our social eco system and political economy rewards elite education. The working of our government including exams for induction into elite government jobs, all reward an elite education. This is also true of the corporate world, higher education and in judicial working. The vast majority that studies in non-elite schools have to work extra hard or be immensely talented to make it but still a vast majority is left behind. This is educational apartheid in its true sense.

08-09-2020

The single national curriculum is an attempt to level the playing field somewhat. This does not mean reducing the higher standards of elite education but raising the level of all education and setting a uniform bar for everyone to move forward. It has been correctly pointed out that the disparities in our education system are not just because of the curriculum. The environment, the facilities, the teaching standards, and in many cases the home environment are fundamentally different. This is true. Making all schools somewhat equal is an impossible task.

But that does not mean that no attempt should be made to at least prescribe the same learning standards, benchmarks, and outcomes, in a common language, for all children. This would give everyone a somewhat equal opportunity – perfectly equal is impossible – to move forward whatever the income level/class. No reason why an attempt should not be made to reduce perceptual divisions to minimise conflict in society. A somewhat similar frame of reference may be an anathema in a nihilist world but a desirable state in most societies. No wonder national curricula are prescribed in almost every developed country. The list is endless but France, UK, most of Europe, China, Japan etc all have a national curriculum.

Our attempt at creating a single national curriculum has not been easy both technically and because of its complicated politics. Curriculum is a provincial subject after the 18th Amendment but we worked closely and in tandem with all provincial governments to come literally on the same page. We also created a national curriculum council that had all shades of public opinion to ensure the diversity of opinion available to us. On the technical side we studied many international curricula and also got feedback from Cambridge. We also had help from professionals of some major educational institutions of the country. The result we think is an outstanding curriculum for class 1 to 5, as good as any.

By: Shafqat Mahmood

Source: The News

The writer is the federal minister for education.

The famine

In 1973, Mukhtar Masood published his book, Awaz-e-Dost (the call of the friend). The book, while only having two essays in it, has over the years become an Urdu classic and is now in its 31st reprint edition. In the second essay titled Qehat-ur-Rijaal (the famine of men), Masood goes through the various stages of his own life, and that of Pakistan, to talk about the absolute dearth of good people in the society. He ends the chapter with a hope that after the years of drought, there will be years of a healthy harvest. That was 1973. Nearly, 50 years later, looking at the political arena, we are doing much worse. There is abject poverty that engulfs our streets, and a crippling famine when it comes to leadership. Looking at those who run several institutions of the government now — and those who have run them in the recent past — one is forced to ask: is this the best we can come up with? Instead of transparency, we have murky businesses in food chains abroad; instead of decency, we have vile attacks on women journalists; instead of accountability, we have vindictiveness. The famine is real and deeply rooted.

Today, our society is in the form of a pyramid, where the bottom of the pyramid is rich with people who are decent, kind, respectful, hardworking, intelligent and whose dealings are above board. People who have nothing to hide in their assets, and have lived their lives playing by the rules. Progressively, as we move up that pyramid, we are left with few of such people. At the very top, there is nothing left of the riches of the bottom. Instead, there is a famine of talent and competence at the top. There are occasional, and rare signs of life — but overall it looks pretty desolate. Because we refuse to nurture life, the famine engulfs it, leaving us all poorer. When you look at the pyramids of Giza in Egypt or the ones in Mexico from a distance, the eyes drift towards the top, not the bottom. When you look at the pyramid of leadership of the recent past, it is not a pretty sight.

Yet we choose to look the other way, come up with bizarre excuses to support the status quo, and decide that only a few people in the nation are smart and hence should be given complete and absolute authority to make decisions, irrespective of history telling us otherwise.

We deserve better. There is no shortage of good men and women in the country. In every institution, there are people who espouse the best of values. In the last few months we have seen the valour, selflessness and dedication of healthcare

workers as they have been at the forefront of Covid-19. Even when things were messy and their needs were genuine concerns about availability of appropriate equipment, there were plenty who inspired everyone around them. The pandemic is not the only instance where we see the clash between values of those in the limelight and those who are the light of humanity. We see the decency of men and women on the frontlines of the battle against polio every day, working for pennies, and feeding on broken promises, routinely sacrificing their lives. They do their job even when the leadership fails them repeatedly. While some may call them ordinary Pakistanis, they are anything but. Perhaps we should look for these ordinary folks, and for a change, move away from those who think that they are extraordinary or indispensable. We should not allow our best to stay at the bottom of the pyramid, we should stop feeding the famine.

