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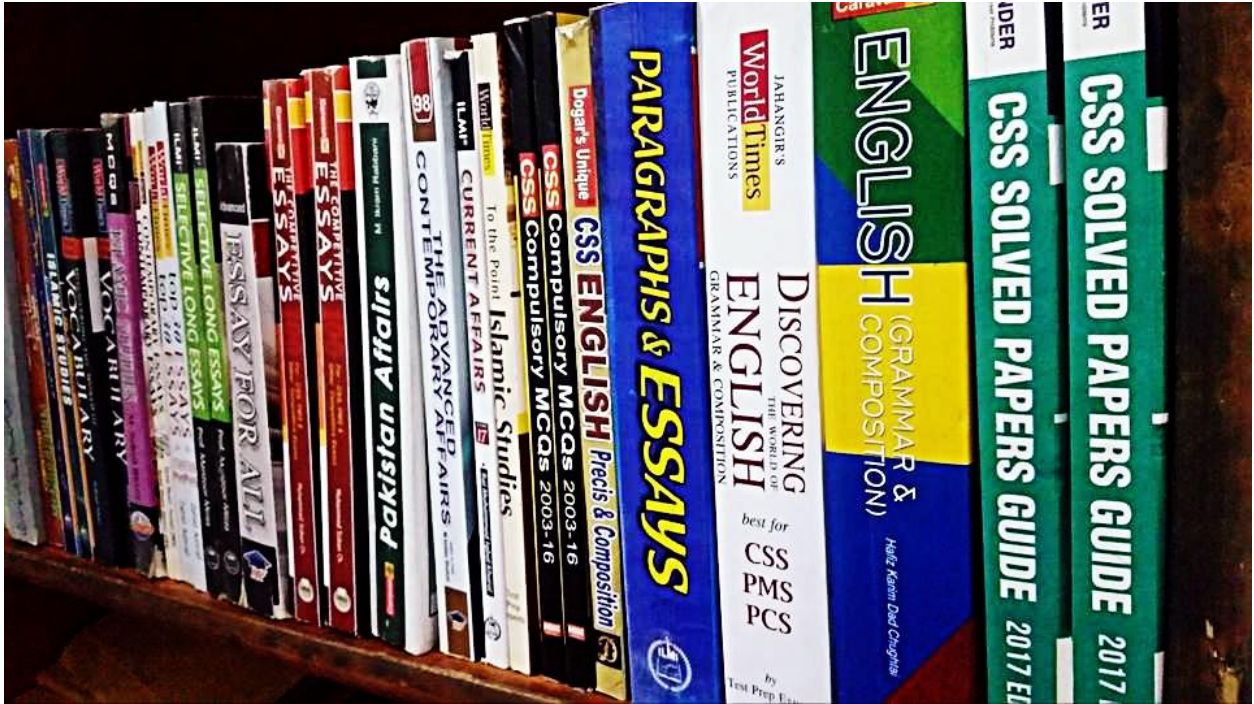
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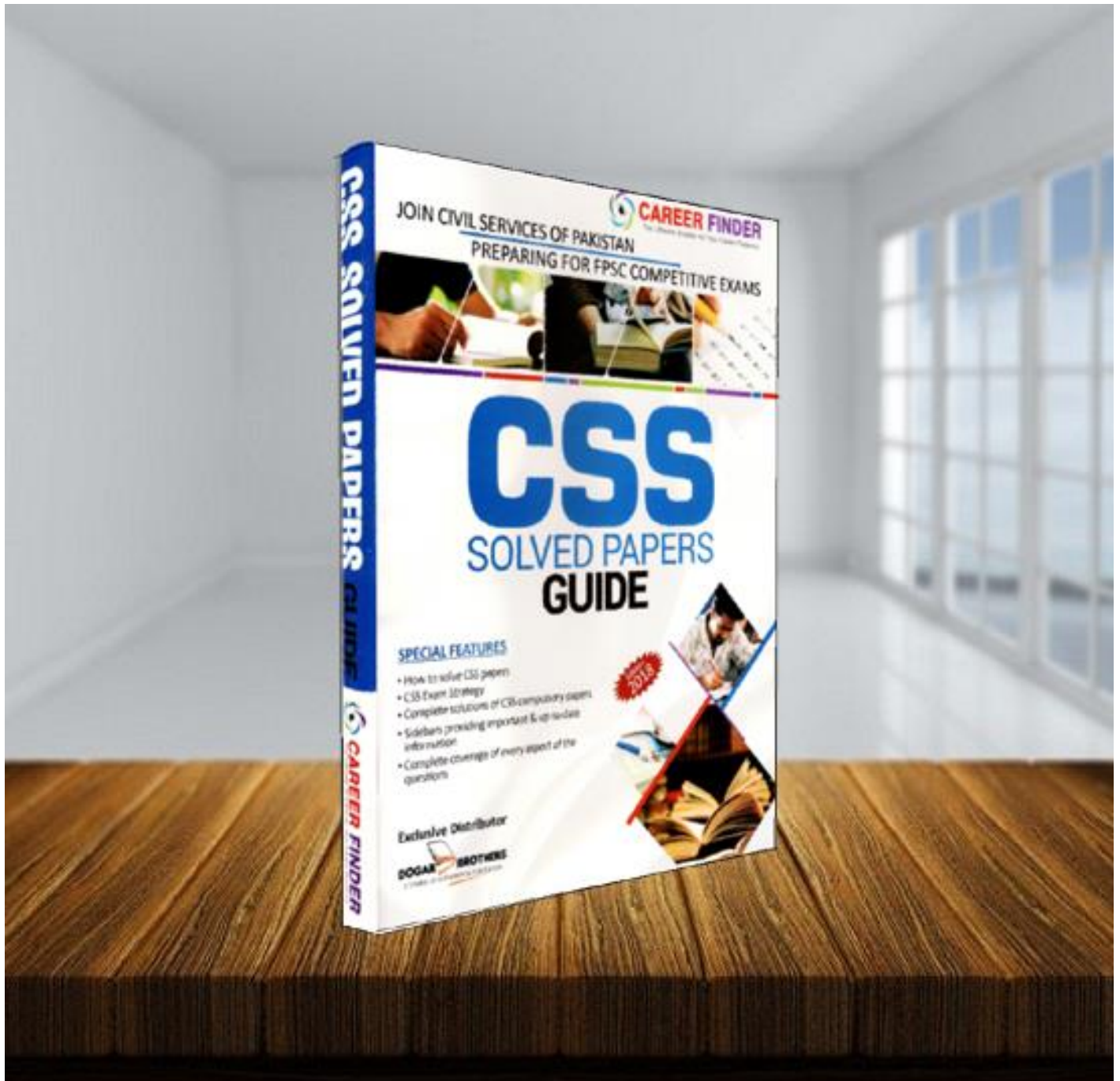
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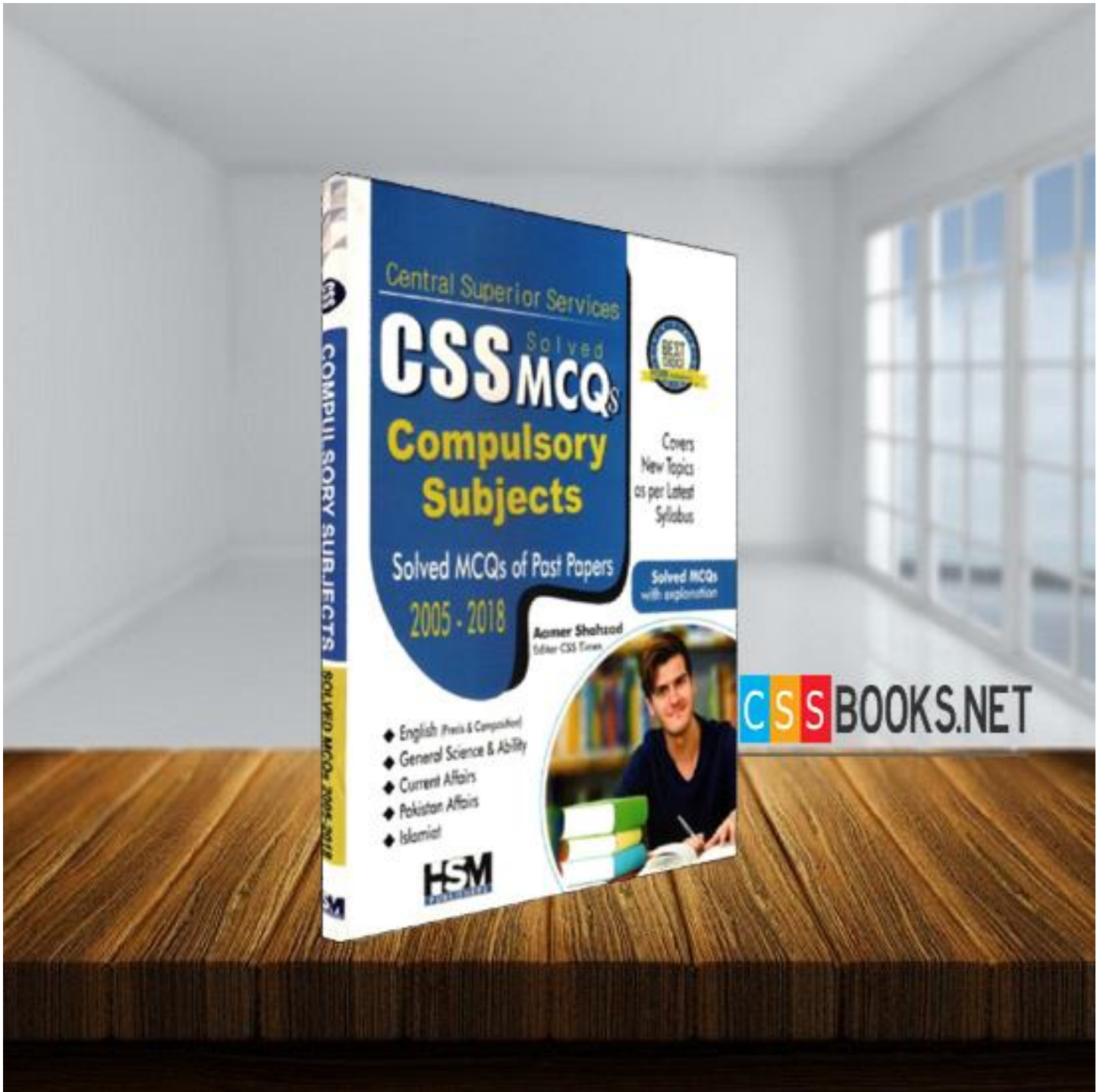
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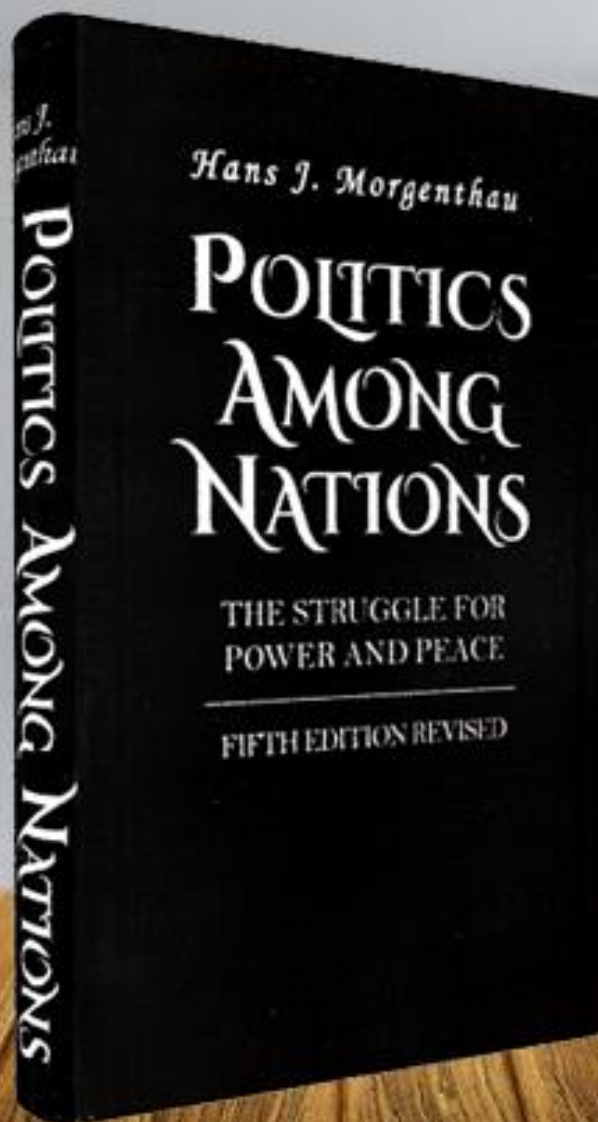
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PAKISTAN

Indus Water Breakthrough | Editorial

AFTER many years, a small but significant breakthrough seems to have been made in the talks between the Pakistani and Indian water commissioners. The talks had been largely stalled since 2014 so the latest agreement by the Indian side to permit an inspection of two of the facilities being built on the Chenab river is a step forward. Even in the latest round of the Permanent Indus Commission talks, the first day seemed to lead to a cul-de-sac. It was only at the end of the second day that news of the breakthrough emerged. It would have been better for both sides had they jointly briefed the media, or if that were not possible, issued a joint press release. Ending the talks without any public word is counterproductive as it creates an impression that runs contrary to the positive news emerging of an agreement for inspections. Now that it seems a deal has been struck for inspection, the next step is for Pakistan to make the most of the opportunity.

At issue are two hydropower projects that India is building on its side of the Chenab river whose waters belong to Pakistan under the Indus Waters Treaty. The same treaty, however, gives India the right to build hydroelectric projects on the river provided that it does not divert water for agricultural purposes. One other project on the same river, the so-called Baglihar dam, had already been the subject of a bitter feud between the two countries around a decade ago when the matter was sent to a neutral expert for settlement. The results of that exercise were mixed, with both sides claiming victory once the neutral expert's verdict came in.

The two projects this time round are the Pakal Dul dam and the Lower Kalnai hydroelectric project. The former is a large project totalling some 1,000MW, while the latter is smaller at about 48MW. But both of them involve the diversion of waters from tributaries that feed the Chenab, much like their cousin built on the Neelum river, the Kishenganga Dam. This is a different design configuration that involves the diversion of water from one tributary to another to take advantage of the water head, but the same water is returned to the river at a different spot

further downstream. As such, its technical evaluation becomes more difficult, and the Indian side should honour its agreement in full by allowing the Pakistani delegation to visit the entire area where the project is spread out. Both sides should make an effort to ensure that resorting to arbitration is avoided. Almost every Indian project on the Chenab and Neelum is landing up at the altar of the World Bank, portending an unhealthy trend with regard to both countries that appear unable to resolve their mutual differences.

Published in Dawn, September 1st, 2018

Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1430263/indus-water-breakthrough>,

Regional Stability | Editorial

Trump Town appears to have a thawing of ties on its mind ahead of Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's visit to this country next week. For Washington has gone on the record as saying that it is willing to give the new set-up a little breathing space to try and reset the Indo-Pak relationship. This is to be welcomed. The last thing that the Imran Khan government needs is undue American pressure as it navigates its way through an often hostile neighbourhood. And then there is the not un-small matter of the message that this sends Prime Minister Modi; who infamously termed Pakistan the biggest stumbling to Sino-Indo peace.

Of course, commitment to the normalising of ties between Islamabad and New Delhi has to be a reciprocal one. And one that does not put Kashmir intermittently on the backburner while pledging to resolve all outstanding water disputes. Yet the window of opportunity for building mutual confidence remains small. Thus it is imperative that this process is conducted in the absence of external interference.

This is not to say that Pakistan must avoid a multilateral approach to easing regional tensions. Far from it. That China has, for example, promised to open up the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) as one such forum to give Indo-Pak peace a chance is to be appreciated. And while this might not be entirely to the US liking, the latter must understand that pragmatism offers the best means of dealing with ground realities. Or put another way, there is vast difference between being part of a neighbourhood and maintaining permanent interests.

All of which should translate comfortably into the White House's dealings with this country. That terrorism will top the agenda of the Pompeo meeting is understood. But this must be a two-way conversation whereby Pakistan's security concerns are recognised in terms of both its eastern and western borders. Towards this end, a roadmap for Afghan peace as seen through American eyes must be put on the table. This has to go beyond assurances that the US supports a Kabul-owned and -led process to bring the Taliban to negotiations. Particularly in light of both Washington and the Ghani government's decision to boycott the now cancelled Russian moot; in which the Taliban had been ready to participate. If nothing else, had this gone ahead, it would have offered the opportunity to clarify what the evolving US permanent regional

presence entails. For now, all that has been confirmed is that there will be no troop withdrawal before the end of next year; something that is at odds with Taliban demands.

Thus Trump Town would do well to come to the mini powwow here with all its cards in hand; ready to place them on the table. For it must understand that Pakistan is not a regional pariah. And that it has powerful friends such as China and Russia; both of which have proved more than willing to step in where the US has proved lacking. Indeed, Foreign Minister Wang Yi is scheduled to meet Khan and his team just days after Pompeo.

It will therefore be in everyone's interest if a multilateral approach to regional peace and security is pursued; keeping in mind the interests of those who live in this neighbourhood. For the last thing that anyone wants is for these to be sacrificed in a proxy war for hegemonic influence. *

Published in Daily Times, September 1st 2018.

Source: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/291078/regional-stability/>

Pak-US Tensions | Editorial

Ahead of Pompeo's visit

Pak-US relations, most likely, face a historic reset moment as Secretary of State Mike Pompeo comes to meet the new government in Islamabad. One after the other US actions have spoken louder than words – not that the Trump administration's diplomacy has been much softer. And the implication, quite clearly, is that the post-9/11 arrangement, which saw Pakistan elevated to 'major non-Nato ally' and its debt rescheduled, will no longer hold. Not only has Washington put a cap on the Coalition Support Fund (CSF), despite the obvious fallout on the local war against terrorism, it is now in the process of slashing another \$300 million in aid to Pakistan. Recently, Pompeo warned the IMF against lending to Pakistan, despite the risk of a nuclear armed sovereign defaulting without a bailout.

Until recently the relationship between the two countries' militaries was not hurt by the usual, cyclical lows in the Washington-Islamabad equation. Senior US generals have been quoted, on numerous occasions, as saying that Pentagon-GHQ dealings are not affected by the politics between the two countries. But that, too, stopped recently when the Americans rolled back all training programs for Pakistani officers.

Strangely, Washington is tightening the economic noose around Pakistan just when it needs Islamabad's help the most to wrap up its long war in Afghanistan. But asking Islamabad to help, and cutting off aid at the same time – when a new government is handicapped with almost zero fiscal space – only betrays Washington's own increasing frustration and helplessness. Recent gains by the Taliban have embarrassed both President Ghani's government in Kabul as well as hawks in the Trump administration. Isolating Pakistan, while also rejecting offers of mediation from Russia, will do the wider war effort no good, especially as the Taliban increase area under their control with every passing day. Pakistan, for its part, must make these issues crystal clear during discussions with Pompeo shortly.

Source: <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2018/09/03/pak-us-tensions-2/>

New Local Government System | Editorial

A new local government system is in talks for the provinces of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). There is no surprise that the government of Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaaf (PTI) wants to empower the average Pakistani to be able to directly elect a representative from their locality and engage them in a dialogue, which will encourage feedback and improvement in performance. The idea is based on the system currently being practiced in London, where the people elect their own mayor. However, the success of that system is very relevant to the polity it is being implemented on.

Direct elections may engage the voters more in the political setup of the country and will create a pathway of communication and accountability. While that can be taken into consideration, a lot of resources will go into uprooting the system already in place. At the same time, the government needs to get the other provinces where they do not have a majority, also on board with this initiative. At this point, they plan on enforcing it on them but it may be wise to first consult them and hear them out if they have any other suggestions. The Sindh government has already shown its reluctance in the adoption of the new system because they believe that their local body system is already up to the mark. Such contingencies need to be accounted for and planned for.

Any system of governance should be uprooted if it is not working out for the people of the country, however, if the same system can be improved with minor adjustments that should be preferred over introducing radical changes. The reason why that is preferred is that it saves a lot of resources and at the same time, it helps people adjust to the new changes. However, if a new government is trying to implement all policies new, it is bound to face difficulties in terms of its application and also getting other lawmakers on board to make those changes. At this point in time, what is required is continuity. If every effort is made from scratch, the results might take more than five years to materialise and if by then, someone else is in government, they might turn the tables around and do away with the system completely. A steady government is the requirement of the time and that can be done by getting the majority on board to ensure that the desired results are achieved.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/04-Sep-2018/new-local-government-system>

Pak-US Relations: Resetting the Terms of Engagement in Afghanistan By Ubaid

Ahmed

The election of Imran Khan to the prime Minister office is no less than a glimmer of hope for the nation's lost credibility in the comity of nations. Mr Khan however has assumed the charge of the office whence Pakistan confronts a few major challenges on the foreign policy front. For instance, Pak-US relations are on a constant course of hiccups whilst relations with Afghanistan have again entered the blame game phase. It is also imperative to mention that insecurity in Afghanistan is one of the major reasons for the deteriorating relation between Pakistan and US.

