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MARCH - 2018



Compiled, Articles, Editorials, Opinion & News for the Month of March - 2018

4/20/2018

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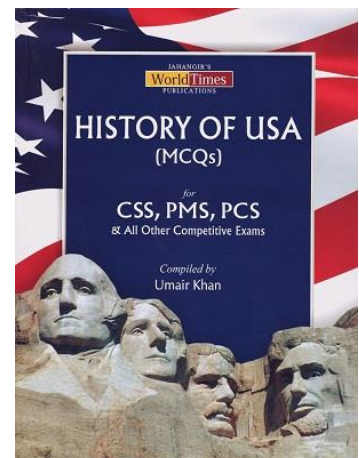
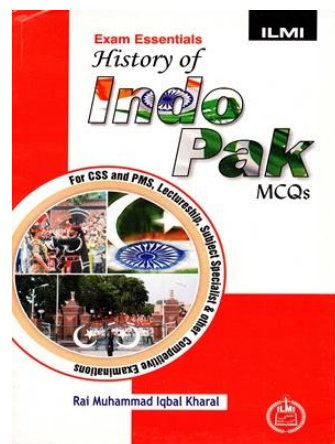
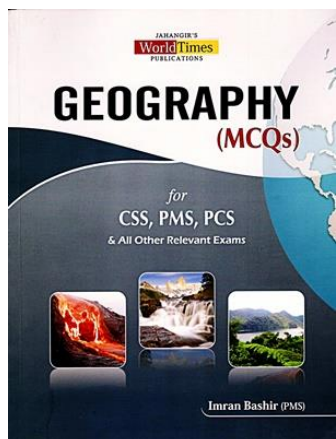
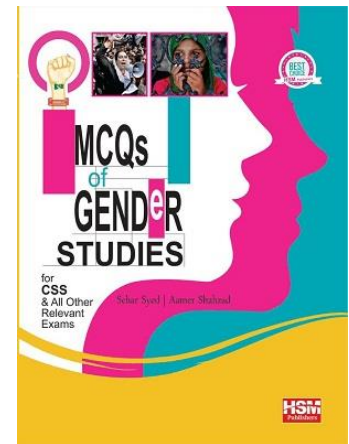
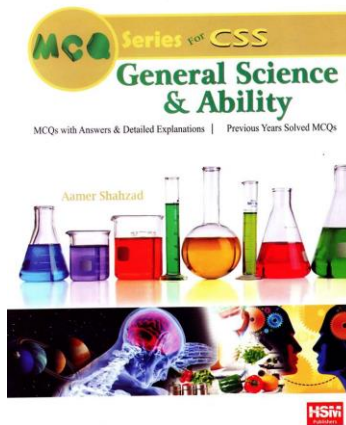
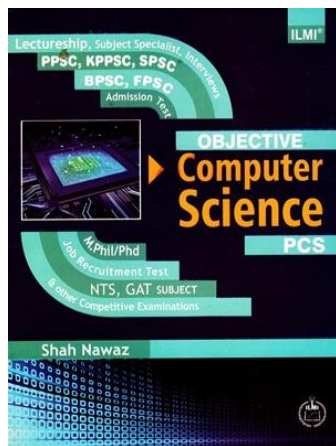
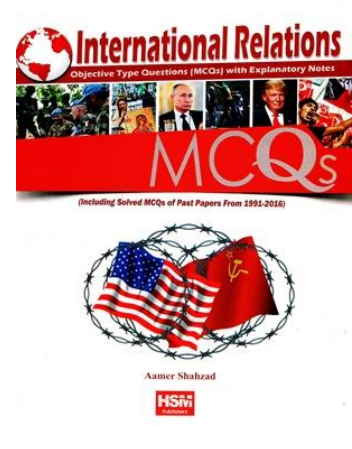
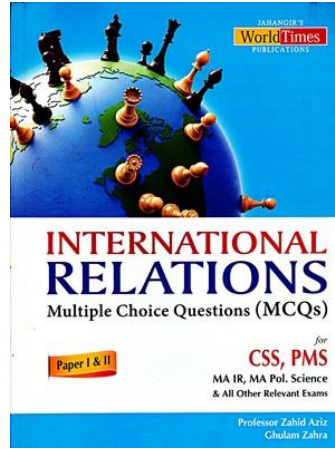
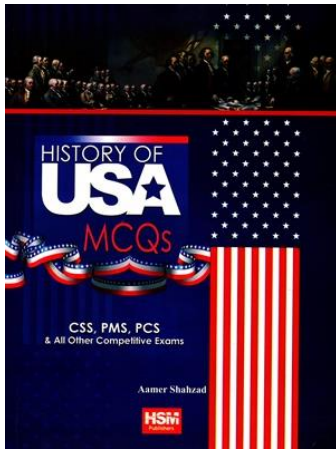
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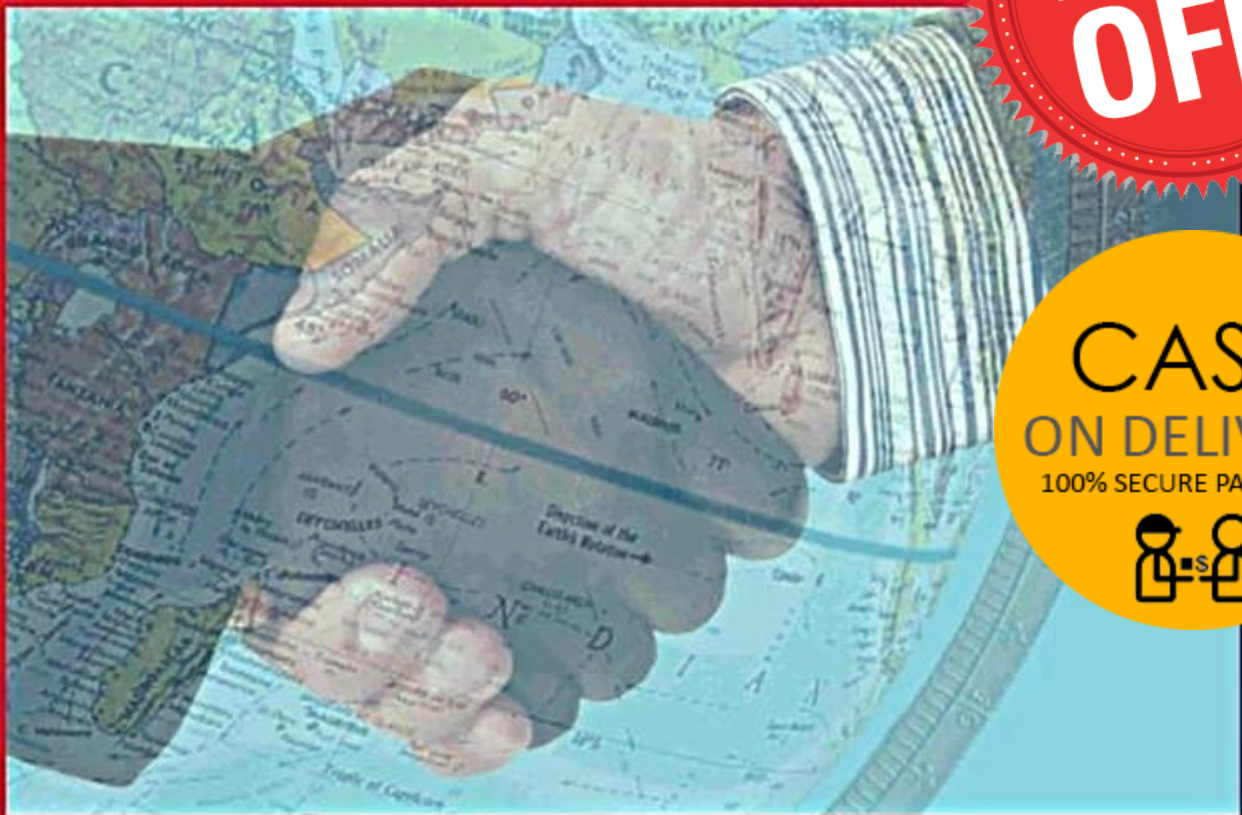
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Contents

PAKISTAN

Struggle vs terror By Salman Tarik Kureshi 8

De-radicalising face of Pakistan By Gulshan Rafiq 10

CPEC: western route and Balochistan By Hasaan Khawar..... 12

Water supply, demand gap to reach 31% by year 2025 By Sehrish Wasif..... 14

Pendulum-like relationship | Editorial 16

Lip service to gender equality in Pakistan By Yasmeen Aftab Ali..... 17

Ties with Iran | Editorial 19

Pakistan’s new old foreign policy By Shahzaib Khan 20

US – Losing Pakistan By Imran Malik 23

Threat from IS | Editorial 25

Back on the same bridge By M Ziauddin..... 27

What is wrong with preliminary delimitation By Sarwar Bari..... 29

ECONOMY

Circular debt | Editorial 32

Pakistan’s current account deficit increases by 50 %..... 33

Where the economy stands By Waqar Masood Khan..... 35

EDUCATION

Guns or books By Zubeida Mustafa 38

Educational fault lines By Raja Khalid Shabbir..... 40

Extremism and our educational institutions By Dr Raza Khan 42

WORLD

A U.S. Containment Strategy for Syria By Aaron Stein 44

What a U.S.–North Korean Summit Means for Japan By Sheila A. Smith 48

Saudi Arabia’s dramatic changes By Talat Masood 53

How to Save the Iran Nuclear Deal By Ilan Goldenberg and Elizabeth Rosenberg 56

Another US volte-face in Afghanistan? | Editorial..... **60**

Trade for development By Munir Akram..... **61**

The Trump-Kim Summit Is No Game Changer By Steven Metz **64**

Putin outsmarts rivals: Comes back to power stronger than ever **66**

The significance of Indo-US alliance for Pakistan By Nawazish Ali..... **68**

How Syrian Conflict Sparked New Cold War? – OpEd By Nauman Sadiq..... **71**

Nuclear weapons | Editorial..... **74**

What Putin’s Reelection Means for Russia and the World By Nikolas K. Gvosdev..... **76**

How to stop a US-China trade war before it starts By Daniel Moss **79**

Is Trump getting his way on global trade By Shahid Javed Burki..... **81**

PAKISTAN

Struggle vs terror By Salman Tarik Kureshi

(PAID CONTENT) Faith and Feminism in Pakistan By Afiya Zia The book is a must read for all those opting for Gender Studies. It will also help immensely in Essay Paper. Order Now: <http://thecsspoint.com/link/0487> Call/SM: 03324437060 — at The CSS Point.

“ONE man’s terrorist,” goes the received wisdom, “Is another’s freedom fighter”. But this is foggy thinking, the kind of value assumption that justifies whichever side one feels sympathetic towards. The assumption that terrorist violence is a component of most liberation movements and revolutions bears examination.

The largest and most significant of liberation struggles, that of our own subcontinent, was driven by the non-violent agitational campaigns of Mahatma Gandhi and the parliamentary constitutionalism of the Quaid. The terrorist tactics of, say, the RSS, were aberrations that played a negligible role in the totality of these freedom movements.

Elsewhere, too, national freedom has been attained through agitation (South Africa, Kenya, Ghana), constitutional negotiation (Sri Lanka, Nigeria), armed struggle (Turkey, Vietnam, Algeria, Bangladesh), even military coups d’état (Egypt, Libya) and a host of other means. Terror against non-combatants was not a major strategic component of these liberation movements. Terror was successfully employed by the Zionists, but that was a done deal anyhow, and by the Palestinians (notably without success).

Beyond freedom movements, is there a relationship between revolutionaries and terrorists? I have previously likened terrorists to storm crows flying before the winds of incipient revolution. There’s an enormous amount of violence that accompanies revolutions, almost axiomatically. As Mao Zedong said, “You can’t make an omelette without breaking eggs.” But does revolutionary violence deliberately target innocent non-combatants? Is terrorism part of revolutionary strategy?

Is there a link between revolutionaries and terrorists?

In the French Revolution, the guillotine was kept busy severing heads. But the French Terror was directed, first, against the functionaries and perceived supporters of the ancien regime and, thereafter, against factions of the revolutionaries themselves.

Pre-revolution Russia witnessed successive bursts of terrorist violence from such groups as the Decembrists, the Nihilists and the Narodnaya Volnya populists. However, both the Bolshevik and Menshevik factions of the Russian Social Democratic Party, which actually conducted the 1917 revolution, were explicit in their denunciation of terrorist methods.

The violence of the socialists' campaigns against the Kulaks, the purges within the Bolsheviks themselves and the Stalinist purges were after, and not part of, the revolution.

The Chinese revolution comprised the campaigns of an armed revolutionary force — the Red Army — during the 1930s and 1940s. Mao was especially careful to target land barons, warlords and the Japanese, and not the ordinary people, who were thought of as the 'sea' in which the communists 'swam like fish'. The campaigns of large-scale mass violence, and the later internecine violence of the Red Guards against the communists themselves during the Cultural Revolution, occurred well after the revolution.

As Lenin said, "A revolution is not a pink tea party." In each of these cases, there was violence aplenty against the leaders of the pre-revolutionary tyrannies. Successful revolutions used violence to clean up perceived remnants of the old order, and then resolved factional disputes amongst revolutionaries themselves in that strange process where revolutions seem to devour their own children.

Now, many may consider the violence of revolutions unacceptably wasteful of human life. The point is that, barring occasional aberrant behaviour accompanying the breakdown of a state, we have not previously seen terror against non-combatants being systematically used as part of revolutionary strategy. In fact, it was considered counterproductive and cowardly. Both Lenin and Mao categorically rejected terrorist tactics and denounced the perpetrators of such occurrences.

But, come the media age of the 21st century, and things have changed. Beginning with the spectacular attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon in September 2001, which many of us saw happening in real time on our TV sets, terrorist tactics have been the principal component of the campaigns of the so-called Islamist militants — whether the TTP and various Lashkars and Jaishes in Pakistan, the Afghan Taliban, IS in the Middle East, Boko Haram in West Africa, etc.

Traditional revolutionaries and liberationists eschewed terror tactics against the non-combatants they hoped to lead. But today's religious warriors observe no such niceties. They are uninterested in cultivating democratic support or catalysing popular uprisings. Their methodology is to terrorise local populations into submission, in order to enjoy the power gained from running their proto-states. Simultaneous terrorist actions against the West prompted the emergence there of the likes of Trump, le Pen, Wilders, Farage, etc, thereby promoting hatred, divisions and barriers between nations.

Terrorism, I would suggest, is not the weapon of the weak, but of the vicious. Such an appreciation is especially significant today, when such asinine mantras as 'negotiating with the Taliban' are doing the rounds of power corridors here and abroad.

Source : <https://www.dawn.com/news/1395374/struggle-vs-terror>

De-radicalising face of Pakistan By Gulshan Rafiq

Radicalisation has risen as a gigantic challenge for Pakistani society. It is by and large accepted to be activated by reasons that are identified with political and religious numbness, destitution, disintegration of lawfulness, a biased social structure, unjustifiable government approaches, and psychological, local, provincial and worldwide components.

Numerous variables, perhaps unique for men and women, may add to radicalisation. The attention on women is essential with regard to Pakistan where women shape 48.76 per cent of the aggregate populace in a male-ruled society that forces limitations on women for the sake of religion and culture, regularly binding them to their homes. In any case, patterns are changing now as an ever-increasing number of women are working in all circles of life close by men. Yet, contrasts hold on in the lives of women in urban and country regions. Pakistan is a patriarchal society where social practices and oppression against women are overflowing. It is not unprecedented for women to be dealt with as chattel. They are not just victimised as far as human services, training and legacy, yet in addition much of the time move towards becoming casualties of aggressive behaviour at home, barbaric and banned traditions, for example, karo-kari and marriage to the Quran to keep the family property inside the family.

This circumstance mirrors the vulnerabilities of women, who endure avoidance, underestimation and concealment because of a moderate outlook towards them and are powerless to radicalisation. Clarifying the reasons behind radicalisation among ladies, Margot Bardan, author of *Feminism in Islam*, says that women who end up helpless against the blandishments of radical fanaticism are individuals who are poor and uneducated or under-instructed and the socially underestimated or uprooted.

The patterns of radicalisation among Pakistani women can be followed back to the Afghan Jihad when ladies assumed a dynamic part by giving logistical assistance on the combat zone. In any case, a dynamic part of women in Pakistan regarding radicalisation wound up to the world amid the 2007 Lal Masjid/Jamia Hafsa standoff where activist men and ladies tested the writ of the state in Islamabad. Publications by extremist associations have likewise filled in as a successful apparatus to spread radicalisation among women. Extremist organisations utilise their publications to advance their belief system, and their restricted meaning of jihad to persuade ladies to convince male relatives to participate. On account of an absence of access to dependable data, ladies can without much of a stretch succumb to such radical promulgation. Rex Hudson, author of *The Sociology and Psychology of Terrorism*, expresses that ladies, being more hopeful than men, might be more headed to take part in extremist activities. Militants in Pakistan also rely on women for protection to continue their activities and to hide from the authorities, using them as

“human shields”, as they are not exposed to as thorough checking when accompanied by women.

It is in this setting the investigation of radicalisation among Pakistani women winds up noteworthy in the present militant and political milieu of Pakistan. This foundation features the need to investigate the effect of socio-economic, religious and political factors on radicalisation of women, through accumulation of their observations. In spite of men being the vital workers, women in Pakistan have a generous part in residential undertakings as mothers, little girls, sisters and spouses. It is acknowledged that the mother is the principal wellspring of learning for youngsters’ moral training for her life partner, and gives physical care to her kids as well as plans their essential ideology. Therefore there is a need for an endeavour to examine the opinions of the women from both rustic and urban zones in all parts of the country to decide patterns and examples of radicalisation.

Source : <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1659013/6-de-radicalising-face-pakistan/>

CPEC: western route and Balochistan By Hasaan Khawar

During his recent visit to China, a senator claimed knowing that there was no mention of the western route in the Chinese records of CPEC. The statement fuelled widespread speculations on social media about ignoring Balochistan in CPEC's development. It is however important to look at the facts and ascertain if these speculations hold any merit.

There are three planned alignments within CPEC: eastern, central and western, routes, with the last being critically important since it runs through underdeveloped areas of K-P and Balochistan. The western route will connect Islamabad-Peshawar (M-1) motorway with Gwadar, through DI Khan, Zhob and Quetta.

Mamnoon urges Baloch youth to learn Chinese language

Let's first see if Chinese record has any mention of the western route or if it only exists in Pakistani plans. Initially developed by the Chinese National Development and Reform Commission and China Development Bank, based on an earlier much detailed document, CPEC's long-term plan has been publicly released. The approved LTP therefore is a direct reflection of Chinese plans.