By: Muhammad Hamid Zaman

Source: The Express Tribune

Mega Lecture

Accountability rush

Assets have become a four-letter word in Pakistani politics. Let talk begin of the 'assets' of anyone well known, especially in politics, and chances are it will not end well — or ever end.

From a prime minister (Nawaz Sharif) to a judge (Qazi Faez Isa) to a former military man (Asim Saleem Bajwa), they have all been accused of hiding their wealth and because it was not made public it is assumed that it was illegally gotten.

But what is even more fascinating is the reaction to these allegations made public. Our ability to buy them or reject them is directly linked to our political affiliation and not to the 'facts' made public. And because it's a matter of belief, the 'faith' is rarely shaken, regardless of what follows. Be it the case of the former prime minister or the current judge, or present cabinet members, political beliefs decide which side of the issue we will land on and stay, no matter what transpires later.

Is this because of the polarisation in our politics? Partly, this is so for our national political scene is rather Manichean these days and everything is either to be accepted for all its goodness or rejected entirely for being evil. Shades of grey are old-fashioned, even if the book so titled proved rather popular. In our part of the world, for those who follow politics closely, it's black and it's white, as Michael Jackson once crooned.

And, therefore, wealth is accepted or its accumulation deemed acceptable, or otherwise because of who the owner is. And not the size or origins of the wealth. Facts have never been less important.

But this, too, is only part of the story.

Another part of it is linked to the undocumented nature of the economy. Chances are that most of those who are well known and wealthy have riches they can't explain because of the manner in which businesses and people in Pakistan operate; figures are fudged and income tax evaded. And this is helped along by the law which says any 'remittance' from abroad will not be questioned. It is one of our, many, open secrets that unaccounted money is sent abroad through illegal means and then sent back through banking channels. And once this is done, the money is legit, till a fuss is kicked up for reasons other than the law and taxes. Such transactions would be found in many a bank account of the rich and the famous.

08-09-2020

And the second issue here is of the breakdown of our institutions. Be it the FBR or investigative agencies such as the FIA which should be looking into these matters and determining the facts, none of them is capable of doing this. The organisations are so compromised that their inquiries and decisions lead to no closure.

As a result, scandals or allegations turn into a never-ending soap. Take the case of Nawaz Sharif — from Hudaibiya to Panama to the JIT to the NAB courts, it's a story spanning decades and yet nothing is settled or resolved. Neither the details and reality of the 'wrongs' nor if they were really committed — those who believe in his innocence or his guilt do so by ignoring the actions and the findings of the state institutions, which in turn will declare him innocent or guilty, depending on the times and the political environment.

Hence, a case will be closed by the courts and in retrospect the decision will seem shady. Investigations will go on for years without anyone ever hearing anything and then suddenly they will move at breakneck speed and evidence will pile up faster than it is consumed. It is all, always, part of a game and rarely ever due to an institution doing its job.

This perhaps is the most worrying aspect. For without stronger institutions, none of these problems will ever be addressed. After all, Pakistan is not the only country where the powerful are able to influence the system; it happens elsewhere also. But at some stage, the allegations or the scandal is big enough for the institutions to ignore all pressure and just do their job. The Epstein or Weinstein convictions are a case in point. And this is essential if people are to still have some level of trust in the state.

But this is never our goal. Because for everyone involved, it's easier to keep NAB or FIA or even the trial courts so compromised that either accountability can be avoided or used for political ends. And this is true of the politicians as well as the establishment. And unfortunately, if there is any unspoken consensus between the two at the moment, it is to not address the larger systemic problems; instead, it's to continue manipulating the system for political ends.

And sadly, the rest of us have become part of the game. We, too, now want a general or a politician or a judge to be held accountable. For some the politician is more accountable because he is elected to office by the people; for others, a general should be because politicians have already offered themselves up for

accountability and paid a 'heavy price' more than once; and others still, a judge providing answers will ensure the fairness of the system. But no one seems interested in demanding stronger, more independent institutions which would do due diligence away from the public glare and also ensure that a scandal or an allegation is put to bed, one way or the other. However, in our part of the world, this is such a boring approach. And it doesn't allow us to beat our chest and announce our patriotic or liberal credentials. Grey, after all, is a four-letter word.

By: Arifa Noor

Source: DAWN

The writer is a journalist.

Mega Lecture

Japan's foreign policy: What's next after Shinzo Abe's exit?

Everybody seemed to know the result even before the game began.

Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party formally began its extraordinary presidential election on Tuesday to choose a successor to Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

According to projections by the Japanese media, incumbent Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga will most likely become the next Prime Minister of Japan. Suga has reportedly been endorsed by five out of seven factions or policy groups inside the LDP.

This, of course, may not be the endgame.

Neither of two other candidates, former Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida and former LDP Secretary General Shigeru Ishiba, seem to give up. Even though a "Suga administration" is likely to emerge from the election, its fate is tenuous. Should he fail to call a snap election this October, he may end up becoming a caretaker prime minister just for a year.

All you need to know about how Abe's successor will be chosen

While all eyes are on the internal politicking of the LDP, what is concerning is the foreign and national security policies of the next administration. Although all three candidates served under the Abe administration, what, if any, are the differences among them on foreign policy? Here's a quick rundown of their geopolitical views:

Suga: Maintain Tokyo's emphasis on the Japan-U.S. alliance. While promoting the Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategy, Suga wants to establish stable relations with neighbors as China. He also pledged to focus on the issues of Japanese abductees in North Korea.

Ishiba: Uphold and develop the strategy of FOIP. While enhancing the effectiveness of Japan-U.S. relations, Ishiba suggests creating an East Asian version of a NATO-like alliance mechanism. The former defense chief says he'll take the initiative to solve the abduction issue by opening liaison offices in Tokyo and Pyongyang.

Kishida: Bring the divided international community together by utilizing Japan's soft power such as science, technology, culture and art. The former foreign minister

08-09-2020

says he will step up efforts to be part of the rulemaking process in the international community, including establishing targets for sustainable economic development.

Although the three candidates have similar views on foreign affairs, they differ from each other in detail.

What is most striking is not what they have already stated, but what they would not officially discuss — namely their policies on China, Russia and South Korea, chiefly because of the sensitivity of the issues and for negotiation purposes.

Any way out for Japan-Russia negotiations?

The Asahi Shimbun editorial on Sept. 7 criticized the Abe administration's negotiating style with Russia as "too naive." It contends, "Without listening to experts, Abe hastened to make unprincipled concessions with no fruits and leaving heavy debts behind. The next administration must review this failure and make a fresh start."

It is easy to criticize, but difficult to implement and produce results. If you listen to fundamentalist Russia-hands, they will only recommend you stick to the principles and to not give in. If you do not move, however, nothing will happen. It was as simple as that.

Abe tried to convince President Vladimir Putin to make a strategic judgment that there would be a day when Beijing poses a strategic threat to Moscow in the future.

The Russians, unfortunately, were not ready because they failed to improve relations with the West. Until then, Tokyo can wait because Abe made no unprincipled concessions.

Will China take a softer line towards Japan?

The Mainichi Shimbun's editorial on Sept. 3 claims that "Abe's vision on the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) to confront China under close coordination with the U.S., Australia and India, has failed to maintain the difficult balance between deterring China in the security arena and befriending China economically."

But wait. When it comes to strategic judgment, what matters most is geopolitical calculations. Economic rationale is only valid during peace time. The relationship among Japan, China and the U.S. is asymmetrical. Unfortunately, Japan-China

relations are heavily dependent on relations between the U.S. and China. Tokyo need not and should not keep such balance between Beijing and Washington.

How will Seoul react?

The Asahi editorial on Sept. 3 also blames Abe, saying that, “After reaching an agreement on ‘comfort women’ with South Korean President Park Geun-hye, the Abe administration came into sharp collision with the Moon Jae-in administration, which could endanger the U.S.-Asia strategy based on the alliance with Tokyo and Seoul.”

On the contrary, it is President Moon Jae-in who truly endangered the U.S. policy toward Asia. The Moon administration is determined to change South Korea’s foreign policy. Seoul is homing in on its traditional balancing strategy and, unfortunately, the days of a U.S.-Japan-South Korea tripartite anti-communist alliance are over.

What will the Suga administration’s foreign policy look like?

Suga, whether he likes it or not, will have to succeed much of Abe’s foreign policy while refurbishing parts of it.

The fact remains that the foreign policy Abe pursued is one of the few realistic options available for Japan to cope with the strategic transformation in the 21st century for East Asia.

Suga may not seem to have as much foreign policy experience as Abe does. That said, we should not underestimate Suga, because, as the No. 2 man in the Abe administration, he has been involved in every major foreign policy decision made by Abe for the past seven years and eight months.

By: Kunihiko Miyake

Source: The Japan Times

The writer is president of the Foreign Policy Institute and research director at Canon Institute for Global Studies.

Mega Lecture