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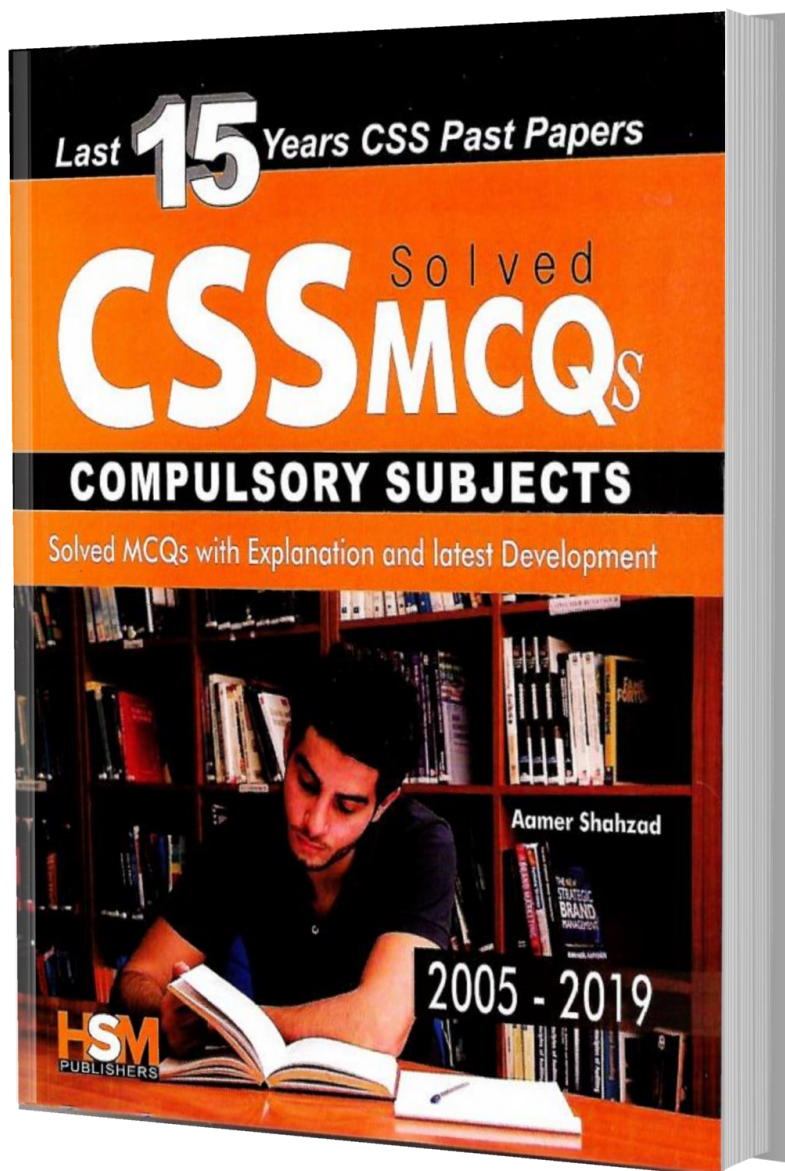
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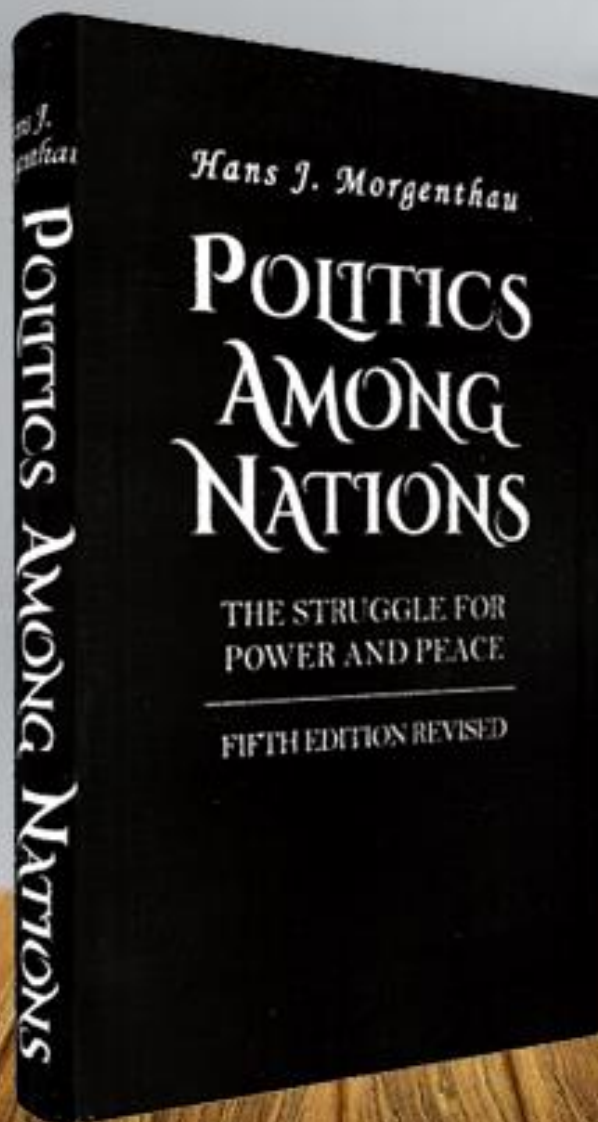


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# PAKISTAN

## 18th amendment and charter of democracy By Dr Farid A Malik

The 18th constitutional amendment has cut Islamabad to size. After the failure of the federal government in keeping the federation together in 1971, the 1973 constitution was promulgated on the basis of provincial autonomy. The Muslim League concept of 'Mazboot Markaz' was rejected by the elected legislators. As the provinces lacked structure a concurrent list of departments was prepared to be devolved in a reasonable period of time.

A ministry of provincial coordination was also formed headed by Hafeez Pirzada one of the key players in the constitution-making process after Comrade Mahmood Ali Kasuri decided to step down. As envisioned in the constitution the devolution had to be all the way down to the Tehsil and Union Council level. The original document defined fundamental human rights to be provided by the state. Under Article 25-A, every Pakistani had to be literate by 1985.

Zia removed the time limit which meant never. Tax, loan, utility defaulters were barred from contesting elections. Musharraf imposed the condition of Bachelor's Degree. A constitution must be respected as it is an agreement between the rulers and the ruled. Tempering of this core document to suit individual or vested needs has always been disastrous and should not even be attempted without debate, discussion and due process.

Short cuts are short lived and usually inappropriate. While the 18th amendment has succeeded in cutting Islamabad to size, it has created four equally repressive power centres. Now the constitutional provision of devolution and distribution of National Finance Commission award is being violated with impunity by the rulers of Lahore, Karachi, Peshawar and Quetta. The people of far flung areas are left at the mercy of the provincial masters instead of the federal rulers.

Their empowerment remains a pipe dream. This controversial amendment came out of the Charter of Democracy (COD) which was signed in London on May 14, 2006 by the two exiled political leaders of the country. Benazir Bhutto was in self-

exile while Nawaz Sharif the head of the political outfit conceived and nourished by the third usurper had having tricked the fourth dictator to leave the country under a written agreement.

Musharraf who had written off both of them while teaming up with another rogue political outfit (PML-Q) was considered a common enemy by both of them. After the assassination of the daughter of the East, Zardari took control of Bhutto's party. Instead of democracy the focus now shifted to loot and plunder. With Shahbaz Sharif in Punjab and the Shah's in Karachi it was free for all. Zardari and Sharif weakened the federation while the provinces under the cover of provincial autonomy were able to squander the nation's resources at will.

Like the COD, the 18th amendment has been misused and its implementation has been seriously flawed to suit vested interests. Recently the judiciary has also come under attack due to its liberal bail relief to the politicians. The last such relief was provided in 2001 about 18 years ago since then the judicial benevolence has not been exercised. There was a big difference between now and then. Till 1985 political leadership was by and large honest, now most of them are criminals.

They no longer struggle and fight for common good as such they are not victims, in fact they are victimizers who should face the law without any major concessions. From the barracks of Karachi, the first capital, Pakistan started off well. Now it has ceased to function behind the barricades of Islamabad. I strongly believe that the federation developed cracks the day it moved out of the city of the founder. The final rupture took place in 1971 but the process had started earlier.

The 1973 constitution was formulated by a genuinely elected assembly that is why it has been able to weather several storms. It is a people friendly document, if implemented in letter and spirit and respected by all parties and power brokers only then can democracy reach the grass root level. The COD and the 18th amendment have failed to provide the perceived relief to the common man. Instead of rollback, it should be rolled forward. Through the local government constitutional framework the devolution plan should be carried out to empower the masses.

After Islamabad, it is time to cut Lahore, Karachi, Peshawar and Quetta to size for the people of Pakistan to grow. While the 18th amendment is under attack in Islamabad, Punjab and KPK have announced new local bodies' framework. Now it is up to Sindh and Balochistan to frame their local bodies' structure to carry forward the much needed and long denied devolution as envisioned by the

architects of the unanimously agreed 1973 constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

Source: <https://www.globalvillagespace.com/18th-amendment-and-charter-of-democracy-dr-farid-a-malik/?fbclid=IwAR26JNg6oKScxctdYnjRX6RVQhDI4NrC6e8Y7ay1pZUC2I0DVgT2AdyFU60>

## Cooperative counter-terrorism strategy By Dr. Zafar Nawaz Jaspal

Prime Minister Imran Khan visited Tehran to cultivate a better understanding of the Iranian leadership, which is imperative to combat the menace of terrorism. Both states have been suffering from cross border terrorist attacks. Prime Minister Khan and Iranian President Hassan Rouhani agreed to increase cooperation between both states security agencies. They also announced that both countries would devise a cooperative counter-terrorism strategy to combat the militancy.

The precise prediction about the outcome of understanding between Pakistan and Iran on militancy is difficult because both competing and cooperating variables have been making bilateral relations a complicated affair. Prime Minister Imran and President Rouhani offer an optimistic future course of cooperation. Whereas, realist theory of international relations coupled with the emerging trends in the regional geo-strategic environment entails pessimistic conclusions.

The strategic competition between Saudi Arab and Iran, developments in Afghanistan and Indo-Iran defence partnership have the potential to spoil improving understanding between Islamabad and Tehran. Realistically speaking, radicalised militancy is causing insecurity in both Iran and Pakistan. Recently, militants with the support of their foreign operators conducted terrorist attacks in Quetta and Chaman.

On April 16, Baloch Raji Aajoi Saangar (BRAS), an alliance of three Baloch terrorist organizations, killed 14 personnel belonging to the armed forces in the Bozi Pass near Ormara. The disturbing factor is that the Baloch separatists are using Iranian territory for their safe hideouts. Government of Pakistan shared actionable pieces of evidence with Iran about the Baloch terrorist organizations' sanctuaries located on its territory.

Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi claimed that the logistical training camps of BRAS are inside the Iranian border region. He said, "We have shared this actionable evidence with Iran after due authentication and identified the location of the camps." Pakistan is planning to improve the security on its 950 kilometers

border with Iran. It has taken various steps to prevent illegal activities in the border area.

For enhancing the border management, patrolling, and surveillance Pakistan has planned to raise a new Frontier Corp, having its headquarters in Turbat. It will also establish border centres after the consultation with Iran. Pakistan is also fencing the border with Iran like it fenced the Pak-Afghan border. The positive development is that Iran and Pakistan agreed to set up joint border 'rapid reaction force' to counter terrorism during the recent Iran-Pakistan summit.

Prime Minister Khan assured his host that Pakistan would take all kinds of measures to prevent cross border terrorism. He said, "We are committed not to let it happen again. We will not allow any militant group to operate from our soil. We will not allow our soil to be used by anyone against anyone." However, Prime Minister Khan's statement in a joint press conference with President Rouhani was severely criticized in Pakistan.

The opposition in the National Assembly accused Prime Minister Khan of conceding that Pakistani soil had been used in the past by terrorists to carry out attacks in Iran. Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) MNA Khurram Dastagir opined, "The statement has jeopardized national security. We demand to know how the prime minister's admission serves the interests of the country."

PPP MNA Hina Rabbani Khar stated: "Our prime minister stood beside the Iranian president and said that our soil was being used for terrorist activities. This is not funny anymore." It is understandable that in a parliamentary democracy, the opposition in the parliament critically examines the government's policies. However, one fails to understand why our political elite is reluctant to accept the reality that transnational terrorist groups misused Pakistani territory for their evil activities.

That's why the armed forces of Pakistan have launched operations such as Zarb-i-Azb and Raddul Fasaad. Without admitting reality, one cannot chalk out effective policy.

To conclude, Pakistan needs to eliminate the remnants of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, the East Turkestan Islamic

Movement, Lashkar-i-Jhangvi, Al-Qaeda, Jundallah, BRAS, etc. Without the sincere support of the neighbouring States, including Iran, it seems impossible. Therefore, joint border 'rapid reaction force' to counter terrorism is a constructive understanding between Iran and Pakistan.

Source: [https://www.globalvillagespace.com/cooperative-counter-terrorism-strategy-dr-zafar-nawaz-jaspal/?fbclid=IwAR2WIDghe1nC9vEdpS50SLOFmV3byB7tXyKHYE xPnIJHJbfW0\\_h15Aqkctc](https://www.globalvillagespace.com/cooperative-counter-terrorism-strategy-dr-zafar-nawaz-jaspal/?fbclid=IwAR2WIDghe1nC9vEdpS50SLOFmV3byB7tXyKHYE xPnIJHJbfW0_h15Aqkctc)

## Need to review security paradigm | Editorial

The biological control of pests by letting loose their predators is a fine way to avoid the use of harmful chemicals on crops. Under Gen Ziaul Haq, the idea was however misused to tackle perceived security threats like the PPP by creating the MQM in urban Sindh and Anjuman-e-Sipah-e-Sahaba, later called Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, in Punjab. After killing hundreds of peaceful citizens, both finally started biting the hand that had fed them. More recently the TLP was said to have been mainstreamed to defeat PML-N, categorised the latest security threat, in selected constituencies. In Balochistan, the task of taking out militant nationalists was allegedly assigned among others to LeJ till the latter joined hands with al-Qaeda. The creation of the Taliban was a similar exercise to safeguard external security. The network gave birth to several splinter groups which turned against their masters when they were told to halt the jihad. Before they took out their trainers like Col (rtd) Imam and Khalid Khawaja, the TTP terrorists had killed thousands of innocent citizens in the country.

No action was taken to silence Mullah Fazlullah's FM radio station that spread extremism all over Swat. A military operation was delayed till the TTP established control over the area, repudiated Pakistan's constitution, set up its own courts and decided to march on Islamabad. The Musharraf government continued to be in denial when it was pointed out to it that North Waziristan had become a safe haven for terrorists. While those trained in North Waziristan launched attacks on GHQ and military installations and killed thousands in various cities, the then COAS Gen Ashfaq Kayani ruled out any military operation. Even after an operation had been conducted in North Waziristan, the search for good Taliban continued for use against the bad Taliban and perceived security threats.

After sustaining unbearable losses in human and material terms, the world is no more willing to allow militant networks to operate from any country in the world. Those who are deadly opposed to them, include international bodies like the World Bank and the FATF, Pakistan's traditional friends and donors like the USA, Britain and Japan and its closest allies like China and Saudi Arabia. That China finally agreed not to block the resolution declaring Masood Azhar a global terrorist should provide a much needed reality check.

## The Afghan factor in Pak-US relations By Kahkashan Noor

Historically, Pakistan-US relations— which are as old as Pakistan itself— have never been consistent. There exist various episodes of convergence and divergence with regard to the national interest of the two countries. From being the ‘most allied ally’ of the USA in the 1950s, 1980s and in the wake of the September 11 tragedy in 2001, Pakistan have at times moved to also being a country against which considerable US pressure has been exerted in the form of sanctions, threats, blame-game or the need to “do more,” so it can be said that the relations of the two countries are not all-weather. Even though national interest remains a defining feature of Pak-US ties, one factor that has always been underscored in the US foreign policy and which no country can deny, is the geostrategic position of Pakistan.

By the late 1970s, Pak-US relations had deteriorated to a considerable extent, reaching the bottom ebb, because the USA opposed Pakistan’s nuclear quest strenuously and was also suspected of being concerned in the attack on the Holy Kaaba in Makkah. It was only when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979, that there was a notable modification in the US policy towards Asian countries. The foreign invasion had taken place in Pakistan’s immediate neighbourhood within the northwest, and with that Asian country it shares a 2430 km-long border, referred to as the Durand Line. Because of its geopolitical position, in such a tense regional atmosphere, Pakistan was the Asian country whose support as a frontline state was required for the USA.

There is that the indisputable fact that because of the Afghan issue, Pakistan has assumed a vital role for the US government and has become a vital player within the international arena

Thus Pakistan fought a US-aided war by acting as a middleman in providing weapons, training and funds to the Mujahideen, who fought against the Soviet forces in Afghanistan. Following the defeat of the USSR in Afghanistan, its ultimate disintegration, and the end of the Cold War between the two superpowers, the USA emerged as a sole superpower in the new international system. It no longer required Pakistan’s support.



But in the wake of the September 11, 2001 destruction of the Trade Center twin towers, that a new chapter was initiated in Pak-US relations. Pakistan became a key US ally in the War on Terror. In return for its assistance, there was restoration of military and economic aid for Pakistan and sanctions that had been imposed against Pakistan's possession of nuclear explosive devices were lifted.

From George W. Bush to Barack Obama and now Donald Trump, the Afghan War has been a protracted journey for each Asian nation and also the USA. Participation in the extended Afghan war has grave short and long term repercussions for Pakistan. Varied issues in this regard, still beset its political, strategic, social and economic landscapes. Additionally, Pak-US relations became a lot of complicated than ever. The USA has always suspected Pakistan of providing safe havens to the militants targeting American soldiers in Afghanistan. To boot, it maintained pressure on Pakistan to "do more" and has suspended security help to Pakistan.

The other facet of the coin is that Pakistan has been systematically registering its security concerns to the USA over the presence of anti-Pakistan militants on Afghan soil and has expressed its annoyance with the USA even though it has taken very little notice of its legitimate security issues. During this context, the trust deficit has remained the underlying facet of Pak-US ties. Still, peace in Afghanistan remains the common goal for both Pakistan and the USA.

So far, one fact that has been established is that without Pakistan, the USA cannot resolve the Afghan problem. Pakistan was urgently required once the USA decided to seek a military answer to the Afghan problem and Pakistan additionally has a crucial role to play within the Afghan social process, both because it is home to so many Afghan refugees, and because of its large Pashtun population.

Whether Afghanistan could be a source of convergence or some extent of divergence in Pak-US relations is a subject which will be debated upon and weighed. However, what remains noteworthy is that the indisputable fact that because of the Afghan issue, Pakistan has been ready to assume a vital role for the US government and has become a vital player within the international arena.

## 18th Constitutional Amendment: Divine document By Amir Zia

All of a sudden, the 18th Constitutional Amendment has become one of the most emotive and hotly debated topics in Pakistani politics. The Pakistan Peoples' Party's (PPP) top leaders certainly deserve the credit for bringing this controversial amendment back on the center-stage with their repeated allegations that efforts are underway to scrap it from the constitution and deprive provinces of their hard-won autonomy in administrative, political and financial matters.

But do these allegations made by PPP's top-guns, including its Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari, carry any substance? Is there any serious move afoot to undo the 18th Amendment or make any sweeping changes in it? The answer to these questions is in negative. The besieged Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government does not enjoy the support of two-third members in the Parliament, to get rid of this amendment or make any one-sided changes in the constitution.

Why are Zardari senior and Zardari junior giving centrality to this issue in every speech, press conference and media talk? Why are they houting "wolf, wolf" when none is baying for blood?

To amend the constitution, the PTI will have to perform a high-wire act and negotiate a complex deal with the opposition parties and its allies. Given the multiple challenges, especially on the economic and foreign relations fronts, the issue hardly figures out as the top or even secondary item on its agenda. Background interviews with a couple of senior ministers in Prime Minister Imran Khan's cabinet reveal that doing away with the 18th Amendment is not under any formal discussion within the government circles; though a couple of the party leaders do openly criticize this piece of legislation — passed on April 8, 2010, during the last government of the PPP.

At that time, all the major political parties, including the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) supported this amendment, and it was passed with 292 votes in the National Assembly out of 342. Then why are Zardari senior and Zardari junior giving centrality to this issue in every speech, press conference and media talk?

Why are they shouting “wolf, wolf” when none is baying for blood? The answer is obvious; as the accountability dragnet begins to close in, Zardari senior, his sister Faryal Talpur, and other close aides are trying to deflect pressure.

They are raising those issues which may whip up sentiment in some constituencies and trying to build a narrative that they are being targeted for standing up for the 18th Amendment, opposing the alleged plan of enforcing the presidential system and resisting the military courts seen vital to administer justice to hardcore terrorists. While Zardari senior is using Zardari junior as a shield to wiggle-out of the corruption cases, the PPP’s narrative building has triggered discourse in the public domain about merits and demerits of the 18th Amendment.

This public discourse on constitutional matters is indeed a good omen for the country, where some powerful interest groups are trying to portray the 18th Amendment as something sacred that cannot be revisited, revised or renegotiated. Like any other piece of legislation, this Amendment too, should remain open for scrutiny by stakeholders and public at large for improvement and change as and when required. Definitely, for many experts, politicians and economists, the 18th Amendment which brought more than 100 drastic changes to Zulfikar Ali Bhutto’s 1973 Constitution – has tarnished the original document so much that it should now be called “Zardari’s Constitution.”

The 18th Amendment allowed an individual to hold the coveted slot of a prime minister more than two times. This change was personality-specific and aimed to benefit Nawaz Sharif so that he could become prime minister a third time.

Even this entire amendment was enacted without a proper analysis of its political and economic impact on the federation and federating units. Not just the lawmakers, but also the state institutions failed to grasp its overall negative implications for Pakistan. However, even the staunchest critics of the 18th Amendment do not want to do away with it altogether. What the critical voices, including many leading economists and experts, demand is to revise the amendment in a rational manner and remove its weakness and flaws, including those pertaining to financial matters, education, health and unchecked powers of the executive, especially the prime minister, that created an inbuilt crisis-like situation for the federation.

The amendment took away the right of President of Pakistan to dissolve the Parliament by removing article 58-2(b) from the constitution and changed the very basics of the governance structures. The political parties hailed this change, but they failed to grasp the fact that their labor of love did not provide any alternative mechanism to check the powers of the executive within the Parliament. It was unable to develop any viable internal system of accountability of prime ministers, who may turn into a mini-dictators. Lawmakers belonging to the ruling party cannot differ or challenge him/her on any issue; for fear of losing their seat in Parliament, under the anti-defection law, nor any subordinate investigation or law enforcing agency could hold the premier accountable.

That's why former premier Nawaz Sharif could only be forced out of power after prolonged agitation and sit-in by the opposition and extraordinary judicial involvement, which is not possible as a matter of routine. Furthermore, while Nawaz Sharif was firmly in the saddle, none of the investigation agencies and anti-graft bodies from the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) to the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) could move against him because they were overtly or covertly under the executive's thumb. To avoid a repeat of such a situation which had put the country in the vortex of protests and uncertainty the Parliament needs to find a method to hold the prime minister accountable in a way so that the system doesn't get derailed if he/she is found involved in corruption, misuse of power or poor governance.

Secondly, the amendment clipped the wings of the President further by barring him/her from imposing emergency rule in any province or from dissolving Parliament without prime minister's concurrence. This creates a dichotomy as no constitutional way remains open to tackle a political turmoil created by an elected government or calling for action against any provincial or the national assembly. Thirdly, the 18th Amendment allowed an individual to hold the coveted slot of a prime minister more than two times. This change was personality-specific and aimed to benefit Nawaz Sharif, so that he could become prime minister a third time – which he did in 2013.

The so-called secular parties amended the constitution to make only Muslim members

of the National Assembly eligible as candidates for the slot of the prime minister, reinforcing the perception that members belonging to the religious minorities are treated as the second class citizens.

It was a highly controversial change because it promoted personality-cult both within the Parliament and the political parties, consolidating dynastic politics instead of democratic values. The PML-N, considered a centrist party, agreed to massive changes in the Constitution only because Zardari senior gave them this Sharif-specific concession. A senior PML-N leader, who spoke to the scribe on the condition of anonymity, admitted that it was a huge mistake committed by the party. On a positive note, the amendment barred courts from validating extra-constitutional measures such as the suspension of the constitution, but it again failed to suggest a constitutional way out of a crisis or an impasse.

The 18th Amendment also included several fundamental rights to the Constitution such as Article 10-A on the right to a fair trial, 19-A on the right to information, and 25-A on the child's right to education. These are non-controversial additions and been generally acclaimed by all. Similarly, amendments regarding judicial appointments, the establishment of Islamabad High Court and renaming of North Western Frontier Province as Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa also have been well received. The architects of the 18th Amendment, however, did not address the qualification and disqualification criteria in articles 62 and 63 of the constitution for the members of the Parliament.