Peace in Afghanistan could greatly be favoured and facilitated by Pakistan, but for that to happen, the trust deficit on the part of the US must seriously be addressed. US ought to undertake Pakistan's efforts in curbing terrorism genuinely. The US at this point needs to understand that with the development of SCO as a viable alternative power centre fosters US diffusion as a global power by providing alternatives to countries like Pakistan. Furthermore, referring to some media reports, both Russia and Iran are engaging Taliban to counter the US influence in Afghanistan. Given these circumstances Pakistan is the only country over which US can exercise its limited leverage. US so far is the sole super power and there is certainly no defying of this truth and thenceforth Pakistan's national interest lies in improving relations with Washington.

Mr Khan has a longstanding stance for a peace process and political settlement in Afghanistan and for Mr Khan there is much more work to be done like sorting out the differences between the US and the Haqqani network , stability at the Afghanistan-Pakistan border and reconciliation with the Taliban. Now, as far as Khan's stance for a peace process and reconciliation with Taliban is concerned, the stars seems to be in favour for both the presidents, Trump and Ghani have come to more or less the same position as both favour and support direct talks with the Taliban. Mr Khan has already said that a peaceful Afghanistan is the pre-requisite for a peaceful Pakistan. Moreover, Kabul and Islamabad at this point should relate to the classic example set by India and China, where both the

countries are willing to strengthen their economy and are trying to prove that adversarial relationships of the past and the territorial disputes have neither stood in their way nor stopped them from building and developing strong trade and economic linkages.

Pakistan will always remain a problematic partner for the US, as long as US officials always look at it as a problem to be fixed, rather than a country to be engaged with

Times have changed, Globalisation and economic development has revolutionised the world by large and the current geo-political rivalry rests in staying ahead economically, technologically, industrially and by maintaining domestic stability. Washington in this regards can play a beneficial role by opening the diplomatic channels directly with the elected democratic government. As Mike Pompeo is scheduled to visit the country in this month, the encounter may help in easing the tensions between Washington and Islamabad. There also seems to be the realisation of Pakistan's critical and pivotal role in any potential Afghan Peace Process that the US has been ignoring for so long in the past.

Mr. Khan's very first formidable challenge would be to put a halt to the ongoing sub-conventional warfare, which has scared the relations between both the countries. However, as the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Imran Khan now has an opportunity to energise a peace process, for he is the longstanding critic of the US occupation of Afghanistan and also an advocate of political reconciliation which has earned him the label 'Taliban Khan'. With certitude it is now a tough job to translate election campaign promises into a reality.

To conclude Pakistan will always remain a problematic partner for the US, as long as US officials always look at it as a problem to be fixed, rather than a country to be engaged with. Prime Minister Imran at this point has an opportunity to change such a notion once and for all.

The writer is an Independent Researcher, he can be reached at ubaidtalks@gmail.com

Published in Daily Times, September 4th 2018.

Source: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/292406/pak-us-relations-resetting-the-terms-of-engagement-in-afghanistan/>

The New President | Editorial

Today, the parliament and provincial assemblies of the country gathered together to vote and crown the thirteenth President of the country. After two weeks of speculation, competition and failed efforts by the opposition to unite, Dr. Arif Alvi of PTI has gone on to become the next president.

Considering that the opposition had pitched two candidates, lawyer Aitzaz Ahsan, and JUI-F Chief Fazlur-Rehman, thus dividing whatever votes the opposition could scramble, it was highly expected that Alvi would win. It was through the votes of the Balochistan and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa assembly where Dr Alvi really dominated- securing 45 out of 60 votes in the Balochistan Assembly, and 78 out of 109 votes in the KP Assembly. In the parliament, it was a harder battle for PTI where it snagged a bare minimum of 212 votes out of a total 430, its underwhelming performance being due to PTI's comparatively fewer number of seats in the Senate.

After this highly unsurprising election, we congratulate PTI and Dr. Alvi for clinching the spot for President, and hope that this election serves as a lesson to the opposition that unless it learns to put aside its petty differences, it cannot hope to wield any influence for the next five years. Had the now-failed Pakistan Alliance managed pitch one candidate, there was a chance it could have manipulated the numbers to grab the last powerful position available in the government.

Now that the last competitive elections for the government, other than the by-elections, are over, it is time for all of us to move past politics and focus on governance. From the looks of it, the President-elect, Dr. Alvi makes for a good choice for the position. Being a dentist, holding degrees from de Montmonrency College of Dentistry, it is expected that Dr. Alvi will highlight education and health issues in his stint as President. Certainly, Dr. Alvi's statement yesterday where he emphasised bringing awareness to mental health is an encouraging sign that he will bring dignity and statesmanship to the President Office.

The post of President is mostly a symbolic position- while a good President is limited in his power, a President wanting to wreck havoc can be chaotic. With

Alvi's profile as a hard loyalist member of PTI, and having written the constitution of the party, it seems likely that he will function along the lines of the party, and the PTI parliament doesn't have anything to worry about presidential clashes.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/05-Sep-2018/the-new-president>

Implications of Pompeo's Visit By

Muhammad Ali Ehsan

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo visited Pakistan a day ago along with US Joint Chief of Staff General Joseph Dunford. This is the first high-level Pakistan-US political contact which will be showcased by the defining presence of the PTI-led ministers and government in the country. The US can take it as an opportunity to see how it can start afresh and develop new political relationship with the new Pakistani government in the office. It can and must do that because the current civilian government and its leadership meet all the key conditions that the military has for a long time wanted the political leadership to show, such as — indulge in policy-making not on personal whims but on the basis of national interests; incorporate if not necessarily include military's advice in policy-formulating process; construct and compose the right set of social , economic and political conditions on which to build and sustain the country's grand national strategy; and most importantly 'put the genie of institutionalised political corruption back in the bottle'. To the benefit and advantage of the Americans, the current civilian government in Pakistan not only enjoys much harmonised relationship with the military but also as a start-up most of the government's views on domestic and foreign policy are consistent with those of the military.

But no matter how favourable is the domestic politico-military environment of the country, no diplomatic benefit can be extracted from its usefulness if there is no change in attitude on the side of the Americans. Almost a year has passed since President Donald Trump announced "America's revised vision of US war in Afghanistan". He pledged to end the 'strategy of nation building' and substitute it with a policy that would squarely focus and aim at terrorist threat emanating from the region; no more 'rebuild countries in our own image' but address the security concerns 'above all other considerations'. The change in American policy and its implementation in Afghanistan for the past one year have rather worsened the security situation in the country. Secretary Pompeo has come with great hope to align Pakistan with the American-crafted Afghan policy which is driven by the great 'American expectations'. However, it's not the American expectations but the 'national and regional interests' that are most likely to determine the success and failure of this policy. The most important component of this changed American policy was to win over the approval of the domestic as well as the

regional audience, however, unifying the strategic audience who would support the American-sponsored Afghan strategic narrative should have been its primary goal. But neither has the strategic audience been unified nor has the American Afghan narrative sought a popular approval amongst the many stakeholders in the Afghan war — the most crucial amongst them are Taliban. We keep hearing that the Afghan peace process is Afghan-owned and Afghan-driven but the realities on the Afghan political and military landscape on ground have been quite different and include a resurgence of attacks by the Taliban, including attacks on military checkpoints, suicide bombings and the attempt by a large-scale Taliban attack to take over the City of Ghazni (75 KMs south of Kabul) in which over 200 Afghan security personnel were killed; and the Taliban leadership's continued insistence and emphasis that 'there will be no deal on their position on American troops withdrawal'. The Taliban's rejection of President Ashraf Ghani's offer of peace talks without any pre-conditions and their insistence on directly talking to the US suggest that the peace process that the Americans want to initiate can neither be Afghan-led nor Afghan-proposed. The ownership of this Afghan peace process became highly questionable when Alice Wells, the US Deputy Assistant Secretary for South Asia and Central Asia Affairs, met the Taliban leadership in June 2018 in Doha, Qatar, as just days before the meeting General John Nicholson, the US Commander of forces in Afghanistan, was denied any US contact with Taliban. It has also been a long-term US policy not to indulge in direct talks with the Taliban, but to circumvent this policy Secretary Pompeo had been giving statements in the past that reflects US willingness to 'support, facilitate and participate' in talks with Taliban. This meeting of the US official with the Taliban representatives in Doha may be a diplomatic step forward to engage the Taliban in the peace process but it is also a huge step backwards that undermines the very idea of the peace process being "Afghan-owned and Afghan-led".

If the US secretary of state is here as part of his exploration of all avenues that can lead to and facilitate the peace process then he must understand Pakistan's concerns as well. The 'do more' strategic narrative of the US has been rejected by Pakistan's counter-narrative of 'no more'. It is under the political umbrella of these highly-polarised strategic positions that the meeting took place. In the short term, it is \$800 million that have been withheld by the US as part of the Coalition Support Fund (CSF) that undermines Pakistan's ability to execute anti-terrorist operations and secure its western frontier but in the long term it is the US views

on China's \$64 billion investment as part of CPEC. The US defence secretary's statement that, "Washington cannot support connectivity projects that raise sovereignty concerns" visibly smells of Indian tilt and support when it comes to dealing with Pakistan. We know that India opposes CPEC because of the Kashmir dispute and the US officially toes the Indian diplomatic interests.

Considering that the last US National Security Strategy (December 2017) paper, prepared for the US Congress, outlined China and Russia as "competitors that challenge America's leadership in the world and the international order". It also singles out China for its 'aggressive investments' in and outside the Indo-Pacific region reiterating that the investment puts the future of political and diplomatic interests of both the US and Pakistan on cross purpose.

I am not sure about the success and failure of this Pakistan-US diplomatic engagement. But one thing that I am sure about is that when Mike Pompeo leaves with his delegation back home, he would surely consider that deteriorating relations with Pakistan will only green-signal the country to further fast-track its relations with other powers in the region — that neither serves the American interests nor is that a demonstration of successful American diplomacy.

Published in The Express Tribune, September 6th, 2018.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1796233/6-implications-pompeos-visit/>

Pakistan's Nuclear Habit | Editorial

That Pakistan is heavily investing in its nuclear capability is well known. For the security apparatus this is not a luxury but, rather, a necessity. And given that this is an at times hostile region, the state maintains the policy of Credible Minimum Deterrence while avoiding an arms race.

Yet according to a recent report — “Pakistani nuclear forces, 2018” — the country is on schedule to be the world's fifth-largest nuclear capable country by 2025. This should not come as a surprise. Back in 2014, Islamabad was declared home to the world's fastest growing nuclear stockpile. Fast-forward to the present, and this translates, in real terms, into an estimated 140-150 warheads. This is sharply contrasted with US Defence Intelligence Agency projections dating back to 1990 which envisioned this as not surpassing 60-80.

Naturally, the best outcome all round would be a normalisation of ties with regional neighbours. As things currently stand, the pace of nuclearisation here is largely determined by India. And as much as both sides maintain that such investment in national security is for the greater good of their respective populations — the high human cost in terms of diverted expenditure cannot be overlooked. Thus peace is the only sustainable way towards a mutual prosperity that trickles down to the local citizenry.

That being said, many a pundit erroneously believes that Pakistan's nukes represent the only safeguard against American-led military aggression. After all, Libya only came under NATO fire once it had surrendered its chemical weapons programme. There may well be some truth to this. Though this is not to say that Washington has just let Pakistan be. Plans were put in place more than a decade ago outlining how the US would sweep into secure the nation's nukes in the eventuality that militants would overthrow the then Musharraf regime; in a bid to get hold of the nuclear capability that they reportedly long craved. And while in 2007, the State Department went on record as saying it was confident about Pakistan's nuclear security — the Trump White House has returned to script. Central to the US president's new and improved South Asia vision, unveiled last year, is the need for Islamabad to prevent nuclear weapons and material from falling into terrorist hands. Possibly, Washington needs to recognise that this is

the overriding priority of the Pakistani state; and one that was not quite helped by the US mission in Afghanistan that precipitated the flight of the top Al Qaeda leadership to this side of the border in the early days of Operation Enduring Freedom.

All of which presents a conundrum of sorts for the new government that is committed to picking up the austerity tab so that the masses do not have to. Increased nuclear capability on this scale does not come cheap. Thus it is hoped that Prime Minister Khan will hold a meeting with the security apparatus to talk budgets and figures as well as opportunity costs. This is not to undermine those whose job it is to protect Pakistan's borders. But it is to ensure utmost transparency across the board. *

Published in Daily Times, September 7th 2018.

Source: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/293945/pakistans-nuclear-habit/>

The Juvenile Justice System Act of 2018 By **Wajahat Ali Malik**

On May 18 2018, the President of Pakistan approved the Juvenile Justice System Act (JJSA) 2018, which was passed by the Parliament earlier this year. JJSA 2018 overcomes the shortcomings which were present in Juvenile Justice System Ordinance 2000, and provides a much better system for criminal justice and social reintegration for juvenile offenders. The Act defines a child according to the definition of UNCRC as 'a person who has not attained the age of eighteen years'.

JJS Act 2018 classifies the criminal offences into following three different categories: 1) Minor, which means an offence for which maximum punishment under the Pakistan Penal Code, 1860 is imprisonment for up to three years with or without fine. A juvenile is entitled to bail in minor offences, with or without surety bonds by Juvenile court. 2) Major, which means an offence for which punishment under the Pakistan Penal Code, 1860 is imprisonment of more than three years and up to seven years with or without fine. Bail shall also be granted in major offences with or without surety bonds by juvenile court. 3)Heinous, which means an offence which is serious, brutal, or shocking to public morality and which is punishable under the Pakistan Penal Code, 1860 with death or imprisonment for life or imprisonment for more than seven years with or without fine. A juvenile of less than sixteen years of age is entitled to bail in heinous offences, but a bail is on discretion of court if juvenile is more than sixteen years of age.

The JJSA 2018 is very different from JJSO 2000, and the following are some of its salient new features. 1) Right of legal assistance: every juvenile or child victim of an offence shall have the right of legal assistance at the expense of the State. A juvenile shall be informed about his right of legal assistance within 24 hours of taking him into custody.

2) Observation home: this means a place where a juvenile is kept temporarily after being apprehended by police as well as after obtaining remand from juvenile court or otherwise for conducting inquiry or investigation. Observation Homes shall be made separately from police stations.

3) Juvenile rehabilitation centres: this is a special kind of prison established exclusively for keeping juvenile offenders. The convicted juvenile, shall be confined to the premises till the completion of period of imprisonment or until they turn 18 years of age. Here convicts can receive an education as well as vocational or technical training for their development and includes certified institutions including women crises centres.

4) Determination of age mechanism: JJS Act 2018 makes it compulsory upon the ranking officer-in-charge, or the investigation officer, to make an enquiry to determine the age of any such alleged offender, who physically appears or claims to be a juvenile. Age shall be determined on basis of accused person's birth certificate, educational certificates or any other pertinent documents. In absence of such documents, age of such accused person may be determined on the basis of a medical examination report by a medical officer.

Disposal of Cases through Diversion: This is an alternative process of determining the responsibility and treatment of a juveniles on the basis of their social, cultural, economic, psychological and educational background, without resorting to formal judicial proceedings

5) Disposal of cases through diversion: this is an alternative process of determining the responsibility and treatment of a juvenile on the basis of his social, cultural, economic, psychological and educational background, without resorting to formal judicial proceedings. The complaint against a juvenile shall be referred to the Juvenile Justice Committee for disposal through diversion. All offences, either minor or major, shall be compoundable for purpose of diversion. For major offences, diversion can only be exercised if the age of the juvenile is not more than 16 years.

6) Juvenile Justice Committee: this shall dispose of cases through diversion within a period of one month from the date of the referral. The Committee shall dispose of a case with consent of the complainant by resorting to different options, including restitution of movable property, reparation of the damage caused, written or oral apology, participation in community service, payments of fine and costs of the proceedings, placement in juvenile rehabilitation centre; and written and oral reprimand. If the offence has been committed against a State

and not against an individual; the Committee may dispose of the case through diversion with consent of the concerned public prosecutor. The Committee shall also perform inspection of Observation Homes and Juvenile Rehabilitation Centres and may give directions to concerned persons for welfare and social re-integration of juveniles kept in these places.

The J.J. Committee is set to consist of four members, including a serving Judicial Magistrate with powers under section 30 of CrPC (Head of Committee); District Public Prosecutor; Member of local Bar having at least 7 years experience, appointed by the concerned Sessions Judge for a period of 2 years; and serving probation officer or social welfare officer not below BPS-17. One thing that is missing is the presence of a qualified child rights activist that understands the plight of the underage victims, and is equipped to deal with their issues.

7) Separate challan and trial of juvenile offenders: a juvenile shall not be charged with and tried for an offence together with an adult person. But if it is in the interests of justice to hold a joint trial of a juvenile and an adult, the juvenile court may dispense with the physical presence of the juvenile and they may be allowed to join the Court proceedings through audio-visual technology link.

8) Imposition of penalty for disclosure of identity of juvenile or to publish proceedings of juvenile court: JJS Act 2018 exclusively bars revealing the identity of an accused juvenile to the public without the authorisation in writing of the juvenile or their next-of-kin. The S.H.O, investigating officer or the juvenile court can also grant permission in this regard.

9) Special provisions for female juveniles: Female juveniles shall not in any circumstances be apprehended or investigated by a male police officer or released on probation under supervision of a male officer. A female juvenile shall only be kept in a Juvenile Rehabilitation Centre established or certified exclusively for female inmates.

10) Removal of disqualification attached with conviction: A juvenile offender convicted under the provisions of JJS Act 2018 shall not suffer a disqualification, if any attaching to a conviction of an offence under such law.

11) Preventive Detention: No child shall be arrested under any of the laws dealing with preventive detention or under the provisions of chapter VIII of the Code of criminal procedure.

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The Population Growth Dilemma By Aadil Nakhuda

Pakistan has one of the highest population growth rates in the region. According to the World Development Indicators, the population growth rate in Pakistan stood at 1.95% in 2017. On the other hand, the population growth for India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka was below 1.14%. The population of Pakistan stands at 207.8 million, according to provisional results of 2017 census reported by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, making it the sixth most populous country in the world.

Although in the long run, a large population can be a source of much-needed manpower for industrial development, it can also pose several challenges to developing countries that lack social safety nets such as effective welfare programmes as well as proper healthcare and educational facilities.

Fertility rate is 2.62 children per women in Pakistan, which is contributing to the rapid population growth. All other South Asian countries, except Afghanistan, have fertility rates close to the replacement level of 2.1, which is considered enough to maintain their population levels.

With that, average number of children below the age of 15 years is 3.2. This suggests that the dependency ratio, the number of dependents (who are either between the age of 0 and 14 or are above the age of 65), is too higher to maintain sustained population growth.

Needless to mention, population and development are inversely correlated. Inadequate access to healthcare facilities, poor supply of nutrition to mothers and children, are some of the factors that slow down the pace of development over a period of time.

Children surviving through the critical early years are often likely to be underweight or experience stunted growth. This not only reduces their ability to attend school but also reduces their chances of earning higher levels of income and moving up the social mobility ladder. In essence, such children enter a vicious cycle that keeps their households poor for generations.

According to the data on out-of-school children published by UNICEF for December 2017, 61% of the children from poorer households are out-of-school. Considering that the larger households tend to be the poorest, several children belonging to larger families fail to attain basic primary education. In addition, government expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP was as low as 2.2% in Pakistan.

Successful family planning programmes require serious involvement of the government in providing knowledge and easier access of modern methods to the targeted population. In Bangladesh, female outreach workers were crucial in providing door-to-door information, motivation as well as contraceptive items to married couples across the country. In Iran, the clergy played an important role in supporting family planning programmes during the post-war era. Every couple in Iran has to receive mandatory counselling on family planning before being issued a marriage license.

One of the major reasons for the failure of family planning programmes in Pakistan is the apathy shown by successive governments and the conservative groups. As positive results of family planning programmes may take several years to realise due to the hidden momentum, family planning programmes do not receive the desired priority.

There is a direct relationship between educational attainment of females and choice of family size, as women receiving higher levels of education tend to opt for smaller families. Employment opportunities to females in the poorest households can increase the opportunity cost of childbearing, lowering the preference for larger family sizes. Labour-intensive industries, such as the apparel industry, that rely on unskilled and semi-skilled workers should be provided incentives to hire female employees belonging to the poorest households. Employment either on part-time or on contractual basis should also be encouraged. Welfare programmes such as the various income-support programmes must ensure that the recipients not only receive knowledge on but are also incentivised to adopt modern family planning practices.

