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Climate impacts ‘overwhelming’ – UN

[The CSS Point](#) April 1, 2014



The impacts of global warming are likely to be “severe, pervasive and irreversible”, a major report by the UN has warned.

Scientists and officials meeting in Japan say the document is the [most comprehensive assessment to date](#) of the impacts of climate change on the world.

Some impacts of climate change include a higher risk of flooding and changes to crop yields and water availability.

Humans may be able to adapt to some of these changes, but only within limits.

An example of an adaptation strategy would be the construction of sea walls and levees to protect against flooding. Another might be introducing more efficient irrigation for farmers in areas where water is scarce.

Natural systems are currently bearing the brunt of climatic changes, but a growing impact on humans is feared.

Members of the UN’s climate panel say it provides overwhelming evidence of the scale of these effects.

Our health, homes, food and safety are all likely to be threatened by rising temperatures, the summary says.

The report was agreed after almost a week of intense discussions here in Yokohama, which included concerns among some authors about [the tone of the evolving document](#).

This is [the second of a series](#) from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) due out this year that outlines the causes, effects and solutions to global warming.

This latest Summary for Policymakers document highlights the fact that the amount of scientific evidence on the impacts of warming has almost doubled since the last report in 2007.

Be it the melting of glaciers or warming of permafrost, the summary highlights the fact that on all continents and across the oceans, changes in the climate have caused impacts on natural and human systems in recent decades.

In the words of the report, “increasing magnitudes of warming increase the likelihood of severe, pervasive and irreversible impacts”.

“Nobody on this planet is going to be untouched by the impacts of climate change,” IPCC chairman Rajendra Pachauri told journalists at a news conference in Yokohama.

Dr Saleemul Huq, a convening lead author on one of the chapters, commented: “Before this we thought we knew this was happening, but now we have overwhelming evidence that it is happening and it is real.”

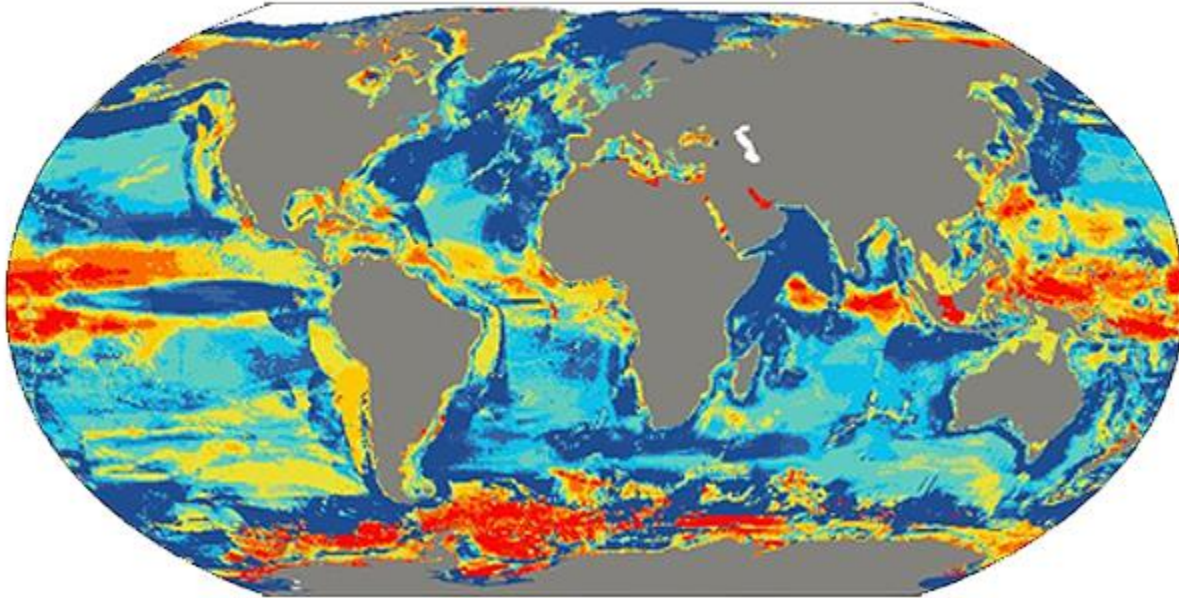
Michel Jarraud, secretary-general of the World Meteorological Organization, said that, previously, people could have damaged the Earth’s climate out of “ignorance”.

“Now, ignorance is no longer a good excuse,” he said.

Mr Jarraud said the report was based on more than 12,000 peer-reviewed scientific studies. He said this document was “the most solid evidence you can get in any scientific discipline”.

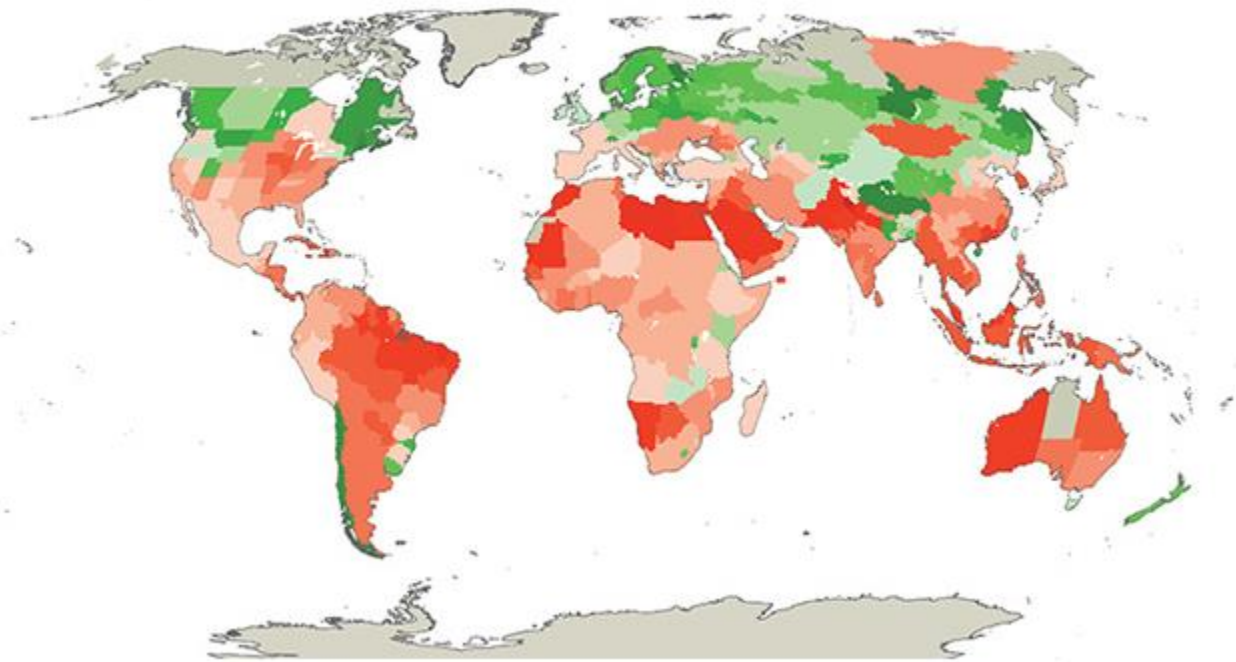
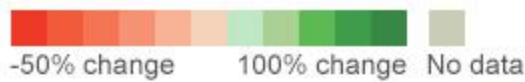
US Secretary of State John Kerry commented: “Unless we act dramatically and quickly, science tells us our climate and our way of life are literally in jeopardy. Denial of the science is malpractice.”

Estimated change in maximum fish catch by 2060 Compares 10 yr average 2001-2010 to projection of 2051-60



Source: IPCC

Estimated impact of +3 degrees C change on crop yields by 2050



Source: World resources institute

He added: “No single country causes climate change, and no one country can stop it. But we need to match the urgency of our response with the scale of the science.”

Ed Davey, the UK Energy and Climate Secretary said: “The science has clearly spoken. Left unchecked, climate change will impact on many aspects of our society, with far reaching consequences to human health, global food security and economic development.

“The recent flooding in the UK is a testament to the devastation that climate change could bring to our daily lives.”

The report details significant short-term impacts on natural systems in the next 20 to 30 years. It details five reasons for concern that would likely increase as a result of the warming the world is already committed to.

These include threats to unique systems such as Arctic sea ice and coral reefs, where risks are said to increase to “very high” with a 2C rise in temperatures.

The summary document outlines impacts on the seas and on freshwater systems as well. The oceans will become more acidic, threatening coral and the many species that they harbour.

On land, animals, plants and other species will begin to move towards higher ground or towards the poles as the mercury rises.

Humans, though, are also increasingly affected as the century goes on.

Food security is highlighted as an area of significant concern. Crop yields for maize, rice and wheat are all hit in the period up to 2050, with around a tenth of projections showing losses over 25%.

After 2050, the risk of more severe yield impacts increases, as boom-and-bust cycles affect many regions. All the while, the demand for food from a population estimated to be around nine billion will rise.

Many fish species, a critical food source for many, will also move because of warmer waters.

In some parts of the tropics and in Antarctica, potential catches could decline by more than 50%.

“This is a sobering assessment,” said Prof Neil Adger from the University of Exeter, another IPCC author.

“Going into the future, the risks only increase, and these are about people, the impacts on crops, on the availability of water and particularly, the extreme events on people’s lives and livelihoods.”

People will be affected by flooding and heat related mortality. The report warns of new risks including the threat to those who work outside, such as farmers and construction workers. There are concerns raised over migration linked to climate change, as well as conflict and national security.

Report co-author Maggie Opondo of the University of Nairobi said that in places such as Africa, climate change and extreme events mean “people are going to become more vulnerable to sinking deeper into poverty”.

While the poorer countries are likely to suffer more in the short term, the rich won’t escape.

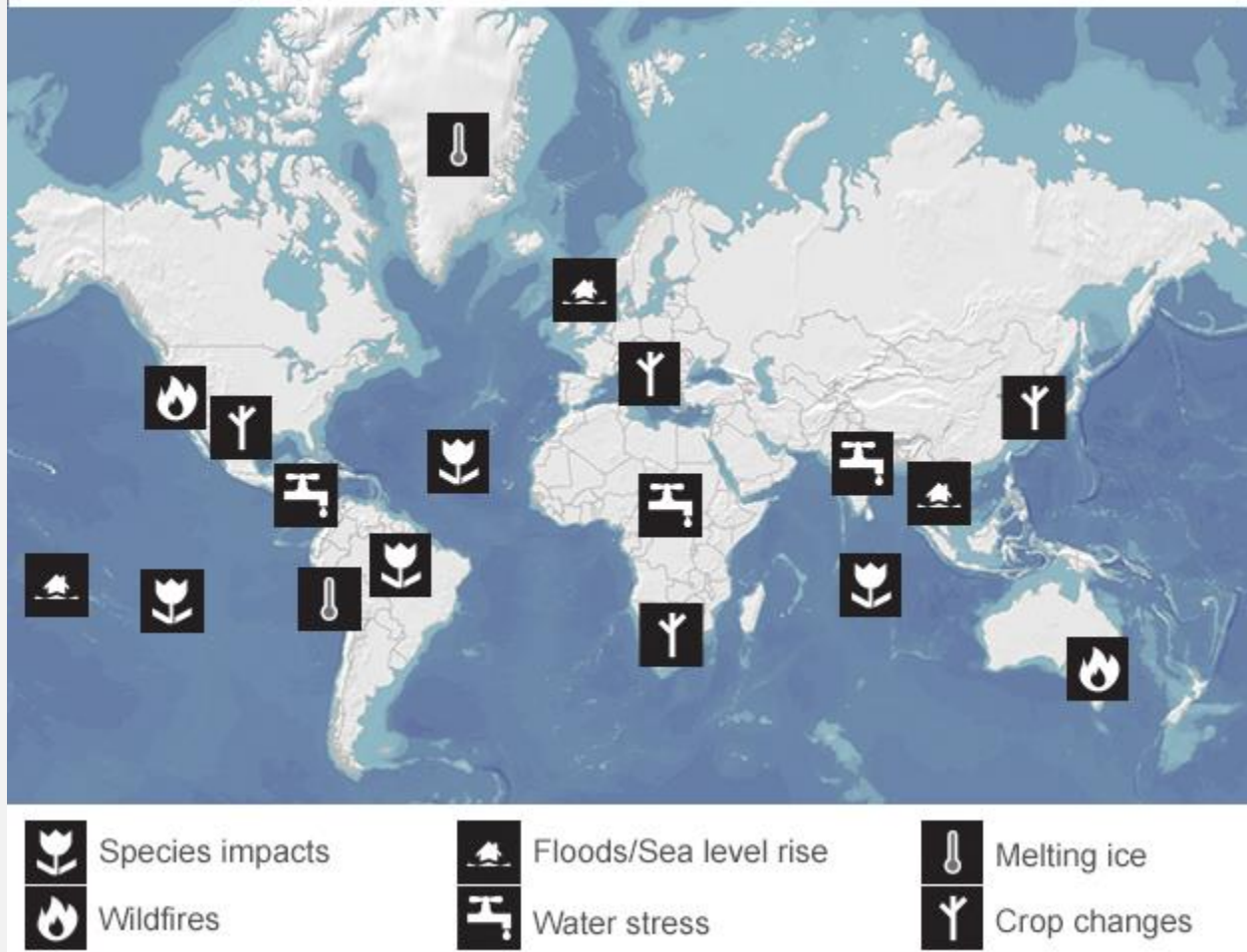
“The rich are going to have to think about climate change. We’re seeing that in the UK, with the floods we had a few months ago, and the storms we had in the US and the drought in California,” said Dr Huq.