These vague articles were inserted by former military ruler President Gen. Muhammed Zia-ul Haq to infuse an 'Islamic' spirit among parliamentarians and remain subject to conflicting interpretations. Instead of improving these articles, the 18th Amendment discriminated against religious minorities; who under constitutional changes are now barred from holding the offices of the prime minister, chief justice and election commissioner. The so-called secular parties amended the constitution to make only Muslim members of the National Assembly eligible as candidates for the slot of the prime minister, reinforcing the perception that members belonging to the religious minorities are treated as the second class citizens.

However, this change remains against the spirit of the Constitution, which treats all as equal citizens regardless of their faith, ethnicity, sect or colour. Furthermore,

despite more than 100 changes in the Constitution, the 18th Amendment failed to undo the contentious Hudood and blasphemy laws. But the biggest abnormality has been created on the economic front in the name of provincial autonomy. The provinces get 57.5 percent of the total taxes collected under the divisible pool, while the federal government gets 42.5 percent.

Moreover, under the 18th Amendment, the share of the provinces, can be increased but not decreased from the share fixed in the 7th National Finance Commission Award. To compound further, this ill-thought out move, all the big ticket expenditure items including debt servicing, defense, footing the bill of the loss-making public sector enterprises, subsidies and allocations for emergency challenges were kept with the federal government, but the bulk of resources were given to the provinces.

The amendment clipped the wings of the President further by barring him/her from imposing emergency rule in any province or from dissolving Parliament without prime minister's concurrence.

It weaved a tangled web as the federal government was allowed to collect tax on goods and all incomes barring agriculture, while provincial governments collected tax on services, which created problems for the big service sector companies operating across Pakistan as they have now to deal with multiple agencies. The hopes that provinces will raise taxes on their own also did not materialize because flushed with money from the federal government, provincial governments made no serious effort to broaden the tax base. Provinces also remain reluctant to tax the powerful interest groups, including the agricultural sector.

Ironically, many ministries and government functions were devolved, but provinces got no say in taxation planning. As the size of the cake remains small (federal government collected revenues worth Rs.3.7 trillion in fiscal 2017-18, which the IMF wants to increase up to Rs.4.7 in the first phase), there is a need not only to broaden it but fix the anomalies that the 18th Amendment infused in the system. The thrust of efforts should be for federal rather than centralized planning as resource mobilization has increasingly become difficult against the backdrop of the country's economic slowdown.

While the backers of the 18th Amendment maintain a strong position on the devolution of power and autonomy, all the major political parties, including the PPP and the PMLN-N remain averse to empowering the local bodies in line with the 140-A of the Constitution. On this issue, the provincial governments consistently played a negative role and resisted granting provincial finance commissions. Even the local bodies elections – for example in Sindh and Punjab – could only be held after the intervention of the superior judiciary, but the provincial governments ensured to make them as toothless and powerless through a string of changes in its laws.

Another big problem which the 18th Amendment created is in the energy sector. The bone of contention remains that while the right of the provinces has been recognized on natural resources, the federal government remains in charge of the distribution network, which is accumulating losses worth billions of rupees every day because of rampant theft and non-payment of electricity and natural gas bills by consumers. Provincial governments are likely to go bust if this burden is transferred to them; meaning running the energy sector distribution companies.

The issues emanating because of the abolishment of the concurrent list also need to be revisited to bring harmony between federating units and the center. Other matters requiring urgent attention is the education sector, which has been devolved at the provincial level. But this was done without proper planning or thinking. The foremost issue here remains that education, instead of uniting the people and playing its role in nation-building, has become a divisive in nature thanks to various curriculums and parallel schooling systems.

The thrust of efforts should be for federal rather than centralized planning as resource mobilization has increasingly become difficult against the backdrop of the country's economic slowdown.

On this front, the federal government should have powers to develop and introduce similar syllabus and method of education across the country with input from the provincial education ministries up to the primary and secondary level. The provinces must devolve powers to run and manage schools to the local governments instead of concentrating at the provincial education ministry. The issue of the capacity of the provinces in terms of teachers training also needs to

be revisited to ensure an equal standard of education in all provinces and develop similar marking criteria.

The existence of the Higher Education Commission (HEC) has also been questioned after the 18th Amendment, but it was saved by the Supreme Court, which allowed it to continue performing functions under HEC Ordinance 2002 in a landmark ruling in April 2011. The federal government must also intervene to regulate, monitor and standardize the quality of education and examination at the college and university level to bring uniformity in the system. The 18th Amendment also hurt the health sector as it did not put in place a centralized checking authority for health services and the regulation of drugs.

The decision to decentralize these core monitoring and regulation functions run contrary to the world trend in which the regulatory framework is being centralized and standardized. Overall the 18th Amendment has created massive governance and financial complications by the haphazard distribution of resources, weakening the center, removing the federal supervision and monitoring on important public service sectors and weakened the much-needed checks and the process of accountability.

To ensure pro-people reforms and better working between provinces and the center it is necessary to revisit the 18th Amendment in its entirety and do away with those changes which have choked and weakened the federal government and prevented devolution of power to the local bodies level. Pakistan is too valuable to be held hostage to the petty interests of a handful of self-serving politicians.

Source: [https://www.globalvillagespace.com/18th-constitutional-amendment-divine-document/?fbclid=IwAR2DSjz-hgwDpEGivneG\\_-uqW80NZj7\\_IR6KAmzqhhT1Hy1ywV27SeZouPg](https://www.globalvillagespace.com/18th-constitutional-amendment-divine-document/?fbclid=IwAR2DSjz-hgwDpEGivneG_-uqW80NZj7_IR6KAmzqhhT1Hy1ywV27SeZouPg)



## Education crisis | Editorial

CHIEF JUSTICE Asif Khosa seems to have taken a special interest in the state of the country's education sector, castigating governments for their failure to fulfil their constitutional duty of providing an education to all children between the ages of five and 16. On Wednesday, he warned of an impending national crisis with millions of children out of school, and unable to access quality education. There are several reasons why so many Pakistani children are out of school; nearly all stem from poverty and issues of access. First, there are simply not enough government schools in the country to accommodate everyone. Many children have to travel long distances to get to school, particularly in the rural parts. If transport is not provided by the school and parents do not have the time to accompany them or the means to arrange for the commute, families see no other choice but to pull the child out of school. Most government schools that exist are at the primary level. Secondary and tertiary schools are even fewer, and the distance to reach them greater. In contrast, there are private madressahs in practically every street.

Second, while public education may be free of cost, there are added expenses that are not covered, such as uniforms, bags, stationery, etc. Even if these costs are not high, it adds up in large families with many children. Children also drop out of school if the quality of teaching is poor, or if they feel discriminated against by authority figures, or if corporal punishment persists. Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah recently pointed to mediocre teaching, and recommended compulsory workshop training sessions. The rise of private schools has exacerbated societal inequalities and resentments, and allowed the state to abdicate its responsibility of providing quality education. With the budget to be announced soon, it remains to be seen whether or not the PTI government, which has always propagated a strong social agenda, will live up to its promise.

Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1481374/education-crisis?fbclid=IwAR20mRdhVVQWPwWEA42C8sl3ABqMxs6HYsOAocffepCnkKeonEU0b0Kdv8k>

## Social structure and democracy in Pakistan By Dr Raza Khan

Even after more than 70 years of existence and around 17 years of continuous rule by elected governments, Pakistan could not attain the desirable levels of political stability and economic growth. The political and economic situation in the country currently has become so adverse that nothing could be forecast with certainty about the future of the present government. The foremost reason for this is the lack of political and economic stability in Pakistan and the resultant social chaos has been that democracy as a culture and institution has failed to flourish and evolve in the country. Various related factors have been responsible for the failure of democracy to evolve as an institution in Pakistan. These factors need to be identified, analysed and documented by the policymakers so that a sustainable political and economic stability can be achieved.

At the outset it must be understood that the culture of society determines the nature, structure and functions of institutions of that society, including the state. Looking at the institutions of democracy from that standpoint reveals that the foremost and underlying cause that a democratic culture has not evolved in Pakistan has been the incompatibility between the social structure of the country and the essence and values of a democratic culture. The nature of social structure, which comprises social institutions, social values, social roles and social statuses of Pakistan has fundamentally been undemocratic in form. As democratic culture primarily is based on the values of equality, equity, justice, freedom and individualism (together creating a culture of merit, inventiveness and amity) these values have hardly been prevalent in Pakistan's social structure.

Pakistan's social structure is profoundly and extensively tribal, ultraconservative and thus anti-change. The culture which such social structure promotes hardly has any space for the above-mentioned democratic ideals to be attained. Such social structure is hierarchical in orientation which functions primarily on the institutionalisation and reverence of traditional figures of authorities like tribal and clan chiefs and religious figures. That is the fundamental reason that symbols of traditional authorities like Khan, Malik, Chaudhry, Wadera and Sardar on the one

hand and maulvis on the other hand have been dominating the society through their societal power and influence to the exclusion of the masses and their consciously and freely-elected democratic and liberal leaders. These symbols and figures of traditional authorities have been colluding to entrench their respective power base on the one hand and to ricochet any challenge to it. As this challenge could only come from liberal and democratic figures, values and institutions under the umbrella of democratic political structure, tribal chieftains and clerical leadership have been trying their utmost to prevent democracy evolve. Many of the traditional figures also joined the political system by appealing to the conservative constituency to make it hostage to their vested interests and in this way make it unviable. Innumerable feudal lords and maulvis have joined the political system of Pakistan over the decades and their efforts to dominate it have seriously compromised the vitality and functionality of the system, whose biggest victim has been democracy.

The success of traditional authorities in this connection has mainly been due to the strategy of traditional power brokers to infiltrate and dominate the institutions of democracy like parliament, political parties and elected governments. Therefore, it is no surprise that most Pakistani political parties have evolved into family-limited companies with politics being their prime business. Traditional authorities have used their power base to domineer the institutions and values of democracy. Thus the very institutions which could otherwise have been a guarantee of flourishing democracy in Pakistan, have served as stumbling blocks for evolution of democracy.

Institutions of a tribal culture intrinsically operate on the principle of inequality and top-down flow of power and authority. Therefore, the values of a tribal culture, like that of Pakistan, are incompatible rather in conflict with the values of democracy. So in a society based on tribal principles equality is hard to be attained. Contrarily, democracy functions on the very principle of equality to all members of society and the state. For instance, every member of society and citizen of the state, has only one vote to exercise and is expected to have equal opportunity of social and economic mobility. Although in theory the Pakistani political system, which is outwardly democratic but inwardly not, operates on the principle of one-person-one-vote (universal suffrage) but most of the people cannot use vote freely either because of the pressure of the respective traditional authorities or bonds or because of their lack of education and information. Resultantly, the government

which gets elected is based on what German political thinker-cum-political sociologist Noelle Neumann called 'loud minority' while the majority becomes 'silent.'

Another very important aspect of the failure of democracy to evolve in Pakistan is that the auxiliary institutions, which otherwise ought to provide support to Parliament, people and political leadership to build their capacities of policymaking and their execution by providing them education and information have been working at cross purposes. These institutions which include the bureaucracy and all the government departments, due to relatively good education and administrative skills of their human resource, have been working for personal and institutional benefits by taking advantage of the ignorance of the masses. This is the basic reason that bureaucrats and top civil servants have been enjoying all kinds of perks and privileges out of the taxpayers' money while the very purpose of good governance remains a pipedream in the state of Pakistan. As the flourishing of true democracy is thus against the interest of the bigwigs of the government institutions, they develop a natural affinity with members of traditional authorities to stunt the growth of democracy.

Moreover, the institutions of the state get their human resources mostly from among the masses socialised into highly tribal and ultraconservative social structures, therefore, they do not have the capacity and comprehension of how to support democracy. Principally and ideally these state institutions must support democracy and more importantly promote the values of democracy: equality, equity, justice and freedom by ensuring good governance through transparency, accountability, rule of law and participation. However, this ideal has been unachievable because the parliamentary political system has reinforced the traditional and reactionary social structure instead of overcoming its shortcomings.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1968735/6-social-structure-democracy-pakistan/?fbclid=IwAR2q58YMFEPwzLTfcKthaTYzJZhqIZUYw0iod9QpeuCFPuCSzPemTfjaDwc>

## Nuclear Trigger-Happy: India or Pakistan By Dr. Zafar Jaspal

Efforts of de-escalation by Pakistan went all to dust when India kept on violating Pakistan's border sovereignty. India pays no heed to the fact that matters can easily escalate into a nuclear war. Both countries need to develop an understanding of the repercussions in case of a nuclear war. Indian war-hungry attitude will bring only doom to the region.

India and Pakistan have successfully developed and institutionalized the nuclear-triad but simultaneously manifested their unwillingness to adhere to any nuclear arms control. The unrestrained nuclear arms race between them and India's nuclear undertaking in post-Pulwama incident is alarming and pessimistic for the South Asian strategic environment. India's surgical strike mantra from September 29, 2016, and Balakot military adventurism on February 26, and Pakistan's befitting-cum-restraint response on February 27, 2019, added a new dimension in the nuclear lexicon.

The dogfight between the two nuclear-armed states' air forces, shooting down two Indian fighter-jets, and capturing of Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman by Pakistan ground forces were unprecedented perilous developments in the nuclear era. Even during the peak of the cold war, the United States and former Soviet Union air forces avoided such incidences due to the fear of escalation of conflict into nuclear war. Islamabad released imprisoned Indian pilot on March 1, 2019.

Instead of responding positively to the goodwill gesture and de-escalating tension, India deployed nuclear-capable missiles and moved its submarine in Pakistani water. Pakistan Navy detected the enemy's invading submarine but did not strike due to the fear of escalation of a conflict. The unprecedented Air Force dogfight between the nuclear-armed states, Naval brinkmanship, and deployment of nuclear-capable missiles during the crisis, necessitates a critical examination of India and Pakistan's gradual doctrinal makeover and nuclear undertakings in February-March 2019.

Pakistan avoided an escalation in a nuclear-tinged crisis because its ruling elite believes in nuclear taboo, i.e., an all-out nuclear conflagration is unthinkable.

Moreover, its armed forces are confident about their ability and capability to check India's aggressive behavior.

This article is an attempt to spell out the nuclear-related undertakings by India and Pakistan in the post-Pulwama February 14, 2019, crisis and also deliberates the makeover in their nuclear thinking since both declared themselves nuclear in May 1998. It also draws attention towards both states' rational/irrational response to a conflict in a nuclearized strategic environment.

The following discussion is structured to answer three interlinked questions, i.e., how were nuclear weapons employed in the post-Pulwama incident? Is there any shift in India and Pakistan nuclear thinking during the last two decades? Which is the trigger-happy nuclear state in South Asia? What are the consequences of both nuclear undertakings and doctrinal makeover on the regional strategic environment?

Who is the Nuclear Trigger-happy State in South Asia?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi systematically warmongered and escalated tensions, despite the punctured reputation of the Indian military during the post-Pulwama incident. On March 18, Indian Navy announced the deployment of the nuclear-propelled submarine—INS Arihant. Hitherto, only the Indian Army deployed nuclear-capable missiles. On April 14, Prime Minister Modi claimed that he had called Pakistan's 'nuclear bluff' by carrying out air strikes within Pakistan. He said: "Pakistan has threatened us with nuclear, nuclear, nuclear" and then he asked rhetorically, "did we deflate their nuclear threat or not?" As a Prime Minister Modi playing with fire, his irresponsible behavior threatens the lives of two billion people in the region.

Realistically, at no time during the post-Pulwama crisis, did Pakistan intimate the use of nuclear weapons. Maj. Gen. Asif Ghafoor, ISPR spokesperson said, "Since we have gone overtly nuclear, as India also, in 1998, our stance is that this capability eliminates the possibility of conventional war between the two states. So that is to say, this is a weapon of deterrence and a political choice. No sane country having this capability would talk about using it." Pakistan avoided an escalation in a nuclear-tinged crisis because its ruling elite believes in nuclear taboo, i.e., an all-out nuclear conflagration is unthinkable.

Moreover, its armed forces are confident about their ability and capability to check India's aggressive behavior – due to visible tilt in the balance of power and defense budgetary in New Delhi's favor – with its current capacity and professional training of the military personnel. Pakistan nuclear restraint policy in the post-Pulwama crisis confirms that it continues its nuclear deterrent policy without reciprocating in a tit-for-tat deployment of nuclear-capable delivery vehicles to India's deployment.

The risks of accidental or inadvertent use of nuclear weapons in South Asia incalculably increased with the deployment of India's nuclear-capable delivery vehicles during the post-Pulwama military-standoff between India and Pakistan.

However, Pakistan Air Force's befitting-cum-restraint response to India's February 26, aggression reconfirmed Islamabad's capability and resolved to retaliate for its sovereign defense. It confirmed that in a conflict, Pakistan should not chicken out of using its military assets for the sake of defense, due to the fears of a conflict escalating into a total war – that has the probability of nuclear exchange. Indeed, it augments the credibility of Pakistan's nuclear deterrence policy.

#### Change in the Nuclear Discourse

India's deployment of nuclear assets and Pakistan's refrain from reciprocating, falsify two western nuclear observer's percepts, which have been dominating India-Pakistan nuclear discourse since the summer 1999 Kargil conflict. Despite, Pakistan's official denial, many Western nuclear experts opined that Pakistan deployed nuclear weapons during the Kargil conflict.

Ironically, without empirical investigation, they pronounced that Pakistan would be the initiator of nuclear war in South Asia because India has no-first-use (NFU) nuclear policy. The deployment of nuclear assets proves that India can contemplate using nuclear weapons first in a conflict because of its policy of pre-emption and counterforce targeting dubbed as 'Surgical Strike' Stratagem. India incorporated strategy of exercising 'surgical strike' as a part of full spectrum response and formal military option in the 2017 Joint Doctrine Indian Armed Forces.

The doctrine stated: India has moved to a pro-active and practical philosophy to counter various conflict situations. The response to terror provocations could be in the form of 'surgical strikes,' and these would be subsumed in the sub-conventional

portion of the spectrum of armed conflict. The possibility of sub-conventional escalating to a conventional level would be dependent on multiple influences, principally: politically-determined conflict aims; strategic conjuncture; operational circumstance; international pressures and military readiness.

Conflict will be determined or prevented through a process of credible deterrence, coercive diplomacy and conclusively by punitive destruction, disruption and constraint in a nuclear environment across the Spectrum of Conflict. Prime Minister Modi's irresponsible statements against nuclear-armed Pakistan for mustering the support of Hindutva and nationalist forces in the 2019 Lok Sabha election is a significant concern for the regional and international security observers.

The risks of accidental or inadvertent use of nuclear weapons in South Asia incalculably increased with the deployment of India's nuclear-capable delivery vehicles during the post-Pulwama military-standoff between India and Pakistan. Indeed, the current tension between them has further exacerbated the nuclearized South Asian strategic environment.

India's ruling elites' statements and strategic pundits writings manifest that it is detaching from its declared NFU policy. It is consciously pursuing more flexible options beyond counter value targeting—namely, counterforce options against Pakistan.

Notwithstanding, a few nuclear confidence-building measures, India and Pakistan are unable to negotiate and promulgate a bilateral arms control that thwarts the nuclear risks and encourage a Nuclear Weapon Free Zone in South Asia. Besides, New Delhi seems to be disinclined to negotiate a bilateral agreement with Pakistan to avoid the accidental, unauthorized and inadvertent nuclear war.

Nevertheless, the critical examination of both states military doctrines reveals that nuclear weapons occupy an essential position in their defense planning. Though they reject the possibility of nuclear warfighting, yet both are developing nuclear capabilities that appear inconsistent with their professed strategy of minimum deterrence premise for strategic stability between them. India's ruling elites' statements and strategic pundits writings manifest that it is detaching from its declared NFU policy.



It is consciously pursuing more flexible options beyond counter value targeting—namely, counterforce options against Pakistan. Pakistan announced ‘full spectrum nuclear doctrine’ after the development of battlefield nuclear weapons. Strategic analysts widely interpreted that Pakistan would use its battlefield nuclear weapons against Indian conventional forces if they cross certain red lines.

Indeed, it would place enormous pressure on both India’s command and control systems and Pakistan’s National Command Authority. The above discussion reveals that the Indian ruling elite is deliberately ignoring or underestimating the repercussions of a military conflict between nuclear-armed states. Indeed, it was an unthinkable factor during the cold war, but now a ‘surgical strike’ is a significant feature of India’s military doctrine. The nuclear weapons led strategic stability; a system-wide condition constitutes a particular kind of structural change in the strategic environment.

In such a strategic environment nuclear deterrence has had visible and traceable consequences for the behavior of states towards a conflict. It moderates the nuclear-capable rivals’ relations. For instance, from the 1960s onward, it had allowed the United States and the former Soviet Union to acquire a new function—joint custodianship of the international system—which implies a new organizing principle for the system and also encouraged detente between them. The superpowers concluded agreements that limited some of their most critical military operations, notably long-range ballistic missiles and strategic defenses.

Ironically, Prime Minister Modi instead of exercising caution to prevent mistakes and misunderstandings during a conflict has adopted risky warfighting or a trigger-happy nuclear strategy. He said: “India’s nuclear weapons had not been saved for Diwali.”

Steve Weber argued: “The simplest explanation for détente is that the threat of a nuclear Armageddon creates powerful shared incentives for the superpowers to cooperate in preventing nuclear war.” Bernard Brodi expressed similar views, “Thus far the chief purpose of our military establishment has been to win wars. From now on its main purpose must be to avert them. It can have almost no other useful purpose.” Ironically, the Indian leadership is disinclined to respond constructively to the demands of the nuclearized strategic environment and therefore, Modi government is determined to use its military prowess to coerce a

nuclear-armed neighbor to win the support of the Hindu nationalists in the 2019 Lok Sabha election.

India's Cold Start Doctrine/Proactive Military Operation Strategy and 'Surgical Strike' Stratagem underscore that the nuclear deterrence situation between India and Pakistan has failed to encourage the growth of shared norms between them. These developments underscore that the nuclear deterrence situation between India and Pakistan has failed to encourage the growth of shared norms between them. Which would have regulated and contained their political and military rivalry through efforts to exercise mutual restraint, to negotiate and settle differences by peaceful means, and to prevent the development of situations capable of causing a dangerous exacerbation of their differences.

Hence, current India's strategic percepts and the possible strategic responses of Pakistan increase the risk of a minor crisis escalating into a total war. Ironically, Prime Minister Modi instead of exercising caution to prevent mistakes and misunderstandings during a conflict has adopted risky warfighting or a trigger-happy nuclear strategy. He said: "India's nuclear weapons had not been saved for Diwali."

While commenting on Modi's nuclear bellicose statement, Shyam Saran, former India's Foreign Secretary "Many norms have been transgressed and several thresholds crossed in the ongoing Lok Sabha election campaign, whether in the communal and sectarian polarisation of Indians or the politicization of the armed forces. Now another threshold has been crossed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi with his most recent remarks on India's nuclear weapons delivered in a threatening tone."

In summary, Pakistan's mature-cum-effective political and military response to Prime Minister Modi's war hysteria and Indian armed forces aggression in post-Pulwama crisis expose the futility of India's sham 'Surgical Strike Stratagem.' Besides, it confirms that unlike India, Pakistan is not a trigger-happy nuclear armed-state.

## Dynastic politics must be over By Dr Nasreen Akhtar

FOR several decades, Pakistan has been experiencing dynastic rule by the Bhutto and Sharif families. Surprisingly election 2018 ended the dynastic politics and both families failed to regain power. Ironically these two families and historical strong political rivals have developed consensus to regain political power by hook or by crook. Maryam Nawaz Sharif, Vice-President of his father's Party — PML-N and Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Chairperson of his mother's Party – PPP, are leading parties. Both had a meeting at Iftar party to derail the government. What is new to entrench this close political tie? The answer is nothing new. It's all about power and politics of personal interest and old tactics that how to derail Imran Khan's government. The two parties PPP and PML-N would march to protect their political legacy — favouritism, nepotism and corruption. They claim they would protest for the poor people of Pakistan because people are suffering due to high prices. But who is responsible? Would they tell the people that how they have been enjoying at people's taxes and still enjoying.

The end of dynastic politics has introduced the new pattern of politics in the country – stern accountability, rule of law and justice. The new politics may not suit to the old ruling families; indeed, they have their political survival with old political system. True democracy has not taken root in Pakistan. It has been hijacked by the powerful personalities. In seven decades, we have only two democratic transitions, in 2013-2018, when one elected party took over from another political party (PML-N, PTI). We consider this as the beginning of a new democratic change in Pakistan, as it has set a new pattern. Theoretically, there is a grand consensus on democracy to grow in Pakistan but there are many elements “political as well as religious that considers democracy more as a means to power than an ideology”. One of the many reasons for the decline of Bhutto and Sharif families in election 2018 was lack of their ideological commitment to democratic values, norms as well as governance.

The quality of the democratic experience from 2008-2018 lacked true democratic values. This period prompted politics of “patrimonialism” which badly ruined the state's core institutions. Consequently corruption and injustice prevailed. In the last ten years politics was dominated by the personalities and their ideologies. Pakistan's early democratic experience after its independence was not democratic in its nature, however it was chaotic, disorderly and characterized by instability, frequent shifts in political loyalty. If we look at Pakistan's political history the weak and undemocratic party system has been one of the most important reasons for

undemocratic political culture and unstable parliamentary democracy. Political parties are the fundamental actors in promoting democratic institutions, values and norms. Political parties mainly educate their followers and voters but in Pakistan political parties have failed to introduce democratic values – western or Islamic. Neither have they learned from the US, UK nor India and Bangladesh where political parties do not play with their national or security interests.

The political parties with a few exceptions of religious and urban-based parties are mainly dominated by the traditional elites, in Sindh and Punjab, which secure votes more on the basis of their family history. For this reason, the mainstream parties have become stagnant with the same leaders, voices, program and propaganda. For instance, the performance of political parties in the present elected Parliament is disappointing. How do they behave whenever they sit in the people's house - Parliament? Opposition parties strive to defend their party leaders – Nawaz Sharif and Asif Ali Zardari. For decades, Pakistan's politics was dominated by the family politics. Dynastic quality of leadership is a big handicap for the democratization of political parties. Ms Maryam and Bilawal would not introduce new values in politics rather they would defend their fathers or themselves.

Let me explain briefly that how families ruled Pakistan. Pakistan has been known as 'failed democratic state' because democratic values never worked. Political leaders became authoritative when they came in power. They tried to reform the Army for political purposes, which increased rift between the civil and military leaders. From Zulfikar Ali Bhutto to Nawaz Sharif all democratic governments wanted their upper hand over the military institution. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif both promoted politics of 'Patrimonialism'. Political leaders were elected by the people but they ignored the people's sentiments and they never deemed (themselves) 'accountable' as the country's ruler or they enjoyed Constitutional Immunity.

Election 2018 has introduced the new political culture which never existed in Pakistan. This is the first time in Pakistan's politics that the people of Pakistan voted a party which never been in power and promised to eliminate corruption and 'patrimonialism' from Pakistani politics. Prime Minister Imran Khan has introduced a new political ideology that requires corruption-free Pakistan, stern accountability and justice. Khan's ideology has exasperated his political rivals and they are making a grand political alliance. The politics of alliances is not new phenomenon in Pakistan. These alliances protect each other and play different cards – ethnic, linguistic and religious. These cards may hurt democratic process and the national security. The world has been changed and social media has taken over traditional

media. How strange that the political nexus is united on one point agenda that is to bring down an elected government which is not corrupt. The political parties and political leaders are responsible to educate the people to be civilized not to be anarchic. After decades a democratic government is struggling in projecting Pakistan in the world. Both Bhutto and Sharif parties have their roots in Pakistani politics. This is time to perform and unite for Pakistan not for personal desires and dreams. Derailing democracy may not serve their political purposes; however, it would make another political history then who will benefit? The time will decide.

Source :<https://pakobserver.net/dynastic-politics-must-be-over/?fbclid=IwAR3ffxM5fMfgTs6sgdtqi18CH9pOo0mU5xmse6cnuDcjOyXXpVMWGTNgvoo>

## A Pakistani Strategic Opportunity in Iran Crisis By

### Ahmed Quraishi Ahmed Quraishi

It would be wise to have a plan to protect core Pakistani interests in the Gulf, keep Iran policy flexible, and adjust it according to developments

Pakistan's interest lies in avoiding a war in the Gulf, avoiding hostility with Iran, ensuring Tehran does not develop a nuclear weapon, and ensuring stability and security of Pakistan's Gulf allies. We want to remain in the good books of our Western allies, especially the United States, and jointly work for international security.

But international pressure on Iran is also a good time to try to effect change in Tehran's policies on Pakistan and possibly in the wider region. For Islamabad, of special interest is Tehran's open alliance with India's plans to contain and encircle Pakistan and fail the CPEC/Gwadar project.

So, the American pressure campaign on Iran helps Pakistan in some ways to pursue its interests.

Pakistan is directly affected by the situation in the Gulf. Any war or limited hostilities can impact Pakistani energy and economic interests, and ties with major allies. In cases of past wars in the region, proxy groups inside Pakistan linked to Iran and other countries were used for power projection through protests and attacks on diplomatic missions. There is also a concern that the United States and Iran might enter a limited conflict and then reconcile, leaving regional states pay the political and economic price of conflict without addressing the core problem, which means recurring future Iran-linked crises.

So it is wise on the part of Islamabad to call for "restraint" between Tehran and Washington and encourage a peaceful resolution via concessions by both sides. Iran is a neighbor that has a history of unpredictable rash actions and Pakistani officials are right in wanting to avoid being in the line of fire.

But while avoiding war, it would be wise to have a plan to protect core Pakistani interests in the Gulf, keep Iran policy flexible and adjust it according to developments, and – most importantly – identify and exploit strategic opportunity in conflict.

Pakistan can avoid hostility with an unpredictable and fiery Iran. At the same time, Pakistan should politically align itself with, and express political support for, allies

in the Gulf, especially United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and other GCC states. Islamabad should assist in international efforts to secure uninterrupted navigation through Strait of Hormuz. Pakistani economic and energy security is inseparable from Gulf stability, a region that hosts the largest Pakistani diaspora that pumps the single largest annual hard-currency infusion into Pakistani economy. Islamabad can politically support legitimate measures by Gulf allies to defend their security while maintaining good relations with Iran and coddling it to give concessions for peace.

But beyond bilateral diplomacy, this is a good time for Pakistani policymakers to develop long-term strategies on Iran, Gulf, the region, and relations with the United States. Everybody is doing it, including Iran's closest allies Russia, China and India. These three countries have not let their political sympathies for Iran outweigh their global economic interests. Russia is reportedly using Iran sanctions to extract concessions from Tehran in Syria, on militias and Israel. China has implemented American sanctions on Iran and might be interested in more Iranian cooperation on Gwadar and limiting joint sabotage operations with India against CPEC. Pakistan has done something similar by informing Tehran why it can't proceed with the gas-pipeline project. The onus to provide a conducive international political environment for this project rests with Iran, as Pakistan cannot be expected to pay the price for regional conflicts started by or involving Iran that create obstacles for economic diplomacy. Pakistan can and might go a step further and lobby Washington on canceling sanctions waiver to India on Chabahar. Pakistani officials can argue that the joint India-Iran port project is good to counter CPEC [which is the Indian argument] but that a bigger impact of Chabahar is to help end American and Pakistani influence in Afghanistan and strengthen proxies in Kabul who are opposed to Trump's Afghan peace plan.

Tensions in the Gulf appear to have some links to the situation in Balochistan and Gwadar. The Fujairah incident on May 12 was preceded by a daring attack on Gwadar on May 11, and a drone attack on Saudi oil installations on May 14. A Norwegian oil insurance company's report points the finger at IRGC for Fujairah sabotage. A month before the Gwadar attack, militants from Iran executed 14 Pakistani soldiers traveling in a bus. Interestingly, in February, then IRGC chief Maj. Gen. Mohammad Ali Jafari threatened Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Could this be linked to the successive attacks on Gwadar, Fujairah and the Saudi pipeline?

There is a need to discuss Iran's role in the region and assess if this role can change, helping avoid further crises and facilitating improved Pak-Iran cooperation. Pakistan can try help Iran temper its behavior, like it did in 2006 when Iran's then First Vice President Parviz Davoodi visited Islamabad and heard President Musharraf's blunt advice to immediately cease uranium enrichment and enter a dialogue with the US. [Musharraf reportedly told Davoodi: "Tehran's current policy was making life difficult for its neighbor, Pakistan," according a US embassy cable leaked by Wikileaks.]

And Iran can consider changing its behavior. During the same meeting in 2006, Davoodi is believed to have let Pakistan quietly mediate talks with Washington. Islamabad can certainly assess if it can talk sense into the leaders in Tehran, encourage them to return to the days of president Khatami in the 1990s, who reached out to Arab countries and the West and normalized relations. This, however, will require Tehran to end the policy of exporting the revolution. Can Pakistan convince Iran to do this? Fingers crossed.

Source : [https://en.dailypakistan.com.pk/featured/a-pakistani-strategic-opportunity-in-iran-crisis/?fbclid=IwAR1bQrgHF\\_HyKn0WAFP4rpdnqv\\_D095Ei4GleghxPt-wl0l6A5wq7LTaaAM](https://en.dailypakistan.com.pk/featured/a-pakistani-strategic-opportunity-in-iran-crisis/?fbclid=IwAR1bQrgHF_HyKn0WAFP4rpdnqv_D095Ei4GleghxPt-wl0l6A5wq7LTaaAM)



## HEC — stormy times up ahead By Pervez Hoodbhoy

A CONFLICT at the Higher Education Commission in Islamabad is becoming increasingly rancorous. How it is ultimately resolved will profoundly impact the future shape and form of Pakistan's universities. On the one side is Dr Tariq Banuri, HEC chairman for some months now. He took charge just as the economy tanked and education budgets dwindled. His task is unenviable.

On the other side is former (2002-2008) HEC chairman Dr Atta-ur-Rahman who, after being in the boondocks during the PML-N and PPP days, has managed to find favour again. Included in Prime Minister Imran Khan's entourage to China last month, he is making his presence felt. Last month, in a letter addressed to the prime minister, Dr Rahman complains that his favorite HEC programmes are being axed. He sees this as a thinly veiled attempt to roll back what he considers his revolutionary achievements. The present HEC chairman indignantly denies the charges.

Normally one shouldn't worry about personal tiffs — such things happen all the time everywhere. But because the outcome matters, one should actually pay close attention. Two radically different views on Pakistan's higher education are in collision. Both have constituencies and it is unclear which will win.

The Banuri-Rahman tiff provides an opportunity to debate the future shape of our universities.

Banuri's views are strongly influenced by his US education wherein a strong Bachelor's level education is foundational. In a recent TV interview he outlined his flagship initiative — that of concentrating the bulk of HEC's resources into widening and strengthening undergraduate teaching across Pakistan. Every eligible student, he says, should be able to obtain a four-year BS degree irrespective of income or region. Crucially, this should be sufficiently useful in itself and thus be regarded as a terminal degree rather than being just the first rung up the PhD ladder.

If Banuri prevails, funding would shift away from universities located in Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad and head towards Pakistan's less-developed areas. Creating teacher training academies and physical infrastructure development would be prioritised over funding research. He will find many university teachers opposing this.

Rahman's approach is diametrically different. His metric of success is purely numerical — the number of published research papers, patents obtained, and PhDs produced locally. Spending priorities include the purchase and maintenance of scientific equipment, funding overseas visits, paying for meetings, and supporting project grants.

Appointed by Gen Musharraf as HEC chairman (2002-2008), fate handed Rahman a huge gift. The 911 attack on the Twin Towers was a bonanza for the HEC. After Pakistan joined America's war on terror, Western governments rushed to pump in grants and loans for education. This, they thought, was a small price for staving off radicalisation. The HEC budget thereafter zoomed by 12 times (1,200 per cent!) over just three years — a record that no country has ever beaten. Any game could now be played and every wish fulfilled.

Things worked brilliantly in numerical terms. Provided with huge financial incentives, university professors began producing PhDs at an astonishing rate and publishing a mind-boggling number of 'research' papers. Several easily clocked up 20-40 papers a year or more. Every PhD student publishes prodigiously these days — towards the end of studentship some are credited with more papers than a full professor in the 1970s would have published over his lifetime.

As graphs hurtled upwards, the foreign press supported Rahman's claim of having spawned an education revolution in an unlikely country. The World Bank wrote glowing reports and various university ranking organisations like Thomson-Reuters rushed to provide supportive numerical data. A few Pakistani universities were pushed into the top 500 global ranking. National pride swelled and there was backslapping all around.

But slowly — very slowly — uncomfortable facts dribbled out. Were more papers written because there was more research or, instead, because more time was spent upon cut-and-paste from the internet? Were these fecund researchers researching matters that were important either academically or for some applied purpose? Why weren't international academics and profit-seeking businesses making use of papers and patents from Pakistan?

Dr Rahman's home institution must especially be asked these questions. Supported by taxpayers with billions of rupees since the mid 1970s, the HEJ Institute in Karachi possesses the very latest machinery and equipment. Its website speaks of an impressive publication and patent record, as well as large numbers of PhDs awarded annually.

But, since HEJ is an applied science institution specialising in the chemistry of natural products, one expects much more. Papers and patents produced by the institute rightfully should have led to new drugs, manufacturing processes, and commercial applications. Logically the pharmaceutical industry should be its key beneficiary — as well as benefactor. India has many less well-funded chemistry institutes that contribute directly to the Indian economy.

Unable to find pointers on the HEJ official website about the institute's industrial or commercial linkages, earlier this week I called up leaders of Pakistan's pharmaceutical companies. Had they benefited from HEJ's researches? Could they give me a tangible example? I drew a blank.

Before Dr Rahman writes yet another letter to the prime-minister demanding that scientific research be prioritised over college-level teaching, he might want to ask his institute's staff to redo the website. It must detail specific applications of HEJ research over the last 30-40 years and tell what part of its operating expenses were earned through service to industry. If this cannot be done then his repeating internet memes such as 'knowledge economy' and 'technology incubators' will ring hollow.

No one doubts the centrality of research in the Western university system. The faculties at MIT, Harvard, Stanford, etc. have jobs because of their outstanding research. Numbers of publications don't matter, the results do. In these top places teaching is considered secondary to research — which students sometimes don't like but tolerate. However the system rests upon the bedrock of a solid undergraduate teaching programme — one which Pakistan entirely lacks.

To conclude: the Banuri-Rahman dispute must be seized as an opportunity for a wider discussion on what ails Pakistan's university system and how to fix it. For this our professors need to break their self-imposed silence, set aside petty calculations of personal loss and gain, and forthrightly support what is good for the country.

Source : [https://www.dawn.com/news/1484472/hec-stormy-times-up-ahead?fbclid=IwAR3qhDNZ23qwNrJYka9GvWqiK00IE3VVMRzM\\_ET2e0-lfk8XCtszfWi\\_t1g](https://www.dawn.com/news/1484472/hec-stormy-times-up-ahead?fbclid=IwAR3qhDNZ23qwNrJYka9GvWqiK00IE3VVMRzM_ET2e0-lfk8XCtszfWi_t1g)

## Pak-India relations | Editorial

Prime Minister Imran Khan was right to congratulate Indian Prime Minister-elect Narendra Modi as being a reciprocal act this was a diplomatic obligation. Unlike 2014, Mr Modi declined to invite his Pakistani counterpart to his inauguration. This too was understandable as invitations were extended this time by India to leaders of BIMSTEC, of which Pakistan is not a member, and not to the heads of member states of SAARC, which is currently dysfunctional due to Indian manoeuvring.

Pakistan-India relations remain mired in controversies. With Pakistan-bashing given a priority during the BJP's election campaign, none expected the PM-elect to be seen hugging his Pakistani counterpart at his inauguration. While improvement of ties between India and Pakistan is required to create an environment of peace in the region, there are hard realities that cannot be wished away. The PTI government has to proceed towards improvement of relations in a realistic manner without unnecessary euphoria or pessimism.

Pakistan has, by and large, got itself disburdened of the terrorist networks that were considered India-specific. But no positive change is manifest so far in India's Kashmir policy. Despite Mr Modi's promise to pursue an inclusive policy, there is still no respite to attacks on the Muslims. There is no let-up to repression in Kashmir either. One will have to give Mr Modi time to take steps to prove that he really meant it when he called on all NDA allies to work in the spirit of inclusiveness with solidarity with everyone, and development for all, with the trust of all.

India is under pressure from Washington to completely align itself with the US regional strategy of balancing China in return for support in turning India into a regional overlord. In case India takes the bait, this would have negative consequences for Indo-Pakistan relations. With the economy becoming a pressing issue for Mr Modi in the days to come, Chinese President Xi Jinping, who is to visit India later this year, could show the Indian leader an alternate way out, that is, aligning India with the programme of the SCO aimed at growth through increased regional trade and economic cooperation. In case this happens, this would provide a strong basis for improvement of relations between India and Pakistan.

Source: <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2019/05/28/pak-india-relations-9/>

# ECONOMY

## CPEC a debt reliever, not a 'debt trap' for Pakistan By News desk

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, as part of the Belt and Road Initiative, has been making remarkable progress, yet some countries and observers are trying to belittle its enormous potential benefits by labelling it a “debt trap”. Since the CPEC is entering the next phase of its development, those opposed to it are trying to impede its progress using a two-pronged strategy – first, deceiving the public by misquoting the CPEC’s financial figures and achievements in the media and second, raising the spectre of past militancy in Pakistan to mislead investors into believing the country is still a volatile investment destination.

Despite Pakistani government departments issuing innumerable clarifications, along with the real facts and figures about the CPEC, the international CPEC cynics are bent upon calling it a “debt trap”. Let us solve this puzzle by analyzing the CPEC’s financial figures shared by the Chinese Embassy in Islamabad. For instance, only \$5.9 billion of the \$18.9 billion funding provided by the Chinese companies as of now for infrastructure projects constitute loans with a two per cent interest payable from 2021. The rest of the sum is meant for energy projects funded by Chinese companies and other partners. Also, \$143 million has been provided as interest-free loan for the construction of Gwadar East Bay Expressway in Pakistan’s Balochistan province and \$29 million as a grant to fund welfare projects. This means loans are being used to fund less than 20 percent of all CPEC projects – and more than 80 percent of the projects are funded via different financial modalities according to international rules.

Since the CPEC loan of \$5.9 billion is hardly six per cent of Pakistan’s total external debt and liabilities of \$99.1 billion, how can it be called a “debt trap”? As part of a “hybrid war”, it is obvious that some global observers along with a few Pakistanis are calling the CPEC a “debt trap” to fulfil their ulterior motives. The loans from the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, Asian Development Bank and other international lending institutions form a major part of Pakistan’s total external debt and liabilities. Yet no one calls them a “debt trap”?

Thanks to the CPEC, China has been the largest investor in Pakistan for the last five years. The CPEC has not only attracted more Chinese investment in Pakistan

but also transformed the country from an investment-dry to an investment-friendly destination. For instance, in February, Saudi Arabia signed memorandums of understanding worth \$10 billion to invest in Gwadar oil refinery apart from an additional \$10 billion worth of other deals. Other countries, too, are looking forward to investing in Pakistan, especially in the CPEC projects, to reap rich benefits.

The CPEC energy projects have already helped Pakistan overcome its energy shortfall – and by 2021 Pakistan will no longer be an energy-deficient country which will allow Pakistani entrepreneurs to produce more exportable goods and increase their export earnings. The CPEC has already created about 70,000 direct jobs since 2015, and about 60,000 of those jobs have gone to the local people. And by 2030, up to 800,000 people are likely to be employed in various CPEC projects. The other major benefit of the CPEC, especially the Gwadar port, is likely to be a huge influx of foreign investments. Pakistan's transportation network is in a bad shape, causing an annual loss of about 3.5 percent of GDP – due mainly to excessive consumption of gas and lubricants and frequent change of spare parts and breakdown of vehicles. According to the IMF, Pakistan's GDP was about \$304.95 billion in 2017, which means it loses about \$10.67 billion because of its poor transportation network.

The CPEC will help reduce this loss because it is expected to help improve Pakistan's transportation network. And by building the Gwadar port and road network, the CPEC will help Pakistan earn \$6 billion to \$8 billion a year from road and bridge tolls. Pakistan is on way to establishing three Special Economic Zones (SEZs) by the end of June. Also, it has plans to establish an information technology SEZ in Islamabad. Such projects will promote upstream and downstream industries as well as create more employment opportunities for the local people. Along with the CPEC, Pakistan's tourism industry, too, is developing at a rapid pace with the country attracting a record number of tourists. Agriculture is another sector that Chinese investors have targeted, and the innovative and modern technology they will introduce to farming will greatly benefit Pakistani farmers, by increasing their yields manifold. Compared with the increased earnings and benefits of Pakistanis, a \$5.9 billion debt payable over a long period of time would be of little consequence to Pakistan's economy.

Source : <https://pakobserver.net/cpec-a-debt-reliever-not-a-debt-trap-for-pakistan/?fbclid=IwAR2p5grCk-wWSbZaryR8WRLehzD2Y-BOOA64Y64DfQVQbRzas-3sPacFYEI>

## Pakistan's Painful Economics, What more the IMF expects By Dr. Waqar Masood Khan

All signs indicate an evolving understanding between Pakistan and the IMF on a new program, and the recent change of guards at the Ministry of Finance should not affect at this point the pace of implementation. The likely timing for an agreement at the staff level would be just before the announcement of the next budget in late May or early June, and if all conditions are met, the first tranche could be released after the passage of the Finance Act toward end-June.

Expected shape of the new program The program will take the current year as its benchmark and project a three-year path of economic stabilization and growth for Pakistan. They will set a performance criteria comprising of at least four critical economic variables. First, the fiscal deficit, this is a policy variable that the Government can determine through managing its revenues and expenditures.

Lawfare can be of various types ranging from financial/economic to cyber/media or a combination of two or more of these. Increasingly, lawfare has been used to neutralize the adversary's capacity to pursue its geostrategic objectives and to choke its ambitions otherwise.

It may also be accompanied by an indicative target on tax collections, given the severe deterioration of tax performance that has occurred during the year. Second, financing the deficit would be an area of concern for the Fund to reduce inflationary pressures. This would involve the government severely curtailing its borrowings from the SBP. Third, domestic credit expansion would be another variable that affects aggregate demand and hence limiting its flow would be a performance indicator.

Finally, building foreign exchange reserves is a measure of how well the program is helping stem the continuing haemorrhaging of reserves. The program would require authorities to actively engage in the foreign exchange market with a view to building reserves – through purchases from the inter-bank market – unlike the preferred mode of supporting the market by selling precious reserves.

The other component of the program would comprise implementing structural policies in energy pricing, privatization, public sector enterprises (PSEs) reforms, banking and finance, and central bank autonomy, especially in exchange rate determination. These policies would underpin the program to contain aggregate demand. Growth, inflation, interest rates, and the exchange rate would be the key variables whose trajectory would determine how successful is the program.

#### Where does Pakistan currently Stand

To understand the demands of the program, we have to make certain assumptions on the baseline economy at the end of this current fiscal year. Currently, after nine months into the fiscal year (2018-19), the key variables show; that the balance of payments has improved significantly by nearly 30% during Jul-Mar, yet remains elevated compared to the economy's capacity to support it.

Around the February 2019 plenary, voices could be heard in Pakistani policy circles about Indian interference in the FATF process to diplomatically isolate Pakistan. A co-chair of the APG is a serving bureaucrat of India.

Consequently, reserves and exchange rate continue to face pressure. Further compression in import demand would be a vital target of the program, which would, in turn, pose its own challenges for revenue collection. The most formidable challenge for the government is the fiscal deficit, due to low tax collections and rising expenditures. The nine-month revenue collection has already seen a shortfall of Rs.318 billion; this is unprecedented in the recent past. At this rate, it may cross Rs.400 billion (shortfall of more than 1% of GDP).

Furthermore, depressed economic conditions have seen non-tax revenues at only 25% of its annual target in the first half of the year, further weakening the overall revenue collected. On the expenditure side, things are equally precarious primarily because of debt servicing and defense. It was in this backdrop that Asad Umar former finance minister announced that the deficit would reach Rs.2900 billion at the end of the fiscal year, a staggering 7.6pc.

#### Probable IMF Conditions

The first condition of the Fund program would be to cut the budget deficit to no more than 5pc of GDP in the first year of the program. This is a tall order and requires Pakistan to make a fiscal adjustment of 2.6pc, which, at next year's



projected GDP of Rs. 42.5 trillion, would translate to Rs.1105 billion. At least half of this amount would have to come from revenue effort, particularly from tax measures.

Significant tax has been lost this year on account of (i) tax breaks given by Abbasi Government, (ii) Supreme Court order against telecom taxes (which, mercifully, the Court withdrew last week) and (iii) less than full recovery of taxes from petroleum prices. Eliminating these leakages would be low hanging fruits to plug the hole in the tax system. The work on the expenditures' side would be no less challenging.

Pakistan and the IMF on a new program, and the recent change of guards at the Ministry of Finance should not affect at this point the pace of implementation.

An aggressive approach to review all expenditures for their continued utility would be needed to achieve a meaningful reduction in expenditures. Subsidies of all types will have to be significantly reduced from energy products, railways, utility stores, fertilizers, and those given to exporters. In this regard, it is hoped that the PM's Committee on Austerity would finalize its recommendations to guide this process.

On the other hand, any further increase in interest rates would have adverse implications for expenditures. The government borrowings from SBP as on 20 April were Rs.6.6 trillion, which is way above the prudential limit and is, in fact, indicative of near break-down of money and bond markets in the country. There has been a sustained deleveraging from commercial banks in their holdings of government paper. Except for some recent moves to auction government bonds, government debt has become confined to the shortest maturities in treasury bills.

The Fund program would require a significant reduction in SBP financing, and that too steeply. This would have implications for interest cost to the budget. To minimize this, as soon as the Fund program is in place, the government should look for issuing bonds internationally as this would reduce SBP debt without disrupting domestic debt market. The most serious issue requiring resolution with the Fund would be the adjustment in administrative prices of gas and electricity.

The Fund will expect that the government should get out of the business of interfering in setting prices after the regulator has done so through a statutory process. This would be painful, undoubtedly, but will help set the fiscal house in order. Settlement of circular debt would be a must under the program. Since the time the Fund saw it last in September 2016, circular debt has more than doubled.

The first condition of the Fund program would be to cut the budget deficit to no more than 5pc of GDP in the first year of the program.

At the time, the Fund was given a settlement plan that depended on two elements: (i) no further accumulation through appropriate tariff adjustments, efficiency gain and loss reduction; and, (ii) privatization of Discos and Gencos to raise money for the eventual retirement of debts. Apart from falling significantly short in tariff adjustments, this government has shown a general aversion toward privatization. More significantly, the government has resorted to issuing domestic sukuks based on securitization of the assets of the Discos and Gencos, which may pose a new challenge for future privatization efforts so long as these sukuks are outstanding.

This has been the case going by the history of debts parked in the power holding company, which are routinely rescheduled. Under the circumstances, the old approach would neither inspire confidence nor help prevent the continuing hemorrhaging of the sector and potential costs to the budget. The subject of privatization will also feature as a key point of negotiations in the context of reforms in PSEs.

The Fund will insist on bringing the costs of running PSEs into the budget so that an accurate picture of governments footprint in the economy is accounted for. The privatization program is the most desirable solution against continuing losses from PSEs' operations. The new finance minister Hafiz Shaikh would likely have a different perspective on this subject. He has been a former privatization minister (2003-06) and acutely aware of the necessity to divest PSEs as their cost to the budget as well as to the economy, from inefficiencies and politicization of economic issues, are very high.

Why Pakistan should go for Maximum Assistance

Given the significance of the program, Pakistan should seek the maximum possible assistance, which could be as high as 500 percent of Pakistan's Quota

(about \$15 billion). Former finance minister Asad Umar had indicated the government wanted between \$6-\$8 billion; however, this would not have the necessary push needed at this critical juncture. On top of this, support from ADB and World Bank in the form of policy loans, which could be at least \$10 billion over a three period, would further help build reserves.

The Fund will expect that the government should get out of the business of interfering in setting prices after the regulator has done so through a statutory process.

Finally, the country would be able to access the international capital market, through Euro Bonds and Sukuk, when a successfully running Fund program is in place. Our need is to continue to refinance the existing bonds as they are maturing and also, if needed, to seek new loans. There is no doubt that the Fund program would be painful, both for the government and the public. The pain is coming from a reduction in growth, due to reduced demand, while inflation would accelerate on the back of reduced supplies.

Moreover, there may be further needed in adjustments in the exchange rate and interest rates. However, as soon as the Fund program is signed, there would be order in the markets, particularly in the forex market, bleeding of reserves would stop, investors' confidence would be restored, and the process of investment would resume, especially foreign investment. Ease of doing business should be a significant focus of government policy. In the second year, growth may begin to pick up as well. However, the continuing surge in international oil prices could lengthen the period of stabilization.

Source:[https://www.globalvillagespace.com/pakistans-painful-economics-what-more-the-imf-expects/?fbclid=IwAR1LQgDW5x-4ekN\\_Qeia41mp\\_nCZYZA3xjfWZcue02BLRHsPm4v8nUScM74](https://www.globalvillagespace.com/pakistans-painful-economics-what-more-the-imf-expects/?fbclid=IwAR1LQgDW5x-4ekN_Qeia41mp_nCZYZA3xjfWZcue02BLRHsPm4v8nUScM74)

## Handling Pakistan's economic challenges By Col (R) Muhammad Hanif

The PTI government is confronted with many challenges, especially the handling of the inherited debt ridden economy. In this context, the government has been working to make an economic revival plan mainly focused on stabilizing the value of rupee, to increase exports and take other measures to increase the foreign exchange reserves, to muster sufficient funds to repay the foreign loans and resolve the balance of payments issue, and to collect targeted tax revenues to prepare the upcoming annual budget. In this regard, the recent shuffle in the cabinet made by the Prime Minister has initiated the domestic debate and the opposition parties have started increasing pressure on the government.

To ensure political stability and handle major economic challenges by the government, following are important. It is necessary for the country to avoid political instability at this stage for which all political stakeholders need to cooperate to revive the economy on priority basis by making the relevant laws in the parliament. In this regard, the government may have to carry out a balancing act of taking all the stakeholders on board by convincing them that the ongoing accountability process was not a political victimization. For this purpose, the accountability process needs to be made more transparent.

The government and the opposition parties should work together on building the investor's confidence by giving out their intent that keeping political stability in the country and reviving the Pakistan's economy was in their common interest. In this regard, avoiding confrontational statements in the political and economic fields is necessary. For creating foreign investor's confidence about the prospects of the revival of Pakistan's economy, the positive impact of the Belt and Road initiative, and the CPEC, on Pakistan's economy should be projected.

There is also a need that Pakistan's diplomatic efforts to strengthen its relations with important countries in the Middle East and the world should be highlighted. For building confidence of the domestic audience, Pakistan's role in performing the balancing act between Iran and KSA also needs to be projected by the government functionaries and the media houses. In this context, it is important that the people of Pakistan understand that in the evolving international political environment, all states tend to develop de-hyphenated relations with other states.

Domestically Pakistan has cracked down on terrorist organizations and as a recognition of its sacrifices in fighting the war on terror, it deserves to be given a relief by the IFIs and FATF

For example, Iran has good relations with India, and Pakistan has no objections to that as far as Pakistan-Iran relations grow to benefit both countries. Similarly, KSA is growing relations with Pakistan as well as with India and Pakistan has never objected to that. While Pakistan-US relations are converging for a lasting peace in Afghanistan, Pakistan has strengthened its relations with China (through CPEC) and the developed intimate relations with Russia. Likewise, whereas India remains an active member of BRICS, and SCO, it is also a member of the US sponsored Indo-Pacific grouping (a forum built against China and Russia).

The Pakistan government should also convince the concerned countries that it has suffered tremendously in the war against terror and helped international community in stemming the tide of terror in the region. Domestically Pakistan has cracked down on terrorist organizations and as a recognition of its sacrifices in fighting the war on terror, it deserves to be given a relief by the IFIs and FATF.

It needs to be projected that since the CPEC will allow regional connectivity, and Pakistan will act as a connector of civilization, all international players are welcome to join the CPEC, and Pakistan in its quest for collective economic development and poverty alleviation in the region. In this regard, it is to be highlighted that the Saudi investment in the energy sector and Exxon offshore drilling in Kekra 1 block is a manifestation of Pakistan's offer to the international community to reap the dividends of opportunities generated by strategic connectivity initiative of the CPEC.

Apart from the above suggested measures, it is also highly important for the government to increase its foreign exchange reserves and domestic income by taking immediate decisions and steps to boost Pakistan's economic growth, increase its exports, enhance its foreign remittances from the Pakistani diaspora, and attracting domestic and foreign investment, at the same time controlling the prices of the daily use commodities to keep those affordable to the poor masses and ensuring that no more devaluation of the Pakistani rupee takes place.

In this context, some of the suggested steps to be taken by the government functionaries and other stakeholders are: avoid giving such statements about the economy that disturb investor's confidence and market sentiment; let the business work by facilitating Pakistan's market economy and ensuring provision of energy

to the industry and agriculture; take immediate steps to send more manpower abroad, immediately broaden Pakistan's tax base and ensure tax collection, and let the NAB and the courts handle the accountability process and the government functionaries should avoid giving any statements, to avoid political polarization.

source : [https://dailytimes.com.pk/394814/handling-pakistans-economic-challenges/?fbclid=IwAR2DqwZ5nL369uRQqN9n1FQ-xchUMS0ntATcWgr5T5MXJg1PwCIIhBx\\_VVc](https://dailytimes.com.pk/394814/handling-pakistans-economic-challenges/?fbclid=IwAR2DqwZ5nL369uRQqN9n1FQ-xchUMS0ntATcWgr5T5MXJg1PwCIIhBx_VVc)

## Don't blame the IMF By S. Akbar Zaidi

THERE is little disagreement that Pakistan's economy is in a disastrous state. Even the prime minister and Pakistan's last finance minister have acknowledged this truth, publicly. In fact, the last elected politician to hold the job as finance minister was fired precisely because the economy was in such a mess.

Not only is every key economic indicator in poor shape, all indications suggest that things are going to get much, much worse. Pakistan's economy is going to slow down to levels not seen for more than a decade, with inflation and unemployment both reaching proportions not seen for a decade. And this is just the beginning.

With the government having just signed onto yet another IMF programme, it is important to emphasise the point, that it is not the IMF which is to blame for Pakistan's economic condition — not for the past nor for where we are now, and also not for what is about to come. Rest assured, Pakistan's economy is going to be severely constrained over the next few years, with higher inflation, more unemployment and lower growth, and with a far greater burden on working people than what has been the case for many years. Yet, the IMF is not to be held responsible for the state of Pakistan's economy.

Rest assured, Pakistan's economy is going to be severely constrained over the next few years.

The entire responsibility for the wreck that is the Pakistani economy lies squarely on the shoulders of Pakistan's ruling and propertied elite, both civilian and in uniform, since both have been and continue to hold power in and out of office. There should be no ambiguity about apportioning blame and responsibility here, and one needs to stop blaming the IMF for the mayhem created by this ruling elite.

It is not the IMF which has brought Pakistan's economy to its knees, to rock bottom, not the IMF which has forced Pakistan to beg for money from supposedly friendly countries, and certainly not the IMF which has made the government of Pakistan finally run to the IMF for loans. The ruling elite, those who hold office and those who hold the strings of those who hold office, are all responsible for managing the economy the way they have over the last few years and over the last decades. This truth can be clearly explained by one simple economic policy measure and non-measure.

From the Musharraf military dictatorship, to the elected governments of Benazir Bhutto, Nawaz Sharif and Asif Zardari, and now to the Imran Khan government, all have gone to the IMF seeking a 'bailout' and assistance to stop the country's deteriorating economic condition.

Yet all these governments, along with their allies and vested interests, have been the ones to have caused a situation where they have been forced to go to the IMF in the first place. They only need the IMF because they fail and refuse to undertake economic reforms since these would hurt their own interests. One key indicator regarding the state of the economy is that of fiscal deficit, that of having greater, unaffordable expenditure and lower revenue or having insufficient money to spend.

If a government is not going to tax its rich, it will always be short of money to spend, no matter how well intentioned and well meaning its social welfare programmes may be. If it has high and increasing defence costs and has to pay back interest on loans taken to pay for defence and other expenditures, it will always have a shortfall of money because it refuses to tax the rich.

This is a circulatory argument: With no taxes on the rich and the elite, with the particularity of Pakistan's political economy based on essential defence expenditures, and with a shortfall of revenue, there will only be more borrowing, more debt, and so on. The beginning and end of the problem and its solution is simply this: tax the Pakistani elite and the rich. What has the IMF got to do with this gross negligence and failure of Pakistan's ruling elite? Because the government refuses to raise resources, it has to borrow from the IMF. The IMF is not responsible for the budget deficit ending up near 7.5 per cent of GDP this year.

It must be remembered that it is not the IMF which has come begging to the government of Imran Khan to borrow a pittance ie \$6 billion; it is, in fact, the numerous governments of Pakistan which have gone begging for money.

This is simply because we do not raise enough resources — taxes — to be able to spend effectively, whether it is defence or development. If sufficient revenue were raised, there would be no need to beg for money, but in a country where every polio campaign, social welfare measure and women's support programme are funded by one donor or the other, only because the ruling elite refuses to tax itself, going to the IMF becomes inevitable. But don't blame the IMF for this.

Moreover, as a lender, the IMF is fully entitled to raise supposedly harsh conditionalities, only because it wants to ensure that its loans are returned, with interest. Banks, and even individuals, don't lend unless they expect and get



assurances that their money will be returned, and need to know about a business plan. As does the IMF, and it is fully entitled to do so. If you don't like their conditionality, don't borrow from them. Don't blame the IMF for its stringent demands.

Since the government has signed an agreement with the IMF, and as the economy deteriorates noticeably over the next two to three years, we can expect those in office and the rest of the elite to blame the IMF for Pakistan's economic disaster. Yet it is not the IMF that is to be held responsible, but our own elite, elected, unelected, and those who continue to lead Pakistan down the IMF path, yet again. Accountability must begin and end with our elite, not with the IMF.

Source : [https://www.dawn.com/news/1483036/dont-blame-the-imf?fbclid=IwAR2ih0J2FHvVaskZWX\\_bt5s9AtKGyjyaI5PPS7FS5S0kJUKGJFfG72TBnjo](https://www.dawn.com/news/1483036/dont-blame-the-imf?fbclid=IwAR2ih0J2FHvVaskZWX_bt5s9AtKGyjyaI5PPS7FS5S0kJUKGJFfG72TBnjo)

## Re-engineering of economy | Dr Farid A Malik

Most of the debt driven economies of the 20th century never made it. The 'Shylocks' got them. People's Republic of China (PRC) started in 1949, two years after we won our freedom. The Chinese did not borrow; they learnt to live within their means. Today they have one of the largest surpluses in the world with record investments in human and infrastructure development. While there are more billionaires in Beijing than in New York yet the state has record revenues which are re-invested for common good.

In Pakistan till 1958 the focus remained on common good. Like China we too were debt free. The first usurper brought Muhammad Shoaib from the World Bank as his finance minister. He gathered the other 'Sharks' of Pakistani origin. Suddenly from living within means we started to go beyond. Debt was distributed as dole as it was considered free money never to be paid back.

My father's uncle (Khalu) Dr. Anwar Iqbal Qureshi who was perhaps the senior most economist of his times retired from IMF to be appointed Economic Adviser to the Government of Pakistan. The usurper interviewed individuals before appointing them. I remember Dr. Qureshi came to Lahore from Karachi on way to Rawalpindi, Islamabad was not ready by then. He stayed with us. There was an after dinner discussion in which he highlighted the salient features of debt driven economy for fast track development.

Coming from a family of honest entrepreneurs my father pointed out the perils of debt as it clashed with the family principles of interest based finances. With debt came patronage, kickbacks, protection, monopolies and permits for the favoured few. My father held his ground of merit based debt free gradual growth instead of fast track loan driven development.

With easy money came corruption. Greed took over, instead of basic industrialization like steel making and fertilizer complexes focus shifted to luxury items. A few families were able to monopolise the nation's financial resources. State Bank looked the other way when Saigols, Habibs and Adamjees could collect public money through scheduled banks and insurance companies and invest in their own ventures.

Finally the bubble burst. The dictator had to resign in March 1969. In the crisis that followed Quaid's Pakistan was dismembered. Bangladesh emerged on the world

map. They decided on a new economic order. Professor Muhammad Younas came up with the concept of micro financing for the less privileged segments of the society. In the western wing the socialist government of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (ZAB) established the Board of Industrial Management (BIM) under which basic industries were established. Pakistan Steel Mills, National Fertilizer Company, Heavy Industries Taxila, Pakistan Aeronautical Complex Kamra and Revamping of Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission took place. The borrowing was drastically cut down during this period (1971-1977). During the Zia dark ages as dollars poured in for dirty jobs debt remained within control. In the last ten years (2008 to 2018) the floodgates of debt were opened to drown the nation. What Ayub Khan had started in 1958, both Nawaz Sharif and Zardari maximized it. From around \$34 billion in 2008 the external debt now has crossed \$90 billion. Without a major change of direction, the economy cannot be put back on track.

Spoiled by easy money our expenses have become unmanageable. After debt servicing and security nothing is left for other areas. With collapsed institutions revenue generation is an uphill task. Kaptan has a clear vision of debt free Pakistan as it was till 1958. The 'Shylocks' want their pound of flesh.

In the recent past several countries have been able to come out of the debt trap. Soviet Union era debt of \$22 billion has been paid off by Russia after seeking a moratorium. Argentina followed a similar course. Iran neutralized its \$20 billion debt through strict austerity measures and its oil enhanced revenues.

Forensic audit of debt has to be carried out. Kickback driven projects like the Orange Train in Lahore have to be revisited. Subsidies have to be withdrawn together with perks. Under an Economic Emergency austerity has to be introduced across the board. The energy sector is in a big mess. Both exports and revenue has to be increased manifold. Retirement of debt should start right away from this IMF programme. Great hopes are pinned on Shabbar Zaidi to transform the non-performing FBR into a vibrant entity. Both Dr. Hafeez Sheikh and Dr. Reza Baqir are international financial gurus, the nation expects them to take us out of the debt trap laid by the likes of 'Shoaibs' of Ayub era.

Since 1958 a lot of water has flown under the bridge. The after dinner discussion on our dining table in the sixties is still fresh in my mind. My father's arguments for a debt free economy stands vindicated while the IMF driven doctrine of his uncle has trapped us. Short term measures cannot provide long term relief. The proposal of Sarmaya Pakistan Company is sound as it will protect the nation's investments.

The Defence Production Establishment has great potential which must be exploited for technology based development and exports. The approach of stripping public sector assets for lowering their resale value has been disastrous. After sixty years of economic mismanagement and detours, Pakistan yet has the potential to emerge as an Asian Tiger. My father the Tehrik-e-Pakistan Gold Medallist, honest businessman and resilient entrepreneur had a lot of hopes in the new land when he crossed the Wagah border at the age of 27 leaving behind flourishing watch and hosiery business. He summed up his struggle with the following words, “ I could have amassed a lot of wealth together with a few factories had I played by their rules. Instead I followed my own principles of honesty, integrity and interest free financing. At the end of my journey I have no regrets; all my five children are well established in life. I pray for the growth and stability of the motherland for which we struggled with our sweat and blood. Pakistan should build strong defences against external and internal threats”. Now that security threats have been overcome, the focus has to shift on economic emancipation which calls for re-engineering of our economy.

Source: [https://nation.com.pk/22-May-2019/re-engineering-of-economy?fbclid=IwAR0TP4Ola3Vqay97iZ\\_qDUstsO2NNelxB9o6Z\\_YKrFvYxiUVETFRHT4wHSY](https://nation.com.pk/22-May-2019/re-engineering-of-economy?fbclid=IwAR0TP4Ola3Vqay97iZ_qDUstsO2NNelxB9o6Z_YKrFvYxiUVETFRHT4wHSY)

## Economic review of Pakistan under IMF support By Hassnain Javed

Pakistan has a long-standing relationship with IMF, signing 22 plans starting from its first deal on Dec 28, 1958 until the recent one on 13th May 2019. The International Monetary fund or IMF is an international organization, which is Headquartered in Washington D.C. and honed memberships from 189 countries around the globe. The purpose of IMF is to provide monetary stability and cooperation, foster international trade, create employment opportunities, reduce poverty and create sustainable economic growth around the world.

The three main functions that IMF provides for its members includes economic surveillance, lending and capacity building. Economic surveillance entails the monitoring of changing economic and financial policies of its 189 member countries; lending includes providing loans to member countries facing some degree of economic crises and capacity building refers to the help provided in building new economic policies and institutions, and training people of the member countries.

The IMF lending programs can thereby be divided into two sub categories depending on the economic condition and need of the hour of member countries. These includes the lending through GRA (General Resource Account) and Lending through PRGT (Poverty Reduction Growth Trust).

Lending through GRA (General Resource Account) is the kind of program, which is appropriate for not-so-poor economies and wealthy countries, which are temporarily facing economic crisis. On the other hand, lending through PRGT (Poverty Reduction Growth Trust) is a program, which is ideal for economies that are not so poor, and poor but at a relatively low interest rate to reduce poverty. Under the two loan plans, IMF offers 10 programs through its PRGT and GRA. Pakistan has been a recipient of loans under four programs out of these ten categories. It is important to note that not all 21 of these agreements are Stand-by Agreements (SBAs) or what we call the 'bail-outs'. In fact, Pakistan has entered into 12 Stand-by Agreements (SBAs) up until now.

The remaining nine agreements are those that fall under the category of PRGT or IMF programs that aim to counter poverty, introduce structural reforms, divert domestic economic crisis, or hedge smaller economies against the risk of a global

financial crisis. A Stand-by Agreements or SBAs are short- to medium-term loan arrangements with a payback period of 3.5 and 5 years. Therefore, SBAs fall under the General Resource Account, which as described before are not only created for poor economies, unlike programs under the Poverty Reduction Growth Trust.

If we study the past trends of the IMF and Pakistan deals, it is interesting to note that the length of the payback period and principal borrowed amount has been increasing over the time. For instance, only one-year contacts were signed in the era beginning from 1958 until 1977. Furthermore, the seven agreements signed in this period were also bailouts or Stand-by Agreements only. Consequently, if we look at the era beginning from 1980 until 1995, all seven programs were between 1-2 years of payback. Lastly, in the era beginning from 1997 until 2013, the PML-N made six arrangements with the IMF, costing a whopping \$6.4 billion in loans, with a three-year return plan for all except one of these plans.

Currently, the agreement signed on 13May 2019 is our 13th arrangement with the IMF to ask for a bailout, and this event marks the 22nd loan that Pakistan will be taking from the IMF.

In an interview with the media, Pakistan's new Finance Minister, Abdul Hafeez Shaikh, said that: "We have reached an agreement with the IMF staff for \$6bn for the next three years. There will be adjustments involved but we will try to make certain that the extent of pain on low-income people is minimal". The finance minister also insured that Pakistan may receive more funding's by the World Bank and Asian Development Bank, worth US\$ 2-3 billion approximately- such a move will send positive signals to investors. He also said that the conditions imposed by IMF are not only beneficial for Pakistan's economy but also essential for its survival.

It is expected that inflation in Pakistan will continue to touch new heights, considering the tough conditions the new IMF plan will impose on the Pakistani government. These conditions includes reducing the budget deficit by 0.6% of GDP by the end of next fiscal year, this will require the government to reduce its spending and increase revenue by US\$ 6 billion in new taxes, decrease in subsidies by US\$1 billion as well as nationalization of state owned businesses. The stock market is still reeling from the shock, and investor confidence have not been restored yet with the fall of 816 b.pts. Just after the IMF announcement has arrived. Moreover, with IMF's condition to review Pakistan's counter terrorism report and money laundering, it has stepped into the domain of intervening with

our foreign policy for the very first time. The effects of this IMF plan will be felt immediately, after the government announces the budget next month.

In its own statement to the public, IMF said that: “Pakistan is facing a challenging economic environment, with lacklustre growth, elevated inflation, high indebtedness and a weak external position.”

In order to conclude, it is important to understand that economic challenges Pakistan faces is due to its history of poor economic policies, therefore IMF will work with Pakistan in creating better macroeconomic policy and structural reforms which will improve public financing and reduction in government indebtedness. However, for IMF bailout package to work out we need to focus on the domestic policies and regulations so that local investors’ confidence takes up the boost to help in uplifting the difficult economic situation.

Source :<https://dailytimes.com.pk/402178/economic-review-of-pakistan-under-imf-support/?fbclid=IwAR2vmvqu2kDvinjFHrlx2RLYs5Ra3R7uJrYp4j7uJ5g324NulmDIHGmb88Q>

# WORLD

## Iran's withdrawal from NPT By Dr. Zafar Nawaz Jaspal

The nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty's credibility will be immensely undermined with the withdrawal of Iran. The critical examination of Arab nations nuclear policies reveals that a few of them definitely reciprocate Iran's NPT exit by leaving the Treaty. The unraveling of NPT disturbs the regional nuclear order. Ironically, Trump Administration instead of engaging Iran to bolster nuclear non-proliferation in the Middle East is determined to squeeze it economically. Iran's departure from NPT would be hugely damaging and stressing for the global non-proliferation regime.

The tension between the United States and Iran has risen since the former withdrew from Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and imposed sanctions. From May 8, 2018, Washington has been struggling to isolate Iran politically and strangle it economically. Last month, the United States blacklisted Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards (IRGC) and demanded that importers of Iranian oil stop purchases by this month or face sanctions.

In the current global politics, complete isolation of Iran is impossible; however, Trump administration has been using geo-economic strategy against Iran. It is a warning to penalize the business partners of Iran economically. In reality, it is challenging for many European and Asian states to end their bilateral trade with Iran ultimately. Without realizing these nations economic compulsions, Trump administration is systematically increasing direct and indirect pressure on them to suspend their economic engagement with Tehran.

The JCPOA is viewed as one of the landmark agreements in the nuclear diplomatic history. Therefore, the US withdrawal decision did disturb not only Tehran but also unnerved the other members of the JCPOA. The agreement signed by the United States, Iran, the United Kingdom, France, Russia, China, and Germany to prevent Tehran from acquiring weapons-grade fissile material capability. Moreover, the Security Council under Chapter VII of the UN Charter adopted JCPOA unanimously. It is legally binding on all the United Nations member states.



The tangible outcome of the JCPOA is impressive. It keeps Iran within the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) framework and prevents it from accumulating weapon-grade fissile material clandestinely. Moreover, after signing the JCPOA in 2015, Iran dismantled two-thirds of its uranium centrifuges (nearly 20000) and entire plutonium facility and also relinquished about 97% percent nearly eight tons of low enriched uranium stockpile.

President Trump expressed his dissatisfaction on JCPOA because it does not minimize or curtail Tehran's role in the Middle Eastern politics; it does not curb its conventional military potential including ballistic missile development programme; and above all, it does not transform Iran's political system. Trump Administration is convinced that without the regime change, subjugating Tehran is impossible.

Presently, it is relying on its geo-economic prowess instead of coercing Iran militarily despite the earnest desire of Israel and a few of Iran's Arab neighbours. To increase its economic pressure on Iran, the Trump administration decided not to renew the oil import waiver granted to several states that buy Tehran's oil. This virtually restricts Iran's oil and gas sale to the European States and India. Iran is cognizant to the repercussions of the United States imposed oil embargo.

Therefore, it tried to protect the JCPOA from its complete demise. However, it failed to satisfy the Trump Administration despite the capping and roll backing of its nuclear program and lobbying with other stakeholders of JCPOA. The constant Washington threats and Europeans indecisiveness frustrates the Iranian leadership. Consequently, On 28 April 2019, the Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif cautioned that his country may quit NPT if the US tightens sanctions.

Tehran's signaling to leave the NPT is a shift in Iran's nuclear policy. It is departing from its earlier commitment to continue adhering to its commitments under the JCPOA and NPT. Hence, it could restart its uranium enrichment and plutonium reprocessing. Being a party to NPT, Iran can enrich uranium or reprocess the spent fuel of the nuclear reactor for civilian nuclear projects.

After the exodus from NPT, Tehran will be legally free to produce weapons-grade fissile material, i.e., high-enriched uranium and weapons-grade plutonium. To conclude, Iran's withdrawal from NPT would incalculably undermine the credibility

of the nuclear non-proliferation regime in general and NPT in particular. It would unleash destabilizing nuclear arms race in the region.

source: [https://www.globalvillagespace.com/irans-withdrawal-from-npt-zafar-nawaz-jaspal/?fbclid=IwAR2UpiqKL5hq\\_QSgDLQSHhQ0q0edr6yAuLQPoAC7h3gHpKs uchALmm8\\_EW8](https://www.globalvillagespace.com/irans-withdrawal-from-npt-zafar-nawaz-jaspal/?fbclid=IwAR2UpiqKL5hq_QSgDLQSHhQ0q0edr6yAuLQPoAC7h3gHpKs uchALmm8_EW8)

## Belt and road initiative: an overview By Muhammad Mehdi

Myopic politicians cannot see beyond the immediate horizon. The incumbent government left no stone unturned to demonise CPEC while in opposition.

A lot of rumours have been doing rounds to assess the ultimate aims of China behind Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a mega project started in 2013 by Xi Jinping. It is indeed described as the most significant economic and infrastructural project in recent world history. It can also be compared with the Marshall Plan because China will be able to further its strategic interests through BRI. China can counter US hegemony in the world through the institutions associated with BRI. In this regard, South Asia and Pakistan are vital for China to materialise BRI in its true essence.

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) can have far-reaching ramifications not only for China but for Pakistan as well. It will also boost trade in Central Asia and beyond. However, there are some challenges for the Pakistani government vis-a-vis CPEC. Instability in Baluchistan can hamper the dividends of this mega project. Baloch separatists want to undermine CPEC. Natives fear that foreigners and outsiders will flood Baluchistan and they will turn into a minority in their homeland. None of the governments took pains to redress these legitimate concerns. Eventually, this allows India to fill this vacuum. Kulbhushan's arrest from Baluchistan attests this assertion. The other major problem in Baluchistan is sectarian violence. The recent atrocity in Hazarganji is a glaring illustration. Hazara community is paying with their blood for decades. These bigots and terrorists do not want CPEC to flourish.

Myopic politicians cannot see beyond the immediate horizon. The incumbent government left no stone unturned to demonise CPEC while in opposition. Xi Jinping had to postpone his visit to Pakistan in 2014 due to PTI's 'dharna'. Some believe that there is a proper campaign to vilify CPEC by hostile elements, and this current economic crisis is engineered to subvert CPEC. Debt traps, corruption charges, instability and terrorism, are the standard tools to retard this project.

The progress on CPEC cannot be isolated from the situation in Afghanistan. Peace in Afghanistan is viable for Baluchistan, for CPEC, and ultimately for the region. Those who see BRI as a threat to their strategic interests, do not want a peaceful Afghanistan. America has allowed IS or Daish to thrive under its watch. The US wants to restrict China to this region by engaging it in countering terrorism. The peace process initiated by America through Zalmay Khalilzad with Afghan Taliban will impact on the future of Afghanistan, the future of this region, and the future of BRI.

India is playing on both sides of the fence in BRI. It is opposing CPEC due to its lame concerns vis-a-vis Gilgit Baltistan. However, India is a part of BRI through BCIM corridor, but the work progress on that corridor is not up to the mark due to India's uncertain stance. That is why China is focusing more on CMEC. This corridor will provide China with a land-route to Bangladesh.

Bangladesh is also crucial for BRI. It can be a maritime hub in the coming days. It will be beneficial for China's landlocked provinces. However, internal politics in Bangladesh is making it challenging for China to see the completion of CMEC promptly. Awami League, the incumbent government, is considered to be an Indian ally. Moreover, Bangladesh's economy needs to rely on America because it is the major importer of Bangladesh's garments. So, the strategic environment impedes prospects with China.

Hambantota port in Sri Lanka helped the opponents to term BRI as 'debt trap' because Sri Lanka was unable to pay. Detractors use it as a case study for vulnerable countries. But it's a unique case. China has provided debt reliefs to more than 80 projects in the past. Hambantota port will enable China to keep an eye on offshore energy supply route.

It is believed that China wants a corridor consisted of China, Pakistan, India, Iran and Kazakhstan. Landlocked Central Asian states are much dependent on Russia for trade. Bilateral trade is minimal in Central Asia. This corridor will connect Central Asian nations to the rest of the world. These states will be transit states in operations, and the process will promote and bolster trade in the region as well. This corridor can connect Europe to the Middle East, Central Asia, South Asia, and South-East Asia and beyond. Central Asia was the part of the erstwhile Soviet Union, so the political environment there is more suitable to China. This corridor can be an instrument for a prosperous Xinjiang, where instability exists for decades.

The response from Russia is yet to come. Central Asian states cannot be divorced from Russian influence. If China gets more leverage through the corridor mentioned above, Russia can respond by countering Chinese dominance in the region.

Source : <https://nation.com.pk/06-May-2019/belt-and-road-initiative-an-overview?fbclid=IwAR2fWynNgonNytWqCkjrW91hjlLM56GKKUsdB6LlvUrthALy0CJAOf2ZtNI>

## The “Clash of Civilizations” Model is a Poor Fit for Conflicts in East Asia By Robert E. Kelly

It is inaccurate and needlessly alarming for Washington to frame competition with Beijing in such stark terms.

Kiron Skinner, the Director of Policy Planning for the U.S. State Department, ignited a controversy last week when she analogized Sino-U.S. competition to a clash of civilizations. There has been a good deal of pushback from international relations academics (here, here). Many noted that Samuel Huntington’s famous thesis (article, book) has not actually been born out much. There have not in fact been wars since his writing that have been as epochal as the “civilizational” label would suggest. Moreover, Skinner’s particular comment that China will be America’s first “great power competitor that is not Caucasian” sparked a lot of controversy that “civilization” was being used as rhetorical cover for the Trump administration’s persistent flirtation with white nationalism.

But one problem in all this not yet pointed out is how poorly Huntington’s model actually fits the dynamics of conflict in East Asia. Huntington’s argument got its greatest boost from the post-9/11 war on terrorism. There, religious conservatives—on both sides ironically—saw the conflict as much as a millennial clash between Islam and Christianity, as between the United States and rather small, if radical, terrorist networks. Huntington’s book was even re-issued with a cover depicting a collision between Islam and America. But in East Asia, the thesis really struggles.

The central variable defining Huntington’s civilizations is religion. This is why the argument feels so intuitive for the war on terror, where religion is a powerful, obvious undercurrent. But in East Asia, religious conflict was never as sharp as in the West, Middle East, and South Asia. Nor has religion historically defined polities in East Asia as sharply. Confucianism and Buddhism were obviously socially influential, but they generated nothing like the wars of the Reformation or the jihads of early Islam.

So while much of the world is coded by Huntington via religion, he struggles to use that in East Asia. Instead, he falls back on nationality mostly—coding China, the Koreas, and Vietnam as “Sinic” and Japan as “Nipponic.” He also suggested a Buddhist civilization in southeast Asia, as well as Mongolia and Sri Lanka.

However interesting this may be, all this is analytically pretty messy. First, the most obvious religious benchmark for Huntington to use in East Asia is Confucianism. Whether coded as a social philosophy or religion, there is little doubt that Confucius' writings had a huge impact on China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam. But if Huntington had done the obvious and tagged a Confucian civilization including these four players, he would have made the laughably inaccurate argument that those states are natural cultural, religious and civilizational allies.

In reality, of course, there is a lot of traditional national interest-style conflict—the kind Huntington says has been replaced by civilizational bloc-building—in the Confucian space. China and Japan are obvious competitors, and the East China Sea is a serious potential hot-spot now. The Koreas are still very far apart ideologically, and neither feels much affinity for China or Japan. Furthermore, China and Vietnam also sliding toward competition in the South China Sea.

So Huntington is stuck as his model does not work in northeast Asia. So to save it, he carves out Japan as a separate civilization defined by nationality, not religion, with little explanation. He then lumps the Koreas and Vietnam under a Chinese-nationality defined “Sinic” civilization, which, in my teaching experience, Korean and Vietnamese readers find this to be either typical American ignorance or vaguely offensive.

The Buddhist civilization of Southeast Asia struggles to be defined analytically too. Do Mongolia, Thailand, and Sri Lanka have enough in common to be put together? Why isn't South Korea, where Buddhism was long influential and still very much alive, put into this civilization? Do these states communicate or cooperate with each other in any way that may reasonably be defined as “buddhistic”? The answer is almost certainly that Huntington did not know or really care that much—likely as he did not know what to do with non-Arab Africa, so he just labels it all one “African” civilization and moves on.

The thesis was really designed to explain the collisions in southeastern Europe (the Balkan wars of the 1990s) and in the Middle East between Muslim-majority states and their neighbors. It is in these regions and about these conflicts where Huntington's thesis continues to be most persuasive when taught. In East Asia though, it falls down pretty quickly. The units of analysis (civilizations) are not constructed in that region around the variable (religion) which Huntington uses elsewhere, and the conflicts of the region have little to do with religion, because

organized religion was not as influential in East Asia's political past as it was elsewhere.

So if this is to be the Trump model for U.S. foreign policy—and it certainly seems to be the administration's preferred mode to address Islam—it will lead to bizarre predictions and behaviors. The “Confucians,” Buddhists, and East Asian “non-Caucasians” are not going to ally against the United States. China, for all its “Sinic” cultural difference from the West, is also deeply influenced by Western political thought—most obviously Marxism-Leninism, and, today, capitalism.

We may well fall into a cold war with China; prospects for a benign, or at least transactional, Sino-U.S. relationship are narrowing. But there is no need to over-read that competition as an epochal civilizational clash and thereby make it worse and more intractable. That kind of thinking applied to 9/11 led to wild overreaction, as American policymakers saw Salafist-jihadist networks as a far greater threat than they were. If we do that with China, which really is very powerful, America's competition with it will be that much sharper and irresolvable.

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Source : [https://nationalinterest.org/feature/clash-civilizations-model-poor-fit-conflicts-east-asia-56207?fbclid=IwAR3xlXc4dLxODmh0y2vJJUR1NYpgLbkEwqwnzxtHKP2Y5zKG Px9vfAJ\\_Bok](https://nationalinterest.org/feature/clash-civilizations-model-poor-fit-conflicts-east-asia-56207?fbclid=IwAR3xlXc4dLxODmh0y2vJJUR1NYpgLbkEwqwnzxtHKP2Y5zKG Px9vfAJ_Bok)



## On North Korea, a Return to Fire and Fury Isn't Worth The Risks By Doug Bandow

Here's how Washington and Pyongyang can make some progress towards peace and maybe denuclearization too.

A couple of years ago the Trump administration seemingly brought the Korean Peninsula to the brink of war. The president matched North Korea's Supreme Leader insult for insult, sent what he called the "armada" off of the North's coast, and threatened "fire and fury." The consequences of a conflict most likely would have been catastrophic, especially for America's ally, the Republic of Korea.

Happily, negotiation rather than shooting occurred. Contra claims that Washington was played or fleeced, the North ended missile and nuclear testing and Kim Jong-un began acting like a normal statesman. Kim started meeting foreign leaders, and Pyongyang put its Yongbyon nuclear facility up for closure. Before the Hanoi summit, between Kim and Trump, Pyongyang reportedly had agreed to a peace declaration and opening of liaison offices. These steps toward normalization would have benefited America and the ROK as well as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Moreover, Pyongyang agreed to further repatriation of the remains of Americans killed during the Korea War.

Still, the ultimate destination of the Kim-Trump "friendship" admittedly was uncertain. The president's certitude that the latest in the Kim family line to rule the DPRK was prepared to fully disarm almost certainly was misplaced. Indeed, the behavior of President Trump and his predecessors made denuclearization an ever more distant possibility.

Internationally, nuclear weapons give the North status; militarily, nukes enhance Pyongyang's destructive power; domestically, the program cements military loyalty to the regime. Moreover, possession of nuclear weapons offers the only sure deterrent against overwhelming American military power for a small, isolated, impoverished country with no sure friends. Only nuclear bombs and missiles redress a balance of power which has steadily shifted against North Korea since the Korean War ended.

The DPRK's search for deterrence took on greater significance as the U.S. tagged Pyongyang as "evil," attacked several nuclear-free regimes, and abandoned

earlier foreign commitments (most the Iran Deal). Now add to that the president's appointment of a national security adviser who advocated war against North Korea. Only a naive leader would disarm unilaterally, completely, and speedily as demanded by the Trump administration. And Kim, who brutally consolidated power after succeeding his father at age 28, is not naive.

Nevertheless, last year at the Singapore summit between Trump and Kim, Pyongyang offered a plausible road map. Kim wants to improve bilateral relations and create a regional peace regime; then denuclearization would follow. There is reason to doubt even then that the DPRK would ever yield all its nuclear weapons. However, complete verifiable irreversible denuclearization, while desirable, is not a prerequisite for American security. Washington has deterred far worse, most notably Joseph Stalin's Soviet Union and Mao Zedong's China, both equally radical but far more powerful states which possessed nuclear weapons. Moreover, North Korea's objective is to deter, not attack, the United States.

More importantly, the North Koreans might be willing to take smaller steps which both could lead to denuclearization and are beneficial in their own right. For instance, formalizing the end of testing and capping their nuclear program. Pyongyang could also dismantle various nuclear facilities and allow in international inspectors. Furthermore, Kim could pull back conventional forces from their advanced positions and expand cooperative North-South activities.

Of course, the North's newly cooperative stance should not be accepted on faith. Kim is no liberal reformer and he may view the process as a game. However, his objectives look more mainstream than those of his father and grandfather.

First, Kim appears serious about economic reform. Perhaps he simply recognizes that his nation will never be strong and resilient while perched on an economic precipice. South Korea's economic success is a sharp rebuke for the DPRK's collectivism, and China proves that a regime can retain political control while relaxing economic rules. However, economic transformation requires entry into the global marketplace, most notably for investment and trade.

Second, the North Korean strongman has gone from international recluse to statesman in just a year. And he appears to enjoy the process—certainly, he has shown a talent for summitry. Even South Korean diplomats were impressed by his

behavior, such as showing age-appropriate deference to ROK President Moon Jae-in and acknowledging the North's deficiencies.

Most importantly, Pyongyang has gone from a military target demonized around the world to a forgotten issue barely mentioned on newspaper back pages. Talk of armadas and war have disappeared in Washington. The most serious external threat to Kim's rule is U.S. military action, but that is almost impossible absent a DPRK provocation.

If Kim's new course is simply a short-term fake, the advantages would be ephemeral even in the best of circumstances. For instance, Washington could reimpose any sanctions that it lifted. China would be embarrassed and more inclined to cooperate with America if Pyongyang reneged on a deal. The North's return to confrontation would also damage Moon's credibility and push his government to adjust policy accordingly. For example, although Washington dismissed North Korea's short-range missile test on Saturday, the first of any kind since November 2017, Seoul sharply remonstrated the Kim government. Summit invitations will arrive only so long as Kim plays responsible statesman.

However, Kim's willingness to engage in meaningful arms control, whether or not doing so leads to full denuclearization, can only be tested by further negotiations. Unfortunately, Washington's insistence that DPRK does what it cannot do—surrender all of its nuclear weapons immediately in hopes that the Trump administration will be nice to it—risks creating a permanent impasse. Unless the two leaders' supposedly warm feelings for each other end up convincing them to accept a looser agenda, the same thoughts could turn into a shared sense of betrayal and a decision to recycle the dangerous tactics of 2017.

North Korea's latest test was Pyongyang's attempt to break the deadlock by a moderate dose of its time-honored tactic of brinkmanship. The missiles tested flew between forty-two and one-hundred-and-twenty-four miles. The U.S. homeland obviously is not within their range, but South Korea's capital of Seoul is. President Trump dismissed the exercise and insisted that Kim "does not want to break his promise to me. Deal will happen!" However, it would be much more difficult for President Trump to exhibit such a mellow attitude if the DPRK tested intercontinental missiles and nuclear weapons.

In the meantime the relationship between the two Koreas, which is the one that most matters, has begun to fray. With bilateral economic cooperation largely

blocked by sanctions, Pyongyang has dismissed the role of the South, including Moon's proposal for another summit. Meanwhile, the South Korean president is taking increasing criticism at home over his nation's slower economic growth. In addition, with peninsular détente Moon's major accomplishment, souring ties with the North would put him under pressure to respond in kind.

Should North Korea's relations with both the ROK and U.S. go in reverse, the situation could revert to that of late 2017—a confrontation suffused with insults, posturing, threats and increased possibilities of war. There would be no easy way back out.

Sanctions would continue to impoverish the North but would be unlikely to change its policy. America's economic weapons have never forced a foreign government to yield on core interests. (Sanctions did, however, drive Japan toward war with the U.S. in 1941.) A half million or more North Koreans died of starvation in the late 1990s, with apparently little change in Pyongyang's approach. Tougher sanctions today wouldn't likely to yield a different result. Anyway, Washington likely would find international support for even tighter sanctions tough to come by since Washington would most likely be seen as the chief obstructionist to thawing relations with Pyongyang.

A war would be even worse. Despite to Senator Lindsey Graham's belief that any conflict would be "over there," Americans would be deeply involved. Seoul would be at great risk of destruction by conventional weapons. Assuming the North was able to hit regional targets with nuclear warheads, Seoul and Tokyo as well as American bases in Okinawa and Guam would be obvious targets. Casualty estimates are purely speculative, but some reach well into the millions.

All of this leaves leaves negotiation, backed by deterrence, as the only realistic option. But for negotiation to progress, the Trump administration must abandon its demand that the North does what it cannot do. The president should suggest that the two countries sign an agreement formalizing the understandings reached on liaison offices, a peace declaration and return of American personnel's remains. Trump should also toss in the end of State Department's travel ban both to and from North Korea. These steps would help fulfill Kim's insistence on building trust.

Source : [https://nationalinterest.org/blog/korea-watch/north-korea-return-fire-and-fury-isnt-worth-risks-56197?fbclid=IwAR125DqR-dKSFs4F5JrtINlnXV8tad-icwhIDL\\_qSMX4we0GLiDN6oxBh7A](https://nationalinterest.org/blog/korea-watch/north-korea-return-fire-and-fury-isnt-worth-risks-56197?fbclid=IwAR125DqR-dKSFs4F5JrtINlnXV8tad-icwhIDL_qSMX4we0GLiDN6oxBh7A)

## Pentagon Doesn't Want To Report On Its Failed War In Afghanistan – OpEd By Ryan McMaken

The US military's Afghanistan operation is going so well, the US military wants to stop telling you about it.

“Amid a battlefield stalemate in Afghanistan, the U.S. military has stopped releasing information often cited to measure progress in America's longest war...

“The move fits a trend of less information being released about the war in recent years...”

“A government watchdog agency that monitors the U.S. war effort, now in its 18th year, said in a report to Congress on Wednesday that the U.S. military command in Kabul is no longer producing “district control data,” which shows the number of Afghan districts — and the percentage of their population — controlled by the government compared to the Taliban.

“The last time the command released this information, in January, it showed that Afghan government control was stagnant or slipping.”

In other words, the US's 2-trillion-dollar effort there is going nowhere. So they're going to stop telling you about it.

This shouldn't be surprising, of course. Government legitimacy in general relies to a large extent on deception and on withholding information about the true cost, incompetence, and destruction of government programs and government policies. Governments hate releasing data on employee salaries, audits, spending, and metrics. Unless, of course, those metrics make the government look good.

Coming up with that make-us-look-good metric is often easy to do because it's easy for government agencies to track data on “how much stuff bought for x number of people” or “how many jobs created for Y number of government employees.” Then, all they have to do is exclude any data about how many people weren't hired in the private sector because of government regulations and government taxes. They never mention the “stuff” that millions didn't get because of higher taxes. Governments naturally don't even try to collect that sort of data.

A similar phenomenon is seen in foreign policy. We hear all about how the government killed a dictator (i.e., Saddam Hussein or Moamar Qaddafi) while

conveniently leaving out the fact these “humanitarian” missions just created power vacuums which paved the way for the rise of terrorist organizations like Al Qaeda.

When it comes to government programs, it's all benefits, and no costs.

So who can be surprised the Pentagon now wants to hide the fact the Afghanistan War is accomplishing nothing. After all, this might make it easier to point out the Pentagon is hugely over-funded. Moreover, the Pentagon has no idea what it even does with its money, since, as Reuters reported in 2016:

The Defense Department's Inspector General, in a June report, said the Army made \$2.8 trillion in wrongful adjustments to accounting entries in one quarter alone in 2015, and \$6.5 trillion for the year. Yet the Army lacked receipts and invoices to support those numbers or simply made them up.

Disclosure of the Army's manipulation of numbers is the latest example of the severe accounting problems plaguing the Defense Department for decades.

Unfortunately, it's fairly easy for military organizations to get away with this sort of fraud and data manipulation because they can always claim “national security” demands it. Many voters — often including those who fancy themselves proponents of “limited government” are happy to play along and declare the taxpayers have no right to second-guess the “experts.”

The idea is the taxpaying public is too stupid or too ignorant to have anything other than worthless opinions when it comes to military and foreign affairs beyond the borders of the United States. Modern Americans have typically caved to this bullying tactic. Writing in the 1990s, however, at the end of the Cold War, Samuel Francis noted that such an attitude is incompatible with a free society :

The self-sufficiency, the civic independence, of the citizens of a republic, the idea that the citizens should support themselves economically, should be able to defend themselves, educate themselves, and discipline themselves, is closely connected to the idea of public virtue...A self governing people is simply too busy, as a rule, with the concerns of self-government to take much interest in other peoples' business...A self-governing people generally abhors secrecy in government and rightly distrusts it. The only way, then, in which those intent upon...the expansion of their power over other peoples, can succeed is by diminishing the degree of self-government in their own society. They must persuade the self-governing people that there is too much self-government going around, that the people themselves simply are not smart enough or well-informed enough to deserve much say in such

complicated matters as foreign policy...We hear it...every time an American President intones that “politics stop at the water’s edge.” Of course, politics do not stop at the water’s edge unless we as a people are willing to surrender a vast amount of control over what the government does in military, foreign, economic, and intelligence affairs.

Meanwhile, the government insists that the taxpayers have no right to privacy themselves. It’s the taxpayers who need to be monitored, it seems. And Donald Trump apparently agrees. The Washington Post reported yesterday:

The Trump administration has signaled in recent weeks that it may seek the permanent renewal of a surveillance law that has, among other things, enabled the National Security Agency to gather and analyze Americans’ phone records as part of terrorism investigations, according to five U.S. officials familiar with the matter.

So, while the military is cutting back on letting the public see its failures, the national security state insists that those who pay the bills submit to ever higher levels of surveillance.

\*About the author: Ryan McMaken (@ryanmcmaken) is a senior editor at the Mises Institute.

Source : [https://www.eurasiareview.com/04052019-pentagon-doesnt-want-to-report-on-its-failed-war-in-afghanistan-oped/?fbclid=IwAR3Ttee5u7Em8FG-\\_muC63w5jA3yNBAS3iJTdLOYQabPiIKwBiXLpfRFSNg](https://www.eurasiareview.com/04052019-pentagon-doesnt-want-to-report-on-its-failed-war-in-afghanistan-oped/?fbclid=IwAR3Ttee5u7Em8FG-_muC63w5jA3yNBAS3iJTdLOYQabPiIKwBiXLpfRFSNg)

## The Existential Crisis of Global Warming And Carbon Capture – OpEd By Dr. Arshad M. Khan

If we care about our earth (and the readers here are most likely to) the story is quite simple: We emit 40 billion tons of carbon annually, and little is being done to reduce it. There is also not much likelihood of any action from our leaders, given the Senate vote on the Green New Deal and President Trump's well-known views on the subject. So how do we get rid of the carbon about to turn earth into a living hell? Deadlines have been clearly laid down by experts.

The October 2018 IPCC report on limiting global warming to 1.5C above preindustrial levels notes human-caused CO<sub>2</sub> emissions would have to achieve 'net-zero' by 2050. According to the report, this would necessitate 'far-reaching transitions' not just in how energy is used and produced but also in the use of Negative Emissions Technologies (NETs) such as carbon recapture from the air. We have to stabilize earth or eventually a self-reinforcing feedback loop will lead to uncontrollable warming and a "Hothouse Earth" without any means of reducing earth temperatures.

Scientists assessing NETs find that restricting global warming to 1.5C requires large-scale deployment of NETs; in fact, a major national effort. Moreover, any single NET is unlikely to be sustainably adequate, rather multiple NETs each on a more modest scale is the most effective scenario. A comprehensive analysis is therefore both illustrative and illuminating.

Direct air carbon capture and storage (DACCS) is an enticing prospect until one examines the costs. Scientific scenarios project DACCS capacity to remove 10-15 billion tons of CO<sub>2</sub> per year by century's end. Optimists up it to 35-40 billion tons solving the CO<sub>2</sub> problem in one fell swoop. Not so, say those who have examined costs.

A group from the Mercatur Research Institute on Global Commons and Climate Change and Humboldt University of Berlin and in particular Sabine Fuss have examined costs reporting on different NETs in Environmental Research Letters (ERL, June 2018). They put the cost at \$100-300 per ton for DACCS and estimate sustainable removal at 0.5 – 5.0 GtCO<sub>2</sub> per year — a Gt is approximately a billion tons. The upper level would still cost \$500 billion to \$1.5 billion according to them.



The other major problem with DACCS is the sheer energy required. Removing a million tons a year would consume 300-500 MW according to Jennifer Wilcox of Worcester Polytechnic. The power needs to be clean energy for a coal-fired plant would generate more CO<sub>2</sub> than would be extracted.

Climeworks is a company based in Switzerland that has developed a DACCS process. Its pilot plant in Hellisheidi, Iceland, is using geothermal energy to remove CO<sub>2</sub> from the air and store it in basalt. They have also announced a commercial scale venture in Zurich, Switzerland.

In addition to active air capture as described, there is a passive approach. An Arizona State University professor has developed a resin that when dry absorbs CO<sub>2</sub> from the air, relinquishing it when immersed in water. The team envisions artificial trees made from the resin each capable of capturing a daily ton of CO<sub>2</sub>.

Afforestation, namely adding to forests, and reforestation are intuitively attractive. But there are limitations because of competition for land from food production. The CO<sub>2</sub> removal is estimated at 0.5-3.6 billion tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> (GtCO<sub>2</sub>) per year (ERL, June 2018). Of course given demand for land its use is reversible, and over time cost is likely to increase.

As an addendum to afforestation one might note an investment by Apple on a project by Conservation International to restore and protect 27,000 acres of mangroves in Columbia. This will capture a million tons of CO<sub>2</sub> annually as 'blue' carbon stored in coastal marshlands and mangroves can be up to ten times more dense than in forests.

Bioenergy carbon capture and storage (BECCS) is also being employed. As an example, Archer Daniels Midland began to capture CO<sub>2</sub> emitted at its Decatur, Illinois, ethanol plant in 2017. It is now successfully storing a million tons of CO<sub>2</sub> per year underground. Scientists estimate the potential of BECCS at 0.5-5.0 GtCO<sub>2</sub> per year (ERL, June 2018). The technology is stable with good future prospects when other manufacturers also try to (or are obliged to) achieve carbon neutrality.

Biochar is formed from the pyrolysis of agricultural and forestry waste in a controlled process with reduced oxygen. Not only is the carbon prevented from escaping but the char can be used to improve soil quality. It can prevent from 0.5-2.0 GtCO<sub>2</sub> per year from polluting the atmosphere, and scaling will reduce costs enhancing its potential.

Enhanced weathering refers to the improved absorption of CO<sub>2</sub> by rocks like basalt to levels higher than the natural slow process. The Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research estimates the cost at \$200 per ton of CO<sub>2</sub> using basalt and \$60 per ton for dunite i.e. about double the cost for afforestation. A handicap perhaps but afforestation is limited by land availability, and absorption by basalt could remove up to 4.9 GtCO<sub>2</sub> annually, according to Potsdam estimates. For best results, the rock has to be mined, ground up and spread out since CO<sub>2</sub> absorption levels are heavily dependent on grain size. The process does appropriate land limiting use in arable areas.

Soil carbon sequestration can absorb up to 5 GtCO<sub>2</sub> per year (2018). It requires providing a continuous cover instead of letting fields remain bare after harvest to reduce carbon loss. Other methods include no-till or conservation tillage. The accumulated benefits with cropland, however, can be temporary and easily eroded if the land is ever plowed, calling for education programs in addition. There is also agroforestry i.e. combining farming with trees and livestock grazing, which can be an option in some, but not all, farms and climates.

A new attractive technology is the direct conversion of CO<sub>2</sub> into fuel. It is an approach being used by Carbon Engineering of Squamish, B.C. in Canada. Air-captured CO<sub>2</sub> and supplemental hydrogen split from water are combined to produce gasoline and diesel for less than \$4 per gallon. The hydrogen removal uses renewable energy.

Of the 40 billion tons of CO<sub>2</sub> emitted annually, half is absorbed naturally. The 20 billion tons remaining at present require human input to be eliminated. A strategy employing a variety of techniques makes particularly good sense given the unusual possibilities opening up and the limitations of any single method. On the other end of the scale, radical transitions in energy usage, transport, buildings, even cities, coupled with low-emissions energy production will reduce annual emissions. What is left has to be recaptured to attain net carbon neutrality. It is a monumental task requiring international cooperation including, if necessary, monetary incentives for poor and middle income countries. Of utmost importance is to get started.

It is an insidious ailment for planet earth, its presence felt by the extraordinary intensity of extreme weather events — Cyclone Eline and Idai devastating Mozambique in quick succession, for example, were an unexpected event for the southern hemisphere. On the other hand, such vagaries of weather as a cold spell,

can draw mockery from President Donald Trump who proposes to do nothing. He has emboldened others like Jair Bolsonaro, the new President of Brazil.

The real question is whether the American people will exercise profound discernment when the next election comes around. If the senate's confidence is any judge, they will not. The senate voted 57-0 against the Green New Deal, the number including two Democratic senators. The remaining Democrats voted 'present'. Not one Democrat stood up to be counted for GND under the pretense the Republicans were trying to split them.

Carbon capture has potential but who is going to invest in the processes to realize it? Certainly not current senators who just voted for the opposite. At the very least if they passed a law requiring net-zero emissions by 2050, it would encourage private enterprise to self-clean or provide services for others to do so. But what are the chances of any of this happening? Almost none without pressure would not be a bad guess. Perhaps Greta Thunberg and her young cohorts are showing the older generations the way.

\*About the author: Dr. Arshad M. Khan is a former Professor based in the US. Educated at King's College London, OSU and The University of Chicago, he has a multidisciplinary background that has frequently informed his research. Thus he headed the analysis of an innovation survey of Norway, and his work on SMEs published in major journals has been widely cited. He has for several decades also written for the press: These articles and occasional comments have appeared in print media such as The Dallas Morning News, Dawn (Pakistan), The Fort Worth Star Telegram, The Monitor, The Wall Street Journal and others. On the internet, he has written for Antiwar.com, Asia Times, Common Dreams, Counterpunch, Countercurrents, Dissident Voice, Eurasia Review and Modern Diplomacy among many. His work has been quoted in the U.S. Congress and published in its Congressional Record.

Source : <https://www.eurasiareview.com/04052019-the-existential-crisis-of-global-warming-and-carbon-capture-oped/?fbclid=IwAR0e4xp1JB4VD8s0efM2S0GV3afsz-TXX7SQ2ydZMRVttlJP3IJP8iDGu0>

## Why Turkey And America Cannot Compromise In Syria – Analysis By Aaron Stein

After three days of talks in Turkey, representatives from Washington and Ankara failed to reach agreement on the terms of a proposed safe zone in northeastern Syria. The two sides, treaty allies since 1952, share such widely divergent interests in Syria that compromise appears exceedingly difficult, if not impossible. The reasons for these divergent interests are often described as an outcome of a half-hearted American intervention in Syria, where a small and limited military operation to oust the Islamic State resulted in a military partnership with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) affiliate in Syria, the Peoples' Protection Units (YPG). The YPG is the core component of the U.S.-supported Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), the militia that Washington depends on to hold the territory taken from Islamic State. This is only half the story and does not capture the nuance of the slow and painful deterioration of Turkish-American relations.

The United States has sought to ameliorate Turkish security concerns through a proposal that establishes joint-combat patrols and pledges to ensure that the YPG does not threaten Turkey from territory inside Syria. Ankara, in contrast, has pushed to control a territorially contiguous, 32 kilometer-deep zone that would be free of Kurdish elements that Ankara deems politically unsatisfactory. After four formal, high-level government-to-government meetings, the two sides are nowhere closer to overcoming this divergence.

Now, after all of these meetings, the two sides remain in the "talking phase," which has intrinsic value on its own, but does not mean that an agreement is any closer to materializing. The refusal to make (or accept) concessions is, on both sides, a political choice. However, both capitals' choices reflect a clear reality: Washington has decided that a hardline, anti-Iran/Assad policy is more valuable for U.S foreign goals than its relationship with the Turkish government. Ankara, in contrast, has chosen a hardline, anti-Kurdish approach as more vital to its own interests. These twin decisions reflect the desires of Presidents Trump and Erdogan—and it underscores just how fraught the relationship has become.

The root of the problem is that Washington views Sunni-majority, transnational Jihadist groups as a military problem that justifies the use of force abroad. Turkey, in contrast, views this threat as a law enforcement issue, and views the problem as limited to within its own borders. For the Kurdish issue, Ankara has committed to using force abroad, in Iraq and Syria, to deny safe haven in a policy that mimics

Washington's concerns about transnational Jihadists. The threat of a transnational Kurdish movement, for Turkey, is considered an existential struggle that could, at its extreme, split the country into two along ethnic boundary lines. The United States, quite simply, does not share this concern. Instead, Washington views Kurdish terrorism as a political irritant and as an issue that could be dealt with through political inducements and proper law enforcement.

This key divergence in threat perceptions explains why, since late 2015, the two sides have drifted so far apart on how to prosecute the war against Islamic State. Ankara viewed the terror group as an outgrowth of the Syrian civil war. Therefore, to combat ISIS effectively, the United States should have focused on eliminating the root of the problem: Bashar al-Assad's brutal governance. Washington, in contrast, correctly viewed Ankara's policy prescriptions as "mission creep" and part of a broader effort to enlist the United States in a military campaign to topple the Syrian regime. In the end, both the Obama and Trump administrations opted to pursue a narrow, counter-terrorism mission linked the territorial defeat of Islamic State.

However, as the U.S. succeeded in its primary goal, the mission in Syria shifted to reflect the desires of hawks in the Trump administration. Hardliners like National Security Advisor John Bolton have made the case that the physical American presence in northeast Syria can be used to strangle the Syrian regime, which alongside more sanctions on Iran, could make life so miserable for both countries that they make political concessions to Washington.

Ankara does not share this point of view. It is simply a fact that after years of working to topple Assad, Ankara has (since 2015) shifted its priorities to focus on three interrelated priorities. First, through pressure on Washington, Ankara is determined to deny safe haven to the SDF. Second, through its control of northern Aleppo and Afrin, both taken by military force, Turkey is investing resources to create a livable space for Syrian refugees to return home. Third, to ensure that Ankara has a say in how the conflict is settled, Turkey is working with Russia on convening a committee of Syrians from rival camps to draft a new Syrian constitution.

In each one of these cases, the United States is an irritant to Turkish policy planning. These terms, of course, will include hardline demands on no serious devolution of political or military concession to any Kurdish-governed entity in the

northeast. Washington, in contrast, now views Syria's northeast as leverage against the regime, and will soon try to resuscitate a rival forum to the constitutional committee talks that Ankara and Moscow are spearheading.

This is not a picture of two countries on the cusp of reaching agreement on an overarching vision for Syria. Ankara and Washington are competing in Syria to achieve different outcomes. Turkey can live with a small, token American ground presence so long as it can isolate (and then kill) the Kurdish leaders that Washington has fought alongside for 4 years. Washington is prepared to live with a small, token Turkish ground presence, so long as they do not kill the ground forces that U.S. forces depend on to hold territory taken from ISIS.

Given this reality, talks may continue, but compromise and actual negotiations may be impossible.

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Source : [https://www.eurasiareview.com/04052019-why-turkey-and-america-cannot-compromise-in-syria-analysis/?fbclid=IwAR0vf9nzC\\_PzTdhIbgdPuQhHBL1\\_ZEqpLgAf\\_MQoi3eFpk0UmpNKmgAo2Sk](https://www.eurasiareview.com/04052019-why-turkey-and-america-cannot-compromise-in-syria-analysis/?fbclid=IwAR0vf9nzC_PzTdhIbgdPuQhHBL1_ZEqpLgAf_MQoi3eFpk0UmpNKmgAo2Sk)

## Kim Jong-Un Is Meeting World Leaders, But Does It Matter – Analysis By Benjamin Katzeff Silberstein

As leader of North Korea, Kim Jong-un's track record in international relations has been virtually unprecedented. On April 25, he met with Russia's President Vladimir Putin in Vladivostok, the Russian port city close to North Korea. He's met with South Korea's President Moon Jae-in twice, and, of course, U.S. President Donald Trump twice as well. China's leader Xi Jinping and Kim have met four times since March 2018.

In what looks like conspicuous timing, the Japanese government last week dropped the ambition to apply "maximum pressure" on North Korea from its "Diplomatic Bluebook." Japan's attitude toward North Korea has gradually seemed to change over the past few months. The country has traditionally been one of the most hawkish powers involved in negotiations around North Korea's nuclear program, but over the past few months, Prime Minister Abe has even floated the idea of a summit with Kim Jong-un.

In context, Japan's decision to drop "maximum pressure" from its strategy toward North Korea may not seem nearly as remarkable as Kim's various summits. But it is a big change. The Abe government has been the staunchest skeptic of North Korea's denuclearization ambitions, and has pushed the U.S. to take a hardline towards Kim Jong-un. It is unclear precisely what prompted the policy change, but it may well be that Japanese business interests want to be ready in case North Korea opens up to foreign investments.

On the one hand, this balance sheet is pretty remarkable for Kim. His grandfather, Kim Il-sung (1912–1994), was an avid traveler and met foreign leaders quite frequently, but times were completely different during his life. North Korea was part of the communist bloc during the Cold War, and its leader had more international friends to visit. For North Korea in Kim Jong-un's time, international contacts have been much more hard-earned.

On the other hand, however, it's not entirely clear that any of this matters in practice. At least not yet. There are clear quantitative indications that Kim's visits to China may have led the country to increase its fuel transfers to North Korea. In early April, a new bridge opened between Jian in China and Manpo in North Korea. Construction began in 2012, and the opening was delayed from 2016 due to the

UN sanctions regime on North Korea. Not all political decisions are rational, but not everyone expects the sanctions to last forever. Russia may also be aiding North Korea in cushioning some of the burden from sanctions, and it still has not repatriated all North Korean workers from the country.

Still, for all the summits with world leaders, it's not clear what precisely Kim has gained, if anything. With both Xi and Putin, Kim almost certainly brought up economic exchange and trade, and likely asked for lenient sanctions implementation. Both Russia and China advocate for North Korea on the international arena, pushing the U.S. to give concrete sanctions relief in exchange for steps taken by North Korea toward denuclearization (whatever that might actually mean). Even so, Kim has received little in concrete reward from the summits. Prestige is important, but you can't really eat prestige, or power your factories with it.

On April 12, at the First Session of the 14th Supreme People's Assembly, Kim gave a speech expressing a great deal of frustration at both the U.S. and South Korea. North Korea's strategy vis-à-vis the U.S. has, from the beginning, been to flatter President Trump personally, while remaining critical of U.S. conduct. The speech expressed a great deal of frustration with the sanctions regime, and underscored that North Korea won't take U.S. intentions seriously before tangible, significant sanctions relief. There is news of factories closing around the country as a result of North Korea's drastically decreased exports, and raw materials and equipment for sectors, such as industry and construction, are likely in short supply.

Sanctions pressure can't be measured on a binary scale between "perfect" and "non-existent." It's much more complicated than that, and North Korea is far from completely blocked off from the world economy. At the same time, it's impossible to deny that sanctions are hurting the North Korean economy. How much is a difficult question. Many industries are suffering badly, but there are few signs of a large-scale, acute crisis.

Whether that's enough to push the country to denuclearize is an entirely different question. It depends on how the regime weighs economic development against national defense. It still borders the impossible to imagine a scenario where North Korea gives up its nuclear weapons altogether in exchange for economic gains. The relevant question, then, isn't "are sanctions working?," but rather, "are



sanctions hurting North Korea enough economically to make the gains from denuclearization worth the cost, in the eyes of the North Korean regime?”

As of now, the answer remains a firm, resounding “no.”

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## Transition in world order / Editorial

With the end of the Cold War, the world became unipolar as the USA assumed a hegemonic position in the international system. With over four decades of ceaseless clashes and numerous proxy wars, the end of the Cold War conveyed what Francis Fukuyama believed was the arrival of a unipolar moment and a final verdict about the future of global politics. However, the advent of the 21st century saw a shift from a unipolar to a multipolar structure mainly due to the rise of China. China's emergence as a contender against the status quo makes a power transition inevitable, as attempts for power maximisation are likely to result in a struggle for regional and eventually global supremacy.

Chinese ambitions are aligned and expansive which are driven by nationalism, economic uplift and military modernisation. Meanwhile the USA is unlikely to retreat or accommodate Chinese hegemony especially in Asia. China's emergence would bring about a transition in the world order, which is presently unipolar and where the USA, as the sole hegemon, is responsible for maintaining peace and security in the international system. It is proven that no world order can remain for ever, and there is an inevitable end to every order even if it was effective. When this happens, the old order cannot come back and therefore a new one takes its place, but with this acceptance is the mandatory factor, otherwise war prevails, just like the occurrence of the First and Second World Wars resulted in the creation of new Orders. In the case of China, the shift of power and authority would also require acceptance from international society, otherwise the results are clear.

The rise of China with intense security competition can never be peaceful either, and the reasons are already clear as China has penetrated so much into the system by using the tool of trade, which could draw more support for China in the world of complex interdependence.

The world has entered a new era of great-power relationships because of China's growing influence, and a major part of this comes from China's trading policies which China is offering to almost all the potential rivals of the USA. For the USA, Asia was never a region of strategic importance after the defeat of Japan in 1945, and its areas of concern were Europe and the Persian Gulf, but this changed after the emergence of China as a power, and North East Asia was also included by it in the list of extremely important regions.

When the USA adopted the policy of global domination, it was the time when China through its trade started containing the USA by making alliances with compatible or even incompatible neighbours, that is making more stronger relations with Pakistan in the form of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor as part of the One Belt One Road Initiative, in which China is engaged with other countries like Iran, a rival of the USA in the Middle East. It is yet to be established whether this would lead to tranquillity or rivalry, given the challenges faced by US unipolarity, as the USA is also likely to opt for a new containment policy with respect to China. The conflict between the USA and China is somewhat new and cannot be compared to the Cold War contention nor can assumptions about it be made based on history.

It can be said that, China cannot rise peacefully because of intense security competition between the USA and China in East Asia, and between China and its neighbours. The USA is backing India within the region to maintain its advantage over China and this will give China a tough time to reach to its goals. The transition, that is a shift in power, would be more costly as both would have to pay the cost of millions of precious lives because of the unavoidable presence of nuclear weapons. The world has experienced a near-nuclear war between two Great Powers, the USA and the USSR, but then they both realised the cost of it. This was at the time of the Cuban Missile Crisis. But now the situation can be even worse, because no one is going to step back from their positions, and this leads to deadly nuclear war.

The rise of China with intense security competition can never be peaceful either, and the reasons are already clear as China has penetrated so much into the system by using the tool of trade, which could draw more support for China in the world of complex interdependence. This interdependence would prove a significant weapon for China to use it against the USA as it becomes a hegemon in coming years.

Source : [https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2019/05/09/transition-in-world-order/?fbclid=IwAR2swclZiYo7\\_GqL2ZJrjDk5QmbET4xWmLNMeUoXIk9OHHqkep97bP0OW18](https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2019/05/09/transition-in-world-order/?fbclid=IwAR2swclZiYo7_GqL2ZJrjDk5QmbET4xWmLNMeUoXIk9OHHqkep97bP0OW18)

## Alarming Iran-US tension

PRESIDENT Donald Trump has been stating Iran nuclear and missile program to vindicate his diplomatic actions against the country and recent United States military deployments in the region. In reality, he is intended to alter Iran's political system and limits Tehran's increasing influence in the Middle East. He also desires to ensure the electoral support of the anti-Iran groups or pro-Israel lobby in the next presidential election scheduled in 2020. Since his election campaign in 2016, President Donald Trump has been criticizing the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) as one-sided and entirely in favour of Iran. He claimed: "The fact is, this was a horrible one-sided deal that should have never, ever been made. It didn't bring calm. It didn't bring peace and it never will." Conversely, the Europeans, Chinese and Russians consider the JCPOA crucial for stopping Tehran from acquiring nuclear weapons and also preventing a nuclear arms race in the region.

Last month, Trump Administration designated the Revolutionary Guards as a terror organization, which was 'the first time the United States had made that move against a part of another nation's government.' It was a smart move to malign Iran and simultaneously discredit its one of the most reliable military units. A recent attack on four commercial vessels including two Saudi oil tankers, offshore from the UAE emirate of Fujairah just outside the Strait of Hormuz also reinforces the United States case against the Iranian Revolutionary Guards. The Trump administration holds the Iranians accountable for the said attacks. The United States deployed an aircraft carrier strike group and B-52 bombers in the vicinity of Iran to threaten it militarily. Notwithstanding, President Trump's aggressive behaviour, the Iranian ruling elite is responding judiciously. On 14 May, Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei reiterated Iran does not seek war with the United States. He said, "There won't be any war. The Iranian nation has chosen the path of resistance." He added, "We don't seek a war, and they don't either. They know it's not in their interests."

Undeniably, war is not in the interest of Iran. However, it is debatable whether it serves the political objectives of President Trump or not. Interestingly, Tehran is doing its best to avoid a war with the United States and also shield itself from the destabilizing economic sanctions, but it is disinclined to compromise on its ballistic missile program. It rejected negotiations, which are meant to roll-back its ballistic

missile program. Khamenei declared negotiations on ballistic missiles programmes fatal for Iran's national security. President Trump cannot flex the military muscle in the Korean Peninsula due to North Korea's nuclear weapons capability. Therefore, President Trump had two summits with Chairman Kim. However, the United States can use its military might in the Persian Gulf against Iran, a non-nuclear weapons state and member of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT) to demonstrate its military might in Asia. Indeed, military action against Iran qualifies the nuclear optimists' argument that nuclear weapons are essential for solidifying the defensive fence of the militarily insecure state(s).

Washington's military intimidating certainly invigorate the pro-nuclear weapons forces in Iran. Therefore, the European powers are worried due to the probability of Iran's exiting the NPT. Even though the United States pull out of the 2015 JCPOA in May 2018, they are struggling to prevent the demise of the accord so that Tehran does not resume banned atomic activities. German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas argued, "We in Europe agree that this treaty is necessary for our security. Nobody wants Iran to get possession of an atomic bomb and that's been achieved so far." British Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt concurred his German counterpart by stating "if Iran becomes a nuclear power, its neighbours are likely to want to become nuclear powers. This is already the most unstable region in the world. This would be a massive step in the wrong direction." The Iranian national economy heavily relies on the export of crude oil. The Trump Administration is aiming to force Iranian crude oil exports to zero. It announced the cancellation of waivers, which were saving the importers of the Iranian crude oil from US sanctions. Therefore, the Iranian ruling elite is frustrated and is contemplating various options including signalling about the withdrawal from the NPT to avoid sanctions on its crude oil exports. The safety of sea lines of communication does matter to both developed and developing nations. The conflict between Iran and the United States will disturb the maritime traffic in the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea. Therefore, many western and regional nations are frightened due to the increasing tension between Iran and the United States. To conclude, Washington has been using diplomatic, economic and military means to coerce Tehran, which is alarming for the regional and international security.

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## Hybridised South Asia

SOUTH Asia is more hybridised region, internal and external actors have their strategic interests, and their rivalry is never ending-Pakistan, Afghanistan, China, India and the US. The presence of multiple forces has made South Asia a very complex region. Presently, Pak-China relations have strengthened Indo-US nexus which aims to sabotage China-Pak Economic Corridor (CPEC). As we know Pakistan-Afghanistan border is more porous in comparison to the Pakistan-India border. It is an established fact that Pakistan's internal security condition is always exploited by India-Afghanistan cordial relations that aim to halt or endanger CPEC. India assumes that China-Pakistan nexus may curtail Indian's influence in Afghanistan and would threaten its regional security outlook- to dominate the region and to undermine Pakistan. Whereas, CPEC project will change the regional and international dynamics which may hurt the U.S and India's influence not only in the region but also in the world, consequently India and the U.S both have common concern which was raised by the US Secretary of Defence, Jim Mattis. He opposed CPEC during the Congressional Hearing which categorically reflected to India's concerns on CEPC. Mattis said, "The One Belt One Road strategy to secure China's over both the continental and maritime interests, in their eventual hope of dominating Eurasia and exploiting natural resources there, things that are certainly at odds with US policy. So what do see China playing in Afghanistan, and particularly related to their One Belt One Road Initiative". China is a sovereign country and has legitimate right to expand its economic markets in the world. Neither India nor the US have authority to halt China to develop its economic projects vis-a-vis Pakistan. China is determined to pursue its long-term goals to globalise its economic and security interests.

Afghanistan is an important country which may lead China's plan to connect CPEC with Central-Western Asia economic corridor and China is striving to gain Afghanistan's trust to join CPEC which is eventually increasing India's apprehensions. In Afghanistan, China and India are two divergent forces; China is relying on its close partner Pakistan to stabilise Afghanistan by bringing the Taliban on table talks to end the seventeen-year-old conflict. India has always been investing in economic and security programs to strengthen the Afghan government against the Afghan Taliban and does not want peaceful Afghanistan, because peaceful Afghanistan would not serve India's interest. . On the hand China is keen 'in development' in Afghanistan because a peaceful Afghanistan would help in

completing China's long-term strategy with regard to Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). BRI and CPEC are connected. China knows very well that unrest in Afghanistan would pose a great threat to its interests. Afghanistan is a place where regional and external players are playing their cards in the name of 'development'. The US' presence, undeniably, has changed the dynamics of regional power politics and encourages the role of India in Afghanistan and refused to accept Pakistan's narrative that India is using Afghan soil against Pakistan. Now there is a nexus between India and US with Kabul regime playing to facilitate each other. CPEC has alarmed both India and the US owing to Gwadar Port which provides 'direct access to the Indian Ocean which eventually would curtail Indian influence.

China's direct access to Indian Ocean also deters to the US "from blocking the Strait of Malacca, a key passage in the Indo-Pacific region". To curtail China's economic and military influence in the Indian Ocean the U.S has renamed the US Pacific Command as 'US-Indo Pacific Command' in 2018. Secretary Mattis stated "in recognition of increasing connectivity of the Indian and Pacific Oceans, we renamed the US Pacific Command". The former US Pacific Command has pointed out China's impact on the region and he is of the view that "great power competition is back. I believe we are reaching an inflection point in history. A geo-political completion between free and oppressive visions is taking place in the Indo-Pacific. India believes that China will pose a great threat to 'Indian trade through Indian Ocean' and also Pakistan would be able to control enormous energy avenues. China's control over Gwadar port is an irritant for India because this port will enable China to observe Indian's activity in the Persian Gulf, Arabian Sea and future maritime activities between India and Iran, would be smoothly observed by China. Afghanistan had always mattered to India but today on account of CPEC it matters more than it was considered in the past because it is Pakistan's immediate neighbour and the post-Taliban era, comparatively, witnessed the unfriendly relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan. India being the regional power has taken an opportunity of deteriorated ties between Pakistan and Afghanistan and successfully established stronger ties with Afghanistan. Theoretically speaking, India has shaped its policy to contain Pakistan economically and militarily by using Afghanistan. India would not allow Afghanistan in normalizing its relations with Pakistan, because healthy and friendly relationship would not support India's interests in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan's long borders are penetrable and provide direct trail to enter in Pakistan's two main troubling provinces-Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

These provinces remain target by the cross border terrorists since the US forces attacked Afghanistan. Balochistan conflict had emerged with the birth of Pakistan and it has never been resolved politically rather Pakistani governments used force to silence the Baloch leaders which increased alienation in Balochistan, “Afghanistan and India would support their cause ‘independence of Balochistan’ the Baloch leaders (insurgents) sought help from Afghanistan or India”. India and Afghanistan both took advantage to aggravate and exploit the Pakistan’s internal situation. Afghanistan always inculcates Pakistan for its chaotic and anarchic security conditions and endorses India’s perception against Pakistan. An ex-spy master, Ajit Doval who has been in Pakistan for spying purpose, cautioned Pakistan that, “you can do one Mumbai and you may lose Balochistan” and Indian active politician and BJP’s leader Parrikar, said “we should neutralize terrorists through terrorists only”. How can the US deny the role of India in Afghanistan against Pakistan?

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## China Not Impervious To Global Geopolitical Pressures – Analysis By Dr Subhash Kapila

Geopolitically significant was China's switch to lift its veto in United Nations blocking designation of Pak Terror Chief Masood Azhar after years of resistance. It marked of China no longer being impervious to geopolitical pressures. China had come under immense pressure led by United States and France.

Notably, this Chinese climb-down from its unstinted permissiveness of Pakistan Army affiliated Jihadi Terrorist Organisations operating against India maintained for decades also marked two other significant pointers.

Importantly, this United States, France and British sustained pressures on China upholding India's demand that UN designate Masood Azhar as 'Global Terrorist' was an acknowledgement of India's geopolitical rise under Prime Minister Modi and his personal rapport and outreach to Major Power leaders. India under PM Modi seems to have arrived in that Major Power leaders were alive to India's strategic sensitivities.

China's climb down on its long held obduracy in United Nations on shielding Pakistan Army's terrorism adventurism should be strategically noteworthy for United States and Western Powers that China is no longer impervious to Global Power pressures as long as they stand unitedly in any face-off against China.

In terms of US-India Strategic Partnership, President Trump is reported to have put China under a virtual ultimatum that China resile from obstructing India's case in UN on behalf of Pakistan soon or face stern exposure and global condemnation by other UN procedural processes in United Nations as supporter of Pakistan Army's Jihadi Terrorist Organisations and leaders.

China seems to have in preceding weeks before its decision indicated to Pak PM Imran Khan during his Beijing visit that it would have to yield to global pressures. What long-range impact this has on China's critical strategic alliance with Pakistan and Pakistan Army has yet to unfold. One thing however is certain that both China and Pakistan cannot let go of each other. A dent would have been made in the China-provided 'Iron Brother' Shield.

The contextual background having been laid out, one can now proceed towards an analysis of China buckling to Major Power pressures in terms of its global and regional relationships.

Globally, so far the United States and Major Global Powers of Europe were virtually deferential towards China for both strategic and economic considerations. Strategic deference arose from counterbalancing of the Russia factor. Economic deference emerged from considerations of exploiting the vast markets that China offered.

For decades, the United States was in the lead of trying to convince the global community that China deserved patience so as to ease China into the role of a 'responsible stake-holder' in global security and stability. In the immediate run-up to 2019, China's sheen has now worn thin for the United States and other Major Powers. The significant trigger for change of attitudes towards China was China's wanton stamping of United States sovereign toes in the South China Sea, illegal occupation of Islands belonging to Vietnam and the Philippines followed by construction of 'Artificial Man-Made Islands for Chinese military fortifications to establish 'Full Spectrum Dominance' over the South China Sea expanse.

The above also seriously impacted on United States global predominance of switching US Navy Fleets from the Pacific Ocean to Indian Ocean and The Gulf and vice versa. The China maritime challenge in the making was a military gauntlet thrown directly at the United States.

US President Trump has significantly changed the American narrative of policy approaches towards China. The United States decades-old China-Policy of 'Risk Aversion' and 'Hedging Strategy' seems to have been finally dispensed with. Indicative of this is the US-China ongoing 'Trade Wars' which virtually amounts to downsizing China by means short of war.

Major Powers of Europe which earlier felt stifled by US approaches to China and wanted their share of the Chinese markets also seem to have reconsidered their China-Policy approaches as countries like France and Britain felt concerned by China's aggression in South China Sea and growing intrusiveness in the Indian Ocean.

Most notably are the changed perspectives of the United States towards Pakistan based Jihadi Terrorist Groups which have not only plagued India but more significantly attacked US Military Embedment in Afghanistan directly or indirectly. Consequently, Pakistan's strategic utility to United States has waned.

Notwithstanding United States dependence on Pakistani road-routes for logistics resupply of US Forces in Afghanistan, President Trump has chastised Pakistan's reluctance to liquidate Jihadi terrorists' havens in Pakistan. Obviously, lurking behind United States revised strategic calculations is the premise that China has overplayed its hand both in terms of global face-offs and its unstinted support of Pakistan's terrorism misadventures against its neighbours.

In terms of global impact of the above developments it can be summed up that China's and Pakistan's misperceived centrality in United States and other Major Powers strategic calculus stands dented. No longer will strategic deference to China flow from Washington and Western capitals. China will henceforth be on a short leash.

In terms of global balance of power it should be evident that while China can still be expected to challenge United States and Western predominance with Japan and India in tow, it can no longer expect 'soft retaliatory responses'.

In terms of regional implications of China no longer being impervious to Major Powers' geopolitical pressures the impact will be of consequence in terms of Indo Pacific security and stability. China after its aggression and brinkmanship in South China Sea unchallenged by United States in terms of strong retaliation China became endowed with a larger than warranted military image.

Perceptions started flying in Asian capitals that United States power was really on decline and doubts commenced arising whether the United States in face of growing Chinese military power would be a credible provider of security in the Indo Pacific. With the present context of China yielding to Major Power pressures in the United Nations this prevailing misperception would no longer be valid and restore United States credibility in Indo Pacific.

Regionally, the present Chinese switch from obstinate and stubborn Pakistan Army's strategic delinquencies against India to a more pragmatic approach to South Asian political dynamics and the reality of India as South Asian regional power and an Emerging Major Power transforms the existing equations in China-India relations and Pakistan-India relations.

Pakistan and the Pakistan Army should be prudent enough to recognise this transformation of South Asian geopolitical landscape and reset their proxy use of Jihadi terrorism against India more pointedly in Kashmir Valley.

Coupled with China not being impervious to United States and Major Powers pressures China is slowly realising that India under PM Modi is no longer a 'strategic pushover' of past Indian Prime Ministers. PM Modi enjoys the nationalistic support of India-at-large. This was exhibited in the Doklam Military Stand-Off a year back and India's resolute refusal to attend OBOR Summits in Beijing as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, which is a centre-piece of China's OBOR strategy traverses Pakistan Occupied Kashmir, legally part of India.

Presumably, the above may have also been a factor in United States and Western Powers pressures on China having come alive to geopolitical reality that India indeed is an existential counterweight to China and needs to be supported substantially against China's pressures in South Asia.

Concluding, as reflected in my Book and my decades on writing on China was the reality that China may be militarily overpowering on India's peripheries around India but China also has glaring strategic vulnerabilities which provide India with windows of opportunities to drive hard bargains with China on contentious issue bedeviling China-India relations. China's current yielding to global pressures by United States and Western Powers, perceptually favouring India should logically stiffen India's bargaining powers with China. This should be a reference point for India's policy establishment.

Source : <https://www.eurasiareview.com/15052019-china-not-impervious-to-global-geopolitical-pressures-analysis/?fbclid=IwAR1ZSBqU6GoniluyuFtFDSAzE9q31Wo1r5I7cvTdnr5KPpjLQIbWNIOi0iM>

## Security calculations for durable Afghan peace By Dr Sadia Sulaiman

While the US is struggling hard to carve out a political solution to end the protracted conflict in Afghanistan, the peace process continues to ignore some potential security challenges. Afghanistan is a very fractured and fragile state and a small step in the wrong direction may jeopardise the entire process. It is true that ceasefire and counter-terrorism assurances are already on the table between the US and the Taliban but the missing aspect is the fate of the Taliban as a movement, whose majority is busy in fighting across Afghanistan and seem unconvinced of the peace process. There is a need to deliberate the fate of local commanders and foot soldiers along with the political future of their leaders in the ongoing peace process. If overlooked, they may become a security challenge not only for Afghanistan but for the whole region as well.

So far the Taliban leadership does not seem to have taken these local commanders and fighters into confidence about the intricacies of the ongoing peace process. That may well be a reason which is compelling the Taliban to demand a US withdrawal before they could consider a truce with the Afghan government. It is an alarming situation where the internal strife within the rank and file of the 60,000 battle-hardened Taliban could disintegrate the movement into various splinter factions, thereby multiplying the security challenges.

Another possibility is that these armed Taliban fighters may intensify their criminal activities which could be of trans-regional nature, just out of sheer frustration. Crime-terror nexus has always remained a challenge in a fragile post-conflict society like Afghanistan and it could become a Frankenstein monster when the militant force is neither convinced of abandoning their armed struggle nor taken into confidence regarding their future in case of a political deal between the US and their leadership.

The situation becomes more alarming with the Taliban's control over some of the pre-existing structures of illegal economic activities, especially extortion, kidnapping, drug and arms trafficking, and illegal road taxes being collected inside Afghanistan with strong cross-border links. The Taliban are infamous for their indulgence in all such activities to generate funds. The intra-Afghan trade routes and cross-border trade routes connecting Torkhum and Chaman in Pakistan with

Kabul will require strict security. Otherwise these militants may assert their control just as a pressure tactic.

These disgruntled Taliban fighters may even opt to cross border into the newly-merged tribal districts of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) as they had done previously when the US launched Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in 2001. Pakistan's former Fata has always remained a focal gathering point of militants being flushed out of Afghanistan. Though the tribal borderland may not prove that easy a place for the fleeing Taliban militants to regroup as it was back in 2001, it may create an alarming security situation for Pakistan which is struggling to rehabilitate and reconstruct the area.

A viable option before the US, Afghan government and the Taliban leadership can be to deliberate the possibilities of integrating these fighters into the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF) in a post-deal Afghanistan. However, it will not be an easy task considering the fact that both the ANDSF and the Taliban have remained a bitter foe and harbour enormous trust deficit towards each other. It will be a challenging task for them to accept each other as partners and there is a possibility that the Taliban may emerge as a parallel force challenging the position of ANDSF.

Any peace deal which ignores these intricacies and complexities may not last very long in Afghanistan. The Taliban do not comprise a few hand-picked leaders. By ignoring the rank and file of the Taliban group, they may emerge as a peace spoiler. It is wise if the negotiating parties could take these sensitivities into consideration for ensuring a durable peace in the strife-torn Afghanistan.

Source : [https://tribune.com.pk/story/1973742/6-security-calculations-durable-afghan-peace/?fbclid=IwAR2QxN1WEgga\\_Ikffruokpa3EfvbXGgFqjp5QCckOnFkrllOo5ouZldj2Tc](https://tribune.com.pk/story/1973742/6-security-calculations-durable-afghan-peace/?fbclid=IwAR2QxN1WEgga_Ikffruokpa3EfvbXGgFqjp5QCckOnFkrllOo5ouZldj2Tc)

## Is an Afghan peace deal finally within reach By Tanzeela Aslam

Undoubtedly, this moment has not come without a cost. Thousands of Afghans (and their international colleagues) sacrificed their lives and resources to get Afghans right here. But even those vast sacrifices have no longer been sufficient to deliver sustainable peace to a country that has been torn apart by warfare over a long time. Afghanistan now needs a well-rounded approach and practical management to tackle the last few hurdles on its long and deceitful route to peace.

Thankfully, Afghanistan's President Ashraf Ghani devised a complete and sensible four-section method to obtain sustainable peace in the country.

First, the president insists, Pakistan needs to be satisfied to end hostilities closer to Afghanistan. The Taliban and their associates who interact in violence in Afghanistan have been doing so with the blessing and encouragement of Islamabad, he claims. A peace settlement can simplest be agreed on if and while Pakistan learns to respect the sovereignty of Afghanistan and gives up its ambition to forcefully bring its neighbour into its sphere of influence.

Today, Ghani insists on an Afghan-led peace process because he no longer wants to copy past errors or comply with a procedure that might set the country off in the middle of some other bloody battle inside the near future

Pakistan most recently made its opposition to a sovereign, united and completely independent Afghanistan apparent when Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan called the Kabul authorities a "hurdle to peace talks" and recommended setting up an interim government inside the country. An interim government means returning to Square One, scrapping the constitution and reversing the gains of over 18 years. The people of Afghanistan, who fought long and hard for their independence, don't have any intention of agreeing to any peace process that would deprive the country of its sovereignty. Ghani is privy to this and believes the peace process can most effectively move forward after consensus is reached between allies.

Second, Ghani asserts, Afghanistan needs to work towards gaining the trust of the world community and demonstrating that it is ready to tackle the demanding situations of the post-war era independently. The president believes sustainable peace can most simply be completed by ending Afghanistan's reliance on foreign

resources. Alongside his efforts to achieve monetary self-sufficiency, Ghani is likewise embarking on diplomatic engagements to restore the international community's trust in the Afghan authorities. So after some time, his engagement with the USA resulted in the Trump Administration's Afghanistan-centered South Asia method and put increased strain on Pakistan to quit its assistance for the Taliban. Meanwhile, his engagement with Islamic countries resulted in the endorsement of his peace efforts by means of Saudi Arabia and the Indonesian Ulema Council. Moreover, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation officially defined the Afghan struggle as a battle "contrary to the concepts and formal teachings of Islam". This statement stripped the war of its spiritual justifications, bringing Afghanistan one step closer to peace.

Third, the President believes a successful peace process must involve all segments of Afghan society. Past events in 1992 and 2001 really show that peace efforts which depend on reconciliation with one institution, while at the same time undermining others, bring about renewed conflicts. President Ghani is privy to this, and he has already met and engaged in intensive discussions with hundreds of citizens such as women rights activists, civil society representatives and a diverse choice of political leaders and non-secular scholars. He has given every stratum a stake in peacemaking. Ghani believes what Afghanistan desires is a people-targeted peace, now not elite-led one, and he is working hard to supply this.

Fourth, Ghani believes the peace process ought to be owned and led by the people and authorities of Afghanistan. In 1989, the United Nations brokered a peace deal between the Pakistan-based totally Afghan mujahedeen and the government of Mohammad Najibullah. However, this peace deal failed, leading to renewed conflict and extra bloodshed. The failure of the deal was in particular because of the exclusion of Afghans from the process and the dearth of mechanisms for implementation. Today, Ghani insists on an Afghan-led peace process because he no longer wants to copy past errors or comply with a procedure that might set the country off in the middle of some other bloody battle inside the near future.

As the peace process intensifies and some factors each within and outside Afghanistan suggest an interim authority, civil society activists gathered in Kabul and had a verbal exchange on the form of peace they want. One of their foremost needs changed into the demand for the Afghan constitution and the moderate values of the republic to be upheld. The Afghan Constitution assigns the power to declare war and peace to the president.



## America Must Not Stumble into a Third Gulf War By John Dale Grover

Iran is a threat, but not one that requires another costly war.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo claims that Washington is not interested in war with Iran. However, America has ordered all U.S. nonemergency staff and families out of neighboring Iraq. In addition, a recent report by the New York Times said that the Pentagon was given plans to deploy 120,000 troops to the Middle East in the event of a crisis. Given that America previously sent 125,000 soldiers to invade Iraq in 2003, it seems unlikely that a similar number of troops today could be used for anything other than regime change.

A war with Iran is unnecessary and harmful to American interests. Although Tehran is an enemy, there is no immediate danger other than the threat inflation from hawks in Washington, DC. Moreover, a preemptive war would be an overreaction that would cost American lives, money, and bandwidth when deterring China, North Korea, and Russia is more important.

American officials and many pundits in Washington have long-engaged in threat inflation over Iran. Today, unverified claims of heightened Iranian activity and an alleged attack on four oil tankers in the Strait of Hormuz is being used as justification for military preparations.

Previously, legitimate concerns over Iranian missile testing and support for terrorism were used as justification for American withdrawal from the imperfect but still-working Iran Deal. That treaty could have been modified and had been a success, but now it is in jeopardy.

Iran never got a nuclear weapon and still does not have one. Under the deal, International Atomic Energy Administration inspectors gained access to Iran and Tehran shipped about 98 percent of its uranium stockpile to Russia. Iran also destroyed several of its facilities and got rid of 66 percent of its uranium-enrichment centrifuges. In fact, even after Washington left the deal and reimposed sanctions, Iran has remained compliant. As an April 15 report by the Congressional Research Service noted, "U.N. and International Atomic Energy Agency reports since the

JCPOA [Iran Deal] began implementation have stated that Iran is complying with its nuclear obligations under the JCPOA.”

But a lack of communication and de-escalation mechanisms, combined with constant threats and pressure, may push Iran to restart its nuclear program for the sake of deterrence. On May 8—one year after America withdrew from the Iran Deal—Tehran announced it would partially withdraw as well. Specifically, Iran would resume enriching uranium to higher levels in sixty days unless the remaining partners in the Iran Deal found a way around U.S. sanctions. Those partners include the United Kingdom, the European Union, China, Germany, and France—all of whom would prefer to continue trading with Iran in order to keep Tehran compliant with the deal.

Iran’s leaders know that it cannot win a war with the United States, but they saw how non-nuclear powers like Iraq and Libya got destroyed whereas nuclear North Korea was able to deter U.S. military action. Americans intuitively understand this and can foresee the fallout from Washington leaving the Iran Deal and re-imposition of sanctions. According to that 2018 Reuters/Ipsos poll, nearly 66 percent of Americans thought leaving the Iran Deal might lead to Iran developing nuclear weapons, and about 50 percent thought a war would be the result.

Yet American actions and official statements give the impression that Tehran is so threatening it might attack despite U.S. retaliation. Axios has reported that both Pompeo and National Security Adviser John Bolton “have been warning of an unspecified ‘escalating threat’ from Iran in recent weeks.” As if this weren’t enough, U.S. nuclear-capable bombers have been conducting deterrence flights close to Iran, and an aircraft carrier battle group has been sped to the region.

Also, sanctions have crippled Iran and caused massive protests as inflation has soared close to 50 percent. Tehran is isolated and weak—it would not do anything that might cause a war unless it thought it was the only way it could survive. Washington’s European allies are also contradicting America’s claims that Iran has become increasingly threatening. Yet Americans are supposed to believe that Iran is somehow so dangerous that a war might be necessary?

War does not make sense and would be at odds with U.S. interests and what the American people want. America never should have withdrawn from the deal and ratcheted up economic and military pressure on Tehran. A 2018 Reuters/Ipsos poll found that 54 percent of Americans supported the Iran Deal and a plurality of 42 percent, wanted to stay in it. Only 29 percent wanted to leave and another 28

percent weren't sure. This entire unfolding tragedy was avoidable, but there is still time to stop things from getting out of hand.

America's ongoing wars in the Middle East have come at an enormous cost, and Iran would be no different. One estimate by the Watson Institute at Brown University found that the global war on terror will cost \$5.6 trillion when all is said and done. That is a large taxpayer burden and America is still \$22 trillion in debt.

Furthermore, the war on terror has resulted in a combined total of nearly half a million military, insurgent, and civilian deaths. As of the Pentagon's May 14 Casualty Status Report, 6,997 uniformed and civilian Department of Defense personnel have been killed and 52,825 have been wounded.

Meanwhile, surveys show that Americans do not like Iran but they also understand it is not a threat on par with North Korea, China, or Russia. Gallup polls show that since 2015, Americans have consistently ranked Iran as less threatening than those three nuclear powers.

However, Washington's pressure campaign continues apace against the wishes of the American people and U.S. interests. The Iran Deal should have been maintained and both sides need to come back to the negotiating table. At a time when America is committed to wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen, Somalia, and Syria, U.S. forces and bandwidth are spread thin. The United States should focus on preventing conflicts and threats rather than looking for another land war in the Middle East.

John Dale Grover is a fellow at Defense Priorities and a senior contributor for Young Voices. He is the assistant managing editor for The National Interest. His articles have appeared in Defense One, Real Clear Defense, The American Conservative, and Fox News.

Source : <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/skeptics/america-must-not-stumble-third-gulf-war-57717?fbclid=IwAR3Oh8aBuv25z3OkSv7l726v7HpyxbAtds5gqE9ctHc3C7oyrkN9BLC8V2s>

## How to end Afghanistan war as longest conflict moves towards fragile peace By Alexander Gillespie

The longest-running war appears to be coming to an end. The Taliban has been running an armed rebellion in Afghanistan since being dislodged from power in a US-led invasion following September 11 2001. Recent high-level negotiations between the two sides in the 18-year war did not produce a breakthrough, but “significant progress”, leading to “improved” conditions for peace.

The fact that the primary belligerents, the Taliban and the United States, are talking directly is essential. Any peaceful pathway going forwards without their direct involvement is impossible. But to end the killing, all sides are going to have to give up something, to achieve their greater goals.

### Longest Running Conflict

Although the losses in the Afghanistan war are not as bad as either the American war in Vietnam (just over 58,000 military casualties and between 1 and 3 million civilians or enemy) or the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan (maybe 1 million civilians, 90,000 Mujahideen, 18,000 Afghan troops and 14,500 Soviet soldiers), the record in Afghanistan is still difficult reading. The American death toll is a little over 2,200, while the wider losses (civilians and enemy) are well over 100,000.

Once the Americans returned home and their country became engrossed in other matters such as Watergate, the promises were forgotten.

Reliable estimates suggest more than 45,000 Afghani military have been killed since 2014 alone. The annual civilian death toll continues to climb, with 3,804 deaths recorded in 2018. At the same time, the amount of territory that rebel groups control (14.5%) or is contested (29.2%) or under government control (56.3%) is an unexpected result, given nearly two decades of combat.

The significance of talking to the Taliban directly cannot be overstated. When the Mujahideen were not directly involved in the Geneva Accords that ended the Soviet conflict in Afghanistan, the results were a disaster. No sooner had the Soviets left the country, the Mujahideen denounced the agreement (even though Pakistan had been negotiating on their behalf), saying they were not part of it. Their forces then took three years to overrun most of the country.

## Negotiated Peace

The fact that it will be a negotiated end to the conflict, as opposed to an imposed and unconditional one, is significant. Negotiated and conditional agreements are often cast as “peace with honour”, whereby the side that wants to exit the most prioritises what it is willing to give away while still appearing to be in control.

Recent high-level negotiations between the two sides in the 18-year war did not produce a breakthrough, but “significant progress”, leading to “improved” conditions for peace.

For example, with the end of the American involvement in the Vietnam war, the core of the Paris Peace Accords of early 1973, the primary goal of the North Vietnamese was the withdrawal of all US and allied forces from the region. The primary goal for Nixon was the return of 1,056 prisoners of war.

When the Geneva Accords ended the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, the primary exchange was about an exit of Russian soldiers, in return for mutual commitments from the governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan not to interfere in each other’s country. In both instances, a swag of secondary considerations formed part of the package.

In the case of Vietnam, there were supplementary provisions for a ceasefire that was to be monitored by independent countries and a National Council of Reconciliation and Concord to implement democracy and organise free elections in the south. In the case of the Geneva Accords, the return of Afghani refugees was an important consideration, as were mutual commitments “to prevent any assistance to ... or tolerance of terrorist groups, saboteurs or subversive agents against the other High Contracting Party”.

## Main Considerations

In the current deliberations, the most important thing the Taliban want is the exit of all foreign troops from Afghanistan. This is possible, with both the Paris and Geneva accords providing precedents. The most important thing the Americans want is not only an exit of their troops, but a commitment that the Taliban will not, again, host any groups involved in terrorist activities against the US.

The fact that it will be a negotiated end to the conflict, as opposed to an imposed and unconditional one, is significant.

This demand is consistent with the original American war aims and the Geneva precedent is useful. The harder part will be working out the assurances that such promises are kept.

Where negotiations will get much more difficult is with the plethora of secondary considerations. In the context of Afghanistan, this will cover issues such as direct dialogue with the Afghani government and a comprehensive ceasefire. This is easier said than done as it will require the Taliban to accept the legitimacy of the Afghani political system (and whichever government is in power) and the democracy that placed them in power.

The flip side of this, both nationally and internationally, is that the Taliban will have to lose their “terrorist” classification, which the UN Security Council has applied consistently since the end of the 20th century. This designation has placed strong military, financial and diplomatic restrictions on the Taliban, which made them outlaws in the eyes of the international community. This will have to be reversed, as the declared terrorists of yesterday become the legitimate powerbrokers of tomorrow.

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The agenda should cover commitments to the most basic human rights (women’s rights in particular), what to do about almost 2.5 million refugees from Afghanistan, and how to deal with the fact that Afghanistan is now the world’s leading (and rapidly expanding) producer of illegal opium.

The opposing sides need to work out how to ensure a comprehensive ceasefire, as well as its links to ongoing economic, diplomatic and military support for any future governing regime in Kabul, especially if the ceasefire is breached.

When the Americans exited Vietnam, they promised their allies in South Vietnam that American support in all other avenues would continue. But once the Americans returned home and their country became engrossed in other matters such as Watergate, the promises were forgotten. Saigon fell, a few years later, to the very enemy they had negotiated a peace treaty with.

## Avoiding Another Iraq in Iran | By Will Walldorf, Andrew Yeo

National Security Advisor John Bolton is trying to push the United States into a regime change war in Iran. In historical terms, this is not new for U.S. foreign policy. From Korea, Vietnam, and El Salvador during the Cold War, to Afghanistan and Iraq in the 2000s, hawkish advisors have often goaded U.S. presidents into wars to either overturn or prop up foreign governments.

In the early 1980s, Secretary of State Al Haig and National Security Advisor William Clark played, for instance, the part that Bolton plays today. Both used an array of methods—from a white paper with fabricated intelligence about communism overrunning Central America to provocative military exercises and loose talk about using “whatever means” necessary—to pressure President Ronald Reagan to use direct force in El Salvador.

Sound familiar? It should. Today’s hawks like Bolton have adopted similar tactics to press their agenda of a U.S. regime change war in Iran. From evacuating embassies and warnings about unspecified threats, to efforts to challenge Iran into aggressive action and talk of “all options on the table,” the pressure campaign for war appeared to be in full swing last week.

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Trump's caution is undoubtedly a good thing. However, relying on that alone to keep America out of Iran is a dicey proposition for many reasons. Chief among them, other presidents in history have shown equally if not stronger tendencies toward restraint and gone ahead with major regime change invasions all the same. Presidents Lyndon Johnson and George W. Bush offer the classic examples, of course. Both expressed deep skepticism about regime change wars and nation-building, then went on to oversee wars in Vietnam and Iraq, arguably two of the greatest blunders in the history of U.S. foreign policy. Without a doubt, regime change and reconstruction in Iran—a country four times the size of Vietnam and Iraq—would be an even greater mistake. The costs would almost surely precipitate U.S. decline and prove the final death knell of the American century.

Steps must be taken, then, to reinforce Trump's noninterventionist sensibilities in Iran. History (including the El Salvador case) offers important lessons on how to do this. Above else, it shows that traumatic lessons of pain and failure from prior regime change wars are salient with the U.S. public. Additionally, broad national discussions about these past mistakes can serve as powerful tools for constraining similar action in the present. Strong public debates—usually led by opinion leaders, members of Congress, and various interest groups—ignite public fears of a repeat of past traumas. This, in turn, raises the political costs of military action, deterring presidents from pursuing forceful regime change.

El Salvador offers a good example. In the early 1980s, the painful memories of the Vietnam War hung over the U.S. public like a cloud and shaped debates about foreign policy in general. Efforts like those by Haig and Clark in El Salvador sparked a fierce public debate. Pushback from pundits and members of both political parties in Congress stoked fears of “another Vietnam,” which quickly swamped the entire debate about Reagan's policy in Central America. Reagan's moderate advisors used the Vietnam syndrome backlash to impress upon the president the political dangers of an overly hawkish policy, which steered the president away from using direct force in El Salvador.

Similar syndrome-based political pressures led Reagan to later reject proposals for direct U.S. military action in places like Suriname, Chad, Sudan, and the Philippines. Tellingly, in the one regime crisis during the Reagan years—Grenada—where no such public discourse emerged or appeared on the horizon (due in large measure to the distraction of other issues, especially the bombing of the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut), hawks inside the administration found more



room to operate. Consequently, U.S. Marines toppled Grenada's communist government in 1983.

To ensure we stay out of Iran today, we need a restraint-based public debate like El Salvador. Fortunately, there is fertile ground for this conversation. The painful lessons of the 2003 Iraq War hang over the U.S. public in ways similar to Vietnam during the 1980s. Furthermore, evidence indicates that this powerful Iraq syndrome has constrained the use of military force like its Vietnam predecessor. Whether right or wrong, we know from insider accounts that an extensive public debate around the worries of "another Iraq" led President Barack Obama to avoid using ground troops in Libya in 2011 and to choose against force of any kind in Syria, especially at the critical juncture of whether or not to enforce the chemical weapons "red line" in August 2013. Similar insider accounts indicate the Iraq syndrome mattered even during the late years of the Bush administration. In 2007, concerns about domestic political costs led Bush to turn aside, for instance, proposals from hawks in his administration for military strikes against both Syria and Iran.

The same approach can be used to put the brakes on escalating tensions with Iran. Public anxiety and aversion toward Iraq-style wars remain high. A 2019 Gallup poll finds that 79 percent of Americans view Iraq as mostly or very unfavorable. A 2018 Pew survey finds a plurality still believe that the United States made the "wrong decision" with the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Pundits and members of Congress from both parties need to tap into the trauma narrative of Iraq. Doing so can stir the voice of restraint, ultimately steering the administration away from the use of force.

In ways perhaps unique to his predecessors, Trump is acutely sensitive to his political standing at home. Playing on these fears with a robust national discussion about the potential for "another Iraq" in Iran offers an important tool to marginalize administration hawks and create space for more creative, far less costly policy options. Otherwise, the United States appears headed toward another huge mistake in the Middle East—one far more cataclysmic than the last.

Source: [https://nationalinterest.org/blog/middle-east-watch/avoiding-another-iraq-iran-58627?fbclid=IwAR00hwLxPaDJmtLymsUfktE16jVI1A9tT9MRCNdVbfdrdULnfFeAZC\\_HtRg](https://nationalinterest.org/blog/middle-east-watch/avoiding-another-iraq-iran-58627?fbclid=IwAR00hwLxPaDJmtLymsUfktE16jVI1A9tT9MRCNdVbfdrdULnfFeAZC_HtRg)

## Shanghai Cooperation Organization in 2019 By Muhammad Asif Noor

On May 22, Bishkek will be hosting meeting of Foreign Ministers of Member States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization(SCO) wherein Shah Mehmood Qureshi Foreign Minister of Pakistan will be attending this important meeting and will led the delegation from Pakistan. The meeting is scheduled in the backdrop to finalize the agendas to be discussed in the upcoming meeting of the Heads of the State and government level meetings scheduled to be held this June. Foreign Ministers will also approve important documents that will be presented during the upcoming heads of the state meeting in June 2019 in Bishkek. The Foreign Minister's moot will discuss the international cooperation and sign some number of agreements as well. The meeting will be attended by the foreign ministers of Pakistan, India, Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Earlier, SCO Member State Security Council Secretaries met chaired by Kyrgyzstan, SCO Women's Forum, Business Forum concluded apart from the discussion forum held about the defense and strategic cooperation. The SCO's Council of Foreign Ministers will be followed by the SCO's Head of Government level meeting in June in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, and it is expected the newly elected Indian prime minister will be attending the summit, as results of the Indian elections are due to be declared on May 23 followed by appointment of a new premier. Prime Minister Imran Khan, according to the sources, has not yet made any decision whether to attend the summit or not though Foreign Office has recommended to the Premier to avail the opportunity which will also provide prospects of meeting a number of heads of the governments of the SCO member countries including Russian President Vladimir Putin. Pakistan puts high hopes in the SCO and is now an active member of this emerging regional grouping having potential to enhance the peace and stability in the region.

The chairmanship of SCO Summit 2019, 19th in line, was moved to Kyrgyzstan in earlier summit held in China last year. In March 2019, SCO Secretary-General Vladimir Norov disclosed the agenda of upcoming summit where member state leaders would engage in political dialogue to strengthen regional security, increase economic activities incorporating trade and promote cultural and humanitarian cooperation. In line with institutional scope of discussion, leaders would also deliberate on comprehensive regional and international issues. The upcoming

SCO Summit has a huge potential to bring the consensus among regional countries and finalize the agreements to resolve issues especially related to the emerging threat of terrorism, conflicts and development matters. SCO often does not opt to discuss bilateral disputes amongst states and hence the countries are often dialogue on issues which are of multilateral in nature. This is also important in a sense that two permanent members of UN Security Council, major military powers and intra-regional economic players would be sharing a stage to exchange views. After 2nd Belt and Road Forum held in China during last week of April 2019, SCO summit is expected to be another gathering of utmost political significance. The inclusion of Pakistan and India in SCO glittered its institutional character transforming it into trans-regional organization. It has made initially disregarded organization a most relevant and largest regional platform in terms of geography, mass population and GDP quarter of the global total.

The institutional potential to contain conflict and prevent perpetrator of violence collectively should be the bare minimum ability of organization in order to earn international repute and credibility

Geographically, Pakistan acts as a cog in the wheel of SCO giving landlocked Central Asia and South Western Eurasia a land passage up to the deep water sea port at Gwadar, Baluchistan for cheap and exponential trade with the rest of the world. Chinese led Belt and Road Initiative and Pak-China led CPEC remains the mainstay of modern-day SCO in terms of connectivity, trade, economic integration and security cooperation. These are the projects which bolsters integrational characteristics to organization previously underestimated for its potential. Moreover, since China had not evolved up to the 2nd biggest world economy and formidable military power to ensure its relevance in power politics, SCO has been disregarded internationally. SCO remains the first multilateral organization diverse in scope with a potential of enhanced cooperation. It goes without doubt that expansion in SCO membership has given a boost to its international profile and credibility to Chinese leadership. Simultaneously it offers a test case for China to exert its position in regional and international issues and get prepared to assume much bigger role in world affairs.

The upcoming Summit of Foreign Ministers and later the Heads of State Summit also happening in the backdrop of the fact that two of its newly added members India and Pakistan were in loggerheads with each other in the aftermath of the Pulwama attack. Although the countries part of SCO including China, Russia and other Central Asian States advised for restraint but the SCO will not be able to

address the bilateral disputes between two member countries but since it is a multilateral forum, there would not be any such discussion on the agenda right now. However, there would be call for the issues related to terrorism, peace and development. We have also observed recently when the SCO Military exercises took place where the two adverse armies were participating, among others, at single this platform for combined operations against terrorism and extremism. The institutional potential to contain conflict and prevent perpetrator of violence collectively should be the bare minimum ability of organization in order to earn international repute and credibility. SCO has started taking account of serious issues endangering regional and global security as Russia and China with global agenda of their respective foreign policy had shared view towards North Korean nuclear program and role of US in it, Iranian nuclear deal brokered by UN Security Council, Afghan Peace Process and diffusing tensions between India and Pakistan. This upcoming SCO summit would deliberate on regional and transregional security issues.

Given the track record of SCO, it starts a new chapter of cooperation every year to congregate its history and sets new goals to achieve. Moreover, the agenda of SCO is not directed against any state and international organization giving it a cushion to engage with more states on broader agenda. SCO is actively engaging with observer states and dialogue partners aims to expand membership of organization in coming years. Afghanistan has placed its bid for full membership, but its domestic instable politics and fragile security remains major obstacle hindering direct connectivity between South Asia and Eurasia. Afghanistan being full member of SCO can provide direct linkages to Central Asia with Indian Ocean passing through Afghanistan and Pakistan. Russia, China and Pakistan would actively take Afghanistan on board for regional integration. SCO has formed a Contact Group, one of its kind, to keep idea of peace afloat and contribute towards it. China has intended to include Afghanistan in CPEC, a pilot project of BRI, given its strategic central position in the region.

It has made SCO a platform for establishing mutual trust relations and developing cooperation within institutional framework. The credibility and potential of SCO as an organization is on the rise because of its inclusive policies driven by mutual respect and trust of member states.

Source: [https://dailytimes.com.pk/399757/shanghai-cooperation-organization-i-n-2019/?fbclid=IwAR2Aqc2m8me76wVlqm8R0c6TeXSjVZBli1uyQe1Crr\\_evpKc8Ei4xsUn298](https://dailytimes.com.pk/399757/shanghai-cooperation-organization-i-n-2019/?fbclid=IwAR2Aqc2m8me76wVlqm8R0c6TeXSjVZBli1uyQe1Crr_evpKc8Ei4xsUn298)

## Beijing vs Washington a.k.a Socialism vs Capitalism By Keyu Chen

While Xi Jinping called 'cultural clash' between US and China 'Stupid' but analysts still believe this tussle to be ideologically motivated. Can China Socialist community clash with modern America. China's trade war with US has started affecting the global market and concerns have started to rise from other countries

### Beijing vs Washington a.k.a Socialism vs Capitalism

The China-U.S. “ideological clash” has been continuing to make headlines since the fiery speech delivered by the U.S. vice president Mike Pence at the Hudson Institute last October that fueled the fears of new Cold War between two of the world’s largest economies. Given the renewed trade tensions between China and the U.S. that appears to escalate into all-around confrontation, some political analysts and academics are comparing China to the former Soviet Union and invoking historical analogies to interpret the ongoing disputes between Beijing and Washington as a conflict of ideologies.

Besides the U.S. politicians and political observers, on the other hand, the Chinese leadership is also obsessed with the rhetoric of “ideological struggle” to guard against any factor that might lead to the regime collapse resembling the fall of the Soviet Union. In early April, the CCP party magazine Qiushi published a speech by President Xi Jinping six years ago that underlies necessity in cooperating and competing with “capitalism” and reiterates the superiority of socialism to capitalism in Marxist theory.

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Whereas it is tempting for politicians and political analysts to revisit the Cold War playbook for analogical evidence of ideological conflict and put any trace of such evidence in the current context for comparison, the rivalry between Beijing and Washington is hardly an ideological adversary. Here is why. First, China’s ideology has been flexible and adjustable throughout the past decades since the founding of the People’s Republic.

After the Communists took power on the mainland in 1949, Mao Zedong transformed China into a Soviet-style centrally controlled socialist society through forceful measures bearing the hallmarks of fundamental Marxism and Leninism, including removal of landlords, overhaul of land distribution system, destruction of merchants, wipe-out of nearly all foreign investment, all of which are collectively termed as “class struggle”.

Nonetheless, since Mao’s death in 1976, the CCP ruling elites have started to abandon Mao’s fundamentalist socialism and instead, took a revisionist approach to socialism. To save the regime from collapse, Deng Xiaoping inaugurated “reform and opening up” policy to shore up a crumbling national economy. Softening the Party’s hardline on ideology and blurring the borderline between socialism and capitalism, Deng ushered in a kind of revisionist socialism by encouraging foreign investment, private businesses, deregulation and less government intervention to lift the country out of Mao-era poverty.

When he said “it doesn’t matter if a cat is black or white; as long as it catches mice, it’s a good cat”, he may imply that it doesn’t matter if it’s socialism or capitalism, as long as it brings economic growth (or makes us rich), it’s a good political system. Whereas the revisionist socialism bears the brand of “socialism with Chinese characteristics”, political analysts believe it is outright capitalism or state capitalism.

In Mao’s era, the ideological cleavage between China and the U.S. was eclipsed by U.S.-Soviet ideological clash in a larger context.

Under the administration of Deng’s successors, the CCP steered further away from Maoist fundamentalism, reshaping itself as a party that represents all of the Chinese people rather than the party of the workers and peasants, opening membership to capitalists and entrepreneurs, and making legislation to protect private properties. In Mao’s era, the ideological cleavage between China and the U.S. was eclipsed by U.S.-Soviet ideological clash in a larger context.

In the post-Mao era, it’s undebatable that China’s ideology has been moving towards what the U.S. values. Despite that there are backsliding signs under the leadership of President Xi Jinping that remind scholars and analysts of the Mao’s era, after all, the CCP is barely a party that advocated class struggle, execution of landlords, destroy of private properties, and eradication of capitalists and entrepreneurs. In this sense, the argument of China-U.S. ideological flight is only a misinterpretation based on terminological exaggeration.

Second, China's apparent popularity derives from its economic prowess rather than its ideological strength. Political analysts and academics may have concerns over China's influence in not only developing world but also in Western democracies when they read about Italy's joining of China's Belt and Road Initiative, Britain's downplay of Huawei's threat and France's opposition to "Huawei ban" despite the warning of Washington.

Based on these, they may conclude that Beijing is commanding larger influence over Western countries than Washington. However, it should be clear that these allies of the U.S. are siding with China on some issues out of economic instead of ideological consideration. Italy endorsed China's grand infrastructure initiative as the first of the G7 countries by signing a memorandum during President Xi's visit to Rome early this year because Italian companies need Chinese investment and capital injection.

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Given tensions between Rome and Brussels over migrants and austerity measures under Italy's new anti-establishment government, Italy had to find alternatives to finance its economy and social program expenditure. Likewise, the U.K. and France's divergence with the U.S. on Huawei may also be attributed to economics instead of ideologies. When asked about the Trump administration's restriction on Chinese technological giant Huawei, the French President Emanuel Macron takes into account job creation rather than "over-protectionism", which may be the perfect example to understand the rationale of the European countries in disagreement with Washington on Huawei.

Therefore, China may wish to maneuver its economic means to win political or ideological influence over America's allies, which, in the eyes of politicians and analysts, creates an impression that the Western allies are choosing China instead of their traditional partner. But the rationale lies in nothing more than economy and has nothing to do with ideology; in addition, there's little evidence to show China's success on the ideological front. Third, China's ideology in the contemporary world is far from attractive compared to the Soviet ideology in the Cold War era.

The most serious flaw in the "ideological battle" theory is that the analysts ignored the fact that contemporary China is not the former Soviet Union and China's ideology is never comparable to Soviet communist ideology in terms of global

appeal. During the Cold War, the Soviet Union commanded a bloc of communist regimes in Eastern and Central Europe to confront the Western bloc of democracies led by Washington. In contrast, in spite of China's hospitality in hosting world leaders through serial extravagant conferences and forums, the leadership's efforts to voluntarily tout the "Chinese wisdom", and its generosity in granting loans and financing infrastructure, most of the countries are more prepared to take the benefits than to follow China's suit.

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Of course, the defenders of the theory may cite anecdotal traces of media control, Internet censorship, arbitrary surveillance, the crackdown on dissents in other countries to substantiate the claim that China is exporting non-democratic values and practices via economic means or security cooperation, and thus contend that China challenges Western values. But the reasoning may not hold true because the causal relationship between China's influence and these crackdown practices remains debatable.

On the one hand, if these countries are authoritarian themselves, these practices might not be imported from China, but are the instincts embedded in authoritarianism. On the other hand, if democratic countries are beginning to adopt such practices, in most cases, it might be the effects of China's money influence or economic coercion to ensure the rhetoric of local media and public opinion are in line with China's political correctness. Again, it's the matter of economy rather than ideology.

In conclusion, the theory of ideological clash can't be used to accurately explain the ongoing China-America tensions and comparing China with the former Soviet Union is fundamentally wrong. It should be understood that China's ideology keeps changing during the past decades, and China's rising popularity never comes from its ideological attractiveness, but from its economic largesse.

While politicians might be preoccupied with the ideological conflict for strategic purposes or political agenda, political analysts should bear in mind that terminological hyperbole and flawed historical analogies help little in figuring out the complexities in Beijing-Washington competition.



Source: [https://www.globalvillagespace.com/beijing-vs-washington-a-k-a-socialism-vs-capitalism/?fbclid=IwAR2jSoHGiCAVm5VKDAwUi-nwn3Wti-x6p4geOCqoSX8EcRrJRcLw\\_arANms](https://www.globalvillagespace.com/beijing-vs-washington-a-k-a-socialism-vs-capitalism/?fbclid=IwAR2jSoHGiCAVm5VKDAwUi-nwn3Wti-x6p4geOCqoSX8EcRrJRcLw_arANms)