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Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1799351/6-population-growth-dilemma/>

Foreign Policy Challenges For New Government By Kashif Ahmad Mohaar

Foreign policy is dependent upon domestic policy of any country. A domestically stable country can successfully exert its influence on others; whereas, internally weak nations get easily coerced by others in international strategic environment. In Pakistan, domestic political instability have since long been affecting formulation and execution of foreign policy. Therefore, the biggest challenge for the new government on international front relates to its domestic stability which is directly proportional to foreign policy success. Domestic stability needs economic progress in the country. The incumbent government is working hard for economic prosperity. However, the external front is being neglected which is astonishing. This behaviour would further deteriorate both domestic and foreign conditions. Success can only be realised if all the stakeholders collaboratively devise comprehensive strategies to cope with the domestic as well as foreign policy challenges. This article discusses some of the foreign policy challenges for new government.

Firstly, how to normalise Pak-US relations? Pakistan-US relationship has been a roller coaster ride. It has faced many ups and downs. However, currently, both the allies of war against terror are facing new heights of divergences. Imran-Pompeo call has stirred new controversy. This poses severe challenge to the new govt. for re-establishing a mutually beneficial and productive working relationship with the US. Since, the US is an important regional and global power, her vitality for Pakistan cannot be neglected. Because, peace, stability and prosperity of Pakistan is directly linked with the conditions in the neighbouring country, Afghanistan, and the US is an important actor in Afghan war. So, if Pakistan wants (a) to consolidate her gains against war on terror; and (b) a peaceful neighbouring Afghanistan, she needs to manage her relationship with the US, which will ultimately help her in achieving the said objectives. There is no denying the fact that this relationship must be guided by national interest and mutual respect and not by the humiliation and disrespect. The recent regional realignment, wherein US- India-Japan troika has emerged to counterweigh Russia-China-Pakistan bloc, has challenged Pakistan's foreign policy goals. If Pakistan wants to exploit its geostrategic location it has an opportunity in the shape of CPEC. For that to materialize, Pakistan should

balance her relations with both the US and Russia. Though it seems unrealistic, however, history tells us that relations of a country vis-a-vis two major powers can be maintained on the basis of national interest, for example, though China is challenging the status quo of the US, despite being the competing rivals, both are engaged in bilateral trade. Similarly, India has maintained her relations with both the US and Russia on the basis of her national interest. So, Pakistan should endeavour to balance her relations with the US on one hand and Russia on the other, while keeping her national interest uncompromised. She should not have close relationship with Russia at the expense of Pak- US relations or the vice versa.

Pak-India relations are another challenge for the new government. Both the arch-rivals have gained nothing out of decades' long animosity. Most of Pakistan's domestic problems and issues with Afghanistan are caused by Indo-Pak animosity. The Kashmir question is core issue. Without resolving this issue a long-lasting peace cannot be achieved between the two arch-rivals. However, in the age of globalization both the countries need to work for establishing conducive environment for rapprochement. Trade relationship would build a confidence among the political elite and societies of both India and Pakistan. Such confidence building measures would create opportunities for resolving longstanding political and strategic problems. Resultantly, animosity would turn into friendship.

As regards Pak- Afghanistan relations, Pakistan wants peace in the neighbouring country and cordial relations. However, Taliban network, particularly Haqqani network, is the bone of contention. Afghanistan accuses Pakistan of supporting terrorist sanctuaries, whereas Pakistan categorically denies the Afghan allegations. There is no denying the fact that Pakistan wants peace, stability and prosperity of Afghanistan more than any other country in the region, because the goal of a peaceful Pakistan cannot be achieved if Afghanistan is not stabilised and developed. However, Pakistan wishes for a peaceful resolution of Afghan war. Since every dispute ends on a negotiated peace, therefore, Pakistan supports all peaceful initiatives for a peaceful settlement of Afghan war. The new government in Pakistan should proactively engage Afghanistan to address their grievances and establish cordial relations between the two Muslim nations.

Third, Pakistan and China are all-weather friends and iron brothers. However, if Pakistan wants to exploit her geostrategic location and develop economically, it needs to work more enthusiastically on CPEC, which is a game changer and provides opportunities for Pakistan to play an active role in the regional and global politico-strategic landscape .A successful materialisation of CPEC is another challenge for the new government.

Another challenge is how to have a good reputation internationally? For that, the new government needs to work on global perception management. Pakistan's narrative of different issues should be successfully propagated and exploited in her favour to achieve foreign policy objectives. Those objectives would never be accomplished until and unless a diplomatically vibrant foreign office is not realized.

In order to conclude, Pakistan should not rely on any one of the super powers. Instead, given geostrategic importance, Pakistan should adopt a holistic, proactive and long-term foreign policy. For a successful foreign policy, first, Pakistan should have friendly relations with immediate neighbours. Second, it should strengthen relations with the countries that share the unanimity of views on different regional and global issues. Those include Russia, China, Iran, and Turkey. Pakistan should strengthen her relations with these countries. Third, and the most important, is to have national cohesion and unity to combat gruesome challenges and achieve foreign policy goals.

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Water is Lifeline of Any Nation! By

Mohammad Jamil

IT is universally acknowledged that water is life because it is essential to human existence, as the human body can last weeks without food, but only days without water. Indeed, water is food also, as it is indispensable to agriculture and is critical input into a country's agriculture, especially when it is situated in an arid or semi-arid zone. Last but not the least; water is energy as well, as worldwide hydropower accounts for 17% of global electricity production. According to experts, agriculture will need to produce 60% more food globally, and 100% more in developing countries by 2050. Loss of storage capacity due to sedimentation in Tarbela and Mangla Dams is causing serious drop even for existing agricultural production. Energy shortfall has already blighted Pakistan, as industry in all the provinces has been adversely impacted. Secondly, the cost of electricity generated by IPPs using fossil-fuel is 4-time more than hydropower.

CJP Saqib Nisar and Prime Minister Imran Khan have given hope to the nation that Pakistanis are capable of constructing dams with their own resources and appealed to Pakistanis especially overseas Pakistanis to generously donate for construction of dam. On the other hand, pseudo-intellectuals and some politicians say that dams cannot be constructed with charity. They reckon that it will take one hundred years to be able to finance the project. On 4th July 2018, the then Punjab chief minister Shahbaz Sharif and President Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif had said "water shortage was a big challenge and if PML-N came into power after general election 2018, they would construct Bhasha Dam and generate 4000 MW electricity from it within five years," The question is why PML-N government did not allocate sufficient funds for its construction? Unfortunately, no serious effort was made to construct a large reservoir by any government.

Anyhow, the construction of Bhasha Dam along with other dams is vital not only for our survival but also for enhancing the agricultural output, and for increasing overall industrial productivity. In 2006, at the time of ground-breaking ceremony of Diamer-Bhasha dam, the cost was estimated at \$6.5 billion, now it is around \$14.6 billion. And with delay, the cost would increase further. Of course, successful completion of the Diamer-Bhasha dam would help develop agriculture

and also generate inexpensive energy to enable Pakistani producers to compete in the world market. According to experts, Bhasha Dam will eliminate flood hazards to a great extent and will reduce sedimentation in Tarbela reservoir, thereby improving the storage capacity and power output at Tarbela. However, Pakistan should also look for the unconventional sources of energy to meet 21st century's needs. Many countries have benefited from sprinkler and drip irrigation distributed through pressurized plastic pipes. Why Pakistan does not benefit from such system?

In the past, there have been wars between the countries over religions, usurpation of territories and control of resources including oil, but in view of acute shortages of water in Africa, Middle East, Asia and elsewhere, the future wars could be fought over water. The Indus River Basin has been an area of conflict between India and Pakistan for about four decades. Spanning 1,800 miles, the river and its tributaries together make up one of the largest irrigation canals in the world. Dams and canals built in order to provide hydropower and irrigation have dried up stretches of the Indus River. The division of the river basin water has created friction among the countries of South Asia, and among their states and provinces. Accusations of overdrawing of share of water made by each province have resulted in the lack of water supplies to coastal regions of Pakistan.

There is dispute between India and Pakistan for constructing illegal dams by India on Pakistani rivers. India and Bangladesh have had also dispute over Ganges River water. For the last many years Sindh has been complaining for water shortage and accusing Punjab for using former's share of water. Balochistan leadership had blamed Sindh for depriving Balochistan of its share of water. In Punjab, farmers have been protesting for the shortage of water for their crops. And in the past there were speeches in the assembly that Punjab would not give its share of water to Sindh. Pakistan is already facing threats to its internal and external security, and economic crisis. Ominous foreboding is that there could be another vortex of crisis vis-à-vis water conflicts between Pakistan's provinces. India is keenly watching the situation whether the things are moving according to its planning of stoking tensions between provinces of Pakistan.

Pakistan is an agricultural country, and agriculture accounts for about one fourth of GDP. Over 50% labour force is related to agrarian profession; hence water is

of paramount importance for Pakistan. The shortage of water means that our future generations may have to face hunger and starvation. Pakistan had suffered a loss exceeding five billion rupees in paddy crop production only in the wake of water shortage after India stopped Chenab water to fill its Baglihar dam in 2008. India is indeed violating Indus Water Treaty, and the objective seems to be drying up Pakistan. India's think-tanks have been working on river diversion plans with a view to creating acute water shortage in Pakistan, which could lead to acute shortage of wheat and other crops and also inter-provincial conflicts over distribution of water. Instead of bickering and debating, the entire nation including ruling and opposition parties should unite to avert the catastrophe.

—The writer is a senior journalist based in Lahore.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/water-is-lifeline-of-any-nation/>

Pakistan And The Middle East Crisis By

Asad Hussain

Pakistan's foreign policy generally centres on its relations with its immediate neighbours, especially India and Afghanistan, and with larger powers such as the United States and China. But Pakistan's relations with the Middle East are evolving at a faster pace, with important implications for its security and economy. How Pakistan will react to the worsening regional rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran, as well as the current dispute between the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), will have a major impact on stability in the near future.

The Middle East itself has experienced continuous political turmoil for decades. There are many contentious issues such as ethnic diversity, the individual interests of various sects, no reasonable delimitation of the boundaries between nations, the political and economic aspects of various superpower interests, the existing political structures in the ineffective form of dictatorial regimes, emigration, and wars, to name a few. All this has led to the distortion of ordinary life in these countries.

Many dictatorial powers in this region have oppressed people for decades and after years of cruelty, the people finally had had enough. They decided to rise up, leading to the overthrow of many dictators. This has since come to be known as the Arab Spring. Gaddafi, Morsi and Saddam were some of the notable names that lost power, yet the governments that took their place are still struggling to stamp their authority due to various political biases within the country.

The ethnic diversity that can be found here leads to divisions between the different communities and not even nationalism can unite them. This can be attributed to an error in the demarcation of borders by the colonial powers. Therefore, small autonomous groups can be found spread over different geographic areas.

The regime in Syria has led to the interruption of normal life for its citizens and, as a result, many people are choosing to flee these countries, travelling to Europe in large numbers in pursuit of a better life. On a global scale, Russia

supports the regime in power in Syria, while the United States opposes it, and as both are considerably powerful countries, this has led to an impasse that is making it difficult to find a solution to this crisis. On the other side, the people fleeing the country are becoming a burden to their new nations, many of whom fear that the security will get worse with such a large influx of unregistered refugees.

More than 21,900 civilians have lost their lives to sectarian violence since 2003, according to the South Asia Terrorism Portal. In the 1990s, Pakistan became the first line of defence in a sectarian proxy war between Saudi Arabia and Iran, while both countries offered financial and logistical support to Sunni and Shiite groups, respectively, as part of a wider struggle for influence in the Muslim world

Pakistan's policy in the Middle East has largely been aimed at limiting the national consequences of sectarian tensions resulting from the rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Pakistan is a Sunni-majority country, but Shiites account for about 20 percent of the total population.

The country has the second largest Shia population in the world after Iran. It also has a history of sectarian violence that includes violent clashes and spates of assassinations between Sunni and Shiite groups. More than 21,900 civilians have lost their lives to sectarian violence since 2003, according to the South Asia Terrorism Portal. In the 1990s, Pakistan became the first line of defence in a sectarian proxy war between Saudi Arabia and Iran, while both countries offered financial and logistical support to Sunni and Shiite groups, respectively, as part of a wider struggle for influence in the Muslim world.

Because of this history, Pakistan is still wary of being dragged into power struggles along sectarian lines, as they are currently developing in the Middle East. The political and economic resurgence of Iran after the implementation of the nuclear agreement in 2016, and Iran's willingness to participate in the power struggle in the recent conflicts in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and Yemen makes such a result possible in the foreseeable future.

Surprisingly, Pakistan seems to have acted intelligently during the Middle East crisis. They refused to take sides, and their parliament voted not to provide troops to the military alliance formed to fight terrorism in the region, as the

alliance seems more anti-Iran than anything else. Pakistan did grant General Raheel Shareef permission to become head of the military alliance in 2017, but this appointment is more symbolic in nature than practical. The country has also offered to play a mediating role in order to end the latest Gulf crisis between Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar.

However, Pakistan's neutral position has also had an impact on its relations with the other countries, in particular Saudi Arabia, who expressed their aversion to Pakistan's position in the military alliance. But they do not understand that Pakistan cannot afford to impede relations with Iran due to various geopolitical and economic factors and that they are home to millions of Shiite Muslims and such an alliance would lead to tensions between the different sects. In addition, Iran's improving relationship with India, and its threat to CPEC could also not be ignored. In light of these factors, Pakistan's decision was perhaps the best we could hope for in the given circumstances.

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Pakistan, India and the NSG | Editorial

India's latest attempt to seek admission into the 48-member strong Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) has been unsuccessful. Despite US assurances that its strategic partner for the 21st century easily meets all criteria. That this comes in the run-up to the 10-year anniversary of the landmark Indo-US nuclear deal only makes this set-back all the harder for New Delhi to swallow.

China vetoed the move. It may suit Washington to link this to ongoing tensions between it and Beijing; such as the question of foreign exchange reserves or tariffs. Pakistan, for its part, would do well to avoid quiet gloating. However tempting it may be to push home the point, across the eastern front, of how it, too, has important regional allies. For as past lessons inform: what is 'bad' for New Delhi is not necessarily 'good' for Islamabad.

The sticking point is the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Neither India nor Pakistan are signatories while China insists that this must be a prerequisite to NSG membership. Islamabad previously maintained it would ink the treaty provided that its neighbour did the same. Though it changed tack in the wake of the Indo-US nuclear deal; which affords de facto recognition of New Delhi's nuclear status. Thus Pakistan began suggesting that it was ready to become party to the NPT. But only as an established nuclear state.

This is something that the international community needs to consider. Not least because of the inherently discriminatory nature of the NPT that only recognises the 'Permanent 5' as being nuclear capable. Be that as it may, as things currently stand the US is viewed through Pakistani eyes as pursuing a policy of regional imbalance here in South Asia. Indeed, after Israel, India is the largest recipient of American assistance. And now the latter has been admitted into the US inner most circle of trading partners by way of the Strategic Trade Authorisation (STA-1); also covering defence.

There is merit in this country's argument that inclusion into the elite NSG would strengthen the latter's non-proliferation objectives. After all, it would signal the Pakistani state's commitment to formally adhering to international protocols on the nuclear trade front in accordance with NSG guidelines; as well as accepting a

strict monitoring regime. Neutralising the threat of an Indo-Pak arms race would be an added bonus. Especially in the event of Indian admission into the club; considering dual-purpose nuclear material and technology. Thus the way forward must lie in the simultaneous welcoming of both India and Pakistan into the NSG framework.

The US and the rest of the international community are wont to talk of how a peaceful South Asia is in everyone's interest. In this they are right. But now is the time to translate word into deed. And this must begin with refraining from treating this country like a rogue nation. Which, of course, is another way of saying that Pakistan's security concerns must be duly acknowledged.

In short, the NSG will be more efficient with both India and Pakistan in it. The question now remains as to whether the major powers are as committed to regional peace as they claim. *

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Source: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/298148/pakistan-india-and-the-nsg-4/>

Bureaucratic Reforms | Editorial

IT was a necessary pep talk in the circumstances and has helped shed light on Prime Minister Imran Khan's approach to reforms in the civil service. Addressing a gathering of bureaucrats in Islamabad, Mr Khan both asked for the bureaucracy's professional support and pledged to protect bureaucrats from accountability witch hunts. The prime minister did not mention specific changes that his government intends to make, but did appear to suggest that the reforms process and its early results will take at least two years to become apparent. That is a fair demand and a sensible approach. Reforming the giant federal and provincial bureaucracies will require careful consideration that balances the need for greater efficiency with rightful legal protections of bureaucrats. The prime minister's point man for civil service reforms, former governor of the State Bank of Pakistan Ishrat Husain, is an experienced leader, but as early incidents in the PTI government's term have indicated, insulating the bureaucracy from political interference is a complex and long-term problem.

In his comments on Friday, the prime minister did express an admiration for the so-called Singapore model of governance. In Mr Khan's understanding, the Singapore model is effective because bureaucrats are highly paid and there is firm accountability. While there is merit in looking at global examples to effect change domestically, Mr Khan and his team should also take care to avoid simplistic prescriptions. Indeed, there are examples of relatively professional setups in public service in Pakistan. For example, the National Highways and Motorway Police along the Lahore to Peshawar motorway corridor is regarded as professional, courteous and effective. While higher wages are a factor, ensuring entry standards, on-the-job training, quality resources and human-rights awareness have also played a role. Similarly, citizens applying for or updating CNICs have a noticeably professional Nadra at their service. There, too, factors beyond simply pay have resulted in a public service that is reasonably efficient and can be lauded. While arguments for a pay increase for bureaucrats could have some merit, the bloated, overstaffed aspects of the bureaucracy will also need to be scrutinised. Otherwise, gigantic cost increases beyond the capacity of the state to absorb will become inevitable.

Certainly, Mr Khan is the only recent national leader who has made it a priority to advance civil service reforms. The previous PML-N- and PPP-led federal governments may have occasionally referred to the need for civil service reforms, but both parties were content to continue with business as usual in the bureaucracy. At a minimum, then, Mr Khan has infused the debate on bureaucratic reforms with a sense of urgency and political will. If Mr Khan and his advisers abide by a sense of fairness and the need for greater efficiency, positive change should be possible.

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Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1433213/bureaucratic-reforms>

Civil Nuclear Cooperation Between India, Russia And Bangladesh: Implications For Pakistan – OpEd By Asia Maqsood

India signed a tripartite agreement for the first time with Russia and Bangladesh for civil nuclear cooperation on March 1, 2018. Nuclear Power Cooperation of India Limited (NPCIL) is intended to play an active role for the construction of a nuclear power plant with the proposed supply of equipment, being built by Russia in Bangladesh. Simultaneously, India would train Bangladesh's nuclear scientists for the project.

The agreement was signed in Moscow by Deputy Director General of Rosatom (Russia's Alex civil nuclear body) Nikolay Spassky, Ambassador of Bangladesh in Russia S.M. Saiful Hoque and Indian Ambassador to Russia Pankaj Saran. Furthermore, Rosatom will construct a nuclear power plant in Bangladesh on a contract basis and assist in design, production and supply of equipment, installation, pre-commissioning and commissioning, Rosatom officials said.

It has its unique combination of active and passive safety systems providing the maximum resistance against external and internal impact, including tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, and plane crash.

Earlier, India established its nuclear power plant station and operated the Kudankulam Plant built by Russia's assistance and participated in the Russian project in Bangladesh. Indian companies may be involved in construction and installation works and the supply of material of non-critical category in this project, officials told Economic Times. "Today was a landmark event for both of our countries – and the industry as a whole.

We are confident that this is the first step toward the formation of a new, forward-looking cooperation agenda in the region," Spassky said. This would be the first nuclear power plant in Bangladesh. India and Bangladesh have smooth trade ties and would be sharing good working experience with Russia in the field of civil nuclear energy.

This tripartite civil nuclear cooperation between Russia, India and Bangladesh would be the first occurrence where New Delhi will be involved in a civil nuclear project in Bangladesh. This demonstrates India's entry into nuclear mainstreaming. At the same time, India is promoting its "Make in India" initiative in its proposal to Russia to make nuclear power reactors in India.

US global influence is relatively declining and other emerging powers such as Russia, India and China are pursuing their strategic interests globally and regionally. In this changing global international political environment, Pakistan is also seeking its partners other than the United States such as Russia and China. Pakistan's policy makers must accommodate the country in regional developments through joint ventures with Russia, China and Bangladesh etc in order to avoid any of India's policies to isolate it from the regional politics.

The Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant involves two units, each with a capacity of 1200 MW and is situated on the bank of Padma River. It will be based on VVER-1200 reactors of the 3+ generation technology which is the most powerful reactor in Russia.