“These are multibillion dollar events that the rich are going to have to pay for, and there’s a limit to what they can pay.”

But it is not all bad news, as the co-chair of the working group that drew up the report points out.

“I think the really big breakthrough in this report is the new idea of thinking about managing climate change as a problem in managing risks,” said Dr Chris Field.

Climate change impacts around the world



“Climate change is really important but we have a lot of the tools for dealing effectively with it – we just need to be smart about it.”

There is far greater emphasis to adapting to the impacts of climate in this new summary. The problem, as ever, is who foots the bill?

“It is not up to IPCC to define that,” said Dr Jose Marengo, a Brazilian government official who attended the talks.

“It provides the scientific basis to say this is the bill, somebody has to pay, and with the scientific grounds it is relatively easier now to go to the climate negotiations in the UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) and start making deals about who will pay for adaptation.”

UN ready to help evacuate 19,000 Muslims in C.Africa

[The CSS Point](#) April 1, 2014



The UN's refugee agency said Tuesday it was prepared to help evacuate some 19,000 Muslims at risk of attack from mainly Christian militias in the conflict-torn Central African Republic.

“What we don't want is to stand by and watch people being slaughtered,” UNHCR spokeswoman Fatoumata Lejeune-Kaba told reporters in Geneva.

She pointed out that so-called anti-balaka militias controlled major routes to and from Bangui as well as a number of towns and villages in the southwestern part of the country.

They posed a particular threat to Muslims in the PK12 neighbourhood of the capital, in Boda, Carnot and Berberati to the west and Bossangoa further north, she said, lamenting that “we fear for the lives of 19,000 Muslims in those locations”.

“UNHCR stands ready to assist with their evacuation to safer areas within or outside of the country,” she said, pointing out that so far “the only thing keeping them from being killed right now is the presence of (international) troops”.

UN staff were heading to the town of Bema in the north Tuesday to discuss possibly relocating Muslims there, but Lejeune-Kaba said it was difficult, since locals feared welcoming evacuees could attract unrest to their area.

The chronically unstable Central African Republic sank into chaos after the mainly Muslim Seleka rebels who had helped topple president Francois Bozize a year ago refused to lay down their arms and went rogue.

Their campaign of killing, raping and looting prompted members of the Christian majority to form the anti-balaka vigilante groups, which are also accused of atrocities.

Around 8,000 international troops are working to contain the crisis in the former French colony, where more than 2,000 people have been killed since December.

At the height of the crisis in December and January, more than a quarter of the country's 4.6 million people had fled their homes.

A new surge in bloodshed has forced nearly 16,000 people from their homes in the capital since early last week alone, Lejeune-Kaba said.

According to UNHCR numbers, 637,000 people in total are now displaced inside the country, including 207,000 in Bangui, while 82,000 mostly Muslim Central Africans had streamed into neighbouring countries in the past three months.

The increase in violence has claimed more than 60 lives in the capital since March 22, Cecile Pouilly, spokeswoman for the UN's human rights office, told reporters Tuesday.

She pointed especially to a grenade attack on a funeral service in Bangui that claimed at least 20 lives on March 27, and to the 24 people killed on Saturday by Chadian soldiers.

"It appears that Chadian soldiers fired indiscriminately at a crowd following an incident," she said, stressing that her office was "still trying to confirm the exact affiliation of these soldiers".

Pouilly also said she expected a UN team of investigators on the ground in the country to probe allegations that Chadian soldiers supporting the Seleka have been targeting Christians.

Maulana's strange logic

[The CSS Point](#) April 5, 2014



PAKISTAN'S leaders, both of the political and politically religious varieties, are known to make statements that range from the laughable to the cringe-worthy.

But JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman's recent pronouncement takes the cake for its bizarre logic. Speaking to the media on Thursday in Dera Ismail Khan, Maulana Sahib announced that the Sindh Assembly stood dissolved after it had passed a resolution critical of the Council of Islamic Ideology last month.

The resolution, he said, was a negation of the "ideology of Pakistan". Even the best minds in political science and constitutional law will be hard-pressed to establish that the Sindh Assembly's resolution is grounds for the house to be dissolved.

In the unanimously adopted resolution, the Sindh legislature slammed the CII’s “anti-women recommendations” relating to the permissibility of child marriage and making it possible for a man to contract a second marriage without the first wife’s consent. The resolution had also called for doing away with the CII itself.

The maulana’s ire against the Sindh Assembly probably stems from the fact that one of his party members heads the CII. But what defies logic is the call for an elected legislature to be dissolved for criticising an unelected body which has, of late, been proving itself a bastion of regressive thought.

Considering the CII’s recent recommendations, especially where it said that the law banning child marriage was ‘un-Islamic’, it was expected that there would be some public outcry and debate. As a representative forum, the Sindh Assembly was well within its rights to criticise the deplorable recommendations.

And if Maulana Fazl feels there should be fresh polls in Sindh as its assembly ‘dared’ to question the CII’s fiats, should the National Assembly also be dissolved as a private bill calling for the strengthening of the law against child marriage has been introduced in the house? Maulana Fazl should refrain from making calls to dissolve an elected legislature in order to defend an unelected body that has become the subject of controversy.

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TTP and its apologists

[The CSS Point](#) April 5, 2014



Befooled by the mirage of peace

Government leaders have for a long time danced to the tune set by the TTP. For every murderous attack by the network, none blamed the organisation by name. The terrorists may be against the government, claimed Ch Nisar, but they are not against the state. He forgot that the TTP killed 50,000 innocent Pakistanis and thousands of soldiers. It attacked military installations and destroyed highly valuable assets. The militants deepened the sectarian divide by targeting people belonging to sects other than their own. They denied the people playing fields and forced the country to host cricket teams from other countries abroad. Ch Nisar maintained all along that terrorist acts were a reaction to drone attacks, thus putting all the blame on the US. No drone

attack has taken place since December yet scores of terrorist attacks have been conducted on polio workers, security personnel and tribesmen loyal to the state. The TTP decapitated 23 FC personnel held in captivity, desecrated their bodies and put up the video on the net. In another attack inside Islamabad court premises terrorists killed 11 including a judge.

The TTP is ordering the government about, changing directions of the game every now and then. When it announced a ceasefire, the apologists applauded, forgetting that there was little respite to their attacks. These were being conducted by groups who are opposed to talks, they maintained. KP information minister was all in praise for the ‘generosity’ shown by the TTP. When the TTP offered talks, the apologists fell for them castigating the critics for their negative thinking.

The TTP has now delivered a snub to all those who had pinned hopes on peace through talks. A report in the media regarding the talks hitting deadlock were pooh-poohed by the talks lobby. Samiul Haq dismissed the speculation that peace talks were deadlocked, saying negotiations had made steady progress. Even when the TTP demanded the release of its prisoners and withdrawal of the army from parts of South Waziristan as preconditions for the extension of ceasefire, the lobby insisted TTP had attached no conditions. Samiul Haq maintained firmly that the ceasefire would hold beyond March 31.

The announcement by the TTP exposes the hollowness of claims by its apologists. The TTP has also maintained that it was a monolith with none daring to challenge the *amir*. Now one section in the network wants talks to continue while the other has threatened that attacks would begin again in Pakistan in which common people would suffer. Instead of holding talks while the TTP is pointing a gun, government should prepare to take on the terrorists. Any terrorist attack irrespective of whether it is on the civilians or law enforcement personnel must be reciprocated by exemplary punishment inflicted on terrorist pockets and strongholds.

Pakistan’s green growth plan gets underway to tackle climate vagaries

[The CSS Point](#) April 5, 2014



An ambitious economic growth initiative focusing on efficient and sustainable use of natural resources has been launched by the governing political party in northwest province of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa.

The Green Growth Initiative (GGI) aims to boost the province’s socio-economic development by efficiently using natural resources without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs according to Imran Khan, chairman of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), a national political party.

PTI came into power in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province as a result of elections held in May 2013. The party had promised its supporters to implement the GGI if elected, saying that it would create green jobs, boost growth and reduce poverty in the state.

Experts say that poverty is a major cause of deforestation as people cut down trees to sell the timber. The new government began the GGI on March 1 with a campaign to plant 8 million trees by June 30.

“The GGI reflects our understanding well that the transition to a green growth economy is vital from an environmental conservation and climate change mitigation and adaptation viewpoint. Above all, it promises huge economic returns,” Imran Khan said during the initiative’s launch in Peshawar, capital of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, in February.

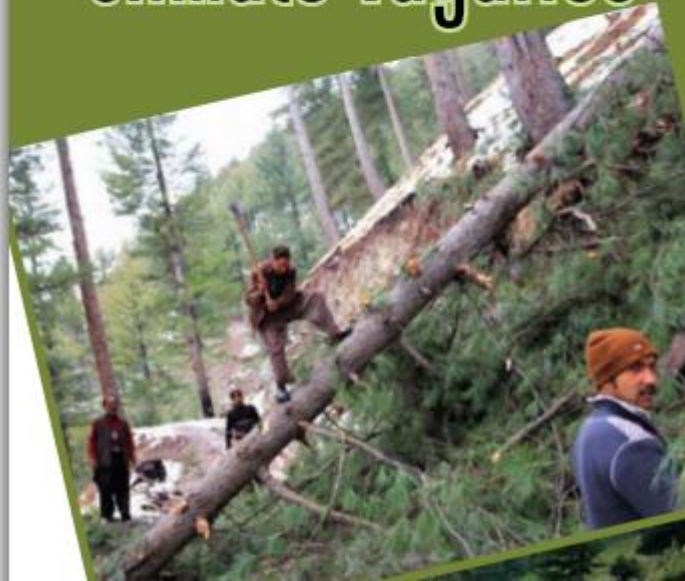
Malik Amin Aslam Khan, a former state minister for environment, who as PTI’s green growth policy advisor is the architect of GGI, described the provincial government’s strategy for “greening” economic growth as having three prongs: defining environmental challenges and identifying solutions within sectors such as energy, water, forestry, transport and agriculture; integrating green growth policies into these sectors; and creating political support for the vision of a green economy.

The government has set up an Inter-Ministerial Committee on Green Growth and a task force on Green Growth, with the provincial chief minister as its chair, to run the GGI.

Khan said that the exact cost of the initiative have not yet been worked out but estimated them to be in the range of 40 to 60 billion Pakistani rupees (about \$390 million – \$590 million) over five years. He said the financing would come through reallocation of existing funds to increase budgets for forestry and clean energy, attracting private-sector investment in waste management and carbon sequestration, leveraging capital market funds for commercial projects such as hydroelectricity and solar energy, and funding from donors.

According to Khan, a core objective of the GGI is promoting water efficiency in households, agriculture and industry. The initiative also calls for green public transport such as buses running on compressed natural gas and rechargeable electric batteries, using renewable energy –

Pakistan's green growth plan gets underway to tackle climate vagaries



building up dams of varying sizes in the province and managed for economic gains by diverting for watering existing agriculture lands and irrigating new ones,” he said.

Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province is home to 40 percent of Pakistan's dwindling forests, and under the GGI, a major campaign aims to increase the proportion of forest from 20 percent of the total land mass to 22 percent by 2018. This will entail converting at least 30,000 hectares (74,000 acres) of additional land into forest every year and planting a total of 2 billion trees.

Global Point ::: CSS – Current Affairs particularly hydropower – to power the province's economy, and increasing the climate resilience of public infrastructure such as schools, medical facilities, water and sanitation networks, which are often damaged during floods.

Ghulam Rasul, senior weather scientist at the Pakistan Meteorological Department, welcomed the government's emphasis on increasing water storage capacity to generate hydropower and said this would help cope with the impact of increasingly intense monsoon rains.

The rivers which criss-cross the province make it vulnerable to flooding, and rapid degradation of forests has exposed the province to landslides and flash floods during the wet season, which runs from July to September.

“Possible massive collateral damages resulting from overflowing floodwater can be avoided, if controlled through

Khan said it was logical to develop the forestry sector through the REDD+ programme, a global financial instrument that provides carbon credits for standing forests.

Forestry officials in the federal climate change division in Islamabad say that the province can earn over \$850 million annually through the REDD+ programme.

Even if the forestation goals are achieved, protecting and maintaining the forest will prove the tougher test for the government, commented Pervaiz Amir, former member of the Prime Minister’s Task Force on Climate Change.

Amir believes that corrupt provincial forest officials who are part of the timber “mafia” must be replaced with honest officials. He says reforestation efforts are highly vulnerable to failure as long as those responsible for illegal felling remain unpunished.

“Efforts for greening the province would go down the drain, if the provincial government do not chalk out viable, effective strategy to contain the timber mafia, which has cleansed decades-old forests over thousands of hectares,” he said

“This would, however, require exemplary punishments for the timber mafia and corrupt forest officials.”

Khan said that he hopes the GGI will lead political parties in other provinces to respond with their own initiatives.

“At the end of the day, it is our country’s environmental resources that we want to conserve and use them wisely for achieving green growth goals,” he said. “We want the initiative as a globally replicable model in the future.”

Band aid solution to terrorism

[The CSS Point](#) April 6, 2014



For once, think long-term

The prime minister's genuine desire to bring peace through talking not fighting, his appeasement of the enemy for the greater good, and his belief that 'the misguided lot' first holed up in FATA and now spread across the country can be cajoled into becoming good citizens, are all appreciated. But failing a clear, long-term, multi-pronged strategy, there is little likelihood of terrorism being contained beyond temporary ceasefires. The Taliban phenomenon grew into its present state-threatening form over decades. And however much clichéd it might sound, the solution will also take a long time coming. But the long drawn process will not start till the right initial steps are taken.

The government's foremost problem is one of counter narrative. Just like it took long years of (very expensive) religious indoctrination to fine tune these soldier-cleric militias, it will take a protracted process of humanising them so they can be accepted back into mainstream society. Without such programmed education, the process of talks can yield immediate term results at best, amounting to a band aid solution of sorts to a very deep cut.

Ironically, the militants have been far more tech savvy, leveraging popular media – radio, internet, facebook, twitter, etc – to take their message to the people, employing the indoctrination model that created them on society at large, and with quite impressive results. Those with slightly long-term memory will remember how the popular press referred to present TTP commander Mulla Fazlullah as Mulla Radio and Mulla FM in the days leading to the Swat operation.

Significantly, even if the government's likeness for accommodating militant elements reflects the painful realisation that military action will be too costly for the nation to bear, there seems little concern for preventing future generations from falling prey to militant extremism. Islam is a very touchy subject, especially in the periphery where education levels are abysmal – little surprise for a country that allocates under two per cent of the budget to education – and the madressa system holds sway. As repeatedly argued in this space, most innocent rural dwellers simply do not appreciate the existential crossing point between orthodoxy and religious militancy. And the Taliban have done an impressive job of cultivating this lot to their advantage. The problem is particularly pronounced in Punjab of late. The southern stretches of the province have become militant havens, and the writ of the state is fast diminishing in some of the country's most prominent population centres.

There is an urgent need to build a national narrative. It must be clear that while we pass through testing times, and the state prefers to give the carrot a chance over the stick, there will be very strict terms to follow. And fool proof mechanisms will be put into place to ensure future generations will not fall prey to extremism and militancy. For that the government will have to work at many levels. But unfortunately, for now it seems that not only has it not formulated a long term strategy, but seems to disagree on the central need of building one.

Putin and the ‘Good Hitler’

[The CSS Point](#) April 6, 2014



Andranik Migranyan is a seasoned Kremlin hand. A former member of the Public Chamber of the Russian Federation, [a cavalier of the presidentially bestowed Order of Honor](#), he currently heads the New York office of the so-called [Institute for Democracy and Cooperation](#), a Russian [GONGO](#) created [on the initiative of Vladimir Putin](#) in 2007 (it also has an office in Paris).

This week, the pro-Kremlin *Izvestia* newspaper published [Migranyan’s article](#) attacking Professor Andrei Zubov, a prominent and well-respected Russian historian, who, [in his recent op-ed in *Vedomosti*](#), drew direct parallels between Putin’s annexation of Crimea and Adolf Hitler’s Anschluss of Austria and annexation of Czechoslovakia’s Sudetenland and Lithuania’s

Klaipeda region in 1938–1939. For his views, Zubov was promptly fired from his job at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations.

Migranyan’s “argument” against Zubov’s well-founded logic is shocking even by the standards of today’s regime in the Kremlin. Rather than attempting to refute the parallel between Putin and Hitler, Migranyan actually embraces it—with an added twist. “We should distinguish between Hitler before 1939 and Hitler after 1939, and separate chaff from grain,” [he writes](#). “The fact is that while Hitler was gathering German lands; if he... were known only for uniting, without a single drop of blood, Germany with Austria, Sudetenland with Germany, Memel [the German name for Klaipeda] with Germany, in effect achieving what Bismarck could not; and if Hitler stopped at that, he would be remembered in his country’s history as a politician of the highest order.”

Perhaps someone could remind Andranik Migranyan and his Kremlin overseers of the track record of this “politician of the highest order” and “gatherer of German lands” prior to 1939—including the establishment of concentration camps and the public burning of books; the purges of “non-Aryans” and the creation of the Gestapo; the closure of newspapers and political parties and the establishment of a one-man dictatorship; the Nuremberg racial laws and *Kristallnacht*.

But of course they already know that.



Obama warns South Sudan to stop fighting or face sanctions

[The CSS Point](#) April 6, 2014



President Barack Obama on Thursday warned the South Sudan government and rebel leaders that they may be slapped with US sanctions if they fail to make peace.

Mr Obama signed an executive order clearing the way for possible bans on travel to the US and financial penalties for South Sudanese who continue to stoke violence.

A White House statement said the president’s action “sends a clear message: Those who threaten the peace, security, or stability of South Sudan, obstruct the peace process, target UN peacekeepers, or are responsible for human rights abuses and atrocities will not have a friend in the United States and run the risk of sanctions.”

“Both the government of South Sudan and Riek Machar’s rebels must immediately engage in and follow through on the inclusive peace process led by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and resolve this conflict,” the White House added.

“The people of South Sudan are calling for peace. There is no room for excuses or delay.”

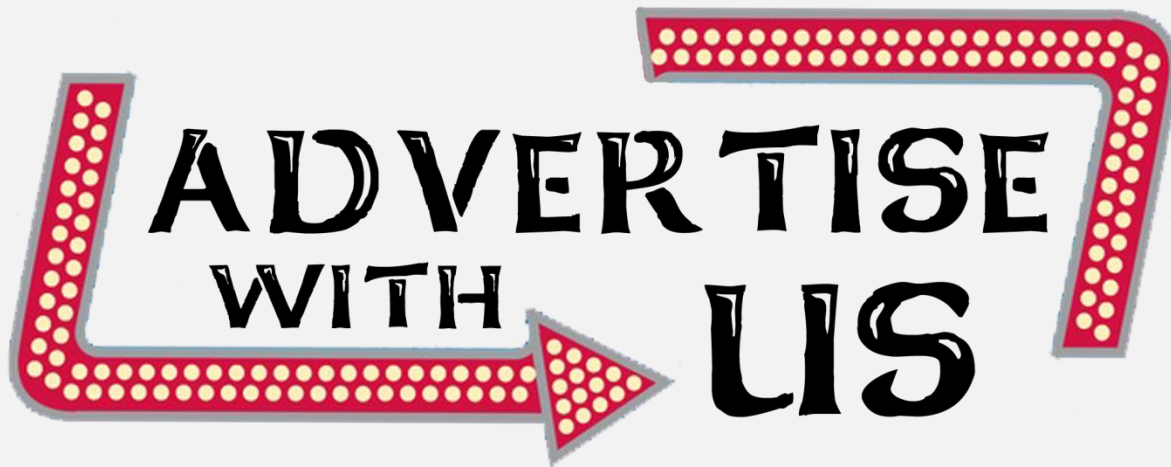
Mr Obama’s warning reflects US frustration and disappointment over the breakdown of a state that Washington helped lead toward independence.

The US has provided hundreds of millions of dollars in aid to South Sudan in the four years since its people voted to establish a nation.

South Sudanese “expected their leaders to act with courage and conviction, to put the interests of the people first, and to be statesmen, not strongmen,” the White House declared.

“The United States will not stand by as those entrusted with South Sudan’s future put their own interests above those of their people.”

US officials indicated on Thursday that the European Union and the UN Security Council are considering action similar to that taken by Mr Obama.



Palestinian U.N. moves designed to avoid U.S. retaliation

[The CSS Point](#) April 6, 2014



(Reuters) – When Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas signed onto 15 international conventions on Tuesday, he shocked the U.S. sponsors of troubled Middle East peace talks. But the move was carefully limited to avoid American retaliation.

Abbas's action may have been designed more as a symbolic act of defiance to shore up his tenuous standing among Palestinians frustrated at the diplomatic impasse with [Israel](#) over their goal of statehood than a knife in the heart of peacemaking.

As a non-member state in the [United Nations](#), Palestinians can join 63 international agencies and accords. However, by only signing conventions dealing with social and human rights instead of seeking full membership in U.N. bodies, the Palestinians' foreign minister said they would not provoke U.S. sanctions.

“Frankly speaking, I don’t expect any consequences coming from the U.S. Congress regarding this step at all,” Riad al-Malki told reporters on Wednesday.

“We did not talk about us becoming members of the U.N. specialized agencies in order for the Congress to activate their decision. We are talking about and we are still talking about letters of submission to protocols and conventions, and that’s it.”

Peace negotiations are near collapse amid mutual accusations of bad faith. In the latest such episode, Abbas inked the 15 conventions in search of more leverage against [Israel](#) after it refused to free a batch of Palestinian prisoners under terms of a previous agreement. Israel, in turn, said it would not release those detainees without a Palestinian commitment to continue negotiations beyond an initial end-of-April deadline.

U.S. officials criticized what they called “unhelpful, unilateral actions” by both sides.

Abbas’s limited self-rule administration in the Israeli-occupied West Bank is dependent on U.S. support. Around \$500 million in annual aid to the cash-strapped Palestinian Authority helps keep its bloated public sector and security forces afloat.

But Congress has repeatedly docked payments as punishment for Palestinian political decisions it disagrees with, including an earlier bid for statehood recognition. A 1990 law also bars U.S. funding to U.N. bodies which recognize a Palestinian state.

The law put the United States in the awkward position of losing its right to vote in the cultural and educational body UNESCO last year after Palestinians acceded to it in 2011.

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry pleaded with a congressional foreign affairs committee last month to reassess its U.N. divestment policies – a sign of how badly his State Department wishes to avoid diplomatic damage arising from Palestinian moves.

“On the next issue of the U.N. waiver, please, I’ve got to tell you, this is a very one-sided event against us...whether or not the United States loses its vote and gets punished for (Abbas) going (to U.N. agencies) is irrelevant to him. He’ll go, because it’s a tool for him to be able to do things he hopes that, you know, make life miserable for Israel,” Kerry said.

“They’ll go again if they think it’s in their best interests. And who will pay the price? The United States of America. We won’t be able to vote.”

“CLEVER”

Palestinians seek an independent state in Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem – lands captured by Israel in a 1967 war. While all parties say negotiations are the best path to peace, Palestinians say they may eventually resort to international bodies to force the militarily vastly more powerful Israel to make concessions for peace.

The U.N. General Assembly voted to recognize Palestine as a non-member state in 2012, entitling them to join the accords which Abbas signed up on Tuesday, including conventions against discrimination against women and for the rights of disabled people as well as the Geneva Conventions.

They burden the Palestinians with few binding commitments on their government, which has been accused of corruption and abuses of detainees and journalists.

Nor do they court retaliation by immediately empowering them to lodge legal complaints against Israel or rattle U.S. foreign policy, a senior U.N. official told Reuters.

“The nuclear option for Abbas would be to go for the International Criminal Court and International Atomic Energy Agency. Those are the ones that matter,” the official said.

“(The latest signing is) actually quite a clever move. Abbas is saying that the Palestinians want to be part of the global community and improve its state building mechanisms by signing up to a load of well-meaning conventions. He can turn around and say, ‘Why should Israel feel threatened by us signing a convention protecting women’s rights?’”

Peace moves by Abbas, a veteran negotiator who has chosen diplomacy over the violent militancy espoused by his predecessors and Palestinian rivals such as the Islamist Hamas, which controls Gaza, have not been welcomed by his countrymen.

Campaigns for recognition at the [United Nations](#), while mostly symbolic, have been praised by many Palestinians.

The 78-year old president – who saw his term expire over five years ago but remains in office because of a stalemate with Hamas over conditions for the next elections – may have been keen to shore up his appeal after Israel over the weekend failed to free a fourth and final group of over two dozen Palestinian prisoners as part of a pledge to restart peace talks last year.

“That’s when he reached his endpoint and said, ‘I’ve got to do another measure that’s going to improve my popularity,’ and going to the U.N. has so far been successful in terms of boosting his popularity,” said Diana Buttu, a former legal adviser to Palestinian peace negotiators.

“But as a measure, it’s a weak one. He didn’t go all the way to hold Israel accountable and he didn’t abandon negotiations.”



The advertisement features a hand holding a smartphone in the foreground, displaying a video player interface for 'The Hangover Part II'. In the background, a television set is mounted on a wall, also displaying the same video. White Wi-Fi signal icons are shown between the phone and the TV, indicating a wireless connection. The top of the ad has a pink banner with 'QMobile' on the left and 'NOIR Z4' on the right. At the bottom, the text 'WiFi Display' is written in a stylized font, followed by a descriptive paragraph.

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India voters kick off world's biggest election

[The CSS Point](#) April 7, 2014



DIBRUGARH: Indians began voting in the world's biggest election Monday which is set to sweep the Hindu nationalist opposition to power at a time of low growth, anger about corruption and warnings about religious unrest.

Voting began at 7:00 am (0130 GMT) in six constituencies in tea-growing and insurgency-wracked areas of the northeast, an often neglected part of the country wedged between Bangladesh, China and Myanmar.

“I want the government to reduce poverty and do something for the future of my children,” said 30-year-old tea plantation worker Santoshi Bhumej at a polling station in Dibrugarh in the state of Assam.

The marathon contest, to be held over nine phases until May 12, got under way after a bad-tempered campaign which reached new levels of bitterness at the weekend.

Religious tensions, an undercurrent to the contest which has mostly focused on development until now, burst into the open on Friday when the closest aide of Modi was accused of inciting sentiments.

Amit Shah faces a judicial investigation after he reportedly told supporters to see the election as “revenge” against a “government that protects and gives compensation to those who killed Hindus”.

Rahul Gandhi, leading Congress into his first national election as scion of the famous dynasty, used the comments to underline his message that a victory for Modi threatens India’s religious fabric.

“Wherever these people (the opposition BJP) go they create fights. They’ll pit Hindus and Muslims against each other,” he warned on Sunday.

The BJP said talk of “revenge” was normal ahead of an election and said the other remarks were taken out of context.

Prime ministerial front-runner Modi, the hawkish son of a tea seller whose rise has split his party, is a polarising figure due to his links to anti-Muslim religious riots in 2002.

He urged voters on Sunday to give him a majority in the 543-seat parliament in defiance of surveys which repeatedly show the BJP are likely to need coalition partners when results are published on May 16.

“I need your blessings for a strong government and strong government means not less than 300 Lok Sabha (lower house of parliament) seats,” he said.

The party released its delayed manifesto later on Monday which included core Hindu nationalist policies such as building a temple for the god Ram on a disputed religious site in northern India and protecting cows.

In Assam, a Congress stronghold, some disgruntled voters told AFP they had been swayed by Modi's promises of better infrastructure, strong leadership, jobs and a clean administration.

“The current Congress government is corrupt. They have not been able to control rising prices in the country. I believe that Modi will give us a corruption-free government,” local voter Deepa Borgohain told AFP.

Despite a decade under Congress when growth has averaged 7.6 per cent per year, a sharp slowdown since 2012 has crippled the public finances and led investment to crash.

Coupled with a widespread perception that Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's second term was largely lost to indecision and scandal, Modi has been able to tap into a groundswell of discontent.

The election will be the biggest in history and is a mind-boggling feat of organisation as voters travel to nearly a million polling stations.

In 2009, officials walked for four days through snow to deliver voting machines in the Himalayas, while yaks, camels and even elephants were pressed into action elsewhere in the vast country.

Such is India's population growth that 100 million people have joined the electoral rolls since the last vote five years ago. More than half of the country is aged under 25.

Modi, 20 years older than Gandhi at 63, is expected to score strongly among the young thanks to his message of aspiration and skills over the left-leaning Congress's pitch of welfare and equitable development.

But in an editorial on Monday, the Hindustan Times said that the aggressive and highly personalised campaign meant “voters were left with a lot of sound and fury but little content”.

India under Modi, an unabashed nationalist, would likely result in a more muscular foreign policy at a time when the country is emerging as a defender of the developing world on issues from climate change to global trade.

But many observers worry about his domestic impact in an officially secular country.

Modi is steeped in the ideology of Hindu nationalism, which is often antagonistic towards Muslims, and he remains tainted by religious riots in Gujarat in 2002.

More than 1,000 people, mostly Muslims, died in a spasm of violence shortly after he became chief minister, leading the United States and European powers to boycott him for more than a decade.

He has never been found guilty of wrong-doing despite multiple investigations, but a woman he appointed as a minister was jailed for life in 2012 for orchestrating some of the worst of the killings.



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Pro-Russians proclaim independence for Ukraine's Donetsk

[The CSS Point](#) April 7, 2014



DONETSK: Ukraine faced a fresh secessionist crisis Monday when pro-Russians occupying the Donetsk government seat proclaimed independence from Kiev and vowed to hold a referendum on joining Kremlin rule.

The declaration and subsequent appeal for Russian military help should Kiev's new pro-Western leaders resist their independence drive put the nation of 46 million in danger of disintegration and added still more pressure on Western powers to act.

The ex-Soviet nation on the EU's eastern frontier continues to be watched by tens of thousands of Russian troops who had already annexed the Black Sea peninsula of Crimea in response to last month's ouster in Kiev of a Moscow-backed regime.

Several heavily Russified eastern regions now want to stage referendums on joining Russia when Ukraine holds snap presidential polls on May 25 that feature two frontrunners who both want to tie the vast country's future to Europe and break its historic dependence on its eastern neighbour.

The political pressure on Kiev's embattled leaders reached boiling point on Sunday when thousands of activists chanting "Russia!" seized administration buildings in Kharkiv and Donetsk as well as the security service headquarters in the eastern region of Lugansk.

The Donetsk activists went one step further on Monday by proclaiming the creation of a sovereign "people's republic" in the region of about five million people.

Footage posted on YouTube showed one bearded Russian speaker telling the packed assembly from a podium: "Seeking to create a popular, legitimate, sovereign state, I proclaim the creation of the sovereign state of the People's Republic of Donetsk."

The industrial eastern region's Ostrov (Island) news website reported that the activists later resolved to join the Russian Federation in a move similar to the one taken by Ukraine's Crimea peninsula last month.

The news site said the resolution was met with a huge roar and chants of: "(Russian President Vladimir) Putin, help!"

The Interfax news agency reported that the self-proclaimed leaders had also vowed to hold a regional sovereignty referendum no later than May 11.

More footage aired on Ukraine's Channel 5 television showed an unidentified speaker asking Putin to send a "peacekeeping contingent of the Russian army" to Donetsk to help the region stand up to Kiev's rule.

Ukraine's latest bout of political turmoil prompted Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk to send his deputy Vitaliy Yarema to the region in order to establish a semblance of control.

The Donetsk administration building on Monday was surrounded by about 2,000 Russian supporters, some of them armed.

Pro-Russian protesters also remained in control of the headquarters of the security service of the eastern region of Lugansk. Activists freed the administration building in Kharkiv on Monday after occupying it overnight.

“People were tired and many went home to get some rest. Now we are waiting for the Kharkiv people to gather again and then we will see what we will do,” said a 28-year-old pro-Russian activist named Andriy.

Ukraine’s 39-year-old prime minister bluntly accused Russia of helping orchestrate the occupations in order to find an excuse for a full-out invasion that would punish Ukraine for its decision to seek a political and economic alliance with the West.

“There is a plan to destabilise the situation, a plan for foreign forces to cross the border and seize the territory of the country, which we will not allow,” Yatsenyuk told a government meeting in Kiev.

“This scenario is written by the Russian Federation and its only purpose is to dismember Ukraine.”

Moscow is now lobbying for Ukraine to be transformed into a federation that allows eastern regions to adopt Russian as a second state language and overrule some decisions coming from Kiev.

The Kremlin has argued the changes were needed because ethnic Russians had allegedly been coming under increasing attack from ultranationalist forces that helped the new leaders ride a wave of anti-government protests to power.

But Washington and its EU allies fear that Russia, having already annexed Crimea last month, is using the federation idea as an excuse to further splinter Ukraine by granting the Kremlin veto powers over Kiev’s regional policies.

The new Kiev government approved a draft reform plan last week that would grant more powers to the regions in line with Western wishes but stopped well short of creating the federation sought by Russia.

And Yatsenyuk on Monday called federalisation a dangerous idea aimed at ruining Ukraine.

“Any call toward federalisation is an attempt to destroy the Ukrainian state,” said Yatsenyuk.

He added that the Kremlin’s ambition was to turn “a part of Ukraine into a slave territory that was under the diktat of the Russian Federation.”



Syria's Assad says political Islam project has failed

[The CSS Point](#) April 7, 2014



DAMASCUS: The “project of political Islam has failed,” Syria’s President Bashar al-Assad said on Monday, calling for the separation of religion from politics, state television said.

Assad’s regime has been battling an uprising that has come to be dominated by Islamists, ranging from moderates to radicals, who want to see Syria run as an Islamic state.

“The project of political Islam has failed, and there should be no mixing between political and religious work,” he said in comments on the 67th anniversary of the founding of his Baath party.

Assad refers to all those fighting against him as “terrorists” and has said that he is battling extremists with retrograde ideas.

The president has repeatedly stressed the need for all parts of Syrian society to challenge “extremism”.

Assad said his government was also “continuing with the process of reconciliation, because what concerns us is ending the bloodshed and the destruction of infrastructure”.

In recent months, Assad’s government has negotiated limited ceasefires with rebels who agree to raise the government’s flag in their neighbourhoods, and in many cases turn over their weapons.

The deals usually follow months-long sieges by the army, which have contributed to humanitarian crises in parts of the country.

Syria’s conflict, which began in March 2011, has left more than 150,000 people dead.



Drone attacks may continue after US pullout

[The CSS Point](#) April 7, 2014



NEW YORK: The CIA drone operations in Pakistan may continue long after US troops have left Afghanistan, The New York Times said on Saturday, revealing that CIA, not military, would remain in charge of drone operations.

However, there have been no drone strikes since the government in Islamabad formally entered peace talks with Taliban, according to the Bureau of Investigative Journalism, a group that tracks drone strikes in Pakistan,

But American officials told the newspaper that the drone programme there could continue for years, and Pakistan's government has long insisted that it be run by the CIA, not the US military.

This was one of the terms of deal reached a decade ago between the Bush administration and Pervez Musharraf, then the president of Pakistan, who said he would allow armed drone strikes in the country's tribal areas only if they were conducted as a CIA covert action and not

acknowledged by either country. For Pakistan to agree to any changes in this arrangement, the United States would most likely have to agree to integrating Pakistan's military into the drone operations.

A White House spokeswoman told NYT there had been “no change in policy” since President Obama's speech last May announcing changes to the targeted killing policy.

The newspaper report which claims to examine CIA's role and the plan to refocus the agency from active operations, the paper quotes a CIA spokesperson as saying. “The plan is to transition to these standards and procedures over time, in a careful, coordinated and deliberate manner.”

Caitlin Hayden, the spokeswoman, added: “I'm not going to speculate on how long the transition will take, but we're going to ensure that it's done right and not rushed.”

It was during the string of revolts across the Arab world several years ago that concerns first surfaced that the years of focus on targeting terrorists had undermined the CIA's ability to forecast and analyse global events. In Egypt, the agency had few sources beyond Omar Suleiman. The country's intelligence chief and one of the agency's closest partners in the Middle East, Mr Suleiman, was not about to give the CIA an honest assessment of the fragility of President Hosni Mubarak's government.

And in Jordan, it is the CIA rather than the Pentagon that is running a programme to arm and train Syrian rebels — a concession to the Jordanian government — which will not allow an overt military presence in the country, the newspaper said.

The NYT noted: “Just more than a year ago John Brennan, the CIA's newly nominated director, said at his confirmation hearing that it was time to refocus an agency that had become largely a paramilitary organisation after the Sept 11 attacks toward more traditional roles carrying out espionage, intelligence collection and analysis. In a speech last May in which he sought to redefine US policy toward terrorism, President Barack Obama expanded on the theme, announcing new procedures for drone operations, which White House officials said would gradually become the Pentagon's province.

US warns Russia over ‘escalatory moves’ in Ukraine

[The CSS Point](#) April 8, 2014

The US has warned Russian President Vladimir Putin to stop “overtly or covertly” trying to destabilize Ukraine. In a bid to ease the crisis, the US and Russia have discussed holding a possible meeting with top diplomats.



The White House said Monday that it was concerned about “several escalatory” moves in eastern Ukraine over the weekend. Spokesman Jay Carney said the US was prepared to [impose further sanctions](#), including targeting the Russian economy, if the situation continued to escalate.

“We are concerned about several escalatory moves in Ukraine at the weekend,” Carney said. “We see them as the result of increasing Russian pressure on Ukraine.”

Pro-Russian activists who seized a provincial building in Donetsk over the weekend on Monday announced the formation of the independent Donetsk People’s Republic, along the Russian border. They also called for a referendum on the potential succession of the Donetsk region to be held no later than May 11, according to the Interfax news agency.

US, Russia discuss possible talks

US Secretary of State John Kerry said during a phone call with his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov on Monday that the US was watching the events unfolding in eastern Ukraine with great concern. He reiterated Washington’s position that intentional efforts on the part of Russia to destabilize Ukraine would “incur further costs for Russia.”

Kerry “called on Russia to publicly disavow the activities of separatists, saboteurs and provocateurs” in Ukraine, said State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki.

The two also discussed possible talks between Ukraine, Russia, the US and the European Union within the next 10 days “to try to de-escalate tensions,” she added.

Western concern

The Western-backed government in Kyiv said the recent events in the east were a replay of what happened in Crimea, where an incursion by Russian military forces into the peninsula culminated in its annexation by Moscow.

“We saw groups of pro-Russian demonstrators take over government buildings in the eastern cities of Kharkiv, Donetsk and Luhansk,” Carney said. “There is strong evidence suggesting some of these demonstrators were paid and were not locals.”

“If Russia moves into eastern Ukraine either overtly or covertly this would be a very serious escalation and would unleash new consequences from the West,” he added. “We call on Putin and his government to cease efforts to destabilize Ukraine.”

‘Stop pointing the finger’

[The Ukrainian government](#) has vowed to quell the unrest, but Russia has warned of more “difficulties and crises” if Kyiv’s leadership does not heed the “legitimate demands” of the people in Ukraine’s Russian-speaking eastern regions.

Ukraine could not achieve long-term stability “without conducting a genuine constitutional reform” whereby “the interests of all the country’s regions ... would be ensured through federalization,” the Russian foreign ministry said in a statement.

“Stop pointing the finger at Russia, blaming it for all the problems in today’s Ukraine,” it added.

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Palestinians, Israelis to meet again to save talks

[The CSS Point](#) April 8, 2014



Israeli and Palestinian negotiators were to meet again on Monday in a fresh effort to salvage the teetering, U.S.-brokered peace process, Agence France-Presse reported U.S. and Palestinian officials as saying.

“Israeli and Palestinian negotiators met last night to discuss ways to overcome the crisis in the talks,” a U.S. official said.

“The meeting was serious and constructive, and both sides requested that the United States convene another meeting today (Monday) to continue the effort.”

A Palestinian official confirmed to AFP that a meeting was scheduled for later Monday, but neither side gave a time or location.

Accompanied by U.S. envoy Martin Indyk, the two sides met on Sunday evening, but Palestinian sources told AFP that the session ended without any breakthrough and an Israeli official was quoted by local media as saying the process was on the edge of collapse.

Israel's parliament was also meeting in special session on Monday during its spring recess, for a debate on the peace negotiations called by opposition MPs critical of the government's handling of the talks.

'Not at any price'

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, in his first public comments on a crisis in U.S.-brokered peace talks with the Palestinians, said on Sunday that Israel was prepared to continue negotiations but "not at any price," Reuters reported.

Netanyahu also warned of unilateral action against Palestinians if any attempt any unilateral moves themselves.

Indyk attempted to rejuvenate Mideast peace negotiations after Israelis and Palestinians took counter offensive measures, bringing the talks near to an imminent collapse.

The U.S. envoy gave diplomacy another chance on Sunday when U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry made a big announcement saying that Washington was going to review its role as mediator of peace talks for Israelis and Palestinians to reach a final settlement status.

Kerry made the announcement when Israel rejected releasing the fourth batch of Palestinian prisoners, a key condition for the peace talks to continue.

In response, the Palestinians infuriated the Israelis when they sought to gain wider international recognition by attempting to attain a full-fledged U.N. membership, and join 15 other international organizations. This made Israel consider imposing more sanctions on the Palestinians.

Some hope?

Meanwhile, some observers believe that the peace process is still alive.

Commentator Tal Harris of the Israeli-Palestinian dialogue movement One Voice wrote in the Jerusalem Post on Monday: “Although it might smell funny, it isn’t dead yet.”

Harris said there should be teams of experts set up to work on issues such as disputes on water and energy, rather than focusing only on deadlocked political talks.

“Kerry must reveal some of the progress that was made so far, and Netanyahu and Abbas need to engage in the process more directly,” he added.

“The diplomatic process sometimes feels irrelevant to the lives of ordinary citizens on the ground.

Opposition parties to challenge Pakistan Protection Ordinance in top court

[The CSS Point](#) April 8, 2014



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on Tuesday announced it will challenge the recently passed Pakistan Protection Ordinance (PPO) in the Supreme Court, *Express News* reported.

The controversial ordinance was passed on April 7 in the National Assembly amid furore from the opposition against the bill, who termed it regressive and extra-constitutional.

The law grants sweeping powers of arrest and detention to security forces.

“This law will turn Pakistan into a police state,” Shah Mehmood Qureshi, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) vice chairperson told a news conference. “We have decided to take this law to court and challenge its anti-human rights stance.”

Qureshi, a former foreign minister, said his party had the support of the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) and the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM).

The main opposition, the Pakistan People’s Party, has led protests against the law in the National Assembly.

When the National Assembly approved the bill, opposition party members tore up copies and threw them in the air and walked out of the assembly in protest.

The law permits the security forces to shoot suspects on sight, detain them at secret locations for up to 90 days and carry out raids without search warrants. The security forces can also carry out secret trials.

Background

PPO – approved by President Mamnoon Hussain last year – is a decree that declares all peace-disrupting elements as ‘enemies of the state’, and states protection of life to be the state’s top priority.

Below are a few clauses from the ordinance:

- Every possible state instrument and resource will be deployed to defeat and frustrate all or any nefarious attempt to create disorder.
- The cancer of syndicated crime, in all its forms and manifestations, shall be responded by proportionate use of state force under the law.
- Joint investigation teams shall be constituted to conduct investigations by security agencies and police in all heinous crimes committed in areas where civil armed forces are invited to aid civil power.

- Those involved in syndicated crime shall be relocated to other parts of the country for transparency and fair trial.

Special jails shall be designated to detain hardened criminals and the minimum quantum of punishments is now re-determined at ten years.

- The state will not allow Afghan immigrants or other foreign nationals to be used for terrorist purposes.

Back to sectarianism

[The CSS Point](#) April 9, 2014



The Indian general election is inexorably moving towards the wearisomely familiar pattern of sectarian rhetoric and counter-rhetoric. It is something that unfailingly happens despite promises across the political spectrum to eschew divisive electoral hectoring. Three days ahead of the first phase of polling, the Shahi Imam of the Jama Masjid, Syed Ahmed Bukhari, has given a call to Muslims to vote for the Congress nationally and the Trinamool Congress in West Bengal. The call itself follows a controversial meeting with Sonia Gandhi where she is presumed to have sought his support. The impropriety of the election-eve meeting and exhortations aside, there is the problem of treating Muslims as an undifferentiated group that can be herded in one direction. In actuality, there is no evidence to show that all Muslims vote one way, much less that the Imam holds any kind of influence over the community. The episode also calls into question the Congress president's judgment — if she did indeed seek the Imam's support. Narendra Modi's sudden interest in meat exports and slaughterhouses is simply a case of reverse demagoguery, with Hindus being seen as an exploitable whole. Some time ago, Mr. Modi had used a reference to the

AK-47 assault rifle to insinuate shady Pakistani connections in the cases of Arvind Kejriwal and A.K. Antony. Lately, he has been expressing angst over the alleged growth of meat exports and slaughterhouses during the period coinciding with the United Progressive Alliance's years in office.

The USP of the Modi campaign has been its promise to deliver efficient governance. Yet, slowly the campaign has veered towards issues with the potential to divide the polity. Meat exports are hardly the stuff of the citizen's aspirational dreams that Mr. Modi undertook to fulfil. And yet, what should have been a non-issue has gained rapid currency thanks to Mr. Modi raising it consecutively at three election rallies. The Bharatiya Janata Party's prime ministerial nominee accused the Congress of ushering in a 'pink revolution' by prioritising meat exports over the welfare of cowherds, while the BJP, he said, had brought in the 'white [milk] revolution.' The allusions are slanted and disturbing — not least because cow slaughter is an emotive issue for sections of Hindus, and its invocation on election-eve can be for no purpose other than to intensify communal polarisation. The Congress's unprincipled overture to the Imam is clearly an act of desperation by a party with little hope in this election. As the man of the moment, Mr. Modi was in a position to offer a genuine alternative to voters. By failing to do so, he is yet to persuade unconvinced voters that Hindutva is not his only plank.

Pakistan vows to work with new Afghan rulers

[The CSS Point](#) April 9, 2014



*Nawaz says peaceful transfer of power will help democracy flourish in the war-torn country * Participation of Afghan people in democratic process will play vital role in bringing peace to region*

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif said on Sunday that Pakistan would not only help and support Afghanistan strengthen democracy but would also work in collaboration with the new leadership in that country to bring peace and tranquillity in the region.

Prime Minister Nawaz congratulated President Hamid Karzai and the people of Afghanistan on successfully holding and completing the electioneering process for the president's office. He said that the Afghan people's effort to make decisions through the ballot boxes reflects their determination and keen interest in adopting a democratic culture. "Participation in the democratic process by the Afghan people would play a significant role in bringing peace and stability in the region," Prime Minister Nawaz emphasised.

The prime minister wished for a peaceful transfer of power in Kabul, as happened in Pakistan last year, and hoped democracy would flourish in the neighbouring country. “This election would prove as a historic moment for the Afghan people in their democratic journey,” Prime Minister Nawaz said. He also hoped that these elections will be instrumental in creating unity and harmony among the war-torn country’s people.

Earlier, Foreign Office spokesperson Tasnim Aslam said in her message that the people of Afghanistan have braved the security threat and inclement weather and turned up in large numbers to exercise their democratic right to choose the future leadership. She said the people of Pakistan wished Afghan electoral institutions well as they take the next key steps in ensuring the successful completion of the electoral process. She said the people of Pakistan stand in strong solidarity with the Afghan nation at this historic moment, and as it moves forward in its peaceful democratic transition.

Former president and Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) Co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari also felicitated the Afghan people on peaceful voting with a larger-than-expected turnout, in defiance of the forces that had threatened the polls. “On behalf of the PPP and on my own behalf I wish to felicitate the people, the government and the officials responsible for the polls in Afghanistan on Saturday,” he said in a statement on Sunday.

“Hopefully the Saturday polls will be a watershed mark in the elusive journey of the people of Afghanistan on the path to peaceful democratic transition and leading to peace and stability not only in their country but also in the region,” Zardari said. The former president said the vote in Afghanistan despite threats demonstrates yet again that the Afghan people want peace and democracy, and those opposed to their democratic ethos are doomed to be frustrated.

The elections hold great promise not only for Afghanistan but also for the region, he said. “The people of Pakistan which last year witnessed the first ever democratic transition under the watch of the Pakistan People’s Party will watch keenly as the results of the voice of the people of Afghanistan are tabulated in the coming days,” Zardari said. He also stressed that peace in Pakistan depends on peace and stability of Afghanistan, and the PPP looks forward to the strengthening the forces of peace and stability in Afghanistan as a result of the polls, he said.

According to initial estimates the voter turnout was more than 58 percent. Meanwhile, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl chief Maulana Fazalur Rahman has said that the effectiveness of the Afghan elections is linked with Afghanistan’s internal political reconciliation in the short term. In a statement issued by his spokesperson, Jan Achakzai, Fazl said that after this important election Afghans are about to decide the ambit of their relations with NATO and the US. He said internal Afghan political reconciliation is the only way to ensure long-term security and stability in the country underpinned by constitutionalism and economic development.



Editorial: Bound for China (The NEWS)

[The CSS Point](#) April 13, 2014



Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has staked the country's economic future on China. From handing over control of the port city of Gwadar to proposing a Pakistan-China Economic Corridor that connects Gwadar to China through Azad Kashmir, Pakistan's destiny is now linked to trade and investment from China. Even for our energy woes we are seeking a Chinese solution, offering them no-bid contracts to fund and construct dams. Thus, Nawaz Sharif's visit to China – his second since assuming power – for the Boao Asia Forum was a chance not just to expound on his own government's vision and performance but to secure further Chinese support. In a meeting with his counterpart Li Keqiang, Nawaz tried to finalise plans for the economic corridor, which has drawn protests from India – an ally China would prefer not to alienate right now. The primary purpose of the meeting was economic, with Nawaz asking for more investment in energy and infrastructure. Punjab Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif also went along for the trip, signing an agreement with a Chinese company to begin iron ore exploration in Punjab. The only false note was struck by the partisan nature of the delegation as there is no reason to bring along the chief minister from only the province in which the PML-N is in power. The federal

government should be trying to encourage deals for all provinces, regardless of who may be ruling them.

Nawaz's keynote address at the Boao Asia Forum was similarly concerned with matters economic. His main theme was the revival of the New Silk Road, an idea first floated by the Chinese last year. Sensing an opportunity to benefit from the increased trade along these routes, Nawaz pointed out that Pakistan is China's link to both the Middle East and Central Asia. As enticing a prospect as this sounds, it will come for naught until there are significant improvements in the law and order situation and the energy crisis is dealt with. Chinese concerns about terrorists using Pak territory for attacks on China also need to be addressed on an urgent basis. Nawaz claimed that his government had cleared the circular debt and reduced the energy shortfall. What he failed to mention is that the debt is accumulating once again and loadshedding is as bad, if not worse, than it was last year. Until we are able to deal with this, the prime minister can talk all he wants about economic power shifting from the west to the east but we will not be partaking in this new economic order.

Can China Become a High-Income Economy?

[The CSS Point](#) April 14, 2014



The IMF thinks so, but some challenging reforms will be needed if China is to avoid the middle-income trap.

In the Asia-Pacific, the inevitability of China’s economic rise has been a reality for a number of years. Already we are witnessing the changing *political* dynamics of the shifting *economic* balance of power. New Zealand’s economy, for example, now relies heavily on Chinese markets. As a result, the Defence Minister Jonathan Coleman [visited](#) Beijing in November 2013 in order “to balance” out New Zealand’s diplomacy; maintaining a “path” between the U.S. and China. The purpose of the visit was to emphasize to the Chinese government that New Zealand would not take sides in disputes such as China’s Air Defence Identification Zone in the East China Sea, preferring to utilize “international processes” to resolve issues.

For a nation that traditionally takes great comfort in its network of Western allies and friends, such a move would have been unthinkable were it not for China’s newfound significance in the region. In years to come, other pragmatic nations who wish to benefit from China’s economic

affluence will also find themselves displaying comparable degrees of [neutrality](#) towards China's foreign policy initiatives. If one is inclined to view the current situation between China and the U.S. as a "[struggle for mastery](#)" in Asia, then China's future economic mastery over the region is likely to make the projection of a few U.S. warships in terms of its pivot to Asia, a largely symbolic exercise. Of course, the foregoing sentiments and those of many other pundits are dramatic reductions of the future dynamics of Asia-Pacific politics that need to be qualified for a future date.

In the meantime, China keeps growing.

Already it has moved up in the World Bank's [statistical estimation](#): into the upper-middle income bracket (those economies with a 2012 GNI of \$4,086-\$12,615 per capita) in the same territory as Brazil, South Africa and Turkey. However, whereas these nations are ostensibly stuck in the middle-income trap, without the capital, technology, or labour conditions to converge further, China is tipped to move into the exclusive high-income club of nations (those with a 2012 GNI of \$12,616 per capita). In a recent [working paper](#), the IMF has appraised the dragon economy's prospects of achieving fully developed status as being entirely within its grasp—albeit with a number of important caveats.

Of these, China first and foremost needs to rein in its borrowing and put an end to excessive investment in the construction and manufacturing sectors. Vast capital accumulation is no longer a feasible policy and economic growth needs to be carefully managed with the mantra being slow and steady. In addition, the IMF proscribes a reformist agenda for China's financial and services sector. Unsurprisingly, it suggests that China deregulate these sectors in order to allow for greater competition as well as reforming the *hukou* system that places restrictions on the movement of rural and urban populations.

The Chinese authorities are well aware that reform is needed and that there is little margin for error. If China does make the necessary reforms, it will transform into a high-income economy by 2030—barring global economic crisis. However, if China fails to control the economy, then it will face an economic crisis and the very real prospect of stagnating in the middle-income

bracket. The next few years will be an exercise in economic brinkmanship for China, testing the agility of the government.

In recent years, China has started to experience lower returns on its huge investment. All the while, its reliance on credit has increased alarmingly. As the IMF's working paper notes, China's growth model "may be running out of steam." To maintain momentum while making the necessary reforms, the IMF's deputy Asia-Pacific director Markus Rodlauer [argues](#) that China needs to redirect focus towards more sustainable "consumer orientated" sectors with "environmentally friendly and inclusive growth." Chinese authorities have already started to move economic growth in that direction. The [twelfth five-year plan](#) highlights the shift in thinking away from labor intensive industries towards technology and innovation as well as an emphasis on the domestic economy.

One of the most important determinants in China's economic future is demographics. By [2025](#), the Chinese economy will no longer be able to rely on surplus labor (i.e. cheap labor) filing out of the central and western provinces into the manufacturing hubs of the eastern seaboard. Its population is slowly declining and with the ready supply of surplus labor will dry up. As surplus labor disappears, China will eventually encounter what is commonly referred to as the Lewis Turning Point. Named after economist Arthur Lewis, this is the point at which an economy fully absorbs surplus labor. With a scarcity of surplus labor there is a systematic shift in capital accumulation: cheap labor is replaced by higher wages for workers; at the same time, there is less return on investment and less profit in general. From that point, China can expect more modest economic growth figures in line with those of advanced economies.

Much like Japan, South Korea and the Asian Tigers that transitioned in the 1980s from labor-intensive industries towards more efficient, technological production processes, the question is whether China's economy will transform in a similar manner. The key is for China to transition from a middle-income country to a high-income country in time to accommodate the changing dynamics brought on by the Lewis Turning Point. Failure to do so essentially means that China will hit the glass ceiling of the upper-middle income bracket and no longer be in the same position to converge to a high-income economy. The specter of the middle-income trap, in which

nations are unable to converge further due to a lack of economic dynamism is a fearful prospect for an aspiring nation such as China.

For the Chinese authorities therefore, the transition from labor-intensive industries towards an innovative exporting economy with a developed domestic consumer sector is the overriding economic strategy of the future.

If China's economy successfully makes this transition then the IMF envisages two scenarios. The first scenario is modeled on Korea's convergence pattern in the 1990s, in which case China's output growth would average seven per cent until 2030. The second scenario, which is more realistic, follows the tendencies of standard convergence patterns in which China's output growth would average six per cent until 2030. This scenario would make China's per capita GDP forty per cent of the United States by 2030, sufficient to make it into the world's largest economy and a prosperous one at that.

From a global point of view, the prospect of China converging towards the echelons of a high-income economy will invariably shape the future economic order for the Asia-Pacific region. For one, high-income status will remove the future comparative advantage of "Made in China" products: it will no longer be possible to produce them as cheaply as low-income economies with surplus labor such as Vietnam. More crucially, however, the convergence of China towards high-income status opens the door for China's trading partners. As incomes rise in China and the consumer sector opens up, countries that have free trade agreements with it will benefit from an even more lucrative market. This fact is not lost on many nations. As the New Zealand government report "[Opening Doors to China](#)" shows, the number of Chinese earning between 100,000 and 200,000 RMB (\$16,500 to \$33,000) will increase to 28 percent by 2015 (compared to 6 percent in 2010) and those earning more than 200,000 RMB will double to 4 percent in the same year. The numbers in this report perhaps go some way to explaining the true significance of the New Zealand Defence Minister's visit to Beijing in November 2013. China's prosperity is a reality and with developing economic power comes emerging economies of power that remap the geopolitical terrain and the status quo. After all, China's economic endgame will alter the global balance of power and transition its socialist society into the realm of capitalism's elite.

Increasingly, more countries in the region will come to rely on the Chinese economy, not just as a source of manufactured goods but also as a wealthy market in its own right.

The impact of this will invariably play out in the future political dynamics of the region, placing an even bigger question mark on how China will direct its foreign policy in line with its increased economic impact on the Asia-Pacific region. That is not to say that China will struggle to dominate the Asia-Pacific as is sometimes crudely suggested, but rather it emphasizes the fact that pragmatism and flexibility will be a far more important factor in Asia-Pacific politics for nations straddling between the two potentates of China and the U.S.



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Iran nuclear deal proves elusive

[The CSS Point](#) April 17, 2014



Foreign ministers from world powers struggled Saturday to nail down a landmark nuclear deal with Iran, with US Secretary of State John Kerry announcing his imminent departure and Iran’s chief negotiator downbeat.

As talks in Geneva went late into an unscheduled fourth day, Kerry’s spokesman said Washington’s top diplomat would be flying to London on Sunday morning — presumably with or without a deal.

Iranian chief negotiator Abbas Ar

aqchi said he doubted that Tehran and the P5+1 world powers — the United States, Britain, France, China, Russia and Germany — could reach an accord by the end of Saturday.

“Intense and difficult negotiations are under way and it is not clear whether we can reach an agreement tonight,” Fars news agency quoted Araqchi as saying.

The talks, mostly between Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and P5+1 chief negotiator Catherine Ashton, are aimed at securing a freeze on parts of Iran’s nuclear programme in return for limited sanctions relief.

The arrival of Kerry and other P5+1 foreign ministers late Friday and on Saturday had raised hopes, after three long days of intense negotiations among lower-level officials, that a breakthrough was in sight.

However the talks continued to drag on inside the smart Geneva hotel late Saturday.

“We have now entered a very difficult stage,” Zarif told state television.

He insisted he would not bow to “excessive demands”, without detailing the obstacles.

British Foreign Secretary William Hague said on his arrival that the talks “remain very difficult” and that “we are not here because things are necessarily finished”.

Late on Saturday, Kerry went into a three-way meeting with Ashton and Zarif for the second time, a US official said following a meeting among the powers’ foreign ministers.

Two weeks ago, the ministers had jetted in seeking to sign on the dotted line, only to fail as cracks appeared among the P5+1 nations — fissures that officials say are now repaired.

But a second fruitless effort in Geneva in as many weeks would not only be an diplomatically embarrassing.

If there is no deal, or at least an agreement to meet again soon and keep the diplomatic momentum going, the standoff could enter a new, potentially dangerous phase.

Since being elected in June, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani has raised big hopes that, after a decade of rising tensions over Tehran’s nuclear programme, a solution might be within reach.

Devil in the detail

But if his diplomatic push fails to bear fruit, Tehran could resume its expansion of nuclear activities, leading to ever more painful sanctions — and possible military action by Israel or the United States.

Mark Hibbs, an analyst from the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, said Kerry's imminent departure might not necessarily be a bad sign, however.

Kerry leaving “might set a deadline and focus people's minds, especially if things this afternoon are bogging down in the details,” Hibbs told AFP.

Iran insists its nuclear programme is peaceful, but has failed to allay the international community's suspicions it is aimed at acquiring atomic weapons.

The six powers want Iran to stop enriching uranium to a fissile purity of 20 percent, close to weapons-grade, but while allowing it to continue enrichment to lower levels. That would be a step back from successive UN Security Council resolutions that have called for Iran to halt all uranium enrichment.

The powers also want Tehran to stop construction on a new reactor at Arak and to grant the International Atomic Energy Agency more intrusive inspection rights.

A hard sell

In return they are offering Iran minor and “reversible” relief from painful sanctions, including unlocking several billion dollars in oil revenues and easing some trade restrictions.

This “first phase” interim deal is meant to build trust and ease tensions while negotiators push on for a final accord to end once and for all fears that Tehran will acquire an atomic bomb.

A major sticking point has been Iran's demand — again expressed by supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei t

his week — that the powers formally recognise it has a “right” to enrich uranium.

Getting an agreement palatable to hardliners in the United States and in the Islamic republic — as well as in Israel, which is not party to the talks — is tough.

Israel's Haaretz daily reported that over the last three days, Intelligence Affairs Minister Yuval Steinitz spoke by phone with two of the P5+1's foreign ministers to press Israel's concerns.

In Washington there is a push by lawmakers to ignore President Barack Obama's pleas and pass yet more sanctions on Iran if there is no deal — or one seen as too soft.



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Putin's Russia as a State Sponsor of Terrorism

[The CSS Point](#) April 17, 2014



Putin's Russia has become what the US Department of State calls a "state sponsor of terrorism."

Here's how: After the Anschluss of Crimea, Putin had three options. He could invade all or parts of Ukraine, or hope that pro-Russian demonstrators would flood Ukraine's streets and assert their "people power." The first option has not been pursued, perhaps because it's too risky. The second failed, as the vast majority of Ukraine's southeastern citizens have remained indifferent or opposed to unification with Russia.

That left Putin with one remaining option: terrorism.

Here's why Putin's Russia qualifies as a state sponsor of terrorism. According to [Section 2656f\(d\) of Title 22 of the United States Code](#):

- (1) the term “international terrorism” means terrorism involving citizens or the territory of more than one country;
- (2) the term “terrorism” means premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents; and
- (3) the term “terrorist group” means any group practicing, or which has significant subgroups which practice, international terrorism.

There is overwhelming evidence of Russia's direct and indirect involvement in the violence that rocked several eastern Ukrainian cities on April 12–13. Russian intelligence agents and spetsnaz special forces are [directly involved](#); the weapons and uniforms worn by the terrorists are of Russian origin (a point [made](#) by the US ambassador to Kyiv, Geoffrey Pyatt); and the assaults on government buildings in Slavyansk, Mariupol, Makiivka, Kharkiv, Yenakievo, Druzhkivka, Horlivka, Krasny Lyman, and Kramatorsk were clearly coordinated by Russian intelligence. As EU High Representative Catherine Ashton delicately put it in a statement yesterday ([pdf](#)):

I am gravely concerned about the surge of actions undertaken by armed individuals and separatist groups in various cities of Eastern Ukraine.... I reiterate the EU's strong support for Ukraine's unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity and call upon Russia to do so as well. To this end, the Russian Federation is urged to call back its troops from the Ukrainian border and *to cease any further actions aimed at destabilizing Ukraine*. (Emphasis added.)

Former NATO Supreme Allied Commander Europe Wesley Clark was more blunt, [stating](#) that the attacks were not spontaneous and represented the second stage of Russia's plan to occupy Ukraine (the first being the occupation of Crimea).

Does the behavior of the pro-Russian forces in eastern Ukraine involve “premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets”? Obviously. Does this violence

involve “citizens or the territory of more than one country”? Yes, it does. The violence therefore qualifies as international terrorism, and its perpetrators are obviously “terrorist groups.” QED.

By the way, the European Union’s far more detailed definition of “terrorist acts” should dispel any lingering doubts one may have had that the violence in eastern Ukraine qualifies as terrorist:

“Terrorist acts” mean intentional acts which, given their nature or context, may seriously damage a country or international organization and which are defined as an offence under national law.

These include:

- attacks upon a person’s life which may cause death;
- attacks upon the physical integrity of a person;
- kidnapping or hostage taking;
- causing extensive destruction to a Government or public facility, a transport system, an infrastructure facility;
- seizure of aircraft, ships or other means of public or goods transport;
- manufacture, possession, acquisition, transport, supply or use of weapons, explosives, or of nuclear, biological or chemical weapons,
- participating in the activities of a terrorist group, including by supplying information or material resources, or by funding its activities in any way, with knowledge of the fact that such participation will contribute to the criminal activities of the group.

In order for these acts to constitute terrorist acts, they must be carried out with the aim of seriously intimidating a population, or unduly compelling a Government or an international organization to perform or abstain from performing any act, or seriously destabilizing or destroying the fundamental political, constitutional, economic or social structures of a country or an international organization.

In light of Russia’s direct and indirect promotion of international terrorism in eastern Ukraine, Russia obviously qualifies as a “state sponsor of terrorism” and, after formally being declared as such, must be immediately subjected to the sanctions the United States is legally bound to impose on state sponsors of terrorism. (Naturally, the EU should follow suit.) [Here’s the State Department:](#)

Countries determined by the Secretary of State to have repeatedly provided support for acts of international terrorism are designated pursuant to three laws: section 6(j) of the Export Administration Act, section 40 of the Arms Export Control Act, and section 620A of the Foreign Assistance Act. Taken together, the four main categories of sanctions resulting from designation under these authorities include restrictions on U.S. foreign assistance; a ban on defense exports and sales; certain controls over exports of dual use items; and miscellaneous financial and other restrictions.

Designation under the above-referenced authorities also implicates other sanctions laws that penalize persons and countries engaging in certain trade with state sponsors. Currently there are four countries designated under these authorities: Cuba, Iran, Sudan and Syria.

That list should now consist of five rogue countries—unless, of course, both Washington and Brussels prefer to supplement their weak-kneed response to Putin’s violation of international norms with an implicit endorsement of terrorism.

Provincial tax collections – KPK Leads by an increase of 216%

[The CSS Point](#) April 20, 2014



According to a Business Recorder exclusive, the sum total of provincial tax collections during the first seven months of the current year rose to 87 billion rupees in comparison to the 70 billion rupees collected during period of July-January 2012-13. Punjab witnessed a rise in collections of 9 billion rupees – from 36 billion rupees last year to 45 billion rupees this year with a major increase attributed to stamp duty (one billion rupees) and urban property tax (one billion rupees). Sindh collections rose by 4 billion

rupees – from 32 to 36 billion rupees with excise and stamp duty the major contributors to the rise. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa collections rose by a whopping 3.9 billion rupees – from 1.8 billion rupees to 5.7 billion rupees and Balochistan witnessed a rise of 370 million rupees – from 483 million rupees to 853 million rupees. In percentage terms Punjab increased collections by 25 percent, Sindh by 12.5 percent, KPK by 216 percent and Balochistan by 76.6 percent. Hence in percentage terms KPK performed a lot better than Sindh and Punjab with Balochistan performing the second best in terms of increasing the provincial revenue generation in percentage terms.

In their defence, the governments of Punjab and Sindh would no doubt point to the fact that they have been proactively engaged in enhancing revenues over and above those that accrue to the provinces from the federal divisible pool and hence their capacity to further enhance revenue is limited especially if taken in conjunction with the revenue generated by the insurgency-ridden KPK and Balochistan provinces. There is no doubt that the government of Sindh, followed a year or so later by Punjab, were extremely proactive in setting up their own revenue boards which

then began collecting sales tax on services, a provincial subject as per the constitution. This, in turn, enabled the two provincial governments to credit the money directly to their coffers instead of first being diverted to the federal divisible pool that would then have been distributed according to the agreed National Finance Commission formula. It also ensured that they did not have to pay the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) the 2 percent collection fee. However, few would agree that the provincial governments of the two richest provinces have exhausted all potential avenues of generating tax revenue particularly with reference to farm tax collections.

Past and incumbent federal governments – be they led by military dictators or civilians namely the PML-N or the PPP – have shown no will to amend the constitution that would have enabled the FBR to commence collecting taxes on all sources of income equally. Thus farm income continues to be exempt from tax and the rather illogical justification given by our parliamentarians with heavy representation from the farm sector is that the constitution stipulates that it is a provincial subject. And while provincial governments do tax farm income yet it is hoped that they begin to tax the income of our rich landlords at the same rate as that levied on other sources of income including the productive sectors and salaried class. Equity demands that income from whatever source be taxed equally and it is unfortunate that Punjab Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif deemed it appropriate to levy a one off-tax on urban property which may or may not generate income while exempting the rich farmers.

KPK has established a revenue board this year and that may well account for the massive rise in its collections. However, more proactive steps would be required to meet its potential, which include ending the law and order problems that afflict the province today. Balochistan too has increased collections this year, however, the realisation of its potential is linked to the end of insurgency that would enable exploitation of its rich natural resources. However, this requires provincial as well as federal initiative to deal with the socio-political issues that have plagued the province for decades.

The Ukraine Deal: Has Putin Realized He Overplayed His Hand?

[The CSS Point](#) April 23, 2014



Vladimir Putin’s annexation of the Crimean Peninsula may have boosted his popularity, but that hasn’t prevented \$64 billion from flowing out of the country since the beginning of 2014. “The capital outflow is a powerful statement about how the commercial sector feels about the situation,” said Finnish diplomat

Jaakko Itoniemi, a former ambassador to Washington and now senior adviser to President Martti Ahtisaari.

Economic considerations may have been a factor in Thursday’s tentative deal in Geneva, even as Putin perhaps comes to the realization that he has “overplayed his hand,” Itoniemi said.

Itoniemi was in Washington this week to assess American thinking about the Ukraine crisis, having just visited Moscow for the same purpose. He said many Russian foreign policy specialists and intellectuals had expressed concern over Putin’s actions and intentions, but shared the Russian president’s view that European and American leadership lacked the toughness that would discourage him.

Since the start of the crisis, Finland has seen a significant drop in visits by Russians due in part to the decline in the value of the ruble, and the Finns were bracing themselves for more problems if the European Union imposed trade sanctions against Russia.

With the Geneva deal in place, the threat of Western sanctions has presumably moved onto the back burner, but skeptics feel the agreement may be short lived. “Fourteen percent of our trade is with Russia,” said Iloniemi, “but we will follow whatever the European Union decides to do.”

There has been anxiety in Helsinki over Russia’s current moves, and Finland and Sweden remain in close touch as two non-NATO countries watching from the sidelines. But Finland is avoiding any involvement in the present confrontation, such as using its good relations with Moscow to try and negotiate a settlement. “We share a 1,300 kilometer border with Russia, and we’re not going to get involved,” Iloniemi declared.

The feeling in Moscow, said Iloniemi—an old Russia hand himself—is that Putin is not winging it (as some think), but seems to have a plan, which superseded his idea of a Eurasia federation as a counterweight to the European Union. “Eurasia is to be shelved, and Putin is thinking of a new federation consisting of the current members plus eastern Ukraine, Belarus—which already has strong ties to Russia—and Kazakhstan,” he said.

He said the more fanciful view is that Putin dreams of recreating the Russia of the czars—a theory given some force by the Russian leader’s press conference Thursday, in which he [referred](#) to Ukraine by its 18th-century name of New Russia.

As for using Russian energy to exert pressure on Europe, Iloniemi argued that the strategy had its limitations since oil and gas revenues were the mainstay of the Russian economy and any long-term, significant drop in exports would hurt Russia as much as the targeted nations.

Meanwhile, Finnish bookings for trips to Russia “have plummeted,” [according to](#) the *Helsinki Times*. A Finnish travel agent told the paper that Finns were not traveling to Russia because of “fear of personal violence, the rise of nationalism, the possibility of an armed conflict, imaginary problems at the border, ideological reasons, disapproval of Putin, a general wariness of Russia created by the media.”

Editorial: End of detente (Daily Times)

[The CSS Point](#) April 27, 2014



While the ceasefire between the government and the Tehreek-e-Taliban (TTP) officially ended more than two weeks ago, events on Thursday seemed to add final confirmation

to the fact. In a morning raid, Pakistan Air Force jets pounded militant hideouts in Khyber Agency killing up to 37 militants. The strikes reportedly targeted the Lashkar-e-Islam, which intelligence officials believe was behind the bombing of a vegetable market in Islamabad on April 8 that killed 24 people. Initial reports claimed a group called the United Baloch Army was behind the attack, but security officials debunked that claim and said it was most likely a group associated with tribal areas militants. The government has stuck to a retaliatory policy regarding striking militants in the tribal areas and Thursday's attack was apparently in that vein too. Though numerous attacks over the last two months have made a mockery of the ceasefire, Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar has asked the terrorists' negotiating committee to convince the group's leadership to extend the ceasefire, with limited success. The events of the last few days are going to make his work harder, since terrorists are clearly targeting police officers, technically Mr Nisar's employees, who have been effective against them. On Thursday a bomb in East Karachi killed SHO Rafiq Tanoli, a police officer known as an 'encounter' specialist in anti-terrorism operations, along with five other people. The TTP Mohmand chapter claimed responsibility for the attack, which reports say was the eighth attempt on Tanoli's life by terrorists. On Friday, a roadside bomb in Delhi Colony struck worshippers leaving by bus from a Shia Imambargah killing four people, though given the size of the blast it is fortunate that the death toll was not higher. The sectarian nature of the attack points to tribal areas militants, or their ideological supporters among sectarian groups in Karachi.

With the ceasefire over and terrorist attacks growing, retaliation may soon become indistinguishable from a military operation. Talks are now a dubious proposition. NATO is scheduled to pull out troops from Afghanistan later this year and 2014 presents a window of opportunity for the government to deal with the terrorists quickly. US special envoy to Afghanistan James Dobbins recently held separate meetings with the prime minister and army chief in Islamabad, and it is almost certain that the status of negotiations was on the agenda. Most importantly, both the government and the military have been at pains to emphasise that they are on the ‘same page’ as far as militancy goes. Recent sounds from Defence Minister Khwaja Asif, who said that the government has a ‘Plan B’ about terrorism, point to increasing convergence between the government and the military about the inevitability of an operation in the tribal areas. While the military will not act without political consensus behind it, creating consensus is the government’s job and it must be done while ignoring criticism from terrorist sympathisers in the mainstream.

Mr Dobbins’ visit indicates how slim the timeline for success is. Once NATO troops leave, it is likely that Pakistan-based terrorists will find safe havens in Taliban-controlled areas of Afghanistan, particularly if the terrorists in Afghanistan make territorial gains in a post-NATO offensive. TTP leader Mullah Fazlullah is already rumoured to be in Afghanistan and it was reported that the head of the Afghan Taliban, Mullah Omar, persuaded his Pakistani counterparts to announce a ceasefire and focus on the war in Afghanistan. The TTP though seems bent on satisfying its bloodlust. Infighting among the terrorists has come out into the open, with over 40 militants reportedly killed in clashes over the last month between rival groups for regional leadership. The fate of foreign fighters, some of whom have been in the tribal areas for decades, is now being openly discussed, with terrorists allegedly asking for safe passage for their foreign ‘guests’. This indicates that many militants believe the tribal areas may soon become an uncomfortable place for them. The outcome of talks now seems increasingly like an end to this lopsided detente for which a political and military response will be necessary. *

Editorial: Sued for being nuclear (DAWN)

[The CSS Point](#) April 28, 2014



THE US has already paid hundreds of millions of dollars to the Marshall Islands in restitution, and now this tiny Pacific nation has set in motion a procedure that might require that the world’s only superpower repent even more for one of its sins. On Thursday, the Marshallese government filed lawsuits against nine countries, including the US, in the International Court of Justice at the Hague. These countries are economically and culturally disparate, but here’s what they have in common: they have been sued for being nuclear-armed.

They stand accused of the “flagrant violation of international law” for failing to pursue negotiations required by the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which requires states to pursue nuclear disarmament “in good faith”. The five original nuclear-armed states were all party to the NPT, and according to the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, which is backing the legal action, the countries that acquired nuclear weapons — Pakistan, India, Israel and North Korea — were “bound by these nuclear disarmament provisions under customary international law”.

We now live in an age when nuclear weapons are taken as a fact of life; barely in evidence are the misgivings and outrage this technology provoked in earlier decades, when the fates of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were well within living memory.

This is a timely reminder, then, that while present-day geopolitics may require contortions such as the doctrine of nuclear deterrence, the fact remains that the world would be an infinitely safer place without nuclear weapons. It is entirely understandable why the Marshall Islands took this action: it was on its atolls, after all, that the US undertook the testing of the hydrogen and atomic bombs repeatedly.

The largest-ever detonation of a nuclear weapon occurred on March 1, 1954, on Bikini Atoll — a blast that the Marshallese government says was 1,000 times more powerful than what destroyed Hiroshima. The world may have moved on, but it is evident that nuclear weapons remain more dangerous than ever.



Govt, military on same page for development, progress, security of Pakistan: Nawaz

[The CSS Point](#) April 28, 2014



GWADAR: On his visit to Gwadar the prime minister, with the Balochistan chief minister on his right and the Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Raheel Sharif towards his left, stated that the government and all its institutions including the armed forces sit on the same table for the development, progress and security of Pakistan, *Express News* reported.

Nawaz Sharif was visiting Gwadar to assess the development projects in the region and had been welcomed by COAS Raheel Sharif.

Balochistan Chief Minister Dr Abdul Malik Baloch and Finance Minister Ishaq Dar also accompanied him during his visit.

Nawaz said Rs162 billion will be allocated for development projects in the province. The premier told the media that the construction of a state-of-the-art airport will be implemented along with development of the port, which the government envisions as a ‘Free Port’ along the lines of Dubai, Singapore and Hong Kong ports.

International consultants will be hired for the planning and development of the free port, said the prime minister, adding that it will be developed along the lines of the ones in Dubai, Singapore and Hong Kong. Speaking about the law and order and security situation in Balochistan, the premier stated that immediate action will be taken by COAS General Raheel Sharif, and new security measures will be introduced.

Furthermore, the PM also said special security measures will be implemented for Chinese personnel working in Balochistan to safeguard the Pak-China economic corridor.

He also praised and gave special thanks to Balochistan’s chief minister on the basis of his work in implementing good policies and curtailing nepotism and bribery.

The prime minister also lauded the role of the FC, the military and federal institutions for the improvement in the law and order situation of the region.

Background

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on April 18 had stressed that the Gwadar port extension project [should be given priority](#) in order to boost economic activity in the country, [Radio Pakistan](#) reported.

Along with these development projects, he had also emphasised the need to improve health and education services in the province. The socio-economic package includes provision for training of human resource in different sectors.

Establishing peace in Balochistan is a priority of the government, he said, noting that security concerns can impede economic activity and socio-economic development.

UN Chief Says Use of Military Force in Ukraine a Mistake

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UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has reiterated his call for the implementation of the Geneva agreements on Ukraine and expects all the conflicting parties to cease futile actions and resume diplomatic efforts. Ban warned that any attempt to seek a military solution to the political crisis in Ukraine would be a grave mistake, Ban's spokesman Stephane Dujarric told reporters on Friday.

Military actions must be avoided at all costs, Ban said, otherwise the situation might spin out of control.

The secretary general is concerned that 'situation could spin out of control with grave and unpredictable consequences.'

The spokesman said that the UN chief reiterates his call to all sides to abide by agreements reached in Geneva.

“He expects all sides to understand that the time is of the essence and therefore seize all unhelpful actions and instead reengage diplomatically to ensure full implementation now,” Dujarric said.

Pro-federalization rallies have not been abating in eastern Ukrainian cities of Donetsk, Kharkiv and Luhansk since March.

Protests later spread to more cities in the Donetsk region, including Kramatorsk and Slavyansk.

In a bid to ease the mounting tensions, top diplomats from Russia, Ukraine, the United States and the European Union brokered an agreement in Geneva on April 17, calling on all sides to refrain from violence, disarm illegal armed groups and start negotiations on a constitutional reform.

The Ukrainian government announced last week the launch of a special anti-terrorist operation providing for the use of military force against demonstrators.

Moscow called the decision to use force against protesters an extremely dangerous development of events.

Kiev-controlled military units announced ‘a second phase’ of the military operation, intended to block access to the rebel city of Slavyansk.

Editorial: Result oriented dialogue (Pakistan Today)

[The CSS Point](#) April 29, 2014

Militants are dictating their terms better than the government



A high level meeting presided over by the prime minister has decided to continue dialogue with the TTP but make it more meaningful by adhering to a formalised agenda. The purpose behind initiating talks with the outlawed TTP was to put an end to the ongoing terrorist attacks. There was however no respite to the attacks either during the so called ceasefire or afterwards. This month alone there were two major attacks resulting in double digit mortalities and several others where less than ten people died. Newspapers on Monday carried reports of an IED blast which left three security personnel including an army officer dead in Waziristan. In Peshawar, militants fired two rockets which exploded within the airport. In Bara threats from a Taliban group forced families to migrate to safer areas. In a third major attack in a week in Karachi, three children died in a *madrassah* blast while several others were injured. In Sadiqabad a low-intensity explosion under the railway track injured the driver and his assistant. A report in an English daily

highlighted the issue of the migration of businessmen from Peshawar under threat of kidnapping for ransom to other parts of the country and in some cases out of the country.

What the committee appointed by the government has done, despite the good intentions of its members, is to put the state of Pakistan on an equal footing with the TTP. What is more, it allowed the militants to dictate the agenda. They have been allowed to get away with some of the most horrendous attacks, including the beheading of 23 troops, on one plea or another. The TTP had initially called into question, totally without reason, the status of the three high profile civilian prisoners on the plea that they belonged to parties with which the TTP was in a state of war, implying that they were in its custody. By sharing a video with the media the interior ministry has suggested that they might not be in TTP's custody. While Shahidullah Shahid insists that the Taliban wouldn't be waging a war against the government if they followed law or a constitution other than Islamic Sharia, the government's negotiators claim the TTP is willing to hold talks within the parameters of the constitution.

There is no use of talks if attacks or kidnappings by the militants were to continue. The government committee needs to tell the TTP plainly that talks can only be held on a single item agenda of stopping all attacks. What is more, the Taliban have to deter other militant groups also from launching attacks from inside the tribal areas. The committee has no authority whatsoever to hold talks on issues like what kind of laws the country is to practice as the subject comes strictly under the purview of the Parliament.



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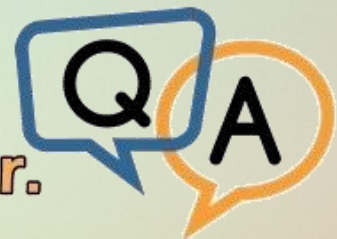
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