The LTP clearly mentions construction and development of DI Khan-Quetta-Sohrab-Gwadar road, while the Sukkur-Quetta link forms one of three critical axes of CPEC. The LTP also mentions developing Quetta as a key node, besides other cities, as well as establishing the western logistics corridor business zone. The detailed version describes this as the zone for logistics, mineral exploration and ecological conservation encompassing Gwadar, Quetta and DI Khan. With so many details in the LTP, it is hard to believe that the Chinese are unaware of the western route.

Let's also look at the progress made so far on the western alignment. The 1,153km-long route consists of four parts. The first is the 280km-long Hakla-DI Khan Motorway (also known as Brahma Bahtar-Yarik Motorway), starting from Hakla interchange on M1 and culminating at Yarik, DI Khan. The contract to build this 4-lane road was divided into five packages and awarded to various contractors, including NLC, FWO and others. The construction on various parts is underway.

The second part comprises the already existing N-50 National Highway between DI Khan and Quetta passing through Zhob, which is being upgraded under the Asian Development Bank's National Highway Development Sector Investment Program. The third part includes 470kms of upgrades to N-25 highway from Sorab to Hoshab near Turbat, which is also reportedly complete. The fourth and the last part is M-8 motorway between Hoshab and Gwadar that has also been built. The under-construction part of M-8 will continue all the way to Khuzdar creating an alternative route. The western route may be getting bulk of its financing from sources other than CPEC, but considering the substantial physical

progress on ground, it becomes quite clear that the western route is a reality and remains a core priority for the government.

Balochistan governor for establishing more industrial zones

There is however a need to look for underlying problems that have caused such speculations. The government's policy to share minimum information with the public has caused some serious mistrust. The public disclosure of LTP by the planning minister was a good step but there is a need to share more. For instance, the official CPEC website still shows that land is being acquired for N50 but the project is way beyond that stage. Similarly, there is no mention of Brahma Bahtar-Yarik Motorway on CPEC's website. The website also does not clearly explain how these routes have been divided into various packages and the progress made till now.

Moreover, at a deeper level the issue is of the sense of deprivation of Balochistan being the least-developed province. More than 7 out of 10 people in Balochistan live in poverty, as compared to three-four in Punjab and Sindh. It has the highest illiteracy rate, lowest immunisation coverage and lowest number of households using electricity as source for lighting or gas as main fuel for cooking. There is an immediate need to attend to these development disparities and ensure that the province is fully integrated into future economic development plans. A peaceful and prosperous Balochistan is central to CPEC's success, without which the project's benefits can never be reaped.

Source : <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1658041/6-cpec-western-route-balochistan/>

Water supply, demand gap to reach 31% by year 2025 By Sehrish Wasif

ISLAMABAD: The gap between availability of water and its demand is forecast to increase at an alarming rate from four percent in 2011 to 31% by 2025.

Chairman Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources (PCRWR) Dr Muhammad Ashraf told The Express Tribune that the surge in population with time is resulting in increased demand of water and its availability is low due to the impact of global warming.

“In 1960 water availability per person was 5,600 cubic meter and now it has reduced to 1,000 cubic meter, which itself is shocking,” he said.

Dr Ashraf said that one of the major threats Pakistan faces is the rapid increase in population and urbanization.

“Without controlling population growth, Pakistan can never address water scarcity in the country and even the construction of new water reservoirs would not be of much help,” said Dr Ashraf. The chairman further expressed his concern over water scarcity and its impact on crops.

“Government of Pakistan is working closely with the Australian government to find out ways, opportunities and possibilities to grow all crops with less water,” he said.

World’s leading bottled water brands contaminated with plastic particles: report

The Australian High Commissioner for Pakistan Margaret Adamson assured full support of the Australian Government to Agriculture and Water Resources Management in Pakistan.

She briefed that the Australian Water Program is a 15 million AUD assistance program, comprising a large policy investment.

Earlier while addressing participants of a seminar titled, “Sustainable Irrigated Agriculture under Changing Climate” held to mark the World Water Day, 2018 which is on March 22, Dr Ashraf said, “PCRWR in collaboration with its knowledge partners is taking various initiatives to improve water productivity. Recent example is Irrigation Advisory to 20,000 farmers through text messaging.”

Federal Secretary Ministry of Science and Technology Yasmeen Masood stressed on the need of disseminating new, cost effective and innovative solution to address water scarcity in agriculture.

Salt Resistant Crops

In a separate discussion held here on Thursday, about the “Advances in Increasing the Salinity Tolerance of Crops, organized by the OIC Ministerial Standing Committee on

Scientific and Technological Cooperation (COMSTech), world renowned authority on food security Professor Mark Tester explained how the twin challenges of meeting food requirements of a rapidly growing world population and very limited availability of fresh water are being addressed by the development of crop varieties, which are resistant to saline water.

Prof. Tester's research group on Salinity at the King Abdul Aziz University of Science and Technology (KAUST) in Saudi Arabia is actively addressing this serious problem by using the science of Genomics to identify the genes, which enable plants to survive in saline conditions.

These genes are then incorporated within existing plant varieties such as barley, tomatoes, etc. to develop new crop varieties, which can flourish in stressful, saline conditions. An immediate implementation of this technology is that seawater or brackish water, which constitutes 97% of the world's water resources, can be utilized for agriculture, satisfying the food demands of countries such as Pakistan that have rapidly depleting freshwater resources.

The professor also described other parallel efforts whereby existing saline resistant wild plants are being modified to make them suitable for food consumption. He said that there is an ongoing collaboration in this area with scientists at Pakistan's National Institute for Biotechnology and Genetic Engineering (NIBGE) and lauded their efforts in developing 254 transgenic wheat varieties using the techniques pioneered by Prof. Tester's team.

The Coordinator General of COMSTech Dr Shaukat Hameed Khan stressed the serious threat posed to Pakistan's agriculture by the depletion of its aquifer system. This is especially relevant because the Indus Basin Water Treaty assumed 75% of cropping intensity whereas it has crossed 156% by 2016.

Source : <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1661330/1-water-supply-demand-gap-reach-31-year-2025/>

Pendulum-like relationship | Editorial

The Iranian foreign minister, a shrewd diplomat who engineered the Iran nuclear deal with the West against overwhelming odds, is on a three day official visit to Pakistan in an effort to enhance pitifully low trade volume, sort out bilateral problems and hold talks on terrorism and other regional matters. Heading a high-level 30-member delegation, he is expected to meet civilian and military bigwigs, address an influential think tank and economic forum, and finally with his large entourage of business persons, visit the country's economic hub, Karachi. Unfortunately, despite much bonhomie, especially at people level, past experience shows that the Pak-Iran political relations, otherwise expected to be brotherly and good neighbourly, are in fact intricate and complex, for various reasons. The recent upsurge in leadership contacts has helped to eschew direct confrontation, and hopefully the present visit would prove in the nature of a breakthrough, as both countries face nearly identical internal and external threats.

Relations with India and Saudi Arabia are perceived to be the main bone of contention between the two. Pakistan's close ties with the Kingdom are looked upon with suspicion by Tehran, although it is not in the former's own interest to be involved in a shooting war based on a personalised, sectarian misadventure, while Pakistan looks askance at Iran's deepening ties with existential threat India, and recent leasing of Chahbahar to the Indians, though it is being assured that the port would not be used against Pakistan. The threat of increased US sanctions on Iran, the latter's difficulties with European Union over its missile programme, Pakistan's anemic economy, the FATF sword hanging over its head, make close economic liaison, especially in trade, of the utmost importance for both. Pakistan's commercial banks should vigorously take the lead in promoting commerce, and government prudently settle the long delayed Pakistan end of the Iran gas pipeline, a big hurdle in ties and trust. Bilateral annual trade target of Rs.5 billion from the current Rs1.2 billion should now be a top priority. Applying the rigid, Maoist formula of 'the enemy of my enemy is my friend', can only bring twin grief in the Pak-Iran case.

Source : <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2018/03/13/pendulum-like-relationship/>

Lip service to gender equality in Pakistan By Yasmeen Aftab Ali

The Charter of United Nations in 1945 was the first international agreement which affirmed the principle of equality between both genders. The status of women was affirmed and strengthened through bilateral agreements, internationally agreed upon goals that strengthen the position of women around the world.

It was in 1909 that the first National Women Day was observed in US on the 28th of February. It was dedicated to the 1908 garment workers strike in New York aimed to raise a voice against the working conditions there by the Socialist Party of America.

In Pakistan as well, this day is celebrated with great fanfare. In February 2018, the United Nations released a report on gender equality. The report was for Sustainable Development Agenda 2030 with Pakistan being one of the four countries focused. The women forming part of the survey were usually married under the age of 18. They were hardly, if at all, educated and were non-working hands. The women of marginalised ethnic groups are even worse off. According to this report the ethnically marginalised group is the Pashtuns, Sindhi and Saraiki. Clean cooking fuel is a luxury for two-third of women taken for sampling and one third has no facilities for sanitation. The rural and urban divide has the greatest degree of disparity in education. 98.8pc in rural areas and 29.3pc in urban areas are uneducated.

In KP and FATA women are targeted by discriminatory practices followed by informal legal systems, in name of religious extremism and under other umbrellas

In urban areas as per Higher Education Commission data, the ratio of men entering colleges and universities is much higher than that of women. Out of twenty students, 11 are male.

The difference between accesses to healthcare too is high. According to the report females around 15 have no decision making powers in their own health concerns. The ratio of this goes as high as 48.1pc in women and girls. Women are given lesser food than men. This disparity of lesser food input in women is 11pc higher than men of their background. Wages of women are lower as opposed to those of their male counterparts.

Pakistan's meeting targets under Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are being held back because of health, social development and education at poor levels. Pakistan had incorporated 169 targets under the National Health Vision 2016–2025. Sadly fewer girls are getting vaccinated for a full course as compared to male children.

Startlingly a DW report reveals the following: "Even women who are elected in Pakistan are hindered by the 18th Amendment, which stipulates that they cannot work or vote without the instructions of the party leaders, and if they fail to comply, they shall be expelled from the assemblies." (03.11.2016)

Violence against women in Pakistan is another ugly chapter. ‘There is 21.5 percent increase in violence against women in 2017 as 8,882 cases were registered in comparison to 2016’. Punjab Government’s Commission on Status on Women Gender Parity Report 2018 said that. (Pakistan Gender News) For every one case registered there are hundreds that go unregistered.

In KP and FATA women are targeted by discriminatory practices followed by informal legal systems, in name of religious extremism and under other umbrellas. “Laws, many remnants of General Zia-ul-Haq’s Islamisation in the 1970s and 1980s, continue to deny women their constitutional right to gender equality and fuel religious intolerance and violence against them. Their access to justice and security will remain elusive so long as legal and administrative barriers to political and economic empowerment remain, particularly the Hudood Ordinances (1979), FATA’s Frontier Crimes Regulations (FCR) (1901) and the Nizam-e-Adl (2009) in KPK’s Provincially Administered Tribal Areas (PATA).”(Report CRSS 7 November 2017)

It is a matter of shame that in 2017 Pakistan was ranked the second worst nation globally in terms of gender equality. The biggest challenge is to change the mindset of people may that be men or women. This needs not just education but awareness of role women can play in upbringing their children but also being a contributing member towards the income of the household. The entire value matrix needs to change. Education alone is not a guarantee of changing attitudes towards female empowerment. In a patriarchal society like Pakistan it is extremely important to involve men to ensure gender equality. In September 2017, ministry of human rights and CARE International in Pakistan produced a documentary as to how to engage men in gender equality. Asia Peace Film Festival held a special screening and panel discussion in Islamabad. The documentary shows both men and women not only as individuals but also as partners. Such initiatives are direly needed at rural community levels too.

Martin Armstrong, writing for Pakistan and Gulf Economist says, “Based on current trends, the global gender gap will not be closed for another 100 years. These predictions are of course fluid. In fact, this year’s figure is even an increase on 2016 – in the last report, the time needed was forecast at 83 years. When looking at particular aspects of the gap, the biggest factor in the current disparity becomes clear. According to the World Economic Forum it will take 217 years to close the economic gender gap. On the more positive side, the educational gap looks set to be almost completely diminished within 15 years.” (The Global Gender Gap Report 2017)

End Note: “In the nineteenth century, the central moral challenge was slavery. In the twentieth century, it was the battle against totalitarianism. We believe that in this century the paramount moral challenge will be the struggle for gender equality around the world.” (Nicholas D. Kristof, Half the Sky: Turning Oppression Into Opportunity for Women Worldwide)

Ties with Iran | Editorial

Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif's visit to Islamabad came at a time when relations between the two countries are more troubled than usual. Iran has long been concerned about the infiltration of militants from the Pakistani side of the border, and just a day before Zarif's trip the Iranian Revolutionary Guards killed two suicide bombers near the border. Iran also views Pakistan's alliance with Saudi Arabia with some concern since it believes the Saudis are building a coalition of Sunni-majority countries to fight proxy wars in the Middle East against Iran. Pakistan's primary worry is the growing Indian influence in Iran, where the Indians have been granted operational control of the Chabahar Port. In that regard at least, Zarif's visit should assuage some of our concerns. The foreign minister has invited both Pakistan and China to invest in Chabahar and link it with Gwadar. This is a welcome offer which Pakistan should be quick to grasp. While our concerns about India will linger, the economic benefits of increased trade with Iran should not be dismissed. The port was specifically developed by India so that it could bypass Pakistan. It is now, however, a done deal and refusing to participate out of spite will only hurt us.

The Saudi Arabia issue was only addressed obliquely by Zarif when he said that Pakistan has no reason to worry about Iran's alliance with Iran and compared it to our relationship the Saudis. This cutting remark was meant to demonstrate that Pakistan's decision to sign up with the Saudi-led Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition, headed by former army chief Raheel Sharif, and the recent announcement that Pakistan would send troops to Saudi Arabia have not escaped the attention of Tehran. The challenge Pakistan faces now is to try and separate its long-standing alliance with Saudi Arabia from its relationship with Iran. There are many benefits to a closer partnership with a neighbour like Iran, from increased trade to cooperation on energy. Many of these issues were discussed in talks Zarif held with his counterpart Khawaja Asif and Army Chief Qamar Javed Bajwa but whether they lead to any breakthroughs remain to be seen. There is potential for the two countries to work together on security issues, especially when it comes to the growing threat of the Islamic State – a multinational militant group that both countries are trying to eliminate. Pakistan and Iran are also trying to set up banking channels for the first time, which would be a prerequisite for the large increase in trade both countries are pursuing. Differences between Pakistan and Iran will persist for the foreseeable future but meetings such as this at least forestall the possibility of outright hostility.

Source : <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/292459-ties-with-iran>

Pakistan's new old foreign policy By Shahzaib Khan

Everything you need to know about the undeniable and drastic shift in Pakistan's current foreign policy you can find out through signposts.

And the drastic shift is most certainly there. In the rarest of events, last year, a military delegation from Russia was given a quite exclusive tour of Waziristan by the Pakistan Army, reportedly. Almost a week ago, the Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Khawaja Asif, stood beside Sergey Lavrov, the foreign minister of Russia, as Lavrov affirmed support for Pakistani counterterrorism efforts at a time when almost all of its traditional Western allies were pushing to put Pakistan on the terror financing watch list.

But again, the foreign policy lies in the signposts.

Signposts in Pakistan's Waziristan, formerly a hotbed of militancy and currently under the safe keep of the Pakistan Army, read in English and Urdu of course but also in Chinese and in Russian. The road signposts point towards local cities of course, but also towards Khunjerab and further north towards Tashkent and ultimately Moscow.

Financial Action Task Force correctly faults Pakistan

Excluding a few insignificant periods of cooperation between the two nations, the relations between Russia and Pakistan have been largely cold and even hot when Pakistan found itself on the frontline of the fight against the Soviets in Afghanistan, once again at the behest of the Americans.

Now, however, the signposts in Waziristan point towards Moscow in Russian; cooperation between Russian and Pakistani establishments is at an all-time high, most importantly with respect to Afghanistan. And Pakistan as it spirals out of the US control continues to look east, first to Beijing and now to Moscow. For all intents and purposes Pakistan's shift eastwards to its all-weather ally in Beijing and now, as Russia warms up to Pakistan, further north to Moscow, is in lieu of traditional support it has received from capitals in the West, most significantly from Washington.

What has sparked this new warmth in the Russo-Pakistani relationship is no secret, however ironic it may be, considering it is the US. But there's more to this new alliance. It's not just that the US has pressured Pakistan into looking towards Moscow and Beijing, Pakistan's relationship with the US has almost always featured the former bending to consistent pressure from the latter to 'do more'. Perhaps never more significantly than in 2001 when then president Pervez Musharraf responded to American threats of being bombed "back to the stone ages." Pakistan had then submitted to almost all American demands, essentially becoming part of the US invasion of Afghanistan.

This time around the US is back with its pressure tactics with cutting its military aid, holding back other kinds of cooperation and publicly condemning Pakistan on the global stage. A recent flashpoint perhaps was when the US led its allies in an effort to put

Pakistan on the FATF watch list. In what is now characteristically Pakistan's new foreign policy however, Pakistan instead of engaging its estranged friends in Washington, called upon its all-weather allies in Beijing, Riyadh and Ankara, as it faced off against the US. And this is what has changed significantly, while Pakistan's new relationships may be the symptoms of estrangement with Washington, the American pressure is nothing new, in fact, the only thing that has changed is Pakistan's willingness to face off against that pressure from the US.

Foreign policy: Tumultuous and eventful 2017

Since the Trump administration came to power, Washington has had an exceptionally tough stance on Pakistan with the US president accusing it of "lies and deceit." The policy with Pakistan has been received with equal amounts of incomprehensible shock and pleasant surprise in different parts of the world, as the US emphasised it required Pakistan to do more against militants in Afghanistan that were purportedly getting support from terrorist elements hiding in Pakistan.

But with what is now being called the 'Bajwa doctrine', in reference to the current Chief of Pakistan Army, Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa, Pakistan seems to be much less reluctant, when push comes to shove, to face off against the US pressure. Pakistan has decried publicly American condemnations of Pakistan's attitude towards militancy in Afghanistan, claiming it has done its part to save Afghanistan often at the cost of its economy and stability. With the US asking Pakistan once more to 'do more', Pakistan this time is saying, it has done more than enough. And so, as the US ratchets up the pressure on Pakistan through tools like the FATF, Pakistan instead of responding to American pressure as it has done historically has chosen to resist the pressure with the support of its new friends. While it is important that Pakistan balances its sovereignty and interests against American pressure, it's worth questioning if it is simply the advent of new friendly power centres that is encouraging Pakistan to dump its traditional ally.

Surely enough, Pakistan survived Washington's attempt to humiliate it at the FATF with the support of its (other) friends. However, having failed in its latest attempt to put pressure, the US is not likely to give up any time soon. And therein lies the question, whether Pakistan's decision to singularly resist American demands and pressure, and resort to a paradigm shift in a decade-old foreign policy is really Pakistan's only good choice.

The risk is isolation, with Pakistan and the US engaged in a high stakes 'who blinks first' standoff. It is important that in the power centres of Islamabad and Rawalpindi a significant relationship is not considered to be dispensable simply due to the existence of other avenues of support. While warming up to Moscow is a belated success for Pakistan's foreign policy, losing a traditional ally like the US voluntarily would be a foreign policy failure, the trick in foreign relations is to be good friends with as many, while having as few enemies, as possible.

Pakistan has historically had a distinctly binary foreign policy as it raced to pick sides in conflicts, most notably the Cold War, when other states chose to stay non-aligned. A thought process where the US is either thought of as the closest ally, or an enemy, would also be binary and thus ill-advised. What is required is for Pakistan and the US to engage in multi-dimensional foreign policy to salvage an undeniably significant relationship. It is important for Pakistan not to determine the fate of future relationships at the expense of existing ones or vice versa. As Pakistan moves to resist American pressure, it is worth questioning how far this resistance would be advisable and justified and how historical relations between not just the US and Pakistan but its traditional Western allies, who moved FATF against Pakistan recently, are balanced with other interests. The opposite is certainly true for the US and the question has been put to them by Islamabad as it chooses to ask of the Americans how much they value their relationship with their former close ally, which remains indispensable in America's longest war effort.

Source : <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1647394/6-pakistans-new-old-foreign-policy/>

US – Losing Pakistan By Imran Malik

The strategic environment in the South Central Asian Region (SCAR) and the Afghanistan Pakistan Region (APR) within it is witnessing a massive clash of interests of regional and global powers. All of them are maneuvering menacingly to secure their respective strategic spaces, retaining their areas of influence and gaining more advantageous positions in the larger region. The APR-SCAR is well on its way to getting severely polarized between the US-India Combine and the China-Pakistan Alliance, with Iran and Russia engaging both India and Pakistan while showing clear inclinations towards China. The CARs remain essentially in the Russian sphere of influence. Afghanistan continues to suffer as Terrorism Central prospers in its eastern provinces!

The primary clash of interests is clearly between the US and China, the secondary one between India and Pakistan and yet another one lingering on painfully between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Terrorism thrives too. It is this interaction of multifarious conflicts of interests, ironically one within another, that is now defining the increasingly ominous strategic environment of the APR-SCAR.

China is single mindedly pursuing its CPEC/OBOR initiative, an economic behemoth in its own right. The CPEC/OBOR promises a strong and vibrant economic future for Pakistan and its coming generations. Under no circumstances will Pakistan allow it to be compromised. On the other hand, the US persists with its ultimate aim of circumscribing China's economic juggernaut (CPEC/OBOR) to keep it from becoming a competing global economic power, much less replacing it as one. Pakistan thus finds itself in a rather paradoxical situation. Both the US and China, the major antagonists, consider its support vital to securing their respective interests in the APR-SCAR. Where China expects Pakistan to help the CPEC/OBOR initiative materialize seamlessly the US expects Pakistan to do the exact opposite – help it delay, disrupt and scuttle it! Furthermore, India and Pakistan are openly belligerent, the former through spies/proxies from Iran and Afghanistan as well. Afghanistan is pro-India and apprehensive of Pakistan. Russia and Iran too are proactively involved and perceptibly impacting the regional environment.

The US is apparently acquiring clarity at the policy level while dealing with a surprisingly defiant and confident Pakistan. It oscillated indecisively between coercion and cooperation for a while but now a visibly bitter and frustrated US appears set to coercing it ruthlessly. Initially, it attempted to coerce Pakistan at the bilateral level. However, Pakistan's strong response, which literally nullified its leverages of economic and military aid, forced it into an "operational pause", to recoil and reconsider its options anew.

The US has now resorted to coercion at the multilateral level. To this end it has employed its allies around the globe and its influence over international organizations like the FATF etc. At the military level it has been manifested in the form of incessant and senseless ceasefire violations by the Indians across the LOC/WB; which have been repaid in full and some more by the Pakistan Armed Forces. The strategic environment is thus vitiated

and on edge. Such military threats on Pakistan's eastern borders are complemented by the US which has threatened to unilaterally attack the so called safe havens of the Afghan Taliban/Haqqani Network through drones/air attacks "wherever they" might be in Pakistan – a possible euphemism for nodal points of the CPEC. Furthermore, terrorist groups like the TTP, JuA, IMU, ETIM, IS etc ensconced with the NDS/RAW/CIA/MOSSAD in eastern provinces of Afghanistan like Khost, Paktia, Paktika, Nangarhar etc potentially threaten to restart the WOT in Pakistan, destabilize it and cause severe disruption of the CPEC. Ostensibly, "an inspired Japan" too has offered Pakistan loans at interest rates markedly lower than those offered by China but specifically for infrastructure projects only- too obvious an attempt to undercut Chinese loans/investments for infrastructure development under the CPEC et al. Furthermore, the US got the UK, France and Germany to co-sponsor a move to have Pakistan placed on the grey/blacklist of the FATF. The US/US-led West is bound to pile up pressure on Pakistan progressively by revoking the Major Non-NATO Ally status, applying stringent conditions through the IFIs, imposing trade restrictions, declaring Pakistan a state sponsoring terrorism et al.

Is it any surprise then that the US Intelligence reviews have come to the obvious conclusion that nuclear Pakistan was slipping out of US influence and could possibly end up working at odds with US interests – a rather sobering assessment in its self! Pakistan is already allied with China and has shown a more than proactive engagement of Russia. It has sure friends in the Muslim and Arab worlds and elsewhere. It is neither isolated nor friendless or unduly scared. This blatant and unjustified coercion by the US will not only unify the nation in defiance but would also push it further into Chinese and Russian camps. An amalgamation of the Eurasian Economic Union with the CPEC/OBOR initiatives would create a massive economic entity clearly beyond US-led West's capacity to manage, contain, disrupt or scuttle. Furthermore, the SCO might just acquire a definite economic and a much visible military dimension too, to emerge as a viable counterpoise to the US-India Combine in the APR-SCAR and the US-led West at large. The US-Australia-Japan-India Alternative to the OBOR is an unoriginal idea already defeated in time and space by its nemesis!

There could not have been a starker contrast in the way the US and China are now being viewed in Pakistan. Whereas the former comes across as a brutally coercive and destructive bully the latter is viewed as friendly, cooperative and helpful. Their deeds speak louder than their words!

Were the US to adopt a more balanced, stable, mutually beneficial and futuristic policy for the APR-SCAR it could still have Pakistan as a friend and ally to further its interests in the region instead of losing it totally through rampant, misplaced coercion. However, if it must play the destroyer's and spoiler's role as at present, then it already has a readymade and experienced ally in India – available, willing, keen and all too happy to oblige!

Pakistan cannot and will not commit Hara Kiri just to please the US!

Source : <https://nation.com.pk/04-Mar-2018/us-losing-pakistan>

Threat from IS | Editorial

THE statement by the National Counter Terrorism Authority chief, Ihsan Ghani, at a news conference on Friday that the militant Islamic State group poses a real threat to Pakistan comes as no surprise to anyone watching regional developments.

The growing presence of IS in Afghanistan, he said, is bound to have spillover effects in this country.

Also read: Defining terrorism

That is a logical inference; violent extremism does not adhere to geographical boundaries. Indeed one can argue that IS already has a presence here. Several acts of terrorism in recent years have been claimed by the group.

Among them are the church bombing in Quetta a few days before Christmas last year; the bombing of several shrines including that of Shah Noorani in Balochistan and Lal Shahbaz Qalandar in Sindh; the kidnapping and murder of two Chinese nationals in Quetta, etc.

There is also reason to fear that IS-affiliated Pakistani militants returning from the Syrian civil war could unleash further violence in this country.

Nevertheless, the country's leadership has tended to downplay the clear and present danger from IS. Former interior minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali, for example, consistently denied the group's presence on Pakistani soil, once doing so only days after IB director general Aftab Sultan had stated to the contrary.

The most recent assertion by Mr Ghani about the threat to Pakistan from IS should, in theory, carry weight. After all, he heads the body that is supposed to oversee counterterrorism operations in the country on a strategic level.

Unfortunately, despite nine years having passed since it was formed, Nacta remains toothless and ineffectual.

According to the law under which it operates, the body's mandate is to formulate a national counterterrorism strategy and monitor its implementation, and collate information from all intelligence agencies to produce national threat assessment reports for the government.

Instead, Nacta's progress has been halting and piecemeal. The draft of the long-pending national counterterrorism strategy has only last November been submitted to the government.

Intelligence agencies still tend to work in silos, reluctant to share information with each other, precluding the cohesive approach necessary to stamp out every vestige of terrorism, in which IS is but one player.

In order for Nacta to play the role originally envisaged for it, the government must recognise the importance of civilian input at the federal level in the fight against terrorism.

Failing this, the gains from the military operations cannot possibly be sustained.

Source : <https://www.dawn.com/news/1399075/threat-from-is>

Back on the same bridge By M Ziauddin

Pakistan, in a way, had played the bridge for the US to reach out to China for its first-ever highest level diplomatic contacts. Henry Kissinger, the US president Richard Nixon's national security adviser, undertook a secret trip to Beijing from Pakistan July 9-11, 1971. His meetings there produced an agreement that president Nixon would visit China.

Nixon went in February 1972. This happened despite the fact that the two countries were locked at that time in a bitter ideological confrontation with the US using China's neighbours to encircle the country hidden behind the bamboo curtain.

Some 40 years or so later when the US and China are locked in a raging trade war, the two countries find themselves traversing the same bridge at the same time via their respective corridors running through Pakistan. China is establishing a trade corridor running from North of Pakistan to Gwadar sea port in the South. The US, on the other hand, has been moving supplies for its troops in Afghanistan through a corridor set up in early 2000, running from Karachi seaport in the south to the country's northwest borders. There are two routes into Afghanistan from Pakistan, one across the Khyber Pass and the other goes through Balochistan to the border town of Chaman.

The \$60 billion worth CPEC is the lynchpin of Beijing's multi-billion-dollar One Belt One Road project. The project is to focus on developing six economic corridors: new Eurasian Land Bridge, China-Mongolia-Russia, China-Central Asia-West Asia, China-Pakistan, Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar and China-Indochina Peninsula economic corridors. It is open to all sharing similar goals.

Meanwhile, the American supply corridor seems to have survived Washington's latest move to freeze security aid payments to Islamabad, claiming it is not doing enough to target the Afghan Taliban and Haqqani group bases.

Pakistan knows that if it were to resort to retaliatory measures, America's war fighting efforts in Afghanistan would be seriously undermined. It has happened before. In 2011, Pakistan closed its border to Nato supplies following a series of incidents that brought relations between the US and Pakistan to an all-time low. The US-led forces in Afghanistan endured the closure by relying on cargo flights and a more costly northern route through Russia, Central Asia and the Caucasus.

However, unlike in 2011, the US no longer has an airbase in Kyrgyzstan, which had been the main transit point for American military personnel and cargo in and out of Afghanistan. Additionally, Washington's fraught relations with Russia could make flying over Central Asian states less reliable, with Moscow able to exert influence on its smaller neighbours.

Clearly, the US has no plan 'B' to fall back on this time if Pakistan were to actually close down the corridor in retaliation. A longer-term embargo would require the US to find more practical solutions and these would come with an unaffordable price tag which

Washington would find it almost impossible to cover. More so because all indications point to the possibility that the Trump administration seems all set to stay put in the war-ravaged country for decades to come in view of its physical proximity to Iran, China and a nuclear Pakistan.

So, whether the US likes it or not and whether or not Pakistan obeys its nauseatingly repetitive command of 'do more', Washington will have to come to some kind of a permanent arrangement with Islamabad (bombing Pakistan into subjugation not being an option) to retain its supply corridor on a permanent basis and at an affordable cost, both in monetary as well as political terms.

So, with both the CPEC and US supply corridors becoming permanent transit features within the four walls of Pakistan, it would be interesting to see how the two, especially the US, would cope with the situation while continuing to press on with its trade war with China.

Source : <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1673512/6-back-on-the-same-bridge/>

What is wrong with preliminary delimitation By Sarwar Bari

Like the provisional census results, the preliminary delimitation has also triggered a huge controversy. Strangely all this is happening when general elections are around the corner. Conspiracy theorists have a field day to create doubts about timely occurrence of the election. As the preliminary delimitation is a self-inflicted wound, it is therefore curable within the given time. The law is there, and if need arises it could be amended too as expediently as some other legislations. The doers are there too. But let's first find the wrongs in the law and its poor practice.

Pakistan's electoral system seems to stand on a single leg — constituency-based politics, hence geographically compact constituency (GCC) is a must. For instance, a landlord who owns huge chunk of estates since generations doesn't need to invest as much as a new aspirant has to. Yet, to keep control over the vote bank, he has to invest time and wealth. Also he has to bring development projects and jobs to the constituency/people. He has to build a strong nexus with the civil bureaucracy too. With this mindset, the GCC becomes sacred. Rage against preliminary delimitation suffices to conclude that political elites of all forms equate their constituency to that of the state.

Therefore, the delimitation law has to be drafted in a manner that stands on the existing administrative/geographical boundaries, ie, revenue boundaries like patwar, qanoongoi, tehsil and district, etc. This overlapping provides a huge opportunity to amass wealth and influence too to elected officials. Just consider this. How many elected politicians are involved in land grabbing? How greatly it helps them if they resolve a land dispute? How easy it is for a member of an assembly to get information about future development plans and then to invest accordingly? Should an administrative boundary be divided across two electoral constituencies, the state officials will have room to act freely. A country where urbanisation is taking place with a huge speed, peri-urban and adjacent rural areas carry massive potential to mint money and extend influence over staggering areas. No wonder we find a mishmash of rural-urban areas in many constituencies in Punjab and Islamabad. The history of delimitation laws informs us that the administrative boundaries remain the overarching principle of each legislation and amendment, including the Elections Act of 2017.

Having said that, the Election Commission of Pakistan can't be absolved from its sins. First and foremost — its refusal to share reasons for crossing the 10% threshold in parity of the vote across constituencies causes doubts. Please note under the law the ECP is bound to give reasons in writing. Two, the delimitation law carries contradictory parameters for delimitation. For instance, beside 10% variation in parity of vote, administrative boundaries, physical features, facilities of communication and public convenience and other cognate factors must be ensured for creating homogeneity in constituencies. Strangely, the law doesn't provide any clause, should two or more parameters wildly contradict each other. The politicians who are showing rage against the

ECP are also responsible for causing this dangerous mess, as they are the architects of the election laws.

It appears the lawmakers while deliberating on election reform bill didn't care to consider the diversity of the country and refused to learn lessons from other countries. For example, the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act of 2010 of the UK could have been studied. The Act allows only 5% variation in vote parity and the quota stands at 70,600 electorates. Unlike our delimitation law, the British Act also limits the geographical area to 13,000 square kms. In case a constituency is greater than 12,000 square kms, then 5% variation is relaxed but only minimally. Therefore, 99% of their constituencies would fall within 5% of national limits. On the contrary, in Pakistan the preliminary delimitation analysis shows 31% of our constituencies out of 10% threshold.

Democracy is government of the majority. Therefore, it is essential to value each vote equally. As Pakistan is a signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, besides Pakistanis, it is accountable to the international community on this count too. Translating the concept of parity of vote into practice and how it undermines democracy is imperative.

Let's consider the following examples. According to preliminary delimitation, the NA-12 Battagram has 476,612 people, while NA-11 Kohistan consists of 784,711 persons. In Punjab, Hafizabad NA-87 consists of 1,156,957, and in Sargodha NA-88 has 749,301 people — a difference of more than 300,000. This discriminates against the people of Hafizabad numerously. Politically, the people of Sargodha are 35% more powerful than the people of Hafizabad. Economically, since MNAs get an equal amount of development funds for their constituencies, per capita funds allocation in Hafizabad will also be 35% less than Sargodha's. Accessibility, larger the number of constituents, lower the access to representative and vice versa. It is feared that if current variation in voter's equality is not rectified by May 2018, this multiple and self-inflicted discrimination will continue in 81% or 31% of 272 constituencies at least for the next five years.

Now let's move to another fundamental principle of the delimitation law: 'facilities of communication and public convenience and other cognate factors to ensure homogeneity of populations'. The case of Jhang district shows how this principle is being ignored as well. After flowing more than 50kms through the Jhang district two rivers, Jhelum and Chenab, converge at Trimmu. A cursory look at the map clearly establishes that boundary of a constituency crosses both rivers almost throughout their journey. There is a need therefore to check all those constituencies which fall along rivers, canals, mountains, hills and motorways, etc.

The violations of the delimitation principles provided an easy opportunity to parties to politicise the issue, embarrass the ECP and gain political capital. The ECP has also contributed hugely by refusing to provide any explanation for deviating from the said principles. Almost all political parties and think tanks, including Free and Fair Election Network, have expressed serious reservations about the preliminary delimitation. An all

parties conference held in Balochistan on the issue has warned that should the ECP fail to address the unjust delimitation in Balochistan, it could trigger a civil war-like situation in the province. While this is a far-fetched fear, it tells a lot. The media enriched the debate but it also deepened the controversy.

History of electoral systems is a tale of competing elites and social groups. A more powerful section of elites would develop and maintain electoral system and delimitation law that suit best to turn its de facto power into de jure. The delimitation of constituencies is the most effective tool for gerrymandering — garbed in principles/laws. The ECP's preliminary delimitation is being seen from that angle too by most politicians. On the surface, the ECP has ignored/violated most of the principles, only a comprehensive analysis could tell the whole truth. Should the ECP fail to amend the final delimitation of constituencies according to the principles and politicians' grievances, the best way forward would be to reinstate the 2013 boundaries through a constitutional amendment. However, there is a serious need to improve our delimitation law — a law that reflects our diversity, terrain, future vision and above all equality of vote.

Source : <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1674321/6-wrong-preliminary-delimitation/>

Economy

Circular debt | Editorial

IN his first budget speech in June 2013, then finance minister Ishaq Dar gave an assurance to the country that the circular debt of the power sector, which had just been retired in a massive exercise of almost Rs500bn, would not be allowed to return. “[It] is imperative that we must do all that is needed to stop its recurrence in the future,” he had said in his budget speech, after outlining the huge proportions that the problem had assumed by the time he had taken office. He hailed as “historic” the decision by his government to settle the entire debt in one go, an exercise to ensure “that every available and economically viable source of power could be brought on line”. Eliminating load-shedding and preventing the return of the circular debt were two central pillars of the new government’s promise to the country, and for a while at least, it seemed like they were on their way to accomplishing both. Load-shedding has indeed been controlled, if not fully eradicated, and up till late 2015 or so, the circular debt was also kept restrained as some improvement in power-sector recoveries took place due to new billing reforms.

But it all began to unravel rather quickly. Today, the circular debt is beyond the levels it was at when the government came to power, and it is only a matter of time before it begins to jam the turbines of the power sector once again. It all depends on how one defines the circular debt, but one recent report in this newspaper shows that it could be as high as Rs922bn, making it almost double the size it was when the government took the reins of power. More megawatts mean stronger billing and recovery to plug the leaks. That is not happening though. All the policy emphasis of the government has been on mega projects, adding more power plants, and hardly any on reforming the power sector so it can handle the additional power without running into severe liquidity issues. With its rapid pace of accumulation, it is possible for the circular debt to once again choke the power sector. If that happens in the days leading up to the election, the debt will not be the only thing that will be circular. The government’s journey from its first day to its last would also have come full circle.

Source : <https://www.dawn.com/news/1396408/circular-debt>

Pakistan's current account deficit increases by 50 %

Pakistan's current account deficit has witnessed a staggering increase of 50% in the current financial year (FY).

Pakistan's economy continues to face upheavals as its reserves plunge as low as to merely cover a couple of months of imports, coupled with an acute fiscal deficit, making it even more troublesome for the beleaguered economy.

According to data released by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), the current account deficit of the country significantly rose to \$10.826 billion during the current fiscal year so far (July-February) compared to \$7.216bn in the same period in last FY.

Read more: [Pakistan on its way to becoming a cashless economy](#)

Government's inability to address the rising concerns related to declining exports, ballooning external borrowing, and worrisome debt management along with failure to improve government revenues have put the government in a difficult position.

Moreover, ever-increasing circular debt in power sector and woeful spending in an election year in development programs to woo the voters has augmented the problems for the incumbent government.

Despite the rhetoric over the projects under the celebrated China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Pakistan has found itself caught in an acrimonious situation.

IMF in its First Post Program Monitoring discussions with Pakistan declared that "Pakistan's near-term outlook for economic growth is broadly favorable". But, at the same time, it concluded that "against the background of rising external and fiscal financing needs and declining reserves, risks to Pakistan's medium-term capacity to repay the Fund have increased since completion of the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) arrangement in September 2016".

Read more: [State Bank optimistic after forecast growth in economy](#)

Though the country has enough finance to cover few months ahead in short term, in the medium term it faces many challenges.

Initially, the government had artificially kept its currency stable which may have affected the exports dearly along with failure to formulate policies to bolster exports.

In the absence of adequate trade policies, despite the much-talked-about depreciation in rupee, Pakistani exports did manage to grow by 11% in the current FY, but it failed to avert the trade deficit. The growing gap between imports and exports has even worsened the position as per the data released on March 20.

Read more: [Pakistan's geostrategic environment and its impact on the economy](#)

Experts have put forward a mechanism to improve the exports position. “The five constraints which hamper the export position includes complex domestic and trade taxes regime, overvalued exchange rate, regulatory complexities, higher unit cost of electricity, fuel, and gas in comparison to competitor economies and weak trade facilitation,” according to SDPI’s Dr. Vaqar and Sajid Amin.

Though Pakistan’s position is strengthened due to encouraging export position, remittances but, due to depreciation, debt position has deteriorated even further, and Pakistan will have to pay even more on principal and interest servicing.

Though, many commentators believe it to be a much-needed and a right tool to lift the exports somehow to help bridge the gap between the growing twin deficits. But, fiscal indiscipline and failure to implement structural reforms and inadequate trade policy did not help the cause.

Read more: [How Xi is ensuring that China’s economy remains strong](#)

Despite the provision of agriculture subsidy, the depreciated rupee is unable to pay off the bulging twin deficit and increasing debt and liabilities. But the government is expected to improve the current account deficit by depreciating rupee even more than current 9.5% cumulative loss in rupee valuation, since December, to improve the current account deficit.

Pakistan may not be in a position to have enough resources, which could be allocated for infrastructure and inclusive development. Moreover, due to widespread corruption and underutilization of loans on asset building, it may not be able to improve the financial perils for Pakistan as it continues to go in circles.

The last ploy to depreciate rupee would further deepen the debt woes and will create even more burden of liabilities for next government.

Source : <https://www.globalvillagespace.com/pakistans-current-account-deficit-increases-by-50-in-fy-2017/>

Where the economy stands By Waqar Masood Khan

The government has wisely chosen to allow the IMF to release the first post-programme monitoring (PPM) report that was discussed in its board on March 5, 2018. The report has provided a detailed analysis of the major conclusions that the IMF presented in its press release, which we discussed in the article 'Where the economy stands' (March 13).

Justifiably, the report has caused anxiety among people who now want to understand the mixed messages contained in it. On the one hand, the report acknowledges the strong performance of the economy – high growth, muted inflation, rising investments, solid consumer demand. On the other hand it warns against the major imbalances – fiscal and current account deficits, declining reserves and worsening risk indicators on debt accumulation. What should an ordinary person make out of these contrasting aspects of our economy?

In reality, we are facing a paradox that we have not faced in the past. When we entered the last IMF programme in 2013, the economy in the preceding five years (2008-2013) had registered one of the poorest performances – having been hit by global financial crisis, unprecedented high commodity prices, particularly oil, and the devastating floods of 2010. The 2008 Fund programme had also ended in failure. Although the 2008 programme was entered into after an exceptional run of economic growth and price stability between the year 1999 and 2007, the political instability in the penultimate year of that spell, coupled with the simultaneous global crisis, had pretty much taken the sheen out of that exceptional performance. Thus, on both these occasions (2008 and 2013), before the beginning of the Fund programmes there was a significant downturn in economic activity alongside macroeconomic instability.

At the conclusion of the last Fund programme, we saw resurgence in growth and stability in prices. Undoubtedly, this was aided by a massive decline in oil prices, general recovery in major economies and, most notably, the arrival of CPEC in Pakistan. But the present government, which made the success of the Fund programme possible, was caught up in both the Panama Papers incident and the disruptions faced in its aftermath – leading to the government's focus on economic management being diverted. In fact, there has been no worthwhile economic management in witness for nearly two years. As a result, the imbalances corrected during the programme have resurfaced and, rather than aiding the growth momentum generated by the programme, are now threatening the nascent recovery.

At present, the paradox is that the economy is moving up-the-curve in all leading indicators, while failing miserably in policy management. The buoyancy in economic outlook is palpable in growth, investments, productive imports and unprecedented consumer demand in all sectors – from real-estate to consumer durables, from cement to iron and steel, and so on. It should, however, be acknowledged that some of this buoyancy is contributed by growing imbalances – rising fiscal deficit, over-valued

exchange rate and low interest rates – whose correction would have a dampening effect, at least in the short run. But in the medium-term, the economy will continue to prosper as its fundamentals are in place.

Let us now consider the major imbalances identified in the PPM report and the consequences that will follow their correction. First, we have to fix fiscal deficit. Unfortunately, this has become a Gordian knot with the transfer of significantly larger share of divisible pool to provinces. The country was able to reduce fiscal deficit during the IMF programme because the provinces – that had the larger share of resources – agreed to refrain from spending a part of their share, thus providing critical savings. Last fiscal year, they had drawn down on those accumulated savings with a vengeance and might do so this year as well. With such high level of provincial spending, the much-needed fiscal adjustment could only come by massively cutting development spending. Also, the government has to find ways to cut expenditures, whatever they may be, by resorting to a zero-budgeting model: all expenditures have to be justified to an independent commission comprising people of high stature from all public services.

The exchange rate adjustment would be painful but inevitable for correcting external imbalance. No institution – the IMF, World Bank or ADB etc – is prepared to lend to Pakistan for the purpose of supporting an over-valued exchange rate. The commercial borrowings would soon become uneconomical or bond investors would shy away seeing an unstable macro framework. But the required adjustment might have a significant impact on the budget on three accounts: first, the high cost of public-sector imports; second, capital loss on external debt; and third, the higher cost of debt servicing.

The policy rate adjustment is needed both to restore order in a chaotic government debt market – no investments in PIBs during the last eight months or six- to twelve-month T-bills) and to move away from an accommodating monetary policy that has allowed unhindered government borrowing from the SBP. The higher interest rates, again, would exert pressure on the budget by increasing debt servicing cost.

Perhaps the most challenging correction would be required to settle the circular debt (CD), which is threatening fiscal finances. Here, we would suggest that there is no other option but to revive the debt settlement plan prepared by the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Water and Power as part of the ADB-WB power sector loan operation, duly adopted and endorsed by the IMF. Another consolidation along the lines of what was done in 2013 would be no solution. If the underlying causes engendering CD remain unheeded, the problem would resurface besides imposing huge budgetary cost.

Finally, the above adjustments would significantly impact consumer welfare by causing a spurt in inflation. The exchange rate, policy rate and debt settlement would all have an adverse effect on prices. The rise in inflation is then the cost of adjustment. By not setting economic variables to their right values, we have spawned a series of distortions where the true costs were not borne by economic agents. For instance, an over-valued exchange rate is another name for subsidising imports at the expense of exports;

unrealistic policy rate discourages savings and unduly increases demand for investment. All such distortions need corrections and soon.

Source : <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/294509-where-the-economy-stands>

Education

Guns or books By Zubeida Mustafa

THE infamous legacy of ‘enforced disappearances’ that the Chilean military dictator Augusto Pinochet left behind has, unfortunately, been picked up by Pakistan. This phenomenon is today a source of great human agony in the country with thousands believed to have been abducted, many for political reasons.

Balochistan has suffered much. One cannot be certain about who is behind this torturous form of suppression of the freedom of expression. One hears of the ‘agencies’, Baloch dissidents, RAW agents, religiously inspired militants and others being involved.

Last week, on a visit to Turbat, I learnt from someone I was talking to that three young men had been called out of their homes by unknown persons and were later found shot dead. No one knew who committed this heinous crime. Of course, the ultimate responsibility rests on the state which as the custodian of the citizens’ security is bound to provide them protection.

Balochistan’s biggest tragedy is the education emergency there.

Whoever is to blame for this tragic situation, the fact is that Balochistan has not received a fair deal from Pakistan right from the start when it made its debut in controversial circumstances on the political stage in this country.

Comprising nearly 44 per cent of the land area of the country and with a population of 12 million (less than 6pc of the total), Balochistan has been a fit candidate for exploitation and repression, given its rich natural resources and historical underdevelopment. Kaiser Bengali, once the head of Balochistan’s Policy Reform Unit, has collected all the facts and figures in his book Cry for Justice. This extremely readable book has become the bible of Baloch activists as a vindication of their cause.

Some of this information should be compulsory reading for all if people really believe in fair play and the even-handed distribution of resources to make equity the underpinning of our system.

Take the case of Sui gas which was discovered in 1952 and was piped to many remote areas of the country in the 1950s and 1960s. It, however, took three decades before a “whiff of gas” was supplied to Balochistan which even now consumes only 2pc of the total production. Here lies the paradox. Despite its mineral wealth the province is impoverished. According to Dr Bengali, the economic growth rate of Balochistan in 2000-

2011 was a measly 2.8pc per annum compared to the over 4pc average in the other provinces. This is attributed to Balochistan's extremely low share of 5.1pc in the Public Sector Development Programme.

As can be expected the province is grossly underrepresented in the federal administration (only 2.1pc officers in BPS 20-22 are Baloch). Similarly, the Baloch are at a disadvantage politically.

In my view, Balochistan's biggest tragedy — inflicted by Islamabad and some of the province's own chieftains — is the education emergency that grips it today. According to the National Education Management Information System, 66pc girls of primary school age are out of school while the overall enrolment ratio is only 47pc. There is also the additional factor of Balochistan's low literacy ratio (43 pc, with only 25 pc for women). The education shortfall, along with the alienation caused by the centre's discrimination and the use of military force, has created a formula for a grave national crisis that could threaten the territorial integrity of the country.

In this bleak situation, it would be cynical not to acknowledge the ray of hope generated by the brave and concerted efforts of those who are trying to help. One of them is a pioneer of female education, Zobaida Jalal, whose school in Mand has been educating hundreds of children of Kech district since 1988. During my stay in Turbat, I met many women who matriculated from this school, went on to study in college and are now teaching or working in offices. That is a remarkable change that augurs well for the future.

The Children's Literature Festival, which has Zobaida Jalal on its board of directors, recently organised a session in Turbat for the first time. This event brought cheer to the lives of the children who attended. The CLF has proved to be a successful means of engaging children in healthy educational activities that open the child's mind. It could only have been Zobaida Jalal's brainwave given her dedication to the cause of education.

Thanks to her work, Turbat is now ranked sixth among the districts of Balochistan in terms of educational score (Alif Ailaan 2017) and has one of the best ratios in the province for primary:secondary schools.

One hopes these seeds of education will blossom to bring a better future to the children of Balochistan. But the powers that control the province's destiny should realise that education can be successfully imparted in an atmosphere of freedom. It is not possible to nurture young minds under the shadows of guns. Let the book culture flourish and say no to guns.

Source : <https://www.dawn.com/news/1395568/guns-or-books>

Educational fault lines By Raja Khalid Shabbir

Pakistan's education sector has stayed rusted for many decades with minimal remedial measures, forcing the verdict that reforms and Pakistan's educational system do not go along well. The world has entered the modern technological era but we unfortunately follow a school curriculum of the industrial age, which was aimed at churning out factory workers. We educate children in batches and make them follow instructions. Those who obey are awarded and those failing to comply are punished. These were industrial age values important for factory work. Today employers value people who are curious and creative, who can communicate their ideas and collaborate with others but our children are deprived of developing such traits in the current pedagogical system.

We start categorising children as smart or dumb the day they start school. In any given classroom, students are at different levels of understanding and not all are destined for academic excellence. What worsens this is that our schools pivot only around grades and rely on rote learning which has no pragmatic relevance once students enter the real world. All students are expected to memorise a generic set of information and the retention power is tested by administering periodic examinations. The prognosis of this is extremely poor as almost all of it is lost the very next day of the exam.

Subjects which lay the foundation for a child's cognitive ability are mathematics and science. Data collected by the National Education Assessment System, shows that scores in these two subjects are below 50% for all four provinces. To boost the keenness of students towards mathematics and science initiatives like appointment of a 'chief scientist' within the office of the prime minister, opening science museums and astronomical viewing sites, and introduction of laboratory exercises at grade six and seven need to be taken. This, in turn, would produce a wiser population.

Our society faces an unhealthy divide due to marked disparity between the quality of education provided in public and private sectors. The dismal state of public schools is evident by the lack of infrastructure, unqualified teachers, low attendance and poor examination outcomes. There is no learning without questioning. Students in Pakistan are graded on the basis of their answers while no importance is given to asking questions. The concept of 'no wrong question' needs to be incorporated in our classrooms.

A great miscarriage of educational justice in developing countries like Pakistan is gender inequality. Females are not allowed to study while males do not want to. The Ministry of Education recently released statistics which revealed that 49% of girls as compared to 40% of boys are out of school in the country. For a prosperous Pakistan, it is crucial that girls are given equal access to education.

Finland routinely tops rankings of global education systems. Finnish schools go against the orthodox, grade-driven educational model. There are no standardised examinations before the age of 16, homework is unheard of and there are no private schools. To become a teacher, one has to receive a master's degree and complete the equivalent of residency programme in US medical schools.

A shift in our educational methodology from the industrial age to modern digital era is required more than ever. The authorities must review the under-investment in our education sector, at the same time collaborating with the private sector to narrow down the disproportion in the level of education provided in public and private schools. Training teachers with critical thinking methods, revolutionising lecturing by making it interactive and incorporating visual aid which has proven to be the most effective way of learning and strengthening the presence of public sector in rural areas should be considered. Quality education will not only free us of socioeconomic problems but will also provide psychological relief to our youth.

Source : <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1662924/6-educational-fault-lines/>

Extremism and our educational institutions By Dr Raza Khan

In Pakistan, the extremism propagated and terrorism perpetrated in the name of religion have had many linkages with education and educational institutions in the country. However, the linkages between education and extremism-terrorism are somewhat very strange. Education and institutions which impart knowledge most often than not in any society and country serve as instruments of civilisation, modernisation and thus, peace and stability. Moreover, educational institutions and teachers by purposefully spreading knowledge prevent the nurturing of radical tendencies and extremist social attitudes. However, in Pakistan educational institutions have instead been contributing to the rise and proliferation of extremism and terrorism.

With regard to extremism and terrorism in the name of religion, the focus of scholarship and government has been on the role of militant madrassas. But the very point, why such a large number of madrassas emerged and thrived, has not been given much attention. It has been due to the outright failure of successive governments and regimes to provide adequate educational infrastructure and purposeful curricula as well as their inability to formulate a viable foreign policy, which resulted in the rise of thousands of madrassas. Due to the absence of the required number of schools and colleges a large number of parents have been compelled to put their children into madrassas. On the other hand, due to profoundly improper foreign policy, particularly in the era of General Zia (1977-88) Pakistan's land was made as a frontline territory to fight the US-orchestrated anti-Soviet resistance in Afghanistan for which thousands of madrassas were allowed to be set up in Pakistan to radicalise a large number of Pakistanis, Afghans and Muslims from across the world to fight the Russians in Afghanistan. So finding no affordable place to educate their children, a large number of parents had had the best option to put them into those engineered madrassas, the very objective of which was militancy not education.

Generally, educational institutions in Pakistan have been found to be wanting in carrying out their primary function of disseminating knowledge in society and its members and, thus, play a critical role in the social stability and development. The failure of educational institutions in spreading knowledge in Pakistani society can even be statistically proven. For instance, the literacy rate after more than 70 years of independence is just more than 50 per cent, whereas the standard of knowledge which educational institutions has been imparting has been pathetic. This sordid state of affairs has roots in poor governance as Pakistan is one of the only 12 countries of the world that spends less than two per cent of its GNP on education. The average Pakistani boy receives only five years of schooling, while the average girl just two and a half years. The UN in the year 2004 assigned Pakistan the lowest 'education index' of any country outside Africa. In such an atmosphere the nurturing of radical mindsets is but natural.

Pakistani universities occasionally provided rallying grounds and launching pads for liberal and leftist political movements but by and large they have failed to play their manifest functions. Universities and colleges instead of playing their social role of educating society through its graduates and studying and finding solutions to social problems have suffered deep parochial divisions. Political parties and the establishment supported groups during General Zia's military rule not only undercut the capacity of institutions of higher learning to play their logical part for betterment and development of society, but also became nurseries of extremism like ethnic and Muslim sectarian strife. This situation struck at the very roots of the universities to impart liberal education that in turn could offset religious extremist trends.

Moreover, due to absence of a strong research culture and capacity to study contemporary issues, Pakistani universities cannot take exact cognisance of prevailing social problems, including religious extremism, exploring the issues, reaching their root causes, and bring forth the findings, suggesting solutions and enabling the decision-makers to take informed and appropriate policy actions. Moreover, having undemocratic orientations and experience of large periods of military rules, the educational policy-makers failed to develop curricula that inculcate and cultivate fundamentally democratic, anti-extremist and tolerant values among the students.

Importantly, well before madrassas in Pakistan became hubs of militant training and extremism, many universities and colleges had already been dens of arms, ammunition and violence if not of militant training per se. The example of Punjab University is a case in point where a student group, the Islami Jamiat-e-Tulaba (IJT), associated with the Jamaat-e-Islami, since long has made the university into its virtual fort and preaching of its radical agenda. Same is true for Karachi University where extremism and violence by the All Pakistan Muhajir Students Organisation (APMSO) not only stunted educational activities but also resulted in the formation of MQM. Groups like the IJT recruited many militants from universities to fight in Afghanistan and Kashmir. On the other hand, there are indications that despite the fact that madrassas have been part of the problem of extremism and terrorism, but at the same time public schools also have their own contribution to the menace. According to a US scholar, Christian Fair, having done extensive research on the twin phenomena of extremism and terrorism in Pakistan, she was told by some Pakistani interlocutors that as much as 40 per cent of militant manpower actually comes from Pakistan's public schools and higher education institutions.

Source : <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1674324/6-extremism-educational-institutions/>

WORLD

A U.S. Containment Strategy for Syria By Aaron Stein

To Beat the Russians, Let Them Win

A U.S. Containment Strategy

The United States' interests in Syria lie in formalizing its battlefield gains with a negotiated settlement and then leaving the country. To achieve this goal, it will need to find common cause in the short term with its greatest geopolitical foe, Russia. Doing so will require Washington to acknowledge a painful but obvious truth: Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has largely routed the anti-regime insurgency, consolidated power in much of the country's west, and received open-ended support and security guarantees from Moscow and Tehran. Assad will govern most of Syria for the foreseeable future.

For the United States, the impetus (and legal justification) for its presence in Syria was the war against the Islamic State (or ISIS), waged to deny the group safe haven and, in so doing, prop up the government of Iraq and ensure that ISIS fighters could not plot and execute terrorist attacks in the West. The success of this war, however, has raised uncomfortable questions about what Washington should do next. Tensions with Moscow and Tehran have helped galvanize support among some U.S. policymakers for an open-ended presence in northeastern Syria, meant to prevent hard-fought U.S. gains from being turned over to hostile powers.

The intention behind such a strategy is easy to understand, but the logic is backward. The United States does have an incentive to challenge Moscow where it can, but it has a losing hand in Syria. Washington's best bet is to negotiate a withdrawal of its own forces, which would leave Russia to manage the costs of a seven-year-old civil war. Granting Moscow this short-term win, moreover, would leave it on the hook for the antics of the odious Assad regime.

Such a settlement would allow the United States to shift its focus toward planning for the long run, where its position is more favorable. Instead of getting dragged into yet more fighting in Syria, Washington should be opposing Russia by pursuing a policy of dual containment toward the latter's Middle Eastern allies, Damascus and Tehran. This policy could include financial sanctions on Moscow for its commitment to Assad, further raising the cost of reconstruction efforts while making Russia pay for its support of a murderous, rogue regime. Such a posture in the Middle East would complement NATO's ongoing efforts to deter Russian aggression in eastern Europe by bolstering the allied military

presence in the Baltic states. These two efforts would work in tandem to contain Damascus while pushing back against Russia on multiple fronts.

MIDDLE EASTERN PROMISES

The first step to challenging Russia is, ironically, to settle the Syrian conflict on terms Moscow can accept. To negotiate an end to the war, the United States must offer Russia something it wants—and think about what the United States wants in return. Russia's main interest is preserving the Syrian regime's hold on power. The United States, by contrast, is focused on denying a safe haven to ISIS. The United States' local ally, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), is reliant on the Kurdish-majority Democratic Union Party, the Syrian branch of the Kurdistan Workers' Party. The SDF has borne the brunt of the ground war against ISIS and is pushing for autonomous governance in areas under its control, a policy that is unacceptable to the Assad regime.

Neither Russia nor the United States wants to see an intra-Syrian conflict between the SDF and the Syrian regime. In Washington's view, such a conflict would distract from anti-ISIS efforts and perhaps allow the group to retake territory. For Moscow, it would further prolong the war and might push Russian forces into conflict with the Kurds—who pose no threat to the Russian homeland and whom the Russians have no wish to fight. The challenge for the United States is figuring out how to wind down tensions between Assad and the Kurds without alienating Turkey, the United States' NATO ally and Russia's partner in the Astana and Sochi process, the latter of which is a stalled effort to draft a constitution and negotiate an end to the war. Turkey is hostile to the SDF and has recently invaded Afrin, an isolated Kurdish enclave in Syria's northwest, where it is fighting the SDF's main militia, the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG). Washington's best bet is to negotiate a withdrawal of its own forces, which would leave Russia to manage the costs of a seven-year-old civil war.

The war in Afrin has undermined the last stages of the U.S. war against ISIS and increased tensions between Turkey and Russia's two allies, Iran and the Assad regime. After Ankara takes control of Afrin, however, there may be a narrow opportunity to agree on a common position. The United States should consider dropping its insistence on regime change in exchange for an expansion of the current negotiating framework to include the SDF. This expanded framework would have Russian and U.S. support and could be included in the UN-backed Geneva peace process, widening the scope of talks to include the United States' closest ally on the ground. It would finally recognize the need to integrate the SDF into efforts to reach a political settlement and could help force Ankara to work out a settlement with the Syrian Kurds that would put an end to its conflict with the YPG.

To maintain pressure on Assad, the United States could take advantage of an agreement Moscow helped to broker—the Syrian regime’s 2013 decision to dismantle its chemical weapons program and join the Chemical Weapons Convention. Russia worked to negotiate this arrangement, but it has undermined every effort since then to hold the regime accountable for violating its commitments. The United States should sanction the regime for its continued chemical weapons use, consider sanctioning Russian entities that provide spare parts for the regime aircraft that deliver chemical weapons, and engage with other countries in the region to prevent the export of dual-use items to the Syrian regime. This approach would link narrow, Syria-specific efforts to pressure the Assad regime to broader U.S. nonproliferation goals and would include sanctioning North Korea for exporting weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile components to Syria.

FROM DENIAL TO ACCEPTANCE

The challenge for the United States is admitting that a U.S. withdrawal could actually free Washington’s hand to increase pressure on Damascus, Moscow, and Tehran. The Syrian regime will inherit a low-level insurgency as well as a wrecked economy and a dearth of usable infrastructure in many urban areas. The United States should not help fund Syrian reconstruction but should instead leave Moscow to pick up the pieces of the country that its client destroyed. Washington can then focus on what it’s good at, both in the Middle East and in Europe: alliance management. In the case of the former, the centerpiece of U.S. policy has for decades been its strong bilateral ties with the Gulf states and Israel, backed up by the presence of large numbers of U.S. troops in the region.

Further isolating Damascus and Moscow will not be difficult, given their behavior. Syria has repeatedly violated international law by using chemical weapons on its own population, and Russia recently used nerve agents to attempt an assassination on British soil. The only other country to deploy chemical weapons so freely is North Korea. Working with allies to develop a unified response to such egregious behavior should be low-hanging fruit. Iran, meanwhile, is the main backer of the Syrian regime and culpable for its ally’s actions on the battlefield. The United States has a long history of sanctioning Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and should continue to do so, while also ensuring that the restraints imposed on its nuclear program remain in place.

In Europe, meanwhile, the linchpin of U.S. security and foreign policy has since 1949 been the mutual defense clause in Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, which states that “an armed attack against one or more...in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all.” Russia’s aggressive actions, from the poisoning of a former spy in the United Kingdom to the annexation of parts of Ukraine (a non-NATO country), underscore the need for continued defense planning and the revitalization of the alliance’s combat capabilities and physical infrastructure throughout the European continent. Syria is ultimately a sideshow in this broader, multi-front effort to contain Moscow, and its

importance should not be overestimated when considering how the United States can push back against or deter future Russian aggression.

To settle the Syrian conflict as quickly as possible, the United States will have to give something to Russia. The only thing it can realistically offer is security for the Assad regime. In return, Washington should demand that Moscow pressure its allies in Damascus and Tehran, along with its partner, Turkey, to begin formalized talks with the SDF. This policy would represent not defeat but an acceptance of reality. It would also be part of a broader effort to recalibrate U.S. policy toward Russia, containing its allies in the Middle East and pressuring Moscow directly on a number of fronts. This pressure should be multifaceted, starting with making Russia foot the bill for the Syrian war and expanding to include deepening alliances in the Middle East and Europe. Globally, the United States has a strong hand, which it can play so long as it focuses on the long game and doesn't get bogged down in a conflict where Russia holds all the cards and the United States' main goal—defeating ISIS—has already been achieved

Source : <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/syria/2018-03-15/us-containment-strategy-syria?cid=int-fls&pgtype=hpg>

What a U.S.–North Korean Summit Means for Japan By Sheila A. Smith

Abe Has Good Reason to Be Skeptical

Then news broke on March 8 that U.S. President Donald Trump had agreed to meet with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe had plenty of reason to worry. Japan, of course, would be delighted if the Trump-Kim meeting were to put Pyongyang on the path to verifiable and irreversible denuclearization, but Japanese leaders have long been and will continue to be concerned about the arsenal of North Korean missiles that could reach them. From Tokyo's perspective, the problem on the Korean Peninsula is not simply that Pyongyang's nuclear and missile capabilities are growing; it is also that Kim blatantly desires to demonstrate those capabilities, and to do so at the expense of Japanese security. North Korea has a reputation of not abiding by agreements, and today it has a lethal military arsenal to show for it. Thus, even if Trump and Kim hash out a deal, there is little reason for Abe to believe that Kim will give up his nuclear and missile capabilities, given how hard he has worked to develop them up to now. Expect Japan to be very skeptical, and to demand sustained evidence of Kim's intentions. Like U.S. and South Korean experts, Tokyo policymakers have little reason to trust Kim's quick about-face.

TARGET JAPAN

Japan has felt the brunt of Kim's intensified missile testing for over a year. Of North Korea's 11 successful missile launches in 2017, five fell within 200 nautical miles of the Japanese islands. In late August, Kim sent the first of two intermediate-range ballistic missiles he claimed could eventually reach the United States. In September, he went further and conducted a nuclear test, again seeking to prove that North Korea was just about to reach its goal of a deliverable nuclear weapon—a threat severe enough that it could decouple Seoul and Tokyo from the United States.

Japan has long worried about North Korea's missile program. In 1998, the first launch of a North Korean intermediate-range missile over Japanese territory alerted Japan's security community to its own vulnerability. Tokyo has struggled to keep pace with North Korea's proliferating missiles. New satellites were built to ensure early warning capability, and in 2002, Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi visited Pyongyang to meet with Kim's father, Kim Jong Il, in an effort to ease tensions. The two leaders issued the Japan–North Korea Pyongyang Declaration, which included a promise that North Korea would place a moratorium on missile testing—a promise that Pyongyang broke shortly thereafter, launching a volley of missiles in July 2006.

North Korea's current leader has only escalated the situation since assuming power. During Kim Jong Il's entire 17-year rule, North Korea conducted 46 missile tests; since Kim Jong Un came to power in 2012, it has conducted 99. Today, Pyongyang has a larger arsenal of missiles capable of reaching Japan than it did a decade ago. Not only that, these missiles are deployed on mobile launchers, making an imminent missile attack more difficult to detect.

In response to this new threat, Japan has begun to invest more in ballistic missile defenses. The budget for FY 2017 allocated 67.9 billion yen (about \$600 million) to missile defense, including high altitude ship-based systems for its AEGIS destroyers and land-based PAC-III missile interceptors. From 2016 until today, these have been on high alert. Last year, Abe ordered a new effort to mobilize civilian defenses as well. When, on August 29, a North Korean missile flew over Hokkaido, Japan's J-alert system warned citizens there to take cover. Since then, businesses, schools, and municipalities nationwide have begun to consider how to seek shelter in case of a North Korean attack. In Japan's new five-year defense plan to be announced later this year, additional funding on a land-based system to bolster a response to ballistic missiles is expected.

PYONGYANG AND WASHINGTON-TOKYO TIES

North Korea has offered its share of setbacks to the U.S.-Japanese relationship. Ever since December 2002, when Kim Jong Il announced that North Korea would no longer tolerate inspections of its nuclear facilities by the International Atomic Energy Association (IAEA), the United States and Japan have gone in and out of sync on their approaches to Pyongyang. Japan partnered with the United States and South Korea in their first attempt to negotiate a change of heart in Pyongyang in the early 1990s. Under the Agreed Framework of 1994, Tokyo provided funding for the light-water reactors that the Korean Energy Development Organization (KEDO) was to give North Korea in order to fuel the latter's energy needs. At the time, Tokyo and Seoul shared an understanding of the problem and a commitment to negotiating a path away from the Kim regime's nuclear breakout.

Yet North Korean backtracking undermined not only this arrangement but also, ultimately, the diplomatic unity of Seoul, Tokyo, and Washington. A new president in Seoul, Kim Dae-jung, wanted to pursue an aggressive engagement strategy, but this, too, floundered. Then the U.S. administration of George W. Bush came into office, identifying North Korea in 2002 as part of an "axis of evil" and, in 2005, sanctioning a Macau bank that kept the finances of the Kim regime. Stung by the failure of its own role in the KEDO program, and with growing confirmation that the North Korean regime had systematically abducted Japanese citizens in the 1970s, the Japanese public lost interest in funding any negotiated compromise with Pyongyang. Japan shifted away from supporting negotiations with the North to a far harder and more skeptical view of the Kim regime's

intentions. Japan's willingness to provide economic assistance as part of a regional settlement was evaporating, and even as the six-party talks—a further attempt at diplomacy involving China, Japan, both Koreas, Russia, and the United States—were launched in 2003, Japanese negotiators remained highly skeptical of North Korean intentions. For the first time, Tokyo also felt distanced by Washington as the United States sought to test the opportunity for a bilateral accommodation with the North Koreans.

Abe has thus witnessed how easily negotiations with North Korea can strain alliance ties. In fact, he has considerable experience in the ups and downs of international efforts to negotiate with the Kim family. He served as chief cabinet secretary to Koizumi during his negotiations with Pyongyang and became an outspoken hard-liner on Japan's compromise with North Korea when Kim Jong Il failed to account for additional abductees. Speaking forcefully about Japan's need to resolve the abductee issue, Abe went on to become one of his country's most vocal critics of negotiations with Pyongyang.

Abe has witnessed how easily negotiations with North Korea can strain alliance ties.

Since returning to the prime minister's office, however, Abe has briefly tested the waters of negotiation. When Kim Jong Un offered to restart talks on the fate of Japanese still living in North Korea, Abe approved a Japanese government response, and a negotiating team—which included officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as the National Police Agency—visited Pyongyang in October 2014. Nothing came of the effort, however, as North Korea once more failed to produce any reliable new information on the fate of Japanese still living within its borders.

THE TRUMP-KIM MEETING THROUGH ABE'S EYES

Ever since February 2017, when North Korea launched a missile into the Sea of Japan during Abe's visit to Mar-a-Lago, the prime minister has counted on close consultations with Trump to ensure that Japan's security concerns are appreciated and represented in the international community's response to the threat. And under Abe, the Japanese government has been more than willing to demonstrate how seriously it takes this growing missile threat. Over the past year, U.S.–Japanese–South Korean trilateral military coordination has expanded the role of Japan's Self-Defense Forces. And in discussions for the next Japanese five-year defense plan, due to be announced by the end of 2018, there have been calls to strengthen the country's ballistic missile defenses even more. Washington and Tokyo are also discussing what kind of conventional strike options might help deter Pyongyang from miscalculating about Japan's determination to defend itself.

For all of this enhanced cooperation, however, Japan anxiously watched as Trump tweeted threats of retaliatory “fire and fury” last August, and it became especially wary of the idea that the Trump administration was considering a preventive strike on North Korea. While in Tokyo in November, Trump wondered aloud why Japan didn't just shoot

North Korean missiles down, revealing a lack of understanding of Japan's defensive military posture. In early 2017, the Japanese government reminded the new U.S. administration of a memorandum of understanding accompanying the countries' bilateral security treaty, which commits the U.S. government to consult with Tokyo should it want to use U.S. forces on Japanese soil for combat in third-party countries.

Now the risk to Abe is a different one. A diplomatic opening spearheaded by South Korean President Moon Jae-in during the Pyeongchang Olympics led to Trump's acceptance of a meeting with Kim. Abe was persuaded to participate in Moon's Olympic diplomacy and joined both the South Korean president and U.S. Vice President Mike Pence on the VIP platform with the North Korean delegation at the opening ceremony. In private meetings with Kim's emissary, Abe reiterated his desire for denuclearization, holding fast to the principle that it is Pyongyang, not U.S. allies, that must bend.

When South Korean National Security Adviser Chung Eui-yong stood in front of the White House to announce the historic Trump-Kim meeting, Abe called Trump that very day. Japan's prime minister plans to visit Washington in early April, prior to Moon's summit with Kim that month and well in advance of any meeting between Trump and Kim, now tentatively scheduled for May. During his meeting, Abe will likely urge Trump to insist on denuclearization and to be unwavering in his commitment to the defense of America's allies. Japan's leader, like his predecessors, must be worried that the Trump administration will repeat the mistakes of the past and compromise too easily in an effort to avoid a military clash.

But Abe will also need to consider his country's approach should the Trump-Kim meeting lead to serious negotiation. Like other members in the old six-party talks, Japan will want denuclearization to be complete, verifiable, and irreversible, the conditions set forth in the last round of talks with Pyongyang. Although the United States may be focused on denuclearization, Japan will need to reduce the North Korean missile threat. We should thus expect Tokyo to condition its support for a deal on a missile moratorium and some sort of disarmament framework that would reduce Pyongyang's existing missile arsenal. Abe will also be hard pressed not to raise the fate of Japan's abductees, which could complicate conversations with Washington and Seoul over diplomatic priorities.

This is not a propitious time for the Abe cabinet. Political scandal is building in Tokyo, one that links the prime minister to a questionable government land sale. On Monday, the Ministry of Finance admitted to altering documents before submitting them to Diet review, raising suspicion that they erased evidence of impropriety. A bureaucrat of the Ministry of Finance who was involved in the sale has committed suicide, and Abe's finance minister and deputy prime minister, Taro Aso, is facing calls to resign. Abe's fate in his party's leadership election in September now seems to be in question.

Abe will need to safeguard his position as Trump's closest confidante in Asia. In Japan's lower house election last fall, Abe campaigned on his ability to keep Japan safe against North Korean belligerence. The Japanese public continues to believe its prime minister can fulfill that promise, largely because he has such a close relationship with the unpredictable U.S. president. Trump's unexpected acceptance of a diplomatic opening to Pyongyang creates a far more difficult future for Abe—one that not only tests his ability to reduce North Korea's threat to Japan but also tests his legacy as Japan's most reliable defender.

Source: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/japan/2018-03-14/what-us-north-korean-summit-means-japan?cid=int-fls&pgtype=hpg>

Saudi Arabia's dramatic changes By Talat Masood

The young and dynamic Prince Mohammad bin Salman — the virtual Saudi ruler — had come to realise that his kingdom was falling behind and it was vital to modernise and be a normal country. Its past rulers were too old, had become prisoners of tradition and too cautious in a world where bold decisions and innovative policies are needed. The prince's ambitions seem to cover a broader canvas and he would like Saudi Arabia to retain a dominant position in the region.

Since assumption of President Trump in office the Saudi-US partnership has also continued to blossom as both countries need each other for their own reasons. Iran's growing power and influence in the region had to be checkmated with revolutionary changes within the kingdom and by developing strong economic, military and strategic ties with the US. Internally, too, there was restlessness as access to the outside world brought forth to Saudis to judge the glaring disparities existing within the country despite its enormous oil wealth. Besides, Saudi Arabia was lagging behind in various fields and far too dependent on foreign expatriates for manning executive positions and labour-intensive jobs.

It seems Prince Mohammad with an open and expansive mind is determined to transform Saudi Arabia into a modern state. He perhaps visualises his country to be soon a model modern Islamic state by introducing economic, political and social reforms. Among the prince's high priority is the emancipation of women and loosening of traditional taboos and customs. Already a glimpse of his vision is reflected in allowing women to drive, participate in sports and extend wider opportunities in government and the private sector.

In a highly traditional and deeply conservative society bringing about these radical changes is no easy task. Already there is strong opposition from certain conservative sections of the society and more so from his own members of the royal family. Hopefully, the prince will be able to overcome opposition with the broad support of people and foreign powers for his policies. Fortunately, he enjoys considerable support from the younger generation on whom he is primarily relying. He has also tried to take along the clergy and those opposed to his policies are apparently being sidelined.

President Trump and the West are fully backing Prince Mohammad's domestic and regional policies. If the Saudi reforms are implemented faithfully and succeed it would have far-reaching impact on Saudi Arabia's social and political structure. The emancipation of Saudi Arabia is expected to counter militant and radical forces if any within the country and have a salutary impact on the Muslim world.

The expectations are a relatively liberal Saudi Arabia that is economically powerful, managerially and the workforce less dependent on foreign assistance will be better

positioned to be a leading force in the region. More significantly, it will be an effective counterweight to the growing influence of Iran in the region and beyond. This obviously has a serious downside, as divisions within the Muslim world are already dissipating the energy and resources of these countries.

Saudi and Iranian proxy wars in Syria and Yemen have destroyed these countries. It has caused unimaginable suffering to the people and allowed the US and Russia and major regional powers like Turkey to back their own favourites. Regrettably, the foremost beneficiary of this is Israel that has taken full advantage of the cleavage to expand its territorial boundaries and strategic influence in the region.

The Palestinian cause has been totally abandoned and new alliances have emerged wherein Saudi Arabia and Egypt are openly siding with Israel as for them countering Iran's growing influence is more threatening than Israel's annexation of Palestinian territory.

At a personal level, too, what facilitated Prince Mohammad to develop a close relationship with the Trump administration were his close relations with Kushner, the president's son-in-law. It is also presumed that he played a major role in the Arab-Israeli bonhomie. This decidedly has come at the cost of setting aside the genuine interests of the Palestinians and a major reversal of the fundamental and principled position that Arab and Muslim countries had pursued in the past.

Growing cleavage between Saudi Arabia and Iran, apart from dissipating the national energy of these nations, places Muslim countries, especially Pakistan, in a difficult position. Historically, Pakistan during military regimes and under the PML stewardship remained very close to Riyadh but tried to maintain a balanced relationship with Iran with reasonable success. The exception was during General Zia's period when Pakistan-Iran ties remained highly strained.

The other more pertinent question is how are the recent developments in Saudi Arabia going to impact, if any, the Muslim world? If the Saudi reforms succeed will other countries also open up their societies and move towards modernity. Will it help in the long term in countering extremism and promote progressive forces? Much would depend on how Saudi Arabia emerges from this bold experimentation.

We have the recent experience of watching the Arab Spring giving us hope then being suppressed. Although these two phenomena are not identical or objective conditions similar yet there are similarities. In Saudi Arabia, Prince Mohammad is leading the change and the ruling establishment enjoys backing of a large cross section of the youth, women and the educated class. Arab Spring was a refreshingly dynamic grassroots movement but was ruthlessly crushed by the Egyptian establishment. The world has since moved at a faster pace, including in the Arab countries.

If Saudi Arabia succeeds in leading the change surely it will have a ripple effect on several Arab and Muslim countries, including Pakistan. First, Saudi Arabia itself will face internal challenges to democratise or at least to loosen its grip on the people and be more accountable. Demand for equitable distribution of national wealth will intensify and overall expectations would generate more noise and disorder. But nations have to pay a price to progress and its leaders should be prepared for steering tumultuous changes. Otherwise, Muslim countries will remain destined as mere pawns to major powers.

Source : <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1659037/6-saudi-arabias-dramatic-changes/>

[How to Save the Iran Nuclear Deal By Ilan Goldenberg and Elizabeth Rosenberg](#)

A Grand Bargain That Can Satisfy Both Trump and the Deal's Supporters

Trade for development By Munir Akram

After a year of complaining about the Iran nuclear deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), U.S. President Donald Trump finally resorted to threats. In January, he gave Congress and Europe an ultimatum: if they did not fix what he considered the agreement's shortcomings by May, he would kill the deal.

Trump's chief objection is that certain restrictions on Iran's nuclear program expire, or "sunset," after 10–15 years. He has also raised concerns about Iran's support for Hezbollah in Lebanon and various Shiite militia groups in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen, and has decried the absence of measures to address Iran's ballistic missile program. These latter concerns are broadly shared, but Trump seems to harbor unrealistic expectations that the nuclear agreement address all of Iran's problematic activities. In the rough and tumble world of international diplomacy, it is impossible to get a perfect deal. And the JCPOA stands as a meaningful framework for nuclear arms control, offering a robust inspections regime that ensures compliance. More important, the JCPOA is far superior to the alternatives: allowing Iran, which had already reached the nuclear threshold when the deal was signed, to continue moving forward or else pursuing U.S. military action to set Iran back.

Many who originally opposed the JCPOA—including National Security Adviser H. R. McMaster, Secretary of Defense James Mattis, and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson—now support maintaining it. They fear that if the United States walks away from the agreement, it will be blamed for the JCPOA's collapse. Iran could then restart its nuclear program while the international community, split over whether to continue honoring the deal, would be unable to collectively isolate Iran. But given Trump's threats and the looming May deadline, the question is now whether Europe and members of Congress can address Trump's concerns with the JCPOA while setting implementation on a more stable long-term path to ensure that it survives.

STAYING WITHIN EUROPE'S REDLINES

The Trump administration's concerns about inspections and missiles can be relatively easily addressed without crossing European or congressional redlines or violating the terms of the agreement. European and congressional negotiators have already come to an agreement with the administration on language that focuses on Iran's intercontinental ballistic missile capability and emphasizes that international inspectors must have access

to any facility in Iran that they believe is necessary to inspect. (Concerns with Iran's regional behavior require a much more comprehensive long-term strategy, but the administration has wisely chosen to keep those discussions outside of its nuclear deal talks for the moment.)

The more difficult question is how to extend the sunset provisions. The administration wants to permanently prevent Iran from spinning more than 5,060 centrifuges or stockpiling more than 300 kilograms of low enriched uranium, activities that are prohibited under the deal until 2026 and 2031, respectively. But this puts the Europeans in a tough position, since they are deeply invested in preserving the nuclear agreement and in not changing terms that would violate the deal.

An obvious long-term solution is to draft a new agreement that extends some of the sunset provisions in the JCPOA, while providing Iran with new incentives, such as further sanctions relief or cooperation on a civil nuclear energy program. This is standard practice in the world of arms control. Ideally, such an agreement should be pursued a few years from now, following a longer stretch of compliance with the JCPOA. The Trump administration's decision to set a May deadline only generates an artificial crisis over an issue with years left to solve.

KEVIN LAMARQUE / REUTERS

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry talks with Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, January 16, 2016.

In any case, this theoretical future agreement will not address Trump's concerns today. There is simply no appetite for a new deal after only two years of implementation. The most practical option at the moment, which is currently being discussed between France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States, is issuing a joint public statement, indicating a desire to address the sunset clauses and an intention to roll out a strategy for a follow-on arrangement in a few years' time.

Of course, China and Russia, which are also signatories to the JCPOA, are not pleased that they have been excluded from the negotiations, and they will therefore regard any agreement that emerges with reserve. It may be possible to convince Beijing and Moscow, however, to support an extended agreement, given their own interests. They too consider a nuclear-armed Iran as destabilizing. And economically, they would prefer to prevent Iran from expanding its civilian nuclear energy technology so that they can become its key suppliers.

Although the Iranians will certainly reject a joint statement by the United States and its European allies, they will continue honoring the deal as long as there are no clear violations of it. Tehran does not wish to be blamed for having caused the deal's collapse,

which would condemn it to international isolation and harsh sanctions once more. In the long term, Tehran may be open to a follow-on arrangement, especially if the other parties to the agreement are united and it is offered new incentives.

WORKING WITH CONGRESS

Alongside its discussions with the Europeans, the Trump administration has pursued a second, parallel track with U.S. congressional leaders. The White House is pushing for new legislation authorizing the automatic reimposition of sanctions on Iran should it engage in nuclear activities that are forbidden under the JCPOA today but permitted in 10–15 years. It has set a low bar for reimposing sanctions, requiring 51 votes in the Senate to actively block a move by the president. Democrats have rightly argued that the legislation would violate the terms of the accord.

A better solution would be to allow the automatic snapback of sanctions if Iran takes actions that clearly violate the deal and that indicate a move toward the building of a nuclear weapon. Such steps include the construction of a secret nuclear facility, restarting production of 20 percent enriched uranium (it takes 90 percent or higher to produce a bomb), or conducting additional research on nuclear weapons building. Such legislation would be productive because it would create an additional deterrent for Iran not to cheat.

In regard to the sunset clauses, Congress could still propose a bill to quickly review and reimpose sanctions if Iran were to ramp up its nuclear program after the restrictions expire, but with a higher bar for passage, such as an affirmative vote by 60 or possibly 51 senators and a simple majority in the House. There are numerous variations of this option that it could experiment with, but whatever formulation legislators agree on, they must ensure that from Europe's view the bill does not violate the nuclear accord. If done correctly, such legislation could provide additional motivation for all parties to negotiate a follow-on nuclear agreement in a few years' time.

As Europe and Congress undertake the hard work of saving the JCPOA while also addressing Trump's concerns, they must make it clear that their concessions will not come free.

REMAINING CLEAR-EYED

As Europe and Congress undertake the hard work of saving the JCPOA while also addressing Trump's concerns, they must make it clear that their concessions will not come free. They should demand an end to the crisis that Trump generates every three months when a deadline nears for certifying Iran's compliance with the nuclear deal or for waiving sanctions so that foreign companies can pursue business opportunities in Iran. Thus far, Trump has used these moments to call into question whether he will honor the JCPOA, creating confusion and uncertainty in the business community, distracting the

deal's signatories from advancing other priorities, and undercutting confidence in multilateral agreements.

One way forward on this front is for Congress and the Trump administration to reduce the number of waiver and certification requirements associated with the nuclear agreement. They could issue them once every two years or even scrap them altogether. To be sure, this would not be an easy change, as many opponents of the JCPOA prefer to keep the waivers in place as a way to destabilize the agreement. Moreover, Congress has traditionally used waiver requirements to hold the executive branch accountable. Removing these requirements may elicit bipartisan concern about weakening legislative oversight. Trump, on the other hand, might be open to an adaptation of waiver requirements, given how much he dislikes the constant need to renew President Barack Obama's nuclear commitments.

As for the Europeans, in addition to demanding that the president provide direct assurances of not unilaterally walking away from the agreement, they should press Trump to explicitly push Republicans in Congress to agree to amending the waivers. (Only Congress can adjust the waivers, and Republicans in Congress will only make this change if pressed by the president.) This will reduce the political drama around the deal, as well as its vulnerability to U.S. violations. Europeans should also urge Trump to allow the civilian airline deals signed by Boeing and Airbus with Iran Air to stand, unless Iran Air is involved in significant, threatening activity subject to U.S. sanctions. These business deals are symbolically significant to the success of the JCPOA. French President Emmanuel Macron is due to visit Washington in late April. It would be an opportune moment for Trump to deliver assurances to the Europeans directly.

That said, the biggest impediment to reaching a new agreement will be Trump himself. He has a tendency to renege on deals and gloss over the details necessary for complex international arrangements to succeed. Thus, deal supporters in Congress and in Europe should remain clear-eyed when negotiating with the Trump administration. They must seek to extract concessions that bring stability to the JCPOA, but if they cannot, they should stand back, leaving Trump with the burden of having to shoulder the blame if he throws away the accord. Given the importance of the Iran nuclear agreement, however, whether it's strengthening the global nonproliferation regime and bringing stability in the Middle East, Europe and JCPOA supporters in Washington must at least explore whether a deal with Trump is possible.

Source : <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/iran/2018-03-13/how-save-iran-nuclear-deal?cid=int-lea&pgtype=hpg>

Another US volte-face in Afghanistan? | Editorial

Unannounced visits to Kabul, especially in the dead of night, by US generals, both serving and retired ones holding official posts, have become quite the rage in recent months. If nothing else, these sudden, secret and short nocturnal visits best illuminate the reality of the precarious security situation prevailing in the Afghan capital, and military capability of Taliban to strike at will even in heavily defended areas. The latest, by the US defence secretary, was unique because reporters in his party were prevented from filing stories until he had safely reached the military coalition headquarters from Kabul airport. That is the grim reality despite massive air strikes, Afghan forces rearmament and offensives under the new Trump policy.

US strategy in Afghanistan has throughout been epitomised by confusion and muddled thinking. The latest, an intensity in air attacks intended to cripple the Taliban militarily and force them to the negotiating table, has only been partially successful. The US military's December 2017 estimates reveal that Afghan government controls just 56 percent of the country's districts, whereas the militant's deadly reach extends to every part of Afghanistan. The US is now initially trying to divide the insurgents by 'peeling off' those insignificant elements from militant ranks who are amenable to President Ashraf Ghani's offer of unconditional talks, as opposed to the formidable Taliban, who want direct talks with the US. The latest Mattis Kabul visit is apparently not only about appraisal of the war effort but also an interested equal eye on peaceful settlement. His reported statement, 'We do look toward a victory in Afghanistan, not a military victory — the victory will be political reconciliation', is welcome, despite being ambiguous, as usual. If the US is really serious about lasting peace in Afghanistan, it should first call for a cease-fire on both sides, followed by a joint US-Afghan-Taliban dialogue, cemented by international guarantors under UN umbrella, at which the Afghan people and the whole world would rejoice. That is the only way to break the years-old stalemate within a time frame, either this or endless, bloody war.

Source : <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2018/03/14/another-us-volte-face-in-afghanistan/>

Trade for development By Munir Akram

US PRESIDENT Trump's unilateral tariffs on steel and aluminium imports threaten to unleash a trade war with America's friends and foes. The move may appease Trump's 'rust belt' constituency but is unlikely to end America's trade deficits or bring back manufacturing jobs.

Emerging from the Second World War as the dominant economic power, the US propagated the thesis that "nations can advance only by eliminating barriers to the free movement of goods and capital and by minimising the role of government in the economy". This Washington Consensus became the driving force for globalisation.

However, history indicates a contrary conclusion: that industrial development has been achieved almost always behind the walls of state protection and intervention. Great powers became great because of active state promotion of industrialisation and production.

Pankaj Mishra's article 'The Rise of China and the Fall of the Free Trade Myth' (New York Times Magazine, Feb 7, 2018) points out that China's rise has happened with "state-led economic planning, industrial subsidies and little or no regard for the rules of 'free trade'".

The interests of the developing countries would be best served if they act collectively.

Mishra recalls that Britain prevented its colonies from competing while selling its own goods globally. Alexander Hamilton's formula for protecting 'infant industries' behind government-erected barriers made the US the fastest-growing economy in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Germany after the First World War, and Japan after the First and Second World War, emulated these protectionist principles in their rapid industrialisation.

Of the three institutions proposed by Lord Keynes for the reconstruction of the world economy after the Second World War, the IMF and the World Bank were created at Bretton Woods. The third, the International Trade Organisation, endorsed in the 1946 Havana Charter to promote "full employment" and "make finance the servant, not the master of human desires internationally", was stillborn. The US Congress withdrew support because the protections provided to American corporations against 'expropriation' of investments were considered not strong enough.

Thereafter, the world trading system developed unequally. Europe's revival was fostered by US aid and trade under the Marshall Plan. As US allies, Japan, followed by Korea and Taiwan, industrialised behind protective barriers and because of the 'one-way' access offered them to the US market, capital and technology. Other countries were asked to adhere to the 'free-trade' principles of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).

The system was unfair at multiple levels. Agriculture was excluded from free-trade principles; the US and EU maintained their agricultural subsidies, while the developing countries were not allowed to do so. Textile trade was restricted by small import and export quotas. Tariffs on other goods were lowered uniformly despite the inherent economic disparity between the industrial and developing countries. The latter had almost no ability to oblige stronger 'partners' to observe the trade rules fairly.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Gatt was transformed into the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the Washington Consensus was imposed with a vengeance. Besides goods, free-trade principles encompassed services, finance, intellectual property and industrial policy. Almost all the tools used by the industrial world to 'climb the ladder' of industrial development (tariffs, subsidies, domestic content requirements), were 'kicked away' under the WTO agreement.

During the late 1990s, a small group of developing countries, led by India, Pakistan, Egypt and Cuba, organised a concerted resistance to the Western juggernaut in the WTO. They blocked one-sided decisions at the WTO's Singapore and Seattle ministerial meetings and were successful in inserting a modest 'development agenda' in the 2000 Doha Ministerial Declaration.

Since the Doha Conference, the nature and dynamics of global trade have changed dramatically. After its entry into the WTO, China, with lower wages, high efficiency and access to domestic and international capital, took advantage of the WTO's 'free-trade' regime to beat the industrialised countries at their own game, emerging as the world's manufacturing hub and accumulating huge trade surpluses and reserves. Simultaneously, due to their financial profligacy, the US and the European Union endured their worst financial and economic crisis since the 1929 Great Depression. The West's Washington Consensus evaporated and was replaced by a protectionist crouch.

The law firm, Gowling WLG, has reported that the world's top 60 economies adopted more than 7,000 protectionist trade measures between 2009-16, with the EU responsible for 5,657 and the US for 1,297. Losing the game in the WTO, the developed countries have moved to pursue plurilateral and bilateral 'free-trade' agreements.

The much-advertised 12-member Trans Pacific Partnership, apart from seeking to exclude China, sought to introduce new 'standards' favouring the industrialised countries: extended intellectual property protections, non-judicial investor-state dispute settlement, restrictions on state-owned enterprises. Although Trump ignorantly denounced the TPP, he may rejoin if the 11 'partners', who have revived it, accommodate his demands, which appears likely.

Similarly, the trade tensions with US allies generated by Trump's steel and aluminium tariffs are likely to be resolved through cosmetic concessions. The focus of future trade

friction will be China. India and other developing countries which are seen to be 'taking away' US jobs may also feel some 'heat'.

Pakistan is unlikely to figure in this trade turbulence. It is a puny trader, exporting \$20 bill and importing \$45 bill annually; as compared to the \$375 bill and \$380 bill which Mexico, a country of comparable size, exports and imports. Pakistan's failure to produce and trade deserves a separate analysis.

The interests of the developing countries would be best served if they are able to act collectively. They could take advantage of Trump's challenge to the global trading system and revive the proposal for an international trade organisation that is more efficient (in the application of capital and technology); more advanced (eg encompassing digital trade) and more equitable (embracing full employment and the SDGs). Today, the developing countries possess the collective economic and political power to construct a trading system that serves development.

As Deng Tsiao Ping remarked at the outset of China's rise: "Development is the only truth. If we don't develop, we will be bullied."

Source : <https://www.dawn.com/news/1396001/trade-for-development>

The Trump-Kim Summit Is No Game Changer By Steven Metz

During the past year the long-running conflict between the United States and North Korea seemed to be lurching toward catastrophe. Whether to actually defend his nation or to extort external assistance, North Korean dictator Kim Jong-un continued testing nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles. To Americans the missiles were particularly threatening since they could give North Korea the capability to strike the continental United States. In response, the president made clear that he would not allow Pyongyang to field nuclear-tipped intercontinental missiles, demanded that North Korea end its nuclear weapons program, and hinted at U.S. military action if this was not done.

Then there was a tiny glimmer of hope in this escalating crisis. In a recent meeting with South Korean envoys Kim Jong-un indicated for the first time that he was willing to consider denuclearization if, in his words, the military threat to his country was eliminated and its security guaranteed. A few days later the North Korean leader asked for direct talks with President Trump—and Trump agreed.

A meeting between Kim and Trump may or may not happen. Summits normally cap off agreements hammered out in advance through extensive negotiations by diplomats and subject-matter experts. That hasn't happened in this case. In fact, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, who was traveling in Africa when Trump accepted Kim's request for a meeting, did not seem to be aware that the announcement was coming. Yet even if Kim and Trump do meet, it is unlikely to produce results. Both sides have vital national interests at stake and have cared out diametric positions. More importantly the United States lacks the leverage to address that compelling North Korean concessions or compromise.

Leverage is the lifeblood of statecraft but it can be devilishly difficult to accumulate and apply, particularly against a skilled adversary. Over the past few decades, the United States has tried both sticks and carrots with North Korea, combining multinational economic sanctions, diplomatic isolation, threats of military action, offers to ease or remove sanctions, and the provision of economic assistance. None of these sticks or carrots have worked. Everything the United States has tried or threatened has proven ineffective or been not credible.

Take sanctions. Given the economic-centric American strategic culture and worldview, sanctions have been an important element of U.S. statecraft for a very long time, stretching back to the pre-World War II embargo key exports to Japan. That, of course, led to war. At other times, though, they have compelled greater flexibility in negotiations for instance, Serbia under Slobodan Milosevic and the apartheid government of South Africa.

But sanctions have not and cannot force Kim Jong-un to abandon his nuclear weapons and ballistic-missile programs. His regime may not be totally immune to economic pressure, but is close to it. Whether through the export of raw materials and some manufactured goods, crime, or remittances from North Koreans working abroad, there seems to be enough cash flowing in to keep the North Korean elite happy. If anything, it has more access to goods and services than it did during North Korea's economic crisis of the 1990s. Most non-elite North Koreans rely on the informal economy. They produce much of their own food or get it from small-scale entrepreneurs, and they have access to goods brought in from China. While far from prosperous, they are getting by.

In general sanctions work when they cause a declining standard of living among groups that a regime relies on for support or fears. In North Korea the elite seems committed to the regime and most of the people are accustomed to having very little. And as the United States learned in its conflict with Saddam Hussein, it's nearly impossible to make sanctions hurt only the elite of a nation without devastating the non-elite. On top of this, China has no interest in economically isolating North Korea and seeing the Kim regime collapse. For Beijing, this would be more dangerous than North Korean nuclear-tipped missiles pointing at the United States.

While sanctions are ineffective against a regime that can count on elite support and does not fear its non-elite public, America's other primary source of leverage against North Korea—military force—is not threatening enough or credible. Kim could tolerate limited U.S. strikes on North Korea. If anything they would help quell any domestic dissent and increase Chinese support. People naturally back their government when facing an external threat. And since U.S. attacks on North Korea would clearly constitute aggression under international law, Washington rather than Pyongyang would be seen as the aggressor, thus undercutting America's global leadership and weakening support for the multinational sanctions regime against North Korea. Kim knows this.

Threatening a full-scale invasion of North Korea is even less credible. South Korea, which would suffer horribly in a major war, would never allow it, yet the United States couldn't undertake major military operations in North Korea without South Korea's assistance. A full scale invasion would have cascading effects across Asia and throughout the world, probably sending the global economy into a tailspin—the last thing President Trump wants leading up to a possible reelection bid. And a U.S. invasion of North Korea provoked only by Pyongyang's deployment of nuclear missiles would make America the aggressor and destroy U.S. leadership everywhere. Again, Kim Jong-un knows this. Even though the United States could overthrow him, he believes—correctly at this point—that will not happen. Hence the United States has the military capability for regime change via invasion but threatening to do so is not be credible.

Putin outsmarts rivals: Comes back to power stronger than ever

In what was always thought to be an obvious matter of fact, President of Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin has won the Presidential Election of 2018. The turnout reported by the Russian as well as neutral observers was 67%, and Putin managed to secure 74% of the casted votes. Both feats are better than the Presidential elections of 2012. The only significant opponent to contest the office against Putin was communist millionaire Pavel Grudinin, who received about 12% votes.

This victory means that Vladimir Putin has secured the presidency for another 6 years. He has been serving at the top executive positions of the country since 1999. The win marks his third term as the President, where he was elected with the nomination from United Russia, ruling political party, for his second term 2012-18. However, this time he won as a nonpartisan, repeating what he did in 2002 elections.

Fair Russian Elections?

Russian presidential elections, unlike United States, are decided by the popular vote. It is a two step process; if not a single one of the contestants manages to secure more than 50% of votes. In the second phase, the leading two candidates go through the process of voting once again, one who gets the simple majority wins this time. Though it might seem transparent with Central Election Commission of Russia broadcasting live video stream from the polling booths, the election are still seen with incredulity by the experts.

For instance, anti-corruption activist and main opposition leader, Alexei Navalny was barred from running by the CEC due to his conviction in a fraud case. During the electoral process, some videos surfaced on the twitter which depicted the organized efforts in pre-ballot rigging. But the final verdict of Central Election Commission of Russia has termed the elections to be fair with no evidence of “major irregularity or rigging”, confirming President-elect Vladimir Putin’s stay in the office till 2024.

Read more: Putin wins again

“With Great Power, Comes Great Responsibility”

In 2017, CNN titled President Putin as “The Most Powerful Man in the World”, because of the supremacy it has to decide the course of Russian domestic and international politics. US president might be the head of the most powerful state in the world, but he is constrained by law of the country in many domains. Contrary to this, President Putin is “all in all” when it comes to authority. This might be his last term as he indicated by laughing off a question by a reporter that will he be running for the chair again after six years?

“What you are saying is a bit funny. Do you think that I will stay here until I’m 100 years old? No!” he said. It is important to keep in mind here that he believes the collapse of Soviet Union as the biggest tragedy of the 20th century. He has always held the notion of returning his country to the glory it possessed in the past and enjoyed astonishing approval ratings from his people subsequently.

Under his presidency, the crumbling Russian economy has done a better job but still there is a long way to go ahead. The poverty in the country is affecting more than 20 million people at the moment, which will surely be one of the biggest challenges ahead for the president-elect. After the collapse of Soviet Union followed by the corrupt and impotent regimes, Russia went partially dormant as far as the global affairs were concerned. For almost two decades, United States solely drove the statecraft all over the world till 2012 when under President Putin, Russia started to flex its muscles again.

Read more: Russian elections 2018: Why Putin is expected to win again

And at the end of his second term, now in 2018, Russia has consolidated its influence in Syria by its military might and in Afghanistan and Korean Peninsula by its effective diplomacy. It is expected that President Putin is going to cash the massive approval numbers he got in the 2018 presidential elections into more audacious and extensive decisions. He has been effectively putting a question mark over unipolarity of the world order in last few years.

Russia is one of the top weapon suppliers in the world and with big guns, comes big influence. President Putin’s next 6 years in the office are not only going to be significant for the Russia as a country but also in the matter of share it will be asking in the issues relating to global and regional affairs.

Source : <https://www.globalvillagespace.com/putin-hailed-victorious-comes-back-to-power-stronger-than-ever/>

The significance of Indo-US alliance for Pakistan By Nawazish Ali

The Three hundred poems are summed up in the one line, 'Think no evil' — Confucius

Let me begin by very briefly putting India-US relations in its geopolitical context. There is dangerous instability prevailing in many parts of the globe. The world is facing the perilous international security situation in the Middle East and Afghanistan. Saudi Arabia and Iran are vigorously sponsoring respective proxy conflicts in the region. Developments in the Middle East are expected to be 'revolting' after President Trump's decision to shift USA's embassy to Jerusalem. Iran reportedly pursues its nuclear weapons program by and large as usual. The prospects for the progress of 'Middle East Peace Process' between Israel and the Palestinians are the grimmest. The basic trends in Afghanistan are negative. Russia's relations with the West are unlikely to get much better very soon if at all. Much of the developing world is reeling from world economic downturn. This is the treacherous context in which US-India relationship in the near-term have and will develop, though India switched over from Moscow to Washington DC in 1991 exploring the avenue through Tel Aviv.

Henry Kissinger had put it much earlier in these words: 'The world faces four major problems — terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the movement of the centre of gravity from the Atlantic region to Asia and the impact of a globalised economy on the world order. The US and India have compatible, indeed overlapping, vital national interests in all four areas.'

India-US bilateral relations have developed into a 'global strategic partnership' based on shared democratic values and the increasing convergence of interests on bilateral, regional and global issues. President George W. Bush based his transformation of the US-India relations on the core strategic principle of democratic India as a critical factor in balancing the rise of Chinese power. To be explicit, this was not at all based on the concept of containing China. Instead, it centred on the idea that the United States and India in the decades ahead had enormous equities in promoting responsible international policies on the part of China. The deep US-India bilateral cooperation in that respect was in the vital national interests of both countries, i.e. USA and India. It was with this strategic paradigm in mind that the Bush Administration treated India with at least as much importance as China.

The combination of largely overlapping US-Indian vital national interests and shared democratic values may produce a bright future for strategic collaboration between New Delhi and Washington in future

Regular exchange of high-level political visits has provided sustained momentum to bilateral cooperation. The wide-ranging and ever-expanding dialogue architectures have established a long-term framework for India-US engagement. Today, the India-US bilateral cooperation is broad-based and multi-sectoral, covering trade and investment, defence and security, education, science and technology, cyber security, high-technology, civil nuclear energy, space technology and applications, clean energy, environment, agriculture and health. In my view, the United States has four declared national interests in the South Asian region concerning Pakistan:

to prevent Pakistan's nuclear weapons and materials from coming into the possession of extremists; to ensure that Afghanistan does not become a sanctuary to repeat terrorist attacks against the United States and its Allies, and to avoid war between India and Pakistan.

The US government clearly has its work cut out for her described 'national interests'. The possible effect of enveloping US preoccupation with Pakistan seems on its way 'practical' thereby constraining the US-India unconditional future relationship. This produces an understandable and growing US interest in trying to reduce tensions in the India-Pakistan relationship. Islamabad will definitely 'repeat the argument' that tensions with India and the Kashmir dispute are preventing it from moving robustly against the terrorists on the Western borders. So, India will continue encountering eventual pressure from the USA about normalising the situation in Kashmir. It therefore strongly makes a case for Pakistan to internationalise the 'Kashmir issue' as it is in line with the US's desire to improve the situation on Pakistan's western borders. This may sound a repeat of the old arguments, but the facts can't be simply 'brushed off'.

India emphatically considers it a mistake for Washington to treat India, mostly at the margin of US consideration of policy toward Af-Pak, as a lesser player on issues related to the future of South Asia. It is India that Pakistan claims is illegally occupying Kashmir. And it is only India that could find itself at war with Pakistan. So, India is profoundly connected to the future of Pakistan, not on the periphery of it. Also, a segment of the US' top brass and officials opine that the United States, India and Pakistan are now together in facing 'a common threat, a common challenge, a common task', in seeking to defeat terrorists based in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

It is now commonly believed in the US that NATO cannot win in Afghanistan as long as Taliban sanctuaries exist in Pakistan. But as George Friedman assumes, 'While the US and NATO forces must rely increasingly on Pakistani supply routes to fight the war in Afghanistan, Pakistan — fearful that the United States and India will establish a long-term strategic partnership — has the incentive to keep the jihadist insurgency boiling (preferably in Afghanistan) to keep the Americans committed to an alliance with Islamabad, however complex that alliance might be'.

As Henry Kissinger remarked: 'The conventional army loses if it does not win. The guerrilla wins if he does not lose.' Perhaps with this in mind, President Trump ordered the deployment of additional troops in Afghanistan. But he has made it clear that to defeat the Taliban, America will have to embark on a long and expensive campaign in Afghanistan and solicit assistance and support from Afghanistan's neighbours specifically Pakistan. The US Administration has recently revisited its policies in detail regarding the war in Afghanistan, a conflict that the United States and its allies are not winning and may be apparently losing.

Iran is another knotty issue in US-India relations and a potential source of considerable bilateral tension. For many reasons, India is unlikely to go along with Americans as related to US policy decisions about Iran. Also, it is not clear how Washington's dominant preoccupation with economic cooperation with China will affect Indian government calculations related to the US-India bilateral relationship and regional security. But if the US treats China in a privileged fashion, this is unlikely to produce spontaneous concessions from the Indian side on other matters of importance to Washington.

It appears that India does not figure as prominently in the US calculations regarding Afghanistan imbroglio as speculated by the Indian mass media. Washington may not object to India's economic development activities in Afghanistan but is considerably sensitive to Islamabad's complaints about India's covert involvement against Pakistan. So, the US administration will not give sufficient weight to India's views regarding Afghanistan as compared to those of Pakistan, the NATO Allies, Iran, China and Russia. The US ultimately will have to seek to limit the degree of Indian involvement in Afghanistan.

The combination of largely overlapping US-Indian vital national interests and shared democratic values may produce a bright future for strategic collaboration between New Delhi and Washington in future. But in the immediate period before us, the bilateral ties are likely to be more problematical than prophesied by the Indian cronies in the USA.

Source : <https://dailymtimes.com.pk/209913/significance-indo-us-alliance-pakistan/>

How Syrian Conflict Sparked New Cold War? – OpEd By Nauman Sadiq

On March 4, Sergei Skripal, a Russian double agent working for the British foreign intelligence service, and his daughter Yulia were found unconscious on a public bench outside a shopping center in Salisbury. A week later, another Russian exile Nikolai Glushkov was found dead in his London home and police has launched a murder investigation into his death.

Skripal was recruited by the British MI6 in 1995, and before his arrest in Russia in December 2004, he was alleged to have blown the cover of scores of Russian secret agents. He was released in a spy swap deal in 2010 and was allowed to settle in Salisbury.

Theresa May's government has concluded that Skripal and his daughter were poisoned with a Moscow-made, military-grade nerve agent, Novichok, and has recently expelled 23 Russian diplomats. In a tit-for-tat move, Kremlin has also expelled a similar number of British diplomats.

Emmanuel Macron and Donald Trump have assured their full support to Theresa May and the relations between Kremlin and Western powers have reached their lowest ebb since the break-up of Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War in December 1991.

Although Kremlin might appear as an aggressor in these instances, in order to understand the real casus belli of the new Cold War between Russia and the Western powers, we must recall another momentous event that took place in Deir al-Zor province of Syria last month.

On February 7, the US B-52 bombers and Apache helicopters struck a contingent of Syrian government troops and allied forces in Deir al-Zor that reportedly killed and wounded scores of Russian military contractors working for the Russian private security firm, the Wagner group.

The survivors described the bombing as an absolute "massacre" and Kremlin lost more Russian citizens in one day than it had lost throughout its more than two-year-long military campaign in support of the Syrian government since September 2015.

The reason why Washington struck Russian contractors working in Syria was that the US-backed and Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) – which is mainly comprised of Kurdish YPG militias – had reportedly handed over the control of some areas east of Euphrates River to Deir al-Zor Military Council (DMC), which is the Arab-led component of SDF, and had relocated several battalions of Kurdish YPG militias to Afrin and along Syria's northern border with Turkey in order to defend the Kurdish-held areas against the

onslaught of Turkish armed forces and allied Free Syria Army (FSA) militias in their “Operation Olive Branch” in Syria’s northwest.

Syrian forces with the backing of Russian contractors took advantage of the opportunity and crossed the Euphrates River to capture an oil refinery located east of Euphrates River in the Kurdish-held area of Deir al-Zor.

The US Air Force responded with full force knowing well the ragtag Arab component of SDF – mainly comprised of local Arab tribesmen and mercenaries to make the Kurdish-led SDF appear more representative and inclusive – was simply not a match for the superior training and arms of Syrian troops and Russian military contractors. Consequently, causing a carnage in which scores of Russian citizens lost their lives, an incident which became a trigger for the beginning of a new Cold War as is obvious from the subsequent events.

Regarding the conflict in Syria, General Joseph Votel, the head of US Central Command, recently accused Russia of playing as both “arsonist and firefighter.” This projection is farthest from truth because in fact it was Washington which kindled the fires of militancy in Syria and now it appears desperate to douse those fires.

First, Washington nurtured militants against the Syrian government for the first three years of Syria’s proxy war from 2011 to 2014, and then it declared a war against one faction of the militants, the Islamic State, when the latter transgressed its mandate in Syria and dared to occupy Mosul and Anbar in Iraq in early 2014.

Since the beginning of Syria’s proxy war in August 2011 to early 2014 when the Islamic State overran Mosul and Anbar in Iraq, an informal pact existed between the Western powers, their regional Middle Eastern allies and the Syrian militants against the Iranian resistance axis comprising Iran, Syria and their Lebanon-based surrogate, Hezbollah. In accordance with the pact, Syrian militants were trained and armed in the training camps located in the border regions of Turkey and Jordan to battle the Syrian government.

This arrangement of an informal pact between the Western powers and the Syrian militants against the Iranian resistance axis worked well up to August 2014, when the Obama administration made a volte-face on its previous regime change policy in Syria and began conducting air strikes against one group of militants battling the Syrian government, the Islamic State, after the latter overstepped its mandate in Syria and overran Mosul and Anbar in Iraq from where the US had withdrawn its troops only a couple of years ago in December 2011.

After this reversal of policy in Syria by the Western powers and subsequent Russian military intervention on the side of the Syrian government in September 2015, the

momentum of Sunni jihadists' expansion in Syria and Iraq stalled, and they felt that their Western patrons had committed a treachery against the Sunni jihadists' cause.

If we look at the chain of events, the timing of the spate of terror attacks in Europe during the last three years was critical: the Islamic State overran Mosul in June 2014, the Obama administration began conducting air strikes against the Islamic State's targets in Iraq and Syria in August 2014, and after a lull of almost a decade since the Madrid and London bombings in 2004 and 2005, respectively, the first such incident of terrorism took place in Europe at the offices of Charlie Hebdo in January 2015, and then the Islamic State carried out the audacious November 2015 Paris attacks, the March 2016 Brussels bombings, the June 2016 truck-ramming incident in Nice, and last year, three horrific terror attacks took place in the United Kingdom within a span of less than three months, and after that the Islamic State carried out the Barcelona attack in August last year.

Fully aware of their complicity and the role of "arsonists and firefighters" they had played in Syria's proxy war, if the Western powers can overlook the blowback of their ill-fated Syria policy in the form of spate of Islamic State-inspired atrocities in Europe during the last three years, then heavens won't fall if they could show a similar level of understanding regarding the recent assassination attempts on the Russian exiles in the United Kingdom and avert a new Cold War with Russia.

Source : <https://www.eurasiareview.com/19032018-how-syrian-conflict-sparked-new-cold-war-oped/>

Nuclear weapons | Editorial

We will not invest in our annihilation. Now we can avoid it. Our world and everything we care about is threatened every moment of every day by nuclear weapons, either by intent, accident, miscalculation or cyber-attack. These weapons, though now illegal following the July 2017 UN 'Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons', adopted by 122 nations, continue to be modernized at an expected cost of \$1.7 trillion over the next 30 years.

Like the Parkland students victimized by inaction of the previous generations, the non-nuclear nations have declared enough – they will no longer be bullied and held hostage by the nine nuclear nations. Now is the time to stop the insanity and divest of nuclear weapons just as apartheid was ultimately stopped by divestment in South Africa. If we want to abolish nuclear weapons, we must stop investing in them. The just released 'Don't Bank On The Bomb' report draws attention to the 'Hall Of Shame' companies that are either financing or producing nuclear weapons and their components.

There are 20 principal companies involved in the manufacture, development, production, and modernization of these weapons and 329 significant investors the world over who are financing this work investing over \$525 Billion in the last three years. The top three US investors include Blackrock, Capital Group and Vanguard and have a combined investment of more than \$110 billion.

It is an obligation for each of us to review our financial institutions' investments and retirement funds to identify whether or not we are inadvertently investing in these companies. Just as in the recent outcry regarding the financing of the NRA, which not coincidentally has been funded by many of the same companies, has led to divestment and disassociation with and by these companies, so to it must be for the companies that fund, develop and manufacture nuclear weapons.

Each of us has a responsibility to stigmatize these companies by speaking up, contacting these institutions and telling them that it is not right for them to be making a profit from the production of nuclear weapons which threaten our very existence, and to demand that they cease and desist in the words of Medea Benjamin and, "stop making a killing by killing."

From the report: "Financial institutions and weapons producers have a choice, either to contribute to the end of nuclear weapons, or to provide the financing that will allow nuclear weapons to end us".

With the recently released Trump Nuclear Doctrine which significantly seeks to expand nuclear weapons spending and capacities in the US over the coming years, as well as lowering the threshold for use, all of the other nuclear nations are following suit and

modernizing their arsenals. The world is faced with the greatest threat of nuclear war since World War II.

In a functioning democracy, we the people will decide – either by action or inaction. We can sit back and assume that “we cannot make a difference” or leave it to “them,” or we can make our voices heard realizing that “they” is us and demand an end to nuclear weapons.

We can take a step by endorsing the ‘Back from the Brink’ resolution rapidly spreading across this nation to prevent nuclear war, while simultaneously divesting from nuclear weapons. Ultimately, nuclear weapons will be abolished. They will either be abolished through the means outlined in the “Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons” and by divesting from them or, through their use in nuclear war, the aftermath of which may end all of life on this planet.

The choice is ours. Our children and the future of the planet demand abolition now.

Source : <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/294512-nuclear-weapons>

What Putin's Reelection Means for Russia and the World By Nikolas K. Gvosdev

Putin is staying—but he is likely to take the initiative to shape both Russia's domestic politics and its international position to his liking.

No one should have been surprised by the results of Sunday's presidential election in Russia. Official figures maintain that nearly 60 percent of eligible voters cast ballots, with incumbent Vladimir Putin cruising to an easy victory with more than three-quarters of the votes. Even assuming that the figures were massaged—note the inflated voter participation counts and tallies for Putin, especially in the republics of the north Caucasus, where totals approached Soviet-era levels—what can we conclude from the elections?

The first and most noticeable conclusion is that the center of gravity in the Russian opposition to Putin still lies with Communists and nationalists, not liberals and democrats. The various “red/brown” candidates collectively took some 20 percent of the vote, meaning that two in ten Russians who voted preferred anti-liberal, anticapitalist, anti-American choices. In contrast, the three liberal-leaning candidates did not, collectively, crest five percent in the tally. For those in the West who are counting on a Maidan or Tahrir Square-style uprising that will depose Putin, his replacement would be more likely to antagonize the West rather than to seek reconciliation.

The second is whether or not the boycott of the election called by anti-corruption campaigner Aleksei Navalny backfired. No one expected Putin to lose the election, but at least some of the 40 percent of Russian voters who stayed home might have casts ballots for candidates like Grigory Yavlinsky, Boris Titov or Ksenia Sobchak—and sent a signal about the constituencies that these political figures can credibly speak for. Given the likely reaction to Putin's reelection will be apathy rather than protest, and given the emergence of a new and perhaps long-lasting feud between Sobchak and Navalny, the continued failure of Russia's liberal-democratic sector to coalesce will continue to have a negative effect on Russian politics for the foreseeable future.

So Putin returns to office. What is this likely to mean for Russian domestic and foreign policy? Allow me to offer a few predictions.

First, Putin himself, in his victory speech, alluded to his age and the reality that he will not be around forever. It is in this forthcoming six-year term that Putin will have to set the foundations for a durable transition. I expect to see a government shakeup, perhaps later this year, in which a number of the long-time figures who have dominated the Russian government for the last decade and a half will be honorably retired to clear the way for new faces, and for a new cadre of fortysomething Russian politicians to assume greater prominence.

One of the ways Putin can ensure a rotation is to better guarantee that those who retire still retain some power and influence and, much more importantly, their property. This will also be critical to his own plans to eventually hand over power. So I would also expect to see, in the coming years, more efforts to codify guarantees and amnesties into law, culminating in a series of arrangements that would preserve Putin's own stake (and that of his children) intact as a condition for a transition of power.

Given how Putin himself was selected, I also cannot rule out that Putin might not wait until 2024, but instead choose a strategic resignation at an earlier date in order to better stage-manage the process of succession.

Now that he has won, will Putin, to paraphrase Barack Obama, now be able to show more flexibility on the world stage? We have three tests emerging: finalizing a settlement with Japan, the conflict in Ukraine and the Syria intervention.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is expected to visit Russia later this spring for yet another summit with Putin. Abe continues to strive for a settlement to the Kuril Islands matter, and for a formal peace treaty with Russia that would enhance Abe's own standing and nationalist credentials. Putin has shown unwillingness to bend on the territorial issue in the past, but now that he has secured reelection, will he take the position that ceding some territory back to Japan is still a net plus, given the annexation of Crimea? And would he be willing to trade land for an investment that would help develop the Russian Far East?

Russian plans to bypass Ukraine as a transit country continue, despite efforts by some EU countries and the United States to impose roadblocks. At some point, it makes sense for Putin to show much more willingness to offer concessions on the Donbass question, especially with the return of a grand coalition government in Germany and the likelihood of a more pro-Russian administration in Italy. Will we see in 2018 some dramatic shift in the Kremlin's position?

Finally, the Syria intervention has largely served its purpose. Now, the task is to disentangle Russia from a possible quagmire in the Middle East—having observed America's own difficulties in disengaging from the region—while still retaining the benefits the Kremlin has obtained. After completing the effort of restoring the Bashar al-Assad regime's control over most of the Damascus suburbs, my sense is that Putin will not continue to offer the regime any sort of blank check, and will shift efforts to forging a series of regional balances (Israel-Iran, Iran-Saudi Arabia, et cetera) based on Russian mediation.

All of this takes place against the backdrop of worsening U.S.-Russia relations. That dynamic will not change as a result of the March 18 polls, and if President Donald Trump is removed during his first term or defeated in 2020, the Kremlin expects that any

Republican or Democratic successor would be more hostile. So we are likely to see a Russian foreign policy that continues to focus on ways to divide and isolate the United States from its Asian, Middle Eastern and European allies. In that sense, not much will change as a result of the elections.

Source : <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/what-putins-reelection-means-russia-the-world-24974>

[How to stop a US-China trade war before it starts](#) By Daniel Moss

IT may be one of the most opportune flubs in economics.

A slip of the tongue by the US Treasury's top international official offers one way out of the trade skirmish between the US and China. Few serious people want tariffs ordered by President Donald Trump and the Chinese import restrictions imposed in response to degenerate into a trade war that would harm both countries. The trick is to find a decorous way for each side to back off. Maybe that formula already exists in a shelved channel for formal talks between the two nations.

To set the scene, recall an awkward moment that occurred on March 18, far from Washington and Beijing. Treasury officials were in Argentina when they delivered a confusing message about the status of the US-China Comprehensive Economic Dialogue, a long-standing framework for negotiations.

The trick is to find a decorous way for each side to back off. Maybe that formula already exists in a shelved channel for formal talks between the two nations

The Comprehensive Economic Dialogue is the latest iteration of a discussion launched with much hype in 2006 by former Treasury Secretary Hank Paulson to provide a formal framework for twice-yearly discussions of economic issues between the US and China. Under subsequent secretaries, the process waned. Reluctant to formally kill it, officials have been wondering what to do with it.

Enter Trump and last month's threat to impose tariffs on American imports from China, apply restrictions on investment in key technologies and address shortcomings in Chinese trade practices. The administration left a few ways out, but resuming the Comprehensive Economic Dialogue didn't appear to be one of them.

David Malpass, undersecretary for international affairs, told reporters in Buenos Aires a few days earlier that Treasury had "discontinued" the dialogue.

But then something odd happened: Malpass reappeared to say, "I misspoke." He added that Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin would engage in "high-level" discussions with China. Both men muddied the waters more by refusing to clarify the status of the existing framework for talks. Was it alive, dead or cryogenically frozen? Nobody could tell.

Though the dialogue was a brainchild of the US, American officials have grown frustrated that it hasn't yielded a lot. Timothy Adams, who had Malpass's job when Paulson launched the project, doesn't fault the US "They're looking for different ways of bringing

about a change of Chinese behaviour,” Adams, now president of the Institute of International Finance, told Bloomberg News’s Saleha Mohsin.

The Treasury officials’ mixed message appears to signal that the US is looking for a way to negotiate a deal during the two-month period before a list of products subject to tariffs is finalized and published. That would be consistent with Trump’s own praise of Chinese President Xi Jinping at the very March 22 event he used to announce the actions against China.

They just need a structure that’s already there so it doesn’t look like one is ceding too much ground to the other. There’s that Comprehensive Economic thingy they’ve been pondering what to do with. Just call it something else: maybe the US-China Trade Resolution Forum?

Source : [/www.dawn.com/news/1398926/how-to-stop-a-us-china-trade-war-before-it-starts](http://www.dawn.com/news/1398926/how-to-stop-a-us-china-trade-war-before-it-starts)

Is Trump getting his way on global trade By Shahid Javed Burki

Countries such as Pakistan that have not benefited as much from globalisation were hoping to join those that have gained a great deal from the opening up of the global economy. It is unfortunate that they will now be subjected to different sets of rules. For over 70 years, the world trading system had moved towards the rule of laws watched over by a set of institutions in which no single country could call the shots. Countries around the world had worked together to shape the system.

The treaty that had led to the creation of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in 1995 was effectively negotiated over a period of 50 years. It established the basic principles, rules and laws, all member nations were required to follow. If there was any deviation, those hurt by the departure from the agreed framework could appeal to the WTO to adjudicate. The WTO decisions were final and had to be followed. The large Communist countries that had stayed out of the global system since they operated their economies with state dominating the decision-making process came into the system by promising to liberalise economic management. China joined the WTO in 2001, followed a decade later by Russia.

The system brought a lot of benefit to the world economy and trade played an important role. Between 1985 and 2005, the proportion of trade in global output increased from 15 per cent to 30 per cent. The ease with which goods and services could cross international borders resulted in major changes in the global manufacturing system. Most heavily traded products were manufactured from parts and components made in many countries. The US automobile industry made cars and trucks using the components made in Mexico and Canada. Apple that made iPhones and iPads, designed these products in America's West Coast, exported the designs to a Taiwanese assembly plant located in China's south using parts and components imported from several East Asian countries. Global production systems linked countries across the globe.

This had become possible because of the easing of constraints on trade. Several rounds of trade negotiations resulted in significant lowering of tariffs and reducing not-tariff barriers. Capital could move fast among nations and multinational corporations could follow the linked political system as a result of the remarkable strides made by information and communication technologies. This process would have continued had the global economy not plunged into what came to be called the Great Recession of 2007-2009. The slowdown lasted for a couple of years and produced a number of long-enduring social and political consequences.

A significant number of people living and working in several old industries in the United States and Europe lost their jobs and saw a significant stagnation in their earnings. Their resentment brought new political forces into play. One of them was Trumpism in the United States. There were also significant changes in the European political landscape. Britain decided to leave the European Union while a number of extreme rightist parties gained ground in Continental Europe. In the huge public rallies addressed by Donald Trump in the run-up to the elections of November 2016, he promised what came to be known as his base in what was once the manufacturing heartland. He introduced a number of slogans into the country's political vocabulary. These included 'America First' and 'Make America Great Again'. If he were elected he promised his followers that he would dismantle the old global system and usher in a new political and economic order in which the United States would rule supreme. There were three areas in which he would reverse course.

These were trade, climate change and immigration. By diluting the old trading system he would bring back jobs to the United States. By quitting the Paris accord on climate change and changing the regulatory system he would revive coal mining. And by building a wall along the United States-Mexico border he would stop illegal migration into the country.

The first concrete result of the new approach was made public on March 27th, when the United States and South Korea signed a new trade pact in which Seoul agreed to a number of long-sought changes concerning its trade with America. A number of these related to the industries that had suffered declines in the United States. Among them were the automobile and steel industries in which South Korea had emerged as a major competitor. The deal lifted existing limits on manufacturers like Ford and General Motors, while extending tariffs for South Korean truck exports. It also restricted the amount of steel that South Korea could export to the United States.

It was quite obvious that President Trump's decision announced a week earlier to impose stiff tariffs on the import of steel and aluminum into the country had worked in favour of Seoul's willingness to work with Washington and conclude a bilateral trade deal. But according to The New York Times, "the political success of the trade agreement — and its ability to be replicated in other negotiations is not guaranteed. Many countries have reacted coolly to Washington's pugilistic approach to trade, viewing the president's preference to punch first and negotiate later as counter to global interests." President Emmanuel Macron is a good example of the reaction of a country the United States once counted as its close ally. "We talk about everything, in principle, with a friendly country that respects the rules of the WTO. We talk about nothing, in principle, when it is with gun to our head." How the Trump's influence on global trade will work for Pakistan is a subject I will take up next week.

Source : <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1675122/6-trump-getting-way-global-trade/>