Pakistan is an energy starving country; it should formulate its policies to attract Russia to civil nuclear cooperation. Russia is India's traditional defence partner since the Cold War era. Last year in April, 2017, India announced a \$4.5 billion line of credit for development projects in Bangladesh and another \$500 million for defence hardware purchases for Dhaka in order to deepen political and strategic ties between the two countries, during Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit to India.

Both countries have no steady and trusted relationship with Pakistan and their growing ties are giving an impression that they are deliberately isolating Pakistan from regional politics. Earlier, Indian Atomic Energy Commission chairman Sekhar Basu said at the 61st general conference of the global nuclear watchdog IAEA, "We are collaborating with our Russian and Bangladeshi partners on establishing Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant in Bangladesh, in Sep 2017 as India's first atomic energy venture abroad. Now, this initiative has been signed formally."

The Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant involves two units, each with a capacity of 1200 MW and is situated on the bank of Padma River. It will be based on VVER-

1200 reactors of the 3+ generation technology which is the most powerful reactor in Russia. It has its unique combination of active and passive safety systems providing the maximum resistance against external and internal impact, including tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, and plane crash.

With active efforts underway, it will be interesting to see if Bangladesh and India are successful in isolating Pakistan in the region. Should Pakistan now focus its attention on improving ties with Russia?

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Source: <http://www.eurasiareview.com/17092018-civil-nuclear-cooperation-between-india-russia-and-bangladesh-implications-for-pakistan-oped/>

Pakistan Again Elected as IAEA Member |

Editorial

NUCLEAR safety and security, during last few decades, no doubt gained added impetus at the international level. Being a nuclear-armed country, Pakistan has often been subjected to unwarranted and baseless criticism especially by our enemies about the safety of nuclear assets. Nonetheless, getting elected yet another time as a member of the board of governors of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is not only a diplomatic success but it also signifies global recognition of country's status as a responsible nuclear power and an acknowledgment of the contributions made by our scientists and engineers to the IAEA's works in various fields including in the area of nuclear safety and security. How robust, resilient, and foolproof is the security of our nuclear arsenals can well be gauged from the fact that none of nuclear facilities, whether military or civilians, have ever faced any single security threat. Strategic Plans Division (SPD), the executive arm and secretariat of the National Command Authority (NCA) that is supported by tri-services strategic forces command is ensuring the most stringent physical and technological security solutions through its dedicated security and intelligence capabilities as well as a rigorous personnel reliability programme. These security measures have also been acknowledged and appreciated not only by the IAEA but several other world institutions and journals. Also had there been a window of vulnerability, our enemies especially the one sitting in the neighbour would have tried to penetrate it. So, credit definitely goes to the SPD and its former and current heads as well as other institutions such as Pakistan Nuclear Regulatory Authority and the Nuclear Security Division for strengthening and refining the security paradigm keeping in view the emerging threats and changing technologies.

The services of former DG, SPD retired Lt Gen Khalid Kidwai who in fact initiated efforts towards that end and then his successors especially the current Chairman Joints Chiefs of Staff Gen Zubair Mehmood Hayat will always be remembered for sparing no effort and doing all possible that was required to ensure the security of nuclear arsenals. Then how one can indeed overlook the work done by our scientists and engineers at the PAEC? The research organisation is promoting peaceful usage of nuclear technology for social economic development of the country. Its contributions in the field of nuclear power generation, medicine and

development of agriculture sectors are commendable and we are confident that it will continue to pursue its missions with the same zeal to achieve more success and progress in these sectors.

Being a constructive mainstream player in nuclear politics, diplomacy and in the light of country's impressive and comprehensive portfolio, which can be independently verified there should be no objection to accepting Pakistan into the NSG (Nuclear Supplier Group). Pakistan fully qualifies to become member of the elite nuclear club more than any other country including India that has a poor track record as far as nuclear security is concerned. Unfortunately, West's double standard in global politics are not supportive of Pakistan's bid yet our Foreign Office needs to step up efforts and stay engaged both with the friendly countries as well as those opposing our bid compelling them to avoid any discriminatory criteria, as such a move will have serious consequences for strategic stability in the region. Pakistan's inclusion in the NSG is significant, as it will help the country promote peaceful application of the technology for its socio- economic development.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/pakistan-again-elected-as-iaea-member/>

Reconstructing The Civil Service By Riaz Khan

Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah in his address to civil officers in Peshawar in April 1948, said “that Prime Ministers come and go, but you stay on”. They have stayed, but as “your obedient servant” and as a self-serving bureaucracy. No government military or civilian has been able to break the steel frame of the civil servants especially the domination of the District Management Group (DMG) now further exalted to the status of Pakistan Administrative Service (PAS). Most of the reforms have only tinkered with the civil service.

In Pakistan the service reforms need to address the issue of interference of higher levels of governments in lower levels of governments, generalisation of civil service, politicisation, non-merit based recruitment, delays in recruitment leading to large number of vacancies, frequent postings and transfers, out of turn promotions, seniority system giving rise to lack of competition, domination by PAS, below market compensation, misuse of perks and allowances, posting of inept officers in poor and far flung areas as punishment, lack of disciplinary action and above all corruption.

Of the many recommendations in the last report prepared in 2008 by National Commission on Government Reforms led by Dr Ishrat Hussain only three might come close to making a minor dent: (i) Separate cadre of regular Civil Services at the Federal, Provincial and District levels co-existing with contractual appointments and lateral movement (ii) Creation of a National Executive Service (NES) for senior management positions open to all Federal, Provincial and district Civil Servants through a competitive process and (iii) induction of three specialised cadres under the NES for Economic Management, Social Sector Management, and General. Most of the solutions presented in the other 38 reports since 1947 also focus on superficial changes.

PTI, with its old school of thought, traditional approach and biased composition of the task force on Civil Service Reforms, is now embarking on the same old trodden road. The task force led by Dr Ishrat will most probably endorse his earlier status quo oriented recommendations. What is needed is the melting of the steel frame in a furnace, demolishing old structures and creating the

foundations of a new civil service capable of withstanding the pressures and serving Pakistan.

A new radical approach is proposed as service reforms have failed worldwide and especially in Pakistan. The problem in the past has been the inability to deal with the complexity of the service and proposing changes within the existing legal framework. Nobody, except a few “Baboos” understand the system. The “Estacode” is over 1500 pages while just the “Travelling Allowance Rules” are over 100 pages. The only way to move forward is to repeal all previous laws, rules, regulations, agreements and notifications and promulgate a new Act while saving the rules for the transition period. Amending the existing plethora of laws is an impossible task.

Designing the civil service afresh with a new slate will provide greater flexibility. It will allow the Government to initiate “meritocratic reform” similar to the one carried out in the 1960’s by the Singapore Government. Civil servants with a proven record of competence were retained while those found incompetent were weeded out. Margaret Thatcher reduced the size of the civil service from 732,000 to 594,000. The DMG being generalists will find no place in the new technically and professionally driven service. A diluted version could be to accommodate all civil servants according to their preferences. Only a decentralised post based technical civil service, the parameters of which are listed below can meet the desired objectives.

To avoid interference and ensure accountability each level of Government will have its own civil service. Each level will be responsible for its own recruitment, pay scale, pension, postings, transfers, promotions, training and disciplinary action. Movement of civil servants through notifications will be abolished as vacant posts would be filled through a competitive process.

The service will have technical cadre based on the technical Ministries, Departments, Offices i.e. Health, Education, IT, Commerce, Police, Revenue, Agriculture, Finance, Accounts, IT, Human Resource and Audit etc. The generalist cadre of DMG will be abolished.

To ensure merit based recruitment a Public Service Commission will have to be established at Federal level, in each provincial government and district. To avoid

delays in recruitment, managing the recruitment process shall be the responsibility of the human resource section of the concerned Ministry, Department or office. The Commission will only be responsible to review the recruitment process and give approval for the selected candidates. Appointing authority will be the nominated officer.

To protect the tenure and ensure productivity of the staff, the appointment of civil servants shall be on a permanent basis to a post unless the post is abolished or the contract is terminated on performance, corruption, misconduct, or other grounds.

To be competitive with the private sector and encourage bright candidates the salary package would be at par with the private sector. A much higher pay scale level will be required for posts in remote and difficult areas or for highly specialised post. This will make hardship posts more attractive and will avoid posting officers to remote areas as a punishment.

To ensure healthy competition within the service, initially a post will be advertised internally within the government and in case it is not filled then it will be advertised externally. This will provide lateral input into the service. A post based system will put an end to the problems of politicisation, promotions and frequent postings and transfers as a vacancy will only be filled through competition.

Performance Evaluation will be undertaken yearly which will include input from the direct reporting officer and staff reporting to the post. Promotion will not be a right. Civil servants will have to apply to a higher post to be promoted. It will not be seniority based. Annual salary increment will be based on performance.

Although the suggested reforms are radical in nature but if communicated and managed properly it can be accomplished harmoniously. However, even the best system cannot withstand the might of the politicians and bureaucracy when they are in cahoots.

n The writer is a former Member of the National Reconstruction Bureau.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/23-Sep-2018/reconstructing-the-civil-service>

Taking Kashmir To The UN | Editorial

The wars fought between Pakistan and India, and the daily skirmishes on the line of control (LoC) between the soldiers of the two nuclear states are evidence that Kashmir will always remain the hotspot between them. In times when India is ruled by the likes of Narendra Modi of Bharatiya Janata Party, (BJP), whose favourite tools to secure the position of regional hegemon includes warmongering, Pakistan has taken a sensible step in bringing Kashmir issue at the 73rd session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) that is in progress.

The Indian government has called off the scheduled meeting between Pakistani and Indian foreign ministers days before the UNGA session citing an incident in Kashmir as a terrorist attack. However, it is essential to highlight the difference between terrorism and “right to self-determination” under the auspices of the UN that allows the occupied people to overthrow the occupation of their lands by any means necessary, including armed resistance.

Pakistan also thinks that dialogue is the best solution to settle any conflict. It is Islamabad’s firm belief in the benefits of conversation that Pakistani foreign minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi will appeal before the world community play its role in finding a durable solution for Kashmir.

It is about time for the global community, in general, to show some respect to the desires of the Kashmiri people who for the last seven decades are struggling hard to overthrow the unjustified and illegal Indian occupation of their lands. The ultimate responsibility, in this regard, lies with the members of the Security Council and especially the United States of America, which is leading the unipolar world.

Before the unipolarity in world order ceases to exist and before it becomes a daunting task like the ever-worsening Syrian civil war, the US needs to show some sincere efforts in convincing and pressurising India on giving up the illegal occupation of the Kashmir valley.

The US has many a time asserted that a sustainable solution could be thought of if both states “sit down and have a conversation together”. However, it seems that the US cannot remain impartial in the case of India and Pakistan. While in India, the US Secretary of State Michael Pompeo asked Pakistan to abandon terrorist attacks into India. Pompeo’s statement was a callous one as it was nothing but undermining the sacrifices of Kashmiri people to set their land free.

Among the many themes of convergence between the two partners in “war on terror”, Kashmir needs not to be forgotten at all. The US needs to let her interest go, at least for once, to settle the Kashmir issue.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/25-Sep-2018/taking-kashmir-to-the-un>

Imran's Successful Visits By Shahid M Amin

ALL reports suggest that Prime Minister Imran Khan's visits to Saudi Arabia and UAE on September 18-19, 2018 were a considerable success. Saudi Arabia was gratified that it was the first foreign country visited by Pakistan's newly-elected Prime Minister, which reemphasised Saudi Arabia's primacy in Pakistan's foreign policy calculations. The two countries have enjoyed a special relationship for more than sixty years. They have stood by each other in war and peace, in good and bad times. Imran Khan's visit reinvigorated the traditional ties and took them to greater heights.

Prior to Imran Khan's arrival in Saudi Arabia, there were some issues of concern affecting the bilateral relations. As an opposition leader, Imran Khan had opposed Pakistan's involvement in Yemen civil war, where a Saudi-led coalition made a military intervention in 2015 against the Shia Houthi rebels, who had Iran's backing. Imran had also opposed General Raheel Sharif's appointment as commander-in-chief of IMCTC, a military coalition force of over thirty Islamic countries, minus Shia states, which was set up by Saudi Arabia to fight terrorism. Thirdly, Imran Khan had criticized Pakistan's involvement in the War on Terror, dubbing it as someone else's war. Some observers even thought that he had a soft corner for Islamist extremists like Taliban. This too could have put him at odds with the Saudi regime, which has been fighting its own war against Al-Qaeda and other Islamist extremists.

However, during his visit to Saudi Arabia, Imran Khan evidently dispelled these concerns. He joined Saudi Arabia in condemning religious extremism, sectarianism and terrorism. He highlighted Pakistan's own sacrifices against terrorism. The Saudi leadership apprised him of steps taken by them to curb extremism and terrorism, and shared views on "the forces spreading extremist ideologies in the region" (an apparent allusion to Iran). The two countries acknowledged each other's efforts and sacrifices and pledged to continue their partnership to defeat this scourge. They agreed on the need to promote peace and security to ensure progress, development and prosperity. However, in a TV interview given to Saudi journalist Faheem Al-Hamid, Imran Khan repeated his view that Pakistan should not have joined the war on terror after 9/11 which was not "its war".

Imran Khan gave unequivocal assurances of support for Saudi Arabia's security, and stated publicly that "Pakistan would not allow anyone to attack Saudi Arabia and that Pakistan will always stand with the Kingdom." Actually, he was reaffirming the long-standing commitment to Saudi Arabia's security that has become the base on which the architecture of Saudi-Pakistan relationship is built. Prince Turki al-Faisal, an ex-Saudi intelligence chief, and Saudi Arabia's spokesman on foreign policy, has described the Saudi-Pakistan ties as "probably one of the closest relationships in the world between any two countries without an official treaty." In the past, Pakistan has assisted Saudi Arabia in tangible ways to protect its security e.g. by sending thousands of troops to Saudi Arabia in the 1980s to protect it.

The two sides expressed satisfaction at the convergence of views on a host of regional and global issues and those faced by the Ummah. (Since Saudi Arabia is highly critical of Iran, Pakistan's convergence of views with it could have hardly pleased Iran). Notably, the Saudi side assured Pakistan of its "maximum assistance" in efforts to transform the country into a welfare state. Imran Khan invited Saudi Arabia to become the third strategic partner of CPEC. His party spokesmen have since said that Saudi Arabia has accepted this invitation and that around \$10 billion will be forthcoming as Saudi investment in CPEC, including building a mega oil city in Gwadar for transportation of oil from Gulf States to China.

However, there has been no official Saudi statement so far confirming these claims. But hopes have been raised because it has been confirmed that a Saudi delegation consisting of Ministers of Finance and Energy will be visiting Pakistan early in Oct. The high-powered composition of this delegation suggests some seriousness of purpose. Incidentally, Saudi participation in CPEC would also constitute a rejection of India's objections to this project on ground that it passes through territory claimed by it.

In an important meeting with Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman, the dominating figure in the Saudi regime, Prime Minister Imran Khan supported the former's Vision 2030 for transforming Saudi Arabia and expressed admiration for the Prince's anti-corruption campaign. Imran's good equation with Prince Muhammad bin Salman would be greatly beneficial for Pakistan. On issues like

Yemen, Imran Khan offered that Pakistan could play the role of mediator if so required. He said the conflicts in Middle East were very distressing for Muslims and Pakistan wanted to play a reconciliatory role. He stressed the need for political solutions rather than resorting to wars. How far Saudi Arabia would support such a mediatory role is not yet clear.

The stopover in Abu Dhabi and Imran Khan's meeting with Crown Prince Muhammad bin Zayed was very useful since for some time UAE has been drawing closer to India. UAE was critical of Pakistan when it declared neutrality in the Yemen war. Sheikh Zayed, the founder of UAE, had been the closest friend of Pakistan and it was a strategic setback for Pakistan that the old warmth was seemingly lost. Though small, UAE is oil-rich and an important financial and commercial hub. Prime Minister Imran Khan was received with great warmth by the Crown Prince (the effective ruler) and it is very much hoped that this visit has restored traditional closeness in Pakistan's ties with UAE.

— The writer served as Pakistan's Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Soviet Union, France, Nigeria and Libya.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/imrans-successful-visits/>

Pakistan at the UN | Editorial

As an institution the United Nations is widely perceived as being long past its sell-by date, but the world has yet to come up with an alternative and it still stands as the 'something that is better than nothing'. The annual General Assembly (UNGA) is the moot in which all member nations at least in theory come together in (reasonable) amity. This year the 73rd UNGA finds itself with President Trump chairing a session of the Security Council, and the possibility of diplomatic fisticuffs with the Iranian president is on the horizon. The new Pakistan government has sent the new(ish) foreign minister and his team to work on a programme spread over a week and arranged by one of the nation's more competent diplomats Maleeha Lodi.

Whatever the opinion may be of the UN it is what it is and the opportunities it presents for international networking are unprecedented. The FM opened the batting for Pakistan with a statement to the effect that freedom of expression must be exercised responsibly. He was in dialogue with his Dutch counterpart and they were ruminating on the outcomes from the 'blasphemous caricatures' affair that raised many a headline in Pakistan and barely ruffled the surface in the Netherlands.

Important as it was, of far more importance in the long run for Pakistan is the promotion of economic cooperation and trade and investment, and not just with the Netherlands which is our fifth-largest trading partner in the EU, but with a host of other countries that Pakistan needs to repair links and fences with. There are two dozen bilateral meetings between now and close of play on Saturday September 29 when the FM will lay before the Assembly the priorities of the new government regarding international and regional issues and deliver the requisite statement on Occupied Kashmir. Post to the UNGA there will be a second meeting with US Secretary of State Pompeo for part-the-umpteenth of a reset in Pak-US relations. Busyness or business? Only time will tell.

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Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1811376/6-pakistan-at-the-un/>

The Kashmir Challenge By Ashraf Jehangir

Qazi

INDIA cancelled talks with Pakistan blaming it for 'acts of terror', along with a vicious attack on the newly elected prime minister. Pakistanis and Indians back their own versions regarding an alleged atrocity. Tragically, the truth is rendered irrelevant. The prime minister, however, must ensure he gets to know the unvarnished truth. Otherwise, like his predecessors, he will be systematically blindsided.

Pakistan wants dialogue. India says Pakistan must first stop 'cross-border terrorism'. Why did Modi first respond positively to the prime minister's proposal and then change his mind? Does he believe Imran Khan okayed an atrocity? Or that he is irrelevant?

Does India regard the Kashmiri freedom struggle as terror? There is a legal and a political reality. The UN has acknowledged the Kashmiri right of self-determination in 1948-49. In 1974, it reaffirmed "the duty of States not to use armed force to deprive peoples of their right to self-determination".

Armed struggle and resistance against illegal military occupation and repression are not terror.

In 1982, the UN "reaffirmed the legitimacy of the struggle of peoples for independence, territorial integrity, national unity and liberation from colonial or foreign domination and foreign occupation by all available means, including armed struggle".

The UN has rejected India's claim that Jammu and Kashmir is part of the Indian Union. It remains disputed territory. The right of self-determination of the Kashmiri people has been forcibly denied by the Indian military occupation of Jammu and Kashmir.

India blames Pakistan for not fulfilling conditions for the plebiscite. Even if this were so, it could not derogate from the rights of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. The fact that UN resolutions on Kashmir were adopted under Chapter 6

in no way reduces the obligation of member states and of parties to the dispute to respect and implement them. Nor does the Shimla Agreement affect Kashmiri rights.

Politically, however, India refuses to accept any of the above. Moreover, other than expressing concern over the human rights situation in India-held Kashmir (IHK), the international community is not prepared to press India on the subject of a Kashmir settlement. This, despite the dispute having triggered three wars between India and Pakistan which are today adjacent nuclear weapons countries.

This, and so much elsewhere, may underline the irresponsibility of the international community. It certainly highlights the structural ineffectiveness of the UN whose primary purpose is to preserve the peace and address situations that have led to war and threaten far more devastating conflicts.

Nevertheless, acts of terrorism including torture and mutilation are unlawful and unacceptable under any circumstances, including in the context of legitimate freedom struggles. The rights of innocent civilians are inviolable. The terror of one party can never justify that of others, including victims. However, armed struggle and resistance against illegal military occupation and repression is not terror.

Despite all of the above, political realities cannot be wished away. Only UNSC resolutions under Chapter 7 are enforceable. It is inconceivable that the UNSC will ever pass a Chapter 7 resolution on Jammu and Kashmir against the wishes of India. None of Pakistan's friends would support such a development.

At best major powers will continue to encourage and try to persuade India to engage with Pakistan on all outstanding issues, including Jammu and Kashmir. India may agree to what passes for dialogue. It has done so in the past.

After several barren rounds on core issues it breaks down over one or more incidents. Tensions rise. Conflicts happen. Hawks thrive. Peaceniks cower. Cynics laugh "all is for the best in the best of all possible worlds!"

Should Pakistan abandon dialogue with India? The prime minister rightly rejects such advice. Nor is it necessary for Pakistan to solicit dialogue if India is unwilling. Over time, however, Pakistan must strengthen its credibility. If that happens, India will, sooner or later, have to accept the reality that it can neither permanently crush the Kashmir liberation struggle nor successfully blame Pakistan for its inability to do so.

Meanwhile, Pakistan needs to improve and intensify its Kashmir advocacy and diplomacy. The prime minister's offer to engage India in a dialogue process to resolve all issues between the two countries is also, sooner or later, likely to be taken up. The challenges of the 21st century, which threaten to further exacerbate Indo-Pakistan tensions, will leave either country no choice.

However, Modi for the moment has chosen to accuse Imran Khan of being the 'true face' of an 'evil agenda'. He hopes to exploit Pakistan's isolation in the international community progressively brought about by the consistently incompetent decision-making of the establishment.

It is not clear if Modi's 'U-turn' was influenced by a reported atrocity, the approach of the 2019 national elections, a major corruption scandal hanging over him, the usual persuasion of influential anti-Pakistan lobbies or personal spite. Whatever it was, it has discouraged sensible realists and encouraged right-wing ideologues in both countries.

Pakistan's formal position on Kashmir does not need to change at all. But its strategy does need to be revisited to ensure its own policies do not inadvertently harm Kashmiris by allowing India to distract international attention away from its repression. Pakistan should honestly inform its people there is no alternative to a negotiated and principled compromise settlement with India that is verifiably acceptable to Kashmiri opinion.

Once India cannot credibly accuse Pakistan of aiding 'terrorism' in IHK it will not be able to portray its repression as 'counterterrorism'. Nor will it be able to sustain its obduracy on Kashmir forever. Pakistan will require imaginative and skilled diplomacy and leadership of a high order. It will also need to make clear 'red lines' that cannot be crossed and 'vital interests' that cannot be compromised.

The 21st century has one message for nuclear-armed India and Pakistan: cooperate or perish. The seas are rising. Land, water and jobs will disappear. Populations cannot cope. Stresses of every kind are increasing. Reason and moderation are giving way to atavistic passions, insane hatred and self-destructive machismo. Cooperating to reverse this fatal trend will provide a context for a Kashmir settlement.

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Indo-US Communications Compatibility And Security Agreement: Implications For Pakistan By Sonia Naz

The Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA) was signed after the US Defence Secretary James Mattis and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo met the Indian Foreign and Defence Ministers Sushma Swaraj and Nirmala Sitharaman respectively on September 6, to protect the military communication. According to the US, it is a foundational agreement and a major step forward because it permits the US to transport its sensitive and high-tech equipment such as armed surveillance drones to India. It also binds both states into a military alliance. Generally, the US signs these types of agreements with NATO allies. In 2016, the then US President Obama gave the status of “Major Defence Partner,” to India and on 30 July, 2018 Trump government gave the status of Strategic Trade Authorization-1 (STA-1) to India.

There are multiple reasons which are driving the US towards India. First, according to senior experts, India’s defence market is attractive for the US and it wants to seize the entire Indian market. With the US \$15 billion of arms deal in the past decade, India emerged as the second largest arms importer from the US. Second, the US wants more a vigorous trade partnership with India, to counter Indo-Russia trade volume. Third, through these surveillance drones the US wants to monitor China in the Indian Ocean. While China and India have more than US \$100 billion trade and China would like to believe that it does not face any threat from India, the growing cooperation between India and the US proves otherwise. This cooperation is boosting the Indian Military Industrial Complex while enhancing its military and nuclear capabilities at the same time.

The US is supporting India on every platform; recently, Washington stated that it would advocate for Indian membership of the Nuclear Suppliers Group despite China’s veto

While the Indo-US partnership is growing rapidly, Pak-US relations are simultaneously deteriorating. On the other hand, Russia also feels wary of the emerging cooperation between India and the US. This is one of the reasons,

bringing Pakistan and Russia closer as both states provide each other with the best alternative options. Islamabad purchased high tech Mi-35m helicopters from Russia and is also interested in purchasing more fighter jets from Russia.

Indian experts believe that COMCASA would reduce the chances of US reservations against India buying S-400 surface-to-air missile systems from Russia. While, the US is not particularly comfortable with India's military purchases from Russia, this issue was not discussed in the recent meeting. However, Pompeo told the reporters that the US would not punish India for its proposed purchase. India is looking forward to purchasing Patriot-3 PAC from the US and it is quite evident that combining both US and Russian technologies would disturb the stability of the South Asian region.

Hence, Indo-US military cooperation will increase the arms race in the region, especially disturbing the delicate equilibrium between Pakistan and India. Nevertheless, Pakistan is not protesting unlike India against any deal between the US and New Delhi. For example, Larry Pressler states in his book "Neighbours in Arms" that when the US Defence Department was approving a sale of eight F-16 to Pakistan in 2016, India started protesting against it. India's leaders also projected that these jets would be used against them. Pakistan is not complaining but the growing strategic partnership between India and the US is pushing it towards Russia and China.

The US is supporting India on every platform; recently, Washington stated that it would advocate for Indian membership of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) despite China's veto. On the other hand Russia has expressed desire to enhance, trade of military equipment with Pakistan. Nonetheless, Russia is cautiously warming up to Pakistan. Lastly, it is to be realised by both India and the US, that their partnership would not only increase the arms race between two rivals destabilising the region, but would also make them move away from their traditional allies. Consequently, Pakistan should think about new strategic partnerships with Russia to avoid any imminent risks.

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PAKISTAN & WORLD RELATIONS

Better Ties With Iran | Editorial

AFTER Prime Minister Imran Khan declined to travel abroad immediately in order to focus on a domestic governance agenda, there had been an added emphasis on which foreign leader would travel to Pakistan first. That Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif is the first foreign leader to meet the new prime minister is of some significance then. To begin with, it demonstrates that Mr Khan's pledge in his victory speech on July 26 to stabilise and improve relations with Pakistan's neighbours is a serious goal of his government. Mr Khan's meeting with the Iranian foreign minister ahead of a visit to Pakistan by US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo also sends a signal that the PTI government will attempt to chart an independent course. Furthermore, Mr Zarif's meeting will not have gone unnoticed in Saudi Arabia. So if Mr Khan has struck the right and courageous note in foreign policy, the PTI government will almost certainly need to navigate past serious external challenges to an independent-minded foreign policy.

To be clear, it is in Pakistan's essential national interest to maintain good ties with Iran and, indeed, all its neighbours. But the leadership in Saudi Arabia has virtually declared Iran a mortal enemy, and US President Donald Trump is determined to bring the Iranian economy to its knees with severe unilateral sanctions. Pakistan needs equally stable relations with all three countries, and, therefore, must tread a difficult path. Emphasising border security cooperation with Iran and supporting it in its tussle with the US over the nuclear deal that the latter country has unilaterally pulled out of are sensible options to pursue at the moment. The nuclear deal, formally the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, was painstakingly negotiated not just between Iran and the US but the four other permanent members of the UN Security Council, Germany and the rest of the EU too. All signatories other than the US remain committed to the agreement and most are willing to consider improvements to the deal to address the Trump administration's hostility to it.

While it is unlikely that the US will reverse course quickly or that Saudi Arabia's hostility towards Iran will ebb anytime soon, Pakistan and those countries still

committed to the JCPOA are taking a principled stance in support of dialogue and international agreements. At some point, better sense must prevail, and Pakistan and Iran stand to make significant gains from ramping up bilateral trade and other economic activities. Nearly a decade ago, there was, briefly, hope that Pakistan would find a way to build and activate the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline, but fierce US opposition prevented Pakistan from getting Iranian gas at a time of great shortages in the country. Today, Pakistan ought to be able to explain to the US and Saudi Arabia — in fact, both should realise themselves — that its legitimate economic and security needs require stable ties with Iran and other regional countries.

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Indo-Pak Relations By Dr Ikhlaq Hussain

India and Pakistan are two immediate neighbouring countries of South-Asia. Seven decades have passed; the relations of these two unfortunate countries have never been normal and are at their lowest level today. The clash of their national interests and unresolved issues are the main reasons.

Indo-Pak relations are an elaborate chapter and therefore should be seen in the light of their long historic background. India and Pakistan both had been created on the basis of “Two Nation” theory and under the formula of Hindu majority areas of the Sub-Continent as an independent sovereign India and the Muslims – majority areas as Pakistan. The hawkish Hindu political leaders of India, who had for a long time been dreaming of “Akhand Bharat” became disappointed and had not accepted the creation of Pakistan.

India has produced dynamic political leaders. They had the vision and desire to see India to emerge as a world-Power, leader of Asia and its supremacy over the Indian Ocean.

The megalomaniac leaders of India had therefore started with occupying the nearby islands in Indian Ocean, then with fake documents prepared from the ruler of the state of Jammu Kashmir and an absurd plea had attacked and occupied the state and lastly violating the agreement as before attacked and occupied pro-Pakistan rulers’ states of Hyderabad and Junagarh.

Following the occupation of Kashmir in 1947, India then in 1948, in collaboration a prominent ruler of Baluchistan had attacked Baluchistan from the soil of Afghanistan.

In reply, the Pakistan Army under command of Gen. Akbar Rangroot had repulsed the attack, captured all enemy-soldiers and presented them before Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Governor General of Pakistan.

In 1965 war between India and Pakistan inside the disputed state of Jammu and Kashmir, India had violated by attacking Pakistan at its international borders.

In 1971 then, the Government of Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi and its agencies, who in collaboration with their political agents and facilitators in East Pakistan had been operating for a long time attacked Pakistan, won the war and disintegrated it.

Following this glorious victory, Mrs. Indira Gandhi wasted no time, carried its first nuclear explosion and made India a Nuclear power.

The political leadership of Pakistan foreseeing and smelling the Indian future designs goals and their intentions against Pakistan, in spite of great hurdles had therefore decided to become Nuclear in its defense and deterrence against India.

Afterwards, the day Mr. Modi became the Prime Minister of India, he and fanatic Hindu extremist political parties known for their anti-Muslim and anti-Pakistan stance and enmity, he has constantly been busy in brutally crushing the movement of self-determination of the people of Jammu and Kashmir lasting for seventy long years. The defence forces of India are committing barbarism over local Muslim population, their massacre and gross human rights violations.

His government is also trying to change 35-A constitutional status of Kashmir. Mr. Modi, remember, India has lost Kashmir forever is written over the wall.

Regarding Mr. Modi's policy for Pakistan, he has started a proxy war of terrorism inside Pakistan financially supporting the separatist movement in Baluchistan and trying to destroy its economy.

Moreover Mr. Modi has stopped water supply of Pakistan, necessary for its agriculture and has further threatened and vowed to convert Pakistan into desert, which is a very dangerous step.

Both the governments of India and Pakistan should remember that, no government of India shall ever have the political will or dare to solve core issue of Kashmir with Pakistan. Similarly, no government of Pakistan shall ever forget Kashmir issue and leave it alone.

Therefore, the chances of good relation between India and Pakistan are bleak. India claims itself to be the biggest democracy of the world shall have to solve the issues one day.

In spite of all challenges, however, it is encouraging that the majority of people on both sides have a great desire for the dialogue between India and Pakistan, solve their issues amicably, visit each other's countries, exchange social functions and live amicably.

They also desire to revise their visa system and change insulting system of issuing visas to the public on both sides.

Visit any country of the world, you will find both people of India and Pakistan living peacefully, eating together, enjoying together and helping each other.

Lastly relating to visa availability for the citizens of both countries, in normal circumstances and routinely, a visa is issued by the embassy of every country to visit freely and move freely all over that country.

In case of India and Pakistan however, visa is issued not for the entire country but only for the cities, restricted to five cities, In addition , the citizens of both countries are bound to report their arrivals and departure every time to the police stations.

Is it not insulting for the citizens of both countries and shameful for both governments?

The writer is a senior citizen, who has served the Ministry of Health, Kingdom of Saudia-Arabia. At present, he is working as a medical specialist in a charity medical centre.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/11-Sep-2018/indo-pak-relations>

A Thaw in Pak-Russia Relations By

Muhammad Usman Ghani

Pakistan, with its unique geographical location and its access to the warm waters of the Indian Ocean, has always attracted Russia. In 1949, the Soviet leader, Joseph Stalin, extended an invitation to the first Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan to visit Moscow. However, Khan opted to give them the cold shoulder and travelled to Washington instead, straining the relationship between the two nations for years to come. In the eighties, during the height of the Cold War, Pakistan once again sided with the US to fight against Russian forces that had invaded Afghanistan. These moves ultimately forced Russia to establish good ties with India.

The relations between Pakistan and Russia became friendly when Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Fradkov visited Pakistan in 2007. He was the first Russian PM to visit Pakistan in the post-soviet era. PM Mikhail and President Musharraf had productive discussions, and this visit laid the foundation for the subsequent relationship between Pakistan and Russia. In 2011, Vladimir Putin publicly endorsed Pakistan's bid to join the SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organisation). In the same year, Russia condemned NATO drone strikes in the North-West region of Pakistan. In 2015, Russia signed a landmark deal in which they agreed to sell four Mi-35 helicopters to Pakistan, as well as expressed its desire to invest \$2 billion in the North-South gas pipeline project. Both countries also held two joint military exercises called "DRUZBA", that were held in Pakistan in 2016, and Russia in 2017.

In recent times, whenever the US accused Pakistan of not playing its part in the eradication of terrorism, Russia came forward to negate the USA's blame, with the Russian deputy minister expressing his appreciation for Pakistan's efforts so far.

Since Pakistan and US are not currently on good terms, with the latter cutting the military fund they owed the former, Russia's recent inclination towards Pakistan may be a good omen. The USA has halted joint military training programs aimed at training Pakistani army personnel, thus, Pakistan signed an agreement with Russia in August 2018 at their first JMCC (Joint Military Consultative Committee)

meeting in Rawalpindi. During the discussion, both sides came to an agreement through which Pakistani troops will receive training at the Russian Military Training Institute.

In the last few years, Sino-Russian ties have scaled new heights of partnership. On the other hand, Pakistan's relations with the US have soured, and in the same vein, the Americans have ignited a trade-war with China. This makes it inevitable that the three nuclear powers China, Russia, and Pakistan are going to band together, to fight against the US hegemony

A few incidents in the past have isolated Russia on many fronts. The Russian ex-spy poisoning scandal, the annexation of Crimea and meddling in the USA presidential elections are just some of the incidents that alienated them from the rest of the developed world. However, this isolation has drawn Russia closer to China. In the last few years, Sino-Russian ties have scaled new heights of partnership. On the other hand, Pakistan's relations with the US have soured, and in the same vein, the US has ignited a trade-war with China. This makes it inevitable that the three nuclear powers China, Russia, and Pakistan are going to band together against US hegemony.

Pakistan is a victim of isolation as well, as its relations with its neighbouring countries are not conciliatory at the moment. Having been shown the 'exit door' by the US, Pakistan is looking for a replacement and Russia seems to be willing to fill that role. It is an oil and gas-rich country, with advanced defence technology, and even though they cannot compare with the US in both cases, it might be enough to fulfil Pakistan's defensive and energy needs. Additionally, Russia also has influence over Central Asian states like Turkmenistan, and with Pakistan already looking to exploit this region, starting with the TAPI gas pipeline project; they could turn to Moscow to improve relations.

From the Russian perspective, this partnership could be more helpful as a boost to its economy. Russia always had the drive to control the Indian Ocean. With Pakistan as a partner (who may even agree to provide naval bases), Russia can become an influential presence in the lucrative Indian Ocean, and can challenge Indian and US power, together with Pakistan and China. With the Russian economy struggling at times, and Pakistan and China already at work on CPEC,

the Russians will more than likely be interested in reaping some of the benefits of this vast project as well.

In recent times, Pakistan's relations with Russia have become necessary for the betterment of both countries, to some extent. This partnership could be propitious for Pakistan due to the sheer size of Russia, which is the largest country in the world that shares its frontiers with 16 sovereign states, and a partnership could open a world of opportunities for Pakistan's business community. Pakistan's large population promises to do the same for Russian businesses, and their easy access to the Indian Ocean is also expected to be of strategic value to Moscow. The growing friendship between the two countries and China will also create an impressive deterrent to US influence and prove to them once and for all, that Pakistan is not dependant on US for anything.

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Transpose in Pak-US Relations By Reema Shaukat

PAK-US diplomatic relations date back from October 20, 1947. Apart from other cordial and subtle relations, Pakistan and USA relationship is more or less based on economic and military support. Pakistan has always proved to be strategic partner of US. In the Post-Cold War era, Pakistan proved to be time tested friend of USA where it had the option of being ally to either USA or Soviet Union, but Pakistan rendered all support to USA in its war with former USSR to become super power.

Unfortunately, at the end of war between two powers of that time, Pakistan later had to face mess of Russian invasion in Afghanistan. Pakistan extended its full support to Afghan Muslim brethren but tactlessly it was left alone to wipe the muddle of other countries. Pakistan was not only left unaccompanied by its allies in vulnerable condition but with traumas of troubled economy, disturbed infrastructure and population burden of millions of Afghan refugees. Since 9/11 the Pak USA ties extra fabricated when Pakistan decided to be a part of alliance of USA in its war against terrorism.

Unluckily here again Pakistan suffered more than the war zone and it is still paying huge price in the form of menace of terrorism and it's after affects in country. Since August 2017, Pak-US relations are following bumpy paths. It was expected that Trump's new policies will acknowledge Pakistan's greater role in South Asian peace and stability but in turn they proved harder for Pakistan where it was asked to stop giving safe havens to terrorists, which do not exist in Pakistan. The year 2018 began with a new tweet of President Trump where Pakistan was blamed for lies and deceit in the war against terrorism and was asked to return the amount so far US has spent on Pakistan. Relations between Pakistan and US continued with ups and downs in the year 2018. US many times announced cut down in military aid to Pakistan and pressurised to 'do more', for which Pakistan's response was no more. Nonetheless Pakistan has always denied these allegations but it appears that US wants to decree its failure of policies in Afghanistan by blaming Pakistan. It was never Pakistan's war which was inculcated upon it by US and Pakistan's loss in terms of human & monetary value is more than given funds.

After the elections in Pakistan, held in July 2018 new government has taken charge of affairs of state. Like previous reigns, this new government is also focusing on fostering bilateral relations with all countries and has always shown positive response for regional peace and stability and keen to play its role. Recently, US Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo visited Pakistan. His visit was important in the sense that after the change of government, this was first official visit by any of US representative. Interestingly, US cancelled \$ 300 million of aid to Pakistan just days before a visit by Washington's top diplomat. The reason for this US frustration was pointed out as that Islamabad is still doing too little to rein in Afghan militants. The Pentagon said it would spend the military aid elsewhere because of lack of Pakistani action backing US troops in Afghanistan. According to US stance money was suspended because of "lack of Pakistani decisive actions in support of the South Asia Strategy". This action of freezing funds could be that US either wants to redesign its aid programme for South Asia and ask Pakistan to review its policies or it can also put pressure on Pakistan to act according to American will and may take the veil of FATF action against Pakistan. Further when Pakistan is looking towards IMF for loans, US pressure on Pakistan cannot be ignored.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo made visit to Pakistan along with US military Chief General Joseph Dunford in last week and met PM along with our authorities. In this meeting security situation of Afghanistan and Pakistan's shaky cooperation with US on matters of Afghanistan was the American agenda. Whereas Pakistan's Foreign Office said that "discussions on bilateral, regional and international issues" took place. Pak Foreign Minister mentioned in his statement that "there is a need to reset bilateral ties on basis of mutual trust and respect". Mike Pompeo before the visit made a statement that "there are lot of challenges between our two nations for sure but we're hopeful that with the new leadership that we can find common ground and we can begin to work on some of our shared problems together".

However, about the visit of Pompeo, US state department issued a statement and mentioned that our secretary has conveyed the need for Pakistan to take 'sustained and decisive measures' against terrorists and militants threatening regional peace and stability in all his meetings with civil and military leadership of Pakistan. He also emphasised the important role Pakistan could play in bringing

about a negotiated peace in Afghanistan. The meeting between the officials of US and Pakistan ended with positive note and high hopes. While Pakistan want to reset its relations with US, other side needs to comprehend dynamic role of Pakistan in war against terrorism. International community must understand Pakistan's role as front liner and know that failure to achieve desired objective to root out terrorism from the area, would be equally shared by entire international community as well as US. US also needs to review its carrot & stick policy for Pakistan. Pakistan must not rely on US for assistance but should focus on better ties with all states to prove to world as a nation standing strong despite all challenges.

— The writer works for Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies, a think-tank based in Islamabad.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/transpose-in-pak-us-relations/>

Pak-Afghan Cooperation | Editorial

FOREIGN Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi rightly chose Afghanistan for his first official trip abroad.

In a visit to Kabul over the weekend, the foreign minister met the senior Afghan leadership and, according to media reports, discussed a range of subjects, from enhancing regional trade to a Pakistani offer to train Afghan police and other security personnel. Mr Qureshi and his Afghan counterparts also agreed to convene meetings of a number of bilateral and multilateral forums, especially the trilateral dialogue with China and the working groups of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Action Plan for Peace and Solidarity.

It is welcome that Afghanistan and Pakistan are engaging each other in a range of forums and in a numbers of areas of mutual interest. A broad-based engagement in dialogue can help lower tensions at the heart of the relationship.

Yet, if Afghanistan and Pakistan are to stabilise their relationship and bring peace to the region, it is in the security and peace arena that cooperation will be key. Afghanistan is looking towards Pakistan to help nudge the Afghan Taliban towards dialogue, while Pakistan is looking towards Afghanistan to eliminate anti-Pakistan militant sanctuaries in that country. Thus far, neither country has been able to receive the level of cooperation that it has sought from the other, and a familiar blame game has been indulged in.

But events inside Afghanistan are gathering speed and between political disarray, a resurgent Taliban, the spectre of the militant Islamic State group and the impatience of President Donald Trump with the US-led war effort, there is a possibility of Afghanistan once again sliding into chaos. Now is the time for Pakistan to extend all the cooperation it can to the Afghan state to set up a framework for a peace settlement with the support of regional and international powers.

Nevertheless, Afghanistan should also focus on removing irritants in the bilateral relationship for Pakistan. The closure of the Pakistani consulate in Jalalabad after interference and intimidation and disruption of trade across the border

crossing are unwelcome distractions. While such unfortunate incidents can usually be contained, in a deteriorating security and political climate matters can quickly escalate. Moreover, Afghanistan should pay heed to Pakistan's legitimate security interests in fencing large parts of the border and seeking the dismantling of anti-Pakistan militant sanctuaries in Afghanistan.

There is no easy road to regional peace; if there were, it would have been taken by now. But purposeful diplomacy and security cooperation can help achieve success.

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Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1433443/pak-afghan-cooperation>

Pak-Turk Relations | Editorial

Similar problems bring both countries closer

Turkey's foreign minister was in town for an unconventionally long five-day visit meeting with the top officials in the PTI government, the military and even called on former prime minister Nawaz Sharif to offer condolences on the passing of his wife. Both countries currently have tense relations with the US which have had economic repercussions. Sanctions were placed on Turkey after a US pastor was held on espionage charges that accelerated the slide of the Turkish Lira that has lost its value by almost 50% this year and continues to face pressure. Meanwhile US aid to Pakistan has been significantly cut under the Trump administration, US military training for Pakistan was suspended recently and an indication that securing a necessary IMF bailout for Pakistan will be made difficult by the US. Not only has this created more space for both Pakistan and Turkey to come closer on the diplomatic front but also in terms of defense and trade deals.

In May of this year both countries signed off on their biggest bilateral defense deal for thirty T129 combat helicopters amounting to \$1.5 billion to be sold over five years. In addition to this Turkey will build and export four warships to Pakistan. Pakistan has also supplied Turkey with small arms in the past and around 1,494 Pakistani military personnel have received their military education/training in Turkey after an exchange program was initiated between the two countries back in 2000.

In 2015 negotiations were initiated on a free trade agreement between Pakistan and Turkey but did not go too far. The PTI government will attempt to restart those talks while Turkey has agreed to encourage their businesses to invest in Pakistan as well. But this is all easier said than done. Turkey has a serious corruption and nepotism problem with Erdogan's son-in-law serving as finance minister and a severely politicized central bank. On the other hand, the ease of doing business in Pakistan is abysmal. For both countries to take full advantage of any trade deals these issues will need to be addressed.

Source: <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2018/09/15/pak-turk-relations/>

Rationalising Pakistan-China Ties By Khalid Saleem

There are no two opinions that the twenty-first is destined to be Asia's century. Asian states, therefore, particularly ours that is so strategically situated geopolitically, have to keep this in mind while doing their calculations. Some of our relationships in the Asian context are of vital importance and no one should be allowed to tinker with them. The relations between Pakistan and China fall in this category.

Before going further, some incontrovertible facts need to be put on record. Firstly, Pakistan is a proud nation of some two hundred million people rather than the collateral appendage of some outsiders' scheme of things. China is heir to an ancient civilisation and, as a friendly neighbour, Pakistan has a lot to learn from it. Despite its inexplicable propensity to go gaga over anything that is West-oriented, Pakistan must not discount the imperative that its ultimate destiny may be linked with its neighborhood to the East. Talk of Pakistan-China 'friendship' has by now become something of a cliché. And much like a habit of long standing, it comes naturally to most pen-pushers who don't even bother to delve into what they are driving at. Extolling of Pakistan-China close ties has, therefore, become something of a *de rigueur* in press parlance as well as after dinner repartee. This tendency, though natural in many ways, is not without its pitfalls.

An unpardonable error countries are apt to commit is living too much in the past. Most references to the subject in this blessed land begin by highlighting the ups of our bilateral ties in the past and end with a string of clichés. The pity is that what most people have settled for is to relive the high points of the past of this relationship embellished merely with hollow expressions of pious hopes of its continuation in the same vein. It needs to be emphasised that international relations must never be allowed to stagnate, but should rather be in a state of constant evolution.

The international scene has undergone a sea change over the turn of the millennium. Paradigms, such as they were, have lost the glimmer of old and, in most cases, will need to be formulated anew. It is in this context, that the relations between Pakistan and China in the twenty-first century would deserve to be re-evaluated, re-oriented and, indeed, re-vitalised. CPEC is an outstanding

case in point. The promise of this visionary project must not, under any circumstances, be allowed to wither on the vine. At the same time it may hardly be opportune to go overboard about it.

Needless to add, age-old parameters must under no circumstances be allowed to crumble. One of the constants in the ever-evolving Pakistan-China relations has been the resolve not to interfere in each other's internal affairs. It may not be incorrect to surmise that it is this very constant – underlining the course of this relationship – that has aroused the wonder and, at times, the awe and jealousy of several interested outsiders.

China has been witness to several upheavals inside Pakistan over the decades. Besides its benevolent interest, China has scrupulously avoided any move or observation that could even remotely be construed as interference in this country's internal affairs. Pakistan has responded in kind. There can be no justification to fiddle with this equilibrium.

Having put things in proper perspective, Sino-Pakistan relations must continue to evolve with the times. There would be no justification in moving the goal posts, though. For one thing, Pakistan has much to learn from China. China appears to be a country in a hurry, bent upon making up for the lost time. Development is taking place at a feverish pace. What is more, the development activity is not at all haphazard but is extremely well-planned. The infrastructure, the development projects and the industrial complexes are all parts of a giant jigsaw puzzle that appears to be emerging out of the Chinese landscape as a well-choreographed whole. Nothing appears to be either incongruous or misplaced; each piece of the puzzle is meticulously planned to fit in its proper place. There is much for Pakistan to learn from this.

Through its pragmatic policies over the past several years, China has successfully shifted its emphasis from political issues to economic development. Not that China has sacrificed any of its principles in the process; just that it has taken a conscious decision to re-order its priorities to conform to its national interest and the evolving international environment.

Coming back to Pakistan-China relations, time is ripe to break out of the strait jacket of hollow slogans and come down to brass tacks. Realism demands that

our relations be given stronger economic, commercial and cultural moorings. While we have been expending our energy in raising hollow slogans, other countries of the region have left us far behind. India, for instance, has continued to develop its economic and commercial ties with China to the extent that today the latter is India's biggest trading partner.

Pakistan did start with an initial advantage, but we have not done enough to strengthen the moorings. In particular, the paucity of mutually beneficial economic joint ventures is noticeable, CPEC notwithstanding. Commercial exchanges too have become a little too one-sided. On our part, we have failed miserably to expand our exports base. The Free Trade Agreement that was heralded as a landmark can be effective only if we put our own house in order. And we must do it quickly or we are in imminent danger of missing the bus. That, needless to add, would be horrible to even contemplate!

— The writer is a former ambassador and former assistant secretary general of OIC.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/rationalising-pakistan-china-ties/>

Pakistan UK Relations: Future Prospects By Sajjad Haider

As significant internationalist powers, but not superpowers, Pakistan and the United Kingdom have an interest in the preservation of an international order based on the application of law rather than might. Pakistan has sacrificed much alone but Pakistan knows well that in a world with global problems, no country is able to address all the challenges alone. Alliances and partnerships are more important than ever and Pakistan finds UK as global alliance partner. Furthermore, UK and Pakistan also have a shared stake in strengthening the rules-based international order to be fit for the challenges of the 21st century. Against the backdrop of the growing challenges to the international order, the UK and Pakistan have a particular shared interest in a multilateral system that works.

UK's diplomatic mission in Pakistan is the second largest in the world and also the DFID's (Department for International Development) was largest bilateral Programme in the world with almost half a billion dollars. In addition, more than two per cent of the UK's population now traces its roots back to Pakistan. British Pakistanis have a significant contribution to the social, economic, academic, cultural, and political fabric of the country, with 12 members in the House of Commons of Pakistani origin acting as a connecting bridge between Pakistan and the UK. It is no coincidence that both the countries invest heavily in the United Nations; an example of both states shared interest. In addition, both Pakistan and the United Kingdom are members of the Commonwealth of Nations and the United Nations.

Now, as United Kingdom has left the European Union, it is looking to renew its global partnerships. This includes seeking free trade agreements with newly emerging and fast growing economies and as Pakistan's biggest trading partner in Europe, UK should continue to champion Pakistan's cause. In the post-Brexit world, the UK and Pakistan can benefit from each other's economic success. Furthermore, the UK is Pakistan's biggest trading partner in Europe and third biggest investor globally. This will be the best guarantee of the future stability and prosperity of both countries, particularly in the post-Brexit world. Moreover, United Kingdom admires the second consecutive democratic transition of power that will shape Pakistan's future. Pakistan and UK share a joint vision of a

peaceful, stable and prosperous Pakistan becoming once again the vibrant hub of trade and commerce that its geography and size demand.

Pakistan seems to have increased its allure for the United Kingdom. Moreover, relationship between UK and Pakistan requires vigorous people to people contact through bilateral exchanges in order to gradually eliminate misperceptions between the two countries. Pakistan also needs to work to ensure that post-Brexit, it continues to have market access to the UK along the lines of the current GSP+ status. Furthermore, Pakistan needs to improve its trade complementarity with UK, so it can meet UK's import demands. In addition to this, Pakistan should also push to have more products, currently not covered under the GSP+, for inclusion in any preferential market access agreement with the UK.

Strengthening trade and economic relations with the United Kingdom should be the cornerstone of Pakistan's foreign policy as this lucrative destination can help boost national exports to the required level. Pakistan and the UK have to work hard together operationally and through their legal systems to deal with threats to both countries, whether from crime, terrorism or illegal migration. Criminals of neither country should be allowed to find refuge in the other.

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Strengthening trade and economic relations with the United Kingdom should be the cornerstone of Pakistan's foreign policy as this lucrative destination can help boost national exports to the required level.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/28-Sep-2018/pakistan-uk-relations-future-prospects>

Future of Indo-Pak Relations By Muhammad Asif

THE rise of radical Hindu nationalist movements like Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) in 1920's contributed to intensify Hindu-Muslim distrust that ultimately paved the way for the partition of India. RSS promotes the ideology of Hindutva (Hinduness) to strengthen the majority Hindu community. Many Indian social scientists have described the Hindutva movement as fascist, adhering to the concept of hegemony of regimented majority through force. The radical elements continued to fuel hatred among Muslims and Hindus even after the partition of India. Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) adopted Hindutva as its official ideology in 1989. Though India boasts of being a secular state, the on ground reality is much different. After Narendra Modi's, election as Prime Minister, Hindu nationalist, belonging to RRS, have geared up their efforts to transform India into a purely Hindu state by terrorizing other religious communities.

Indo-Pak relations have also reached the lowest ebb because of the policies of Modi government, which are based on RSS' dream of Hindu dominance in the sub-continent. Modi government has been trying to destabilize Pakistan by sponsoring terrorist operations inside Pakistan. India has also launched the "water offensive" against Pakistan by starting the construction of dams on Pakistan's western rivers in violation of the Indus Water Treaty. Even bilateral sports and cultural ties between India and Pakistan have been suspended. Salman Bashir, former Foreign Secretary and Pakistan's Ambassador to China and India, basing on his firsthand in-depth knowledge about the psyche and mindset of Indian policymakers, considers India's hegemonic aspirations as the root cause of hostilities between India and Pakistan. In his article: "Hostilities between India and Pakistan Continue after 20 Years of Nuclearization", he writes: "At the heart of the intensely adversarial relationship between the two protagonists is; India's refusal to allow Pakistan to co-exist as an "equal." The nature of this adversarial relation has not changed. India has sought to reassert its conventional superiority by trying dangerous concepts such as the "cold start", that is to fight a swift war under the nuclear overhang". To substantiate his conclusions, he states, "The Cold-War mindset of Indian rulers has dictated pursuit of hegemonic agendas by military means in the region".

Jaswant Singh, former Indian External Affairs Minister, in his book; “Jinnah: India-Partition-Independence”, pointed out; “But, our real flaw is, for along with several other there is one central difficulty that India, Pakistan, Bangladesh face: our ‘past’ has, in reality never gone into the ‘past’, it continues to reinvent itself, constantly becoming our ‘present’, thus preventing us from escaping the imprisonment of memories. To this we have to find an answer, who else can or will”? After the creation of Pakistan, Quaid-i-Azam also urged the nation to forget the past, in the following words; “Any idea of a united India could never have worked, and in my judgment it would have led us to terrific disaster. Maybe that view is correct; maybe it is not; that remains to be seen. Now what shall we do? If you will work in co-operation, forgetting the past, burying the hatchet, you are bound to succeed”.

Mani Shankar, the suspended member of the All India Congress, believes that Kashmir dispute and ‘India-directed terrorism’ are the two main issues that need to be addressed to improve bilateral relations. He believes; “India is still caught in a partially 1947 situation while there is change of mindset in Pakistan. The need of the hour, for both countries, is to engage in uninterrupted dialogue. While Islamabad has accepted the need for continuous dialogue to resolve issues of bilateral importance, New Delhi has not”. Mr. Salman Bashir hopes; “There is a narrow window of opportunity starting very soon to the end of the year when India gets immersed in its own election. It should be seized for the good of peace in the region as a whole”. Among those who have predicted an improvement in India-Pakistan ties is former Indian spy chief A.S. Dulat. He believes that relations would improve dramatically before the 2019 Indian elections. Prime Minister Imran Khan offered India to resolve the bilateral disputes through dialogue and trade relations. In his letter written on September 14, to his Indian counterpart, he proposed a meeting between the foreign ministers of India and Pakistan on the sidelines of the ongoing UN General Assembly Meeting. Within twenty-four hours of accepting Pakistan’s proposal, India not only backed out from its commitment, Indian Army Chief hurled highly irresponsible and unprovoked threats to Pakistan. The behaviour of Indian leadership indicates; BJP is too weak to withstand the pressure of RSS and other radical Hindu nationalist groups like Bajrang Dal and some outside powers. It also signifies that the time for dramatic improvement in Indo-Pak relations has not yet arrived, as predicted by Salman Bashir and A.S. Dulat. Now we will have to wait for what Mani Shankar said while speaking in an event in Lahore in 2015; “Narendra Modi

needs to be removed if talks between the two nations have to resume. Bring us back to power and remove them. There is no other way. We will remove them, but till then you have to wait.”

The peoples of Indo-Pak may be followers of different religions, but what a vast majority of them have in common (linguistic, cultural and ethnic affinities), should enable them to coexist, peacefully. To provide nearly one and a half billion people of this region with a breather from a state of unrelenting fear of an impending conflict between the two nuclear-powered neighbours, the governments of India and Pakistan are required to display greater maturity and a sense of responsibility. However, no positive development in Indo-Pak relations can be expected if the radical elements continue to gain strength by winning elections in the world’s biggest democracy and so-called secular state.

— The writer, a retired Brig, is professional educationist based in Islamabad.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/future-of-indo-pak-relations/>

ECONOMY

Could China Replace The IMF? By Waqas Aslam Rana

In his first address to the nation as Prime Minister, Imran Khan singled out growing debt as one of Pakistan's fundamental economic challenges and reiterated his personal aversion to the proverbial 'begging bowl'. This was a thinly veiled reference to Pakistan's historic reliance on, some would say addiction to, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as a source of borrowing.

Employing such rhetoric is a rite of passage for every new government, blaming the previous one for handing over a struggling economy. In doing so, newly-elected leaders hope to limit the political fallout from tough decisions they know are unavoidable. And the toughest decision facing Prime Minister Khan and his economic team right now is how to avert a looming balance-of-payments crisis.

According to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), the current account deficit for fiscal year 2017-18 ballooned to \$18 billion, 44% higher than last year. Put simply, this means that exports and remittances fell far short of covering much higher levels of imports. Net FDI and the SBP's reserves are not enough to make up this shortfall. Factoring in interest payments on foreign debt coming due this fiscal year, the macroeconomic accounting is clear. Pakistan simply does not have enough foreign currency to meet its short-term financial liabilities and trade needs. And since our central bank cannot print dollars, we must borrow them from someone.

Pakistan needs \$9b for running domestic economy: Umar

And this brings us back to the IMF. The Fund has played the role of the 'lender of last resort' for developing countries across Latin America, Africa and Asia for decades. But its emergency loans come with standard neoliberal policy prescriptions of austerity, forcing governments to cut social spending, drastically, hike interest rates and slap additional taxes. Successive IMF programmes in

Pakistan and elsewhere have shown that they provide short-term macroeconomic stability at the cost of growth, while systemic economic problems persist. Is history doomed to repeat itself in 2018?

Enter the dragon. China's \$1 trillion multi-continent Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) that seeks to reshape global trade and commerce has given new options to countries in the Global South. Since the beginning of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in 2016 — a flagship BRI project — political and economic ties between Beijing and Islamabad have intensified rapidly. China has a vested interest in preventing an economic meltdown in Pakistan, which would endanger its existing and planned investments. Already, it has lent \$7.4 billion outside of CPEC over the last 13 months to support the external sector. This is more than the \$6.4 billion IMF programme Pakistan underwent during 2013-16. So in a sense, China has already given us a mini-bailout.

Asad Umar briefs PM on state of economy

Apart from protecting its investments, China has larger strategic reasons for replacing the IMF as Pakistan's chief source of foreign funding. As it competes with the US for global influence, its strategy hinges on expanding alliances through trade and investment, with the BRI as the linchpin in this grand scheme. In this context, CPEC is an important node in the BRI chain. Special economic zones (SEZs) to be set up in Pakistan will serve as bases for export-oriented Chinese industries, helping them remain competitive as labour costs inside China rise. Another critical factor is energy security. Currently, about 80% of Chinese energy imports pass through the narrow Straits of Malacca linking the Indian Ocean with the South China Sea, which Beijing believes could be blockaded by the US navy in a major geopolitical standoff. A planned pipeline in Pakistan allowing China to directly transport oil from the Persian Gulf via Gwadar port, along with similar projects in Thailand and Myanmar, seeks to establish alternative energy supply routes. Letting CPEC fail would entail financial losses, but more importantly, it would be seen as a foreign policy mistake of the Chinese leadership.

The possibility of Chinese financial assistance expands Pakistan's menu of choices, in comparison with the past when the IMF was the only option. By leveraging China's CPEC-related strategic imperatives, the new government has

an opportunity to secure a bailout with less odious terms than in the past. Together with funds raised from global capital markets through bond issuances, this can simultaneously help avert a balance-of-payments crisis and US political pressure that comes with IMF money. The question then becomes, what are the trade-offs from a potential Chinese bailout?

A general trend observed in China's engagement with numerous developing countries is that it does not like to micro-manage. Therefore, any fresh loans to stabilise Pakistan's economy are likely to come with few, if any, formal constraints on fiscal and monetary policymaking. This would allow the government to maintain a degree of autonomy and give it a better chance of implementing its agenda.

On the other hand, some concessions will almost certainly be demanded in return. These may include higher equity stakes in ongoing CPEC projects, a larger role in deciding future ones, and greater market access for Chinese firms. Sri Lanka's Hambantota port is a case in point, in which China acquired a controlling stake and a 99-year lease in 2017 after the former's failure to repay loans. And reflecting growing unease about the BRI, re-elected Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad this month cancelled \$22 billion worth of Chinese projects, questioning their economic rationale and citing debt concerns. These examples, at the very least, show that the terms for any further Chinese loans need to be carefully considered.

Prime Minister Khan and his cabinet must seriously assess the broader impact on Pakistan's economy of closer integration with China, and devise a policy to balance the potential risks and benefits. In particular, effects on the competitiveness of local industries, fiscal sustainability in the wake of increased CPEC-related infrastructure spending, and the potential for local job creation from Chinese investment all need to be critically evaluated. Keeping true to his pre-election rhetoric, Asad Umar should initiate a debate on these issues in parliament, and build an informed consensus before embarking on the next phase in our economic history.

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Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1792354/6-china-replace-imf/>

Economic Revival: A Formidable Challenge

By M Fazal Elahi

Ascension to the citadel of power may not have been as difficult for the incumbent coalition government of PM Imran Khan as tackling the draconian economic and foreign relations challenges would be, now that it has in effect taken the reigns of the country in its hands. I am sure this realization must have already started bogging the minds of PM Khan, his economic team, and his coalition partners. They must have already comprehended, and wisely so, that the economic challenges confronting Pakistan are formidable and phenomenal. To better appreciate the gravity of the country's economic predicaments we would need to enumerate and discuss these problems one by one:

Pakistan's external debt: External borrowing is an essential phenomenon which all underdeveloped and developing nations of the world are compelled to resort to attain its developmental goals. To be more specific, inadequate indigenous financial resources make external borrowing compulsive for the underdeveloped and developing countries. As reported, Pakistan's total external debt and liabilities (EDL) have peaked to a shockingly high level of \$91.761 billion till end March 2018 against \$ 60.9 billion in June 2013. This, according to available official data, means that the EDL increased by \$30 billion in the last five years. The overall public debt including domestic, external and liabilities in rupee term have touched Rs28, 297 billion till March 31, 2018. The IMF has forecast that Pakistan's external debt and liabilities could peak to \$144 billion in the next five years from \$93 billion in fiscal 2018.

Pakistan's Domestic debt: There has been an unprecedented increase in Pakistan's domestic debt. According to the State Bank of Pakistan the provisional total of domestic debt till December 2017 stood at 15.4 trillion rupees. In view of the foregoing, it would rather be logical to assume that the government borrowing during January and February 2018 must have resulted in increasing the domestic debt to more than 16 trillion rupees, which perhaps was more than the total annual budget outlay for the year. This assumption could be all the more credible given the severe resource constraints of the previous government fuelled by the reluctance of multilaterals and bilaterals to extend programme loans (budget support) due to their lack of confidence in the government.

External and internal debt servicing: Shocking, yet again. Pakistan, it is reported, is paying over Rs.1,620 billion as interest against the estimates of borrowing loans from external and internal sources.

Documents reveal that Pakistan will pay an estimated amount of Rs1,391 billion as interest to domestic banks and Rs229 billion to foreign institutions in 2018-19. In addition to this, Pakistan has to repay an amount of over Rs. 21,905 billion to domestic and foreign lenders in the upcoming years. In \$ terms it is reported that on an average Pakistan is paying over \$ 4.5 billion annually on external debt servicing. An alarming and worrisome situation indeed! Had frugality and dexterous planning been the cornerstone of the policy of successive governments Pakistan wouldn't have had to bear this phenomenal burden of external and domestic debt.

Pakistan's current account deficit: Pakistan's current account deficit widened to \$18 billion or 5.7 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) during the last fiscal year of 2017/18, putting rupee at risk of a further big fall and fanning fears about the sustainability of the economic growth. The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) has said the current account deficit amounted to \$12.6 billion or 4.1 percent of GDP in FY-2017. According to eminent economist Dr. Ashfaq Hassan Khan, Pakistan may have to go to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to obtain a fresh bailout package in late August or in early September. Dr. Khan said his calculation for the current account deficit for the current fiscal year is \$21.2 billion.

Pakistan's trade deficit: Reuters reported that Pakistan's import bill peaked to \$5.8 billion in May 2018; emphasizing that pressure on foreign currency reserves is expected to continue. This, the agency said, broke the record registered four months ago (January 2018), as all administrative measures to contain imports seem to have backfired. Cumulatively, imports increased to \$55.2 billion in eleven months, reported the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). The import bill of \$5.81 billion in May was the highest in the country's history.

Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves: According to the State Bank of Pakistan's (SBP) report published in some of the leading dailies of the country recently, Pakistan's total liquid foreign reserves stood at \$ 16.713 billion. As stated earlier,

in May 2018 the monthly import bill of the country jumped to a record \$5.8 billion, perhaps the highest in the country's history. The situation must have become more critical in the following months of the ongoing fiscal year. If that is true then the current foreign exchange reserves would be barely enough to meet the country's import needs for three months. Pakistan thus needs to drastically cut down its import needs and sufficiently increase its exports.

The above data published in some of the leading national English dailies of the country and on the website of the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), from time to time, are perturbing enough to send shockwaves down the spines of not only the country's economic managers and the government in saddles, but also every educated and concerned citizen of Pakistan. In the backdrop of the extremely dismal state of affairs on the economic front, judicious economic planning and audaciously stringent fiscal measures will have to be taken by the incumbent government. The measures that need to be taken would unequivocally be extremely tough and, therefore, unpopular. But do we have a choice? No we don't. The sword of the Financial Action Task Force (FATAF) is already hanging on our neck. Pakistan has already been 'grey listed' by this inter-governmental body. It is being feared that Pakistan may soon be black listed. If that happens, the ramifications would unambiguously be very serious for Pakistan. To add a pinch of salt to the already extremely critical economic predicaments of Pakistan, the US President Donald Trump has not lagged behind. He has, for the present, warned the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to desist from bailing out Pakistan from its profound economic problems. If the US further tightens the noose around Pakistan's neck, things would indeed become distressing for Pakistan.

— The writer is freelance columnist based in Islamabad.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/economic-revival-a-formidable-challenge/>

Promoting The High Quality Development of CPEC By Dr Li Jing Feng

Chinese President Xi Jinping also general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, addressed a symposium marking the fifth anniversary of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on August 27, 2018. Xi pointed out some imperative implications and results from the BRI so far.

Firstly, that the BRI is an economic cooperation initiative. Secondly, he emphasised on BRI as an open and inclusive initiative, which encourages the participation of other countries. Furthermore BRI is not confined by any specific ideology, rather it aims at furnishing the interests of all concerned parties. As the flagship project of BRI, the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has had the most significant progress in the past five years. Up to now, 9 projects have been completed and 13 projects are under construction.

China is looking forward to strengthening cooperation with the new Pakistani government and to promote the high quality development of CPEC.

Firstly, high quality development is not simply investment and lending development; it aims to improve the quality of the actual investment in the CPEC. Investment is not an end, but a means. Its core objective is to promote the optimisation and upgrading of Pakistan's economic structures, to improve the competitiveness of the Pakistani economy in the international market, and to promote Pakistani exports. It is more important to ensure the efficient use of investment funding, rather than the total amount of funding.

In this regard, investments under the CPEC framework should have the following characteristics:

Firstly they should not function on a simple, repetitive investment cycle without planning. Such investment will only intensify market competition, worsen the market environment and cause waste of resources. Secondly we must remember that it is an investment with a top-level plan. Moreover it encourages China's

private capital to invest in the CPEC, and provide foreign exchange funding support for the existing enterprises.

High quality development aims to improve the quality of the actual investment in CPEC. Investment is not an end, but a means. Its core objective is to promote the optimisation and upgrading of Pakistan's economic structures

Most importantly, however, this high quality development is going to bring the benefits of CPEC to the general Pakistani public; enhancing a sense of national gain within the people. Most of the early-harvest projects of the CPEC were concentrated in infrastructure and energy projects, but there were also other projects relating to people's well-being, such as medical care, schools, agriculture, water supply and so on.

These projects have created jobs for the locals, and promoted economic and social development in Pakistan. For instance, the Fraternity Emergency Care Centre and the Gwadar Faqeer Primary School both won great support from the local people.

Lastly, high quality development should pay more attention to the role of Industrial Park, SEZs. Therefore, it is encouraged for Chinese enterprises to transfer technology to Pakistan.

In recent years, China's import growth rate has been higher than the export growth rate. Hence, China's trade policy changed gradually from expanding exports to encouraging exports as well as increasing import.

As a result, the Chinese government not only welcomes Pakistan to expand its exports to China, but is also willing to provide greater market shares for Pakistani goods. However, due to Pakistan's economic structure, the main commodities that Pakistan exports to China were mainly primary processed products and raw materials.

Therefore, we need to encourage Chinese companies to invest in Pakistan, and encourage Chinese companies to transfer technology to Pakistan, sharing advanced industrial technologies with Pakistan, so as to help Pakistan improve its industrialisation level.

The writer is director, Regional Studies and Strategic Research Centre, Sichuan Academy of Social Sciences, China. The research was sponsored by the National Planning Office of Philosophy and Social Science in China, project name: Strategic Planning and Risk Control on China's Investment in Pakistan, (Project No. 15CGJ018)

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Towards an Inclusive Growth Strategy By **Riaz Missen**

'Green Pakistan' has assumed centre stage with the change of government. Keeping in line with the spirit of the time, Pakistan Navy, kicked off the tree plantation drive in the neighbourhood of Naval Headquarters, Margalla Hills, where frequent incidents of fire and activities of timber mafia have considerably damaged the forest. The one million pine tree plantation drive is expected to move the region towards restoring environmental balance.

On the inauguration of the Margalla plantation campaign, the Naval Chief expressed his concern over the dying creeks at the mouth of Indus River. He emphasised the need to make the waters of the river flow down the Kotri Barrage so that the mangroves could survive. He further went on to convey his apprehension of a future where Pakistan would have to deal with 'climate refugees', because of its current ignorance regarding the environment.

Our climate is changing and it poses as a threat to our survival as a nation. To move forward, it is necessary to shake myths associated with big dams. Let us rethink our development paradigm that sacrifices the prosperity of all, in favour of a few. Our existence is intertwined with that of natures, the sooner we understand that the better.

Pakistan gets, on average 145 million acre feet (MAF) of fresh water through monsoons. Only 13.5 MAF can be stored in reservoirs at Tarbela and Mangla. The dams cater to only 10% of agricultural needs of the people but have wreaked havoc on riverine, forests and mangroves.

We have yet to think of the people downstream. We have to restore their livelihood by reviving their habitat. Also, the grim reality of being left with a forest cover of only 1.9 percent has to be faced. Despite this, a media campaign has been launched on the insistence of the people to rally support for more dams. People wrongfully assume that dams will ensure the survival of agricultural production as well as help us cope with the energy crisis.

We are obsessed with agriculture which in turn is harming the forests and wildlife. Gone are the days when we used to have enough grazing space and meandering rivers to host human communities along the forests. Due to the freshwater in dams, rivers have been transformed into drains, carrying the waste of cities and industries

Think about the plight of the communities at the mouth of the Indus River. There used to be 13 creeks before the loss of three eastern rivers took a toll on our freshwater resources. At least 23 MAF of water is lost to India. Sutlej, Ravi and Beas have almost dried-out, they rarely flow down the Kotri Barrage in months other than July and August. Due to the Indus River not carrying waters to its mouth, it is estimated that the Arabian Sea devours up to eight acres of precious land, a day.

It is true that our monsoon rains have decreased and that our glacial resources are also depleting very fast. The reason is the increasing temperature of the landmass, for we are obsessed with agriculture which in turn is harming the forests and the wildlife. Gone are the days, we used to have enough grazing space and meandering rivers to host human communities along the forests. Due to the freshwater in dams, rivers have been transformed into drains carrying the waste of cities and industries.

Dams are not a solution to our woes, at all. It is rather time to think whether our existing dams can bear the results of deforestation in the form of earthquakes and flash floods. We should keep in mind that these structures have become silted and their storage capacity has decreased by at least one-third. Also, there needs to be a check on groundwater and fresh resources being spent on sugarcane production.

The real challenge, is our inability to provide safe drinking water to our growing population, not our failure in watering crops. Furthermore, we have to ensure that riverine communities have a means to earn their livelihood, especially in Punjab and Sindh where the riverbeds are dry most of the year.

However, we can combat this by encouraging forestry in mountainous regions and banning agricultural activity in dry regions. The more vegetation cover we have, the faster we will be able to handle climate change. Furthermore, there

should be institutional plans in cities to ensure that water is not wasted and a certain quota of tree are planted every year.

We have to stop the war against nature by letting our rivers flow freely. Moreover, we should prioritise on increasing our forest cover by at least 25 percent, to ward off the hazards of climate change. Food security cannot be ensured by blindly growing wheat, agriculture needs to be balanced with forests.

The Islamabad-based columnist reads in signs and narratives

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Economic Reforms By Waqar Masood Khan

We return to our series on economic reforms. An area that is truly the most intractable problem of fiscal finances is public expenditures. While a great deal of attention is focused on calls for raising revenues, few voices ask to restrain expenditures, which are growing without much scrutiny.

We consider trends in expenditures during two democratic governments, with the year 2006-07 serving as the base. In 2006-07, the total consolidated (federal and provincial combined) expenditures stood at 19.5 percent of GDP. Over the next decade, the expenditures rose to 21.7 percent – an increase of 2.2 percentage points, which would translate to Rs880 billion at present. It is also important to note that this increase is not continuous; rather, there has been considerable volatility. But the rising trend is unmistakable. It is imperative to examine which expenditures are responsible for this growth.

The current expenditure has varied between 15 percent and 18 percent of GDP, with the figure standing at 17.4 percent last year. This essentially captures the rise in overall expenditures. However, its various components have shown a great deal of variation. Interest payments – the single largest component – has shown some variation but remained within the range of between 3.8 percent and 4.8 percent.

For the most part, defence expenditure was declining from 2.7 percent to 2.5 percent. But in the last three years, it has increased to three percent of GDP. Government grants is an important head of expenditure. It comprises a variety of transfers made to provinces, special areas (Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Fata and Gilgit-Baltistan), losses of railways, and other grants. This head has seen the greatest amount of volatility. It has ranged from 0.9 percent to 2.3 percent of GDP and has averaged around 1.5 percent.

The head of subsidies has long remained a real burden on the budget. In 2007-08, subsidies were as high as 3.8 percent because of the oil price shock and the decision of the government to not pass on the prices to consumers. Subsequently, a similar fate was met when governments started accumulating the so-called tariff differential subsidy (TDS). The country saw multiple tariffs

determined for Discos, but only the most efficient tariff was made applicable throughout Pakistan, leading to huge subsidies, which rose to 2.8 percent in 2011-12.

Since then, and after the PML-N government made major price adjustments under the IMF programme, these subsidies have come down to the rather small level of 0.3 percent in the last fiscal year.

The most significant rise in current expenditures is at the provincial level. From 4.2 percent in 2009-10, the current expenditure has risen almost uninterruptedly to reach six percent of GDP in 2017-18. Not surprisingly, this period of rising expenditure is the same when more resources were transferred to provinces under the new National Finance Award. There were some years when the provinces saved part of their resources and avoided spending to help the federal government meet the fiscal deficit target under the IMF programme. However, it was undone as soon as the Fund programme was completed in September 2016.

The development expenditure has seen the most volatile trend. Starting with 4.6 percent in 2006-07, it slumped to only 2.6 percent in 2010-11. But it gradually rose to 4.9 percent in 2016-17 and was recorded at 4.4 percent last year.

The fiscal deficit was 4.1 percent in 2006-07 and has since then been the real bane of the economy. It averaged to around six percent, with some years when under the Fund programme it was as low as 4.6 percent. Since development spending has been consistently less than five percent, it is evident that deficit was incurred even to finance current expenditures.

We can learn the following lessons from this review. First, the undesirable increase in expenditures has primarily come from increased provincial expenditures. Meanwhile, provinces can justifiably claim that additional resources transferred to them were meant to be spent on the subjects they are responsible for. This brings the ball back into the federal government's court, as it hasn't cut back on spending despite a shorter envelope of resources at its disposal. Under the circumstances, fiscal adjustment is nearly impossible to make.

Second, without correcting the situation soon, we are facing an explosive path of public debt accumulation. The prime minister also noted this situation wherein we are borrowing for even current expenditures (such as payment to employees). The primary deficit has to be eliminated, which is as high as 2.2 percent of GDP, exactly the same amount by which expenditures have risen over the last decade.

Third, we need to recognise that a fiscal policy where spending decisions are divorced from raising revenues is bound to fail. Politicians are frequently annoyed when they are informed that not all expenditures they desire can be incurred. Such advice is often termed as 'non-cooperation'. But they would frown on any suggestion to raise resources, whether it involves taxes or recovering the cost of electricity and gas supplies. The national exchequer is most vulnerable during election times when unreasonable demands on expenditures are made and realised.

Fourth, our system of fiscal responsibility also promotes profligacy. The constitution, regrettably, provides nearly an unchecked authority on spending. As explained in a previous article, 'Public debt: boon or bane?' published in these pages on September 4, for a government that controls the National Assembly, virtually any amount of expenditure can be secured, irrespective of resource availability.

What is more, a government may under-pitch intended expenditures to show an austere budget but then use the instrument of supplementary grants to incur higher expenditures. It shouldn't be surprising, then, to see that in the last decade on most occasions the fiscal deficit target promised at the time of the budget was significantly breached at the end of the year. The parliamentary approval of supplementary grants, under Article 84, is delayed until the presentation and approval of the next budget. In the listless hours of the budget session, last year's supplementary grants are approved.

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Towards a Sustainable Financial System By

Saima Akbar Ahmed

The buzz-word today in global finance is 'sustainable finance'. An article published in the well-reputed periodical The Economist, explains the term 'sustainable finance' as an investment that focuses not just on financial returns but also on, environmental, social and governance (ESG) objectives to be achieved through that investment. Some other, similar terms for sustainable finance are green finance and socially responsible investment, ethical finance etc. The United Nations Environment-World Bank Group in November 2017, produced a document entitled 'Roadmap for a Sustainable Financial System' which views the development of a sustainable financial system as an essential step to ensure sustainable growth, without which the achievement of United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the year 2030 will not be possible.

Ironically, while the concept of sustainable finance includes everything desirable, it conveniently ignores the nature or mode of financing itself that directly affects the sustainability of economic growth. A sustainable financial system can never be created unless the mechanisms of finance itself are sustainable. As is commonly known, there are basically only two mechanisms or modes of financing: Debt and Equity. Traditionally, the focus has mostly been on raising money through debt; this has become an unstated norm in the world of economics and finance. The lenders may be foreign countries, foreign financial institutions, local banks or other lending institutions. The borrowers may be governments, public or private business entities, or even individual consumers. The riskier a loan becomes for the lenders, the higher the interest rates charged on that loan, without concern for the financially restricted borrower, who may or may not be able to the principle amount alongside the interest rate.

The prevalent debt-based global financial system has created havoc within many economies of the world for some decades. It has undoubtedly hit the poor and developing nations the most.

Let's take the case of Pakistan, first. The biggest predicament facing Pakistan today is its economy, which has essentially been run on borrowed money for

decades. Today, it is being discussed at the highest levels of government whether Pakistan should borrow from the IMF, or China, or raise money through launching Sukuk or green bonds in the market. These choices amount to raising future debt to pay off past debt, thereby getting trapped in an never ending cycle of debt repayments along with interest, which is a form of economic bondage. Pakistanis are quite familiar with the strict economic conditions that powerful international lenders have periodically imposed on their country, that have invariably been detrimental to the welfare of its common citizens. And it is not just Pakistan. The resource rich South American countries of Argentina, Venezuela and Eurasian countries like Turkey are too devastated by their respective debt crisis.

The sustainable finance concept conveniently ignores the nature of financing itself, which directly affects the sustainability of growth. A sustainable financial system needs sustainable mechanisms of finance

Even in developed countries where this debt-based financial system was initially conceived and implemented, economic instability and its accompanying tragic human and societal outcomes are widespread. We have seen the European debt crisis breaking down advanced economies such as Italy, Spain and Greece. The effects of severe debt and banking crisis that surfaced in the US in the year 2007, are still haunting its highly educated and hardworking population.

Thus, for half a century at least, the prevalent financial system based on debt has produced one economic crisis after another, all over the world, with disastrous human consequences such as widespread unemployment, alarming poverty levels, uncontrollable inflation, hunger, malnutrition, and the appalling income disparity.

As Pakistan struggles to find an answer to its own looming debtcrisis, its economics and finance policy makers must pay attention to the emerging thoughts in finance. Quite a few contemporary economists and finance thinkers are increasingly blaming a financial system run by banks, which as we know is based on debt, for recurring financial and economic crises all over the world. Books with international acclaim, as well as articles in well-reputed newspapers have been published in the last few years. They highlight the economic instability and subsequent human suffering created across the global board.

Some academics in the field of finance and economics have even proposed a reduction in the size, power and influence of banks, while others have suggested making interest payments more variable to share the risk with the borrowers, when the latter face financial constraints due to unpredictable market conditions.

In a nutshell, the current debt-based financial system is increasingly being questioned for its devastating effect on the economy of a country. The world seems to be very slowly, and involuntarily, moving away from a debt-based economy. It is strongly suggested here, that the only way to create a sustainable financial system; is to focus on equity finance as the main mode of financing in an economy.

When an entity raises money through equity financing, its investors share; the real profits of the venture alongside its losses; in proportion to their respective ownership of the entity. In equity-financing, it is well-recognised that profits may vary depending on business conditions that are not in human control, where the risk of losing the original funds invested is always present, despite the business' best efforts. Thus, an equity-based financial system is characterised by the principles of fairness and justice for all participating investors, unlike an evidently exploitative debt-based financial system where the lender does not share the risk of the business with the borrower.

Will Pakistan's top finance and economics policy makers, who are currently proposing more borrowing as a short term solution to Pakistan's economic woes, wake up to the fundamentally unsustainable nature of a debt-based financial system, and seriously work on developing a viable and sustainable alternate to it, that is, an equity-based financial system.

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Tackling Taxation | Editorial

No government since Independence has successfully addressed the complex issue of taxation in Pakistan, and the population at an individual level has overwhelmingly rejected any form of mass compliance especially regarding personal income tax. The wealthy with the highest incomes have traditionally been insulated from taxation by successive governments with tax concessions and blind eyes being turned, but the new government seems set to challenge the culture of impunity. It is preparing a wide range of tax-oriented moves with the most difficult of these being the rolling back of the tax concessions granted to the wealthiest by the previous government. It is notoriously difficult to reverse benefits once given.

Paradoxically it was the low-salary earners that were the big winners under the PML-N which raised the exemption threshold three times to its current level of Rs1.2 million, in the process dropping 700,000 out of the tax net. The government seems unlikely to tinker at the bottom end instead looking to increase taxation on the big earners in what it describes as a 'rationalisation' of the various tax bands or 'slabs' as they are known. High earners currently pay 15 per cent, down from 35 per cent and raising that bar is going to produce howls of rage and pain from the richest people in the country — or at least those among the richest that actually pay any tax at all.

Other taxes up for revision are on cigarettes which again the previous government had let off the tax hook and an upwards revision in terms of penalties for those who do not file tax returns despite liability. Quite how this will be enforced given that they exist in a parallel fiscal reality is unclear. Imported goods are always a popular target for the taxman with a likely increase of tariff on 1,500 products, with a focus on discouraging 'non-essential' imports at the luxury end of the scale. Over the last year the import of 700 lines has dropped by 700 as a result of regulatory duties. All of which looks fine on paper. Come back in six months to see how fine the ground reality looks.

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Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1802507/6-tackling-taxation/>

UK-Pakistan Trade Ties By Rehman Chishti

I am delighted to be in Pakistan for my third visit as the British Prime Minister's trade envoy to Pakistan, ahead of what will be a very busy few months for UK-Pakistan relations. Many people talk about the joint history of the UK and Pakistan, but I am more excited about the future. There is no other country that has such a unique connection to Pakistan as the UK and, in particular, I can see how important the economic and trading links are between our two countries. As a British-Pakistani, I am proud to be able to promote even further the strong links between our two countries.

It is no surprise that the UK is Pakistan's largest export market in Europe, but what many do not know is this year the UK has just overtaken China to become the second-largest in the whole world. UK-Pakistan bilateral trade in 2017 was £2.9 billion; with Pakistan exporting £1.8 billion of goods and services to the UK and the UK exporting £1.1 billion of goods and services to Pakistan.

The UK is also Pakistan's third largest-source of foreign direct investment — and accounts for eight per cent of foreign direct investment into Pakistan. Both the UK and Pakistan win through trade, but the British market for Pakistani goods and the UK investment in Pakistan are responsible for thousands of jobs in Pakistan. It's a strong record, but one I am personally committed to improving.

People often forget the scale of the UK's business presence in Pakistan, with other 120 British firms operating and investing in Pakistan. Major UK businesses succeeding in Pakistan include Mott MacDonald in infrastructure development, which played an integral role in the development of the new Islamabad Airport; consumer goods Company Reckitt Benckiser; Standard Chartered and UBL in banking; pharmaceutical company GlaxoSmithKline; and Shell in oil and gas. There are also a fantastic range of UK brands represented here, including Debenhams, Toni & Guy, Monsoon & Accessorize in retail.

However there are challenges that hold back further trade and economic development. Pakistan's current business environment holds back economic development and deters foreign companies, including those from the UK, from trading and investing. Making improvements to the ease of doing business is

essential for Pakistan's economic success, and the UK is trying to help. Currently, the British government is supporting the World Bank to help the Federal, Punjab and Sindh Governments in targeting, coordinating and communicating reforms to improve Pakistan's business environment and attractiveness to foreign investors. We are also committed to doing more, and aim to work with the new government to creating a healthier, more easily accessible business environment both domestically and internationally.

The second challenge for Pakistan is that despite living in a region that has vast trading potential, it is one of the least interconnected parts of the world. Between major population centres to the East and West, and energy- rich states to the North and the Southwest, its geographical location gives Pakistan huge potential. The UK believes that CPEC offers great potential to Pakistan, but to unlock even greater growth, Pakistan must open up trade — north, south, east and west.

The UK is committed to working with Pakistan on fulfilling its potential, and as we leave the European Union, the United Kingdom is seeking free trade agreements with newly emerging and fast growing economies, particularly our oldest and closest partners, such as Pakistan. This is in Pakistan's interest too. By trading with the UK, Pakistan has access to the world's fifth-largest economy and second-fastest growing major economy last year. We rank in the top six countries in the world as a place to do business. We have record employment levels, and are ranked fourth globally in Good Country Index, with world-class education, business support and culture. All of this makes for an attractive trading partner for Pakistan.

While we are proud of the strong trade links between the UK and Pakistan, we believe we could be doing much better. With the potential of Pakistan's economy, the history of strong economic ties, and the UK's unique understanding of Pakistan, we think that the UK and Pakistan should be making a step-change in their trading relationship, to the benefit of both countries. We are ready to work for that vision alongside the people, businesses and the Government of Pakistan.

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Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1802623/6-uk-pakistan-trade-ties/>

EDUCATION

Call For Education Reforms By Faran Mahmood

Once upon a time, policymakers prepared blueprints of a tertiary education system to produce graduates who would then just fit into the continuously expanding industrial estate. Now with an economic slowdown, the supply of our graduates has far outstripped the demand for these industrial workers. So how has our education system responded to this market discrepancy?

Push more and more students into pursuing a doctorate!

Earlier, the two-year associate degrees were declared substandard. Today, everyone must grab a four-year bachelor's degree and two-year masters (that may touch even 3.5 years). Then the unemployed ones are told to go for a PhD as it is regarded as a universal passport to a dynamic academic career.

The worst part of this dilemma is that the Higher Education Commission and government officials have no clue where our education system is headed. Our policymakers think all is well. The higher education establishment doesn't seem to have a plan. The HEC Vision 2025 doesn't make up the difference with assumed future demand for graduates and fantastical supply-side growth figures. The current 'do-nothing' plan just intends to increase the lead time between the enrolment of students into college and their entry into the job market after graduation. This crisis of a spiralling supply problem is as real as it gets. In 2017, for example, more than 11,000 electrical engineers entered the job market and just a handful of new jobs were created. It is no rocket science that our higher education system is broken.

Most of these universities — aka 'PhD factories' — have a blatant disregard for actual societal problems at large and what matters to them is a continuous influx of fees and grants, while degrees keep on dropping off the end of a conveyer belt. The basic subject knowledge of PhD candidates is only superficially tested

and candidates are judged primarily on the number of their publications — with little chance of their research materialising into any useful economic or social development outcomes. So what happens to our graduates with all these fancy degrees at the end of the day? Nobody cares.

It can be argued that the way we structure our education system directly affects how the job market behaves. The most successful local degree programme has been that of an MBA from LUMS or IBA because it is like being a member of an elite club. When a member of this club ends up being an HR manager in any corporation, one tends to favour graduates from the same elite school and hence, a graduate from a run-of-the-mill university is at a disadvantage. However when it comes to PhD, success stories are few and far between.

The old school model of higher education needs to go. There is a call for a big vision and to think strategically about interests of frontline HR practitioners, policymakers and academia to better understand the institutional incentives and constraints faced by them. Just collecting feedback is not enough and we need to 'close the loop' by turning voices into conversations; and letting beneficiaries and not just experts to lead the process.

Curriculum designers need to actively scan the job market for a myriad of core competencies and skills in demand, and then incorporate that into curricula. Partners from the industry and the corporate sector need to be involved not only in shaping the curriculum but also in the evaluation of learning and teaching practices. HR managers and industry leaders should co-create, validate and approve tailor-made courses — increasing the capacity of the education system to innovate. Such innovative partnerships require relevant facilitating policies with a need to share best practices and development of central repository for knowledge transfer and exchange. Current processes in place for industry engagement are piecemeal and incomplete. The policy blueprint is still missing.

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Education Reform By Ameen Jan

PRIME MINISTER Imran Khan has identified education reform as the central theme of his government. His first 100 days agenda seeks to “revolutionise social services”, including transforming health and education. The new government’s focus on education is much needed. The low quality of public education in Pakistan, corruption in exam boards, and widespread cheating have contributed greatly to our nation’s decline.

Pakistan’s education emergency statistics highlight that 25 million children do not attend school. Whilst getting these children into the formal education system must be a priority, an even greater priority is ensuring that those children who do attend school get a worthwhile education.

The central challenge of education reform in Pakistan is to improve education quality — measured by ‘student learning outcomes’, or what students are expected to know or be able to do — rapidly, affordably, and at large scale.

A World Bank study (2007) shows compelling evidence that education quality, rather than simply years of schooling, is a driver of economic growth and increased equity. Despite this, education reform efforts in Pakistan pay scant attention to improving what happens inside the classroom. They focus instead on improving school facilities and school management, in part because these are easier and more visible than raising standards of teaching and learning inside classrooms.

The solution to improving education must involve technology.

Reports on education performance point to the gap in literacy and numeracy in Pakistan’s government schools. Comprehensive assessments, such as those run by EDeQUAL, of students in adopted government schools and NGO schools demonstrate a huge achievement gap: students in grade 6 typically fail a Pakistan national curriculum-based grade 3 math test. In other words, a 10-year old child already has a four-year achievement gap in numeracy. Few students from such schools will ever matriculate, let alone join reputable universities or attain professional jobs.

Delivering quality education in science, technology and mathematics — STEM — must become a central focus of Pakistan's education reform. Without this, money spent on school infrastructure, recruiting teachers and improving school management will not produce educated students who can think critically, solve problems, read and write well, and work effectively with numbers.

The solution to improving education quality rapidly at scale must involve technology. Technology offers teachers and students access to educational content and assessment tools that are normally out of reach. Technology adoption in education can enhance teacher skills and capabilities, provide students with unparalleled high-quality instruction that is customised to their needs, and enable independent and unbiased assessment of student learning. While technology won't replace teachers, teachers who use technology will eventually replace teachers who do not.

Today, technology-enabled learning that delivers results for students is available in Pakistan. Our work with adopted government schools and education management organisations in Sindh demonstrates the benefits of effectively implemented technology solutions in math and science. In one partner school that has implemented our national curriculum-aligned blended learning programme, delivered in both English and Urdu, most students gained one year of math competency after only four months. These results point to the transformational change that is possible when education technology is thoughtfully implemented.

Technology is, however, not a panacea; close attention must be paid to how it is implemented. Careful selection of teachers to implement technology-based learning, their training and certification and a carefully structured implementation process are key. Once classroom implementation begins, thorough baseline assessments of students, coupled with continuous assessment as they progress through the course are required. The aim must be for students to gain subject mastery.

Technology implementation in the classroom should be piloted before it is rolled out at large scale. A one-year carefully conducted pilot programme — perhaps involving 30 primary schools with 200 students each — can generate evidence of

success and key learnings for implementing reform. This initial cohort of 'smart schools' can be quickly selected in Pakistan's urban and rural areas, with the aim of rapidly replicating success. The advantage of such a lean startup approach is that it is experimental at very low cost, and can quickly iterate to define a model for successful technology-based learning to be implemented at large scale in Pakistan.

We now need the new government to champion a smart approach to delivering education reform by using technology effectively in the classroom. Without this, the promise of transforming education may remain unfulfilled.

The writer is an education-technology pioneer in Pakistan.

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Pakistan's Education Grand Challenge By **Afaque Riaz Ahmed**

In the 1930s, a simple matriculate was considered the minimum academically qualified person to be part of and potentially thrive in the global world order. With this level of education, one could trade with the British, the British companies in India, or throughout the British Empire; one could easily fill out the requisite government forms; import and export various goods; easily get a passport and travel the world; legally emigrate; get various types of licenses to do businesses; or get reasonable, respectable jobs, both in the private or the government sectors. Such a level of education afforded reasonable opportunities through which one could escape the poverty trap and could live a life of respect, financial and intellectual growth for themselves and most likely for their children. During such times, if one had a university degree, one could really up their game at a much higher level in the food chain.

Today, a four-year undergraduate degree is considered the new matriculate. Without such a qualification, at least for people living in Pakistan, it is quite certain that one will not be able to, barring a few extraordinary exceptions, escape the vicious trap of poverty and one's children may suffer through the same.

But the real challenge is, in the case of Pakistan, that the absolute minimum delivery/operational costs for a four-year bachelor's degree, per person, is close to Rs1.2 million, regardless of whether it is a government or privately owned institution; and the delivery costs at high performance, research intensive, elite universities in Pakistan is closer to Rs10 million. These numbers do not take into account the brick and mortar/capital costs of campuses, lab equipment and other fixed costs, etc.

For a country like Pakistan with 75 million youngsters between the ages of 15-29 years, in 2018, the outlay at the very least, at the minimum acceptable quality, is Rs1.0 trillion to tertiary educate all, ie to give them a chance of a decent, respectable life and global access. Currently, only two million students are receiving such a level of tertiary education. Over the next 30-35 years, with a 2% population growth, the funds requirements would be closer to \$2 trillion and this is only for the tertiary education.

A country with sovereign reserves of \$10 billion in 2018, this requirement is a multiple of 200x. The entire Saudi Arabian sovereign reserves, according to some estimates, are closer to \$2 trillion; and those of Norway are closer to \$1 trillion. In short, the insurmountability of this so-called Education Emergency, at the current trajectory, with the associated, deeply inefficient brick and mortar system, even with full government support and absolutely no corruption, is self-evident. We, the society, just do not have the financial resources, to educate all our children under the current costs structure, for at least the next 25-30 years. Currently, this privilege is being enjoyed by the top 2.5% only.

Therefore, this is not only an Education Emergency it is also a serious, existential grand challenge for the next 15-years for Pakistan. Solving it would require massive funds, a deeply entrepreneurial mindset, a committed leadership at the top, and an integrated approach between various academic disciplines and multiple government ministries.

The good news is that many technologies from the 4th Industrial Revolution provide us hope for solutions for this serious challenge, just like cheap mobile phones/GSM networks were able to help us leapfrog the telecom connectivity problem in less than 15 years. A possible solution to the Pakistan education grand challenge would at least and most likely include leveraging broadband (4G/5G) technologies for ubiquitous, cost-effective, high speed internet access; production quality digitised content delivered through either mobile and/or cost-effective laptops; AI and cognitive science powered Adaptive Learning Management Systems; a national curriculum and the associated assessments for the 21st century and the 4th Industrial Revolution; and some consensus/sensible framework on the language of instruction debate.

For starters, perhaps the office of the president of Pakistan could take a lead on this debate and eventually lead this long-term grand challenge for the next generation.

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Impending Challenges For Higher Education

By Muhammad Murtaza Noor

After being elected as 22nd Prime Minister of Pakistan, Imran Khan, in his maiden speech, highlighted importance of knowledge economy, youth empowerment and strengthening higher education. While chairing a high level meeting attended by senior educationists, he said every possible effort would be made to provide required resources to the universities for promotion of higher education. He termed promotion of education, uniformity in curriculum and provision of modern educational facilities to youth in the field of science & technology as foremost priorities of his government. The Prime Minister included ten senior economists attached with top ranked international and national universities as private sector members of Economic Advisory Council (EAC).

READ MORE: President Alvi took twitter to clarify 'huge protocol' given to him
The real empowerment and development of youth is possible through effective and vibrant higher education system that can cater growing socio-economic needs of the country. The stakeholders are expecting that newly elected federal would address the key challenges and problems being faced by the higher education sector especially ascended during the last few years.

The first and foremost challenge is to follow transparent and merit-based mechanisms for the appointment in the higher education sector following the universal principle of “right man at the right job.” The prime body implementing policies about higher education federal Higher Education Commission was established in 2002, it was easy to manage thirty plus university at that time, but now in Pakistan, the number of recognised universities has been increased to 192 having with more than 114 additional countrywide campuses. Among these, only 19% of universities are federally chartered universities while provincial governments control the majority of the universities i.e 81% (155 out of 192). The multiple challenges being faced by Pakistani higher education sector can be effectively dealt through meaningful and collaborative continuous engagement among federal and provincial governments and higher education bodies, i.e., HEC's especially in the light of 18th constitutional amendment and the decision of 35th meeting Council of Common Interests (CCI).

The careful review of policy documents and election manifesto 2018 of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) indicates the highest priority for education and health, notably higher education. This document shows the firm resolve of the party that it has committed to making universities autonomous, increase university enrolment by establishing new universities & enlarging existing capacity. The PTI policy document even encourages collaborations with foreign universities to attract foreign university graduates from Pakistan to teach and supervise research in local universities, create partnerships with international universities to improve quality of teaching and research and remove political influence and establish an independent, transparent mechanism to select vice chancellors and senior administrators.

The appointment of Mr. Shafqat Mahmood as minister for federal education and professional training, a graduate of Harvard university (leading top-ranked higher education institution in the world), seems good omen for the higher education sector. During his maiden visit to the Higher Education Commission (HEC), he reaffirmed the governments' commitment to supporting the higher education sector so that the Pakistani youth can succeed in the job market and play their role in the country's socio-economic uplift

Although, the number of Pakistani universities has increased to 192 but still low accesses to higher education ratio i.e. 9.1 percent has been reported which is even less than other neighbouring countries. The ratio of PhD faculty still remains below 30 percent. All the stakeholders of higher education sector are unanimous of the view that without an increase in higher education allocations (funds) and the facilitative role both at federal and provincial levels, it seems difficult to get desired results and fulfill commitments made during recent elections. There is a dire need to increase higher education allocation from 0.26 percent to at least 1% of GDP.

Being former chancellor of the University of Bradford and chairman of the Namal College Mianwali, newly elected Prime Minister of Pakistan is well aware of and recognised through his speeches importance of higher education access & its affordability for every talented Pakistani youth, equal opportunities for the marginalised rural youth, financial, academic and administrative autonomy of the universities. As an active member of Oxford University society, it is also hoped that he would also play an essential role in protecting rights of the students and

ensuring active engagement of students in extra-curricular activities. Being controlling authority of federal HEC, it is also hoped that he would play a supportive role in strengthening higher education sector and especially ensuring the provision of required funding for the higher education sector.

The timely transparent and merit- based appointments of heads of four federal universities, including Quaid-e-Azam university, Allama Iqbal Open university, International Islamic University and COMSATS University Islamabad would be a first test case during the early 100 days for the federal government.

It is also expected that PTI government would also ensure effective implementation of its youth policy based on three Es: education, employment, and engagement.

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Uniform Education? By Faisal Bari

THE prime minister has said that having a uniform education system, across the country, is a priority. And this has been added as a key point, one of four, in the terms of reference of the task force that has been set up under Minister for Education Shafqat Mehmood. Within a month or less it seems the task force will give recommendations on the issue to the prime minister.

It is not hard to see what the prime minister is hinting at when he talks of uniform education. He is actually hinting at some notion of equality of opportunity. All children, irrespective of all other things, should have access to quality education that facilitates their development to their fullest potential. Rich or poor, boy or girl, rural or urban, from madressah, public or private school, every child should have access to quality education. This is their right and it is also, instrumentally, good for Pakistan. This is most definitely a laudable and important policy and outcome goal, and it is wonderful to see the prime minister giving it due importance.

But we have to be careful. Equality of opportunity does not mean uniformity. Uniformity is seen more in terms of 'levelling'. We can always level by pulling down those who are ahead. But this kind of uniformity and levelling would be against the idea of allowing children to develop their potential to the fullest. Surely the meaning of 'uniformity' has to be seen in terms of giving a boost to those who are being left behind.

Take the example the prime minister has used a few times: children going to madressahs should have more opportunities for access to mainstream higher education and jobs. Why would anyone dispute this or object to it? But this implies major reforms in madressah education. It does not mean mainstream education has to be made more like madressah education. It is the other way round. The success or failure in achieving this objective is going to depend on making changes in madressah education and not in mainstream education.

The meaning of 'uniformity' has to be seen in terms of giving a boost to those being left behind.

Is uniformity about one curriculum, one set of books, one examination, and/or one language as the medium of instruction? Though these are the issues that are usually talked about when uniformity or lack of uniformity comes under discussion, none of these actually get to the problem of equality of opportunity.

What is wrong with having multiple examination boards in a country? Most countries have multiple examination boards at school level. At a higher level, all universities have their own mechanisms for examