

The other face of Anglo-Saxons

Once again, the US and British planes used precision-guided missiles to hit three targets in the so-called southern no-fly zone in Iraq. Army Col. Rick Thomas of U.S. Central Command in Tampa, Florida, said allied planes in the region had hit communications, radar and missile sites in Iraq. As usual, the Americans suppressed the details on Iraqi civilian casualties and the extent of damage to the Iraqi civilian sites.

It was at least the second time this week that allied planes struck Iraqi civilian targets in the no-fly zones. The recent air strikes once again raised questions about the legal justification of no-fly zones in the skies above Iraq. The US and Britain imposed two zones arbitrary after the Gulf war, in a bid to paralyse Iraq militarily and ensure that Iraq could never be able to rebuild its armed forces. The second objective is to protect Israel from a possible Iraqi missile attacks.

No other nation ever recognised the no-fly zones. Even France described the no-fly zones as illegal and violation of the sovereignty of Iraq over its air space. France maintained that whatever was justified in 1991 was not necessarily justified 11 years later, when the reasons for continuing the air patrols might have changed. France no longer takes part in policing the no-fly zones, and the US and the UK are now alone in the Security Council in insisting on their frequent bombing of Iraqi

targets even as such bombings are in complete variance with international law. Other countries, notably China and Russia, have condemned the no-fly zones as violation of Iraqi sovereignty, and they insist there is no backing for the policy under international law or UN resolutions.

Following the massive use of force against the military and economic infrastructure of Iraq in the 1991, few would have imagined that over a decade later, it would be the US that would remain in trenches. No sane person could have supported the Security Council resolutions against Iraq, if it was known that the sanctions would continue indefinitely and would lead to the massacre of over two million civilians, mostly children.

Imagine what would be the reactions of the Anglo-Saxons in Washington and London if similar sanctions were imposed against Israel. Imagine the

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wave of the Western moralists on "massive human rights violation." But, the Anglo-Saxons preach something and act another. By now, their slogans of human rights are hollow. The Anglo-Saxons ruling in Washington and London have proved that they have no heart. They are deliberately pursuing a policy of annihilation of a proud people --- the Iraqi people.

For many in the region, life has moved on. But for Iraq's civilian population, the Gulf war never ended. United Nations sanctions have destroyed its economy, driving millions into poverty and contributing to more than two million excess deaths among children alone, according to the UNICEF.

The hatred of the United States and British against the people of Iraq has crossed every limit. Both countries used their military, political and economic power to destroy Iraq's oil revenues for more than a decade. Iraq has been unable to rebuild its economy and infrastructure. Recovery remains as elusive as a desert mirage. However, Iraq managed to improve its air defence system despite the 11 years old sanctions. Iraq recently fired a surface-to-air missile at an American U-2 spy plane

over southern Iraq. As a result, the United States and British warplanes committed series of air strikes.

The Bush Administration's first major air strike against Iraq occurred last February. In reckless disregard for civilians, this raid employed cluster bombs against targets on the outskirts of Iraq's capital, Baghdad.

In June, a misdirected US missile hit a soccer field near the northern Iraqi city of Mosul, killing 23 civilians. US and British warplanes routinely patrol so-called no-fly zones, which cover 65 per cent of Iraq's territory. Yet, these zones are not authorised by the United Nations or backed by the coalition forces. Nevertheless, the United States and Britain have regularly bombed command centres, anti-aircraft batteries, radar stations and other military targets in the longest sustained air campaign since the Vietnam war.

Despite US claims that the zones protect Iraqi Shi'ites in the south and Iraqi Kurds in the north, these military exchanges have killed more than 300 civilians mainly Shiites and Kurds since December 1998, according to the UN

office of the humanitarian co-ordinator for Iraq. That is, the

Anglo-Saxons are killing or contributing to killing Shiites and Kurds instead of protecting them.

Marking a departure from the Clinton Administration, which refused to acknowledge any US responsibility for the plight of the Iraqi people, US Secretary of State Colin Powell has made reforming US sanctions policy toward Iraq a top priority. During a February visit to the United Nations, he said, "We have sympathy for the children of Iraq." To Powell, this means making sanctions against Iraq "smarter." With its proposed "smart" sanctions, the Bush administration wants the United Nations to take more complete control of Iraqi oil revenues and cross-border trade while allowing Iraq to import a greater range of consumer goods under the oil-for-food programme.

Although more civilian supplies may be imported, this proposal is fundamentally flawed. "Smart" sanctions don't allow the foreign investment needed to overhaul Iraq's oil sector. This seriously diminishes oil revenues available to finance the rebuilding of Iraq's civilian infrastructure, which is central to restoring public health, according to UN agencies working in Iraq.

The proposal provides no cash for Iraq's civil sector. Current sanctions have devastated the country's economy, contributing to the collapse of Iraq's currency. Doctors, nurses, teachers and water and sanitation engineers will remain unable to do their jobs, regardless of whether more consumer goods are allowed into Iraq. Washington should break the deadlock on Iraqi oil revenues and remove other obstacles that prevent restoring public health and normal economic life in Iraq. With US forces in the gulf, an international ban on arms sales to Iraq, the United States and Britain plan to contain Iraq.

Yet 11 years later, the Iraqi people are still caught in the crossfire. The Bush administration should end the U.S.-led siege against the civilians of Iraq. It's time to climb out of the trenches. If the

Americans and the British continue with the primitive policy of using force as an instrument in fulfilling foreign policy objectives, anything could happen in the region. By this policy, the Anglo Saxons are inciting frustrated people to be suicide bombers.

Most social scientists believe that a society's structure and values can influence its suicide rates

By Mohammed Saleem Shaikh

Suicide has long been recognised as a grave social problem—not as an act of bravery, but as an act of cowardice. Individuals who resort to it, however, call it a necessary evil, which extricates them from the cobweb of social problems like frustration, depression, melancholy and anything else they suffer and fail to cope with. More clearly, they assume it to be a panacea for all their grievances of daily life.

Depression, however, is deemed to be the number one cause of suicide. Many a psychologists and sociologists are of the view that people kill themselves with their own hands, for they suffer from depression that occurs owing to economic crisis, failure in love or study, isolation, sense of degradation, etc.

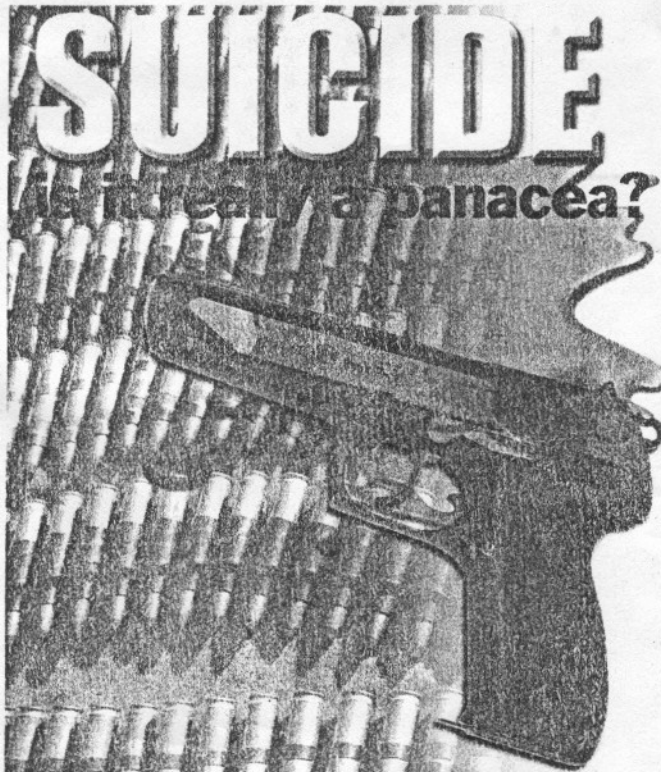
According to Suicide Awareness Voices of Education (SAVE), approximately 30,000 people kill themselves in America alone every year. It is estimated that the actual figure may be three times that number due to inaccurate reporting, ie, suicides recorded as accidental instead. The Journal of the American Medical Association has reported that 95% of all suicides occur at the peak of a

society

depressive episode. Healthy people do not extinguish themselves! However, as per the researches, today suicide rates among the top ten causes of death in the Western society and approximately more than 30,000 suicidal deaths occur annually.

Depressive illnesses, that may lead one to suicide, can distort or crush a person's thinking; therefore, they do not think clearly or rationally. They may not know that they have a treatable illness, or they may think that they can no more be rescued with help. Their illnesses can trigger within themselves thoughts of hopelessness and helplessness, despair and frustration, which may then take them to suicidal thoughts.

Various research reports' findings, as reported by SAVE, mostly people who kill happen to be very



in some way. A person with depression does not think like a typical person who is feeling good. Their illnesses prevent them from being able to look forward to anything. They can only think about the present and lose the ability to imagine the future. Often, they do not realise they are suffering from a treatable illness. Seeking help may not even enter their mind. They do not think of the people around them, family or friends, because of their illnesses. They are consumed with emotional, and many times, physical pain that becomes unbearable. They do not see any way out. They feel hopeless and helpless. They do not want to die, but it is the only way they feel their pain will end.

Most social scientists believe that a society's structure and values can influence suicide rates. French sociologist Emile

that suicide was more likely when a person lacked social bonds or had relationships disrupted through a sudden change in status, such as unemployment. As one example of the significance of social bonds, suicide rates among adults are lower for married people than for the divorced, widowed, or single people.

Numerous studies have revealed that suicide rate varies from one age group to another. Of all age groups, the elderly have the highest suicide rates, particularly white men over the age of 75. The increased rate of suicide among elderly people appears mostly due to the debilitating effects of physical illnesses, losses of social roles and relationships, and untreated depression. Suicide rates for people between the ages of 15 and 24 tripled between 1980

or divorce of their parents; or child abuse or neglect. The parents of those who attempt suicide have a greater frequency of mental illnesses and substance abuses, than other parents. Being an intentional and self-inflicted death, however, suicide occurs in all types of families and cultures including those with little apparent turmoil.

Indeed, fluctuations in social and economic conditions frequently result in changes in the suicide rate. In the United States, for example, suicide rates declined during World War I (1914-1918) and World War II (1939-1945), when unemployment was low, but increased during the Great Depression of the 1930s, when unemployment was high. Occasionally, people commit suicide as a form of protest against the policies of a particular government. Mass suicides, in which large numbers of people kill themselves at the same time, are extremely rare. The most famous mass suicides occurred in AD 73 at Masada in what is now southern Israel, when 960 Jews killed themselves rather than face enslavement by Roman captors; and in 1978 in Jonestown, Guyana, when more than 900 cult members committed suicide following the orders of their leader, Jim Jones.

During the last few years, the rate of suicide has alarmingly accelerated. We daily observe and read about it in the newspapers, listen about it from our friends, relatives and many other sources. The state of our society and social system of disparity is a major cause of many a social, economic, cultural, political problems facing our country for last many years. And suicide is fast emerging to be one such problem plaguing our society.

The cause may be anything from failure in love, loss of a job, depression or mania, to unemployment, starvation and price hikes. Here, experts unanimously maintain that the most up-to-date research reports on mounting figures of suicide should not astonish those who have been following events in the country for the last few years. As we celebrate our entry into the elite nuclear club, the country goes ban't out with a million reduced

young people, an increased use of drugs in this population, and the increased availability of firearms in the home.

Suicide rates also vary between men and women and between ethnic groups. Men complete about 80 percent of all suicides. However, women attempt suicide three times as frequently as men. In the US, among men, Native Americans have the highest suicide rate, followed by whites. White men and women account for about 90 percent of all suicides. Thus, it can be obviously said that countries where people with modern lifestyles, advance technologies and prosperity have also observed escalating ratio of suicide.

Studies prove that although suicidal people do not appear to be under greater life stress than

undiagnosed and untreated. Because depression, being a fundamental cause, so often underlies suicide, psychiatrists are of the view that studying the causes of depression can help scientists understand the causes of suicide. Other mental illnesses, such as bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, and anxiety disorders may also contribute a great deal to suicidal behaviour.

One may be astonished to know that as per medical research, suicidal behaviour runs in families, suggesting that genetic and biological factors play a role in one's suicide risk possibilities. For instance, among one community of Amish people in Pennsylvania, almost three-quarters of all suicides that happened over a 100-year period were in just four families. Studies of twins reared apart provide some support for a genetic influence in suicide.

In the early 1900s, Austrian psycho-analyst Sigmund Freud developed some of the first psychological theories of suicide. He stressed the role of hostility turned against the self. American psychiatrist Karl Menninger elaborated on Freud's ideas. He suggested that all suicides have three interrelated and unconscious dimensions: *r e v e n g e / h a t e*, depression/hopelessness, and guilt.

Cognitive theorists, who study how people process information, underline the role of inflexible thinking or tunnel vision "life is awful, death is the only substitute" and an inability to generate solutions to problems. According to psychologists, many suicidal attempts are symbolic cries for help, an effort to reach out and receive attention.

Pakistan is facing the same problem. The problem has become a major challenge for the society at large, and it must be solved without further ado. In Pakistan, the rapid growth rate of suicides is the result of socio-economic deprivation of most the country's population. The sheer failure of the administrative set-up, still based on the philosophy of ex-colonists. Besides exploitation by the elites and capitalist, and social injustice-cum-inequality has despaired the people, particularly youth. The economic

Over the past few years, major downsizing has been a characteristic feature of our economy, with the result that thousands of people have lost their jobs. Government is still considering ways to further slash its expenditures by sacking its employees. It is, under any definition, unproductive solution of the problem, which has produced no more positive effects that the country is appallingly facing. Does the government ever think of what would happen to the unemployed? Have they ever thought about what would happen to their families?

Unless the economic conditions of the country get better, Pakistan would continue to observe a rising rate of suicides. Most suicide cases unveil such persons who have been trying their utmost in order to find a lucrative job for a secure life. But the more they try, the worse they face. Alternatively one, seeing no way out, finds refuge in the extraordinary act of taking one's own life.

There are also some other surprising causes of suicides in Pakistan. For instance, numerous studies have revealed that even students commit suicide. In almost all cases, either examination or study pressure was cited as the predominant reason, which had nothing to do with economics. It is, therefore, a sociologically proven reason which plays a central role in determining why young people commit suicide without showing signs of distress.

Unfortunately, in Pakistan young individuals are exposed to escalating violence, drug abuse, financial burden, frustrations and general hopelessness. All of this results in depression, which mainly contributes to suicidal inclination.

What should be done to address this problem? There is an obvious need for some sort of a support system, which can identify and help out individuals suffering from suicidal tendencies. It is critical that the society recognises warning signs. But there is still a stigma associated with these illnesses which prevents public awareness and early treatment for them. The topic of suicide has been taboo. It is a subject which is somehow not understood clearly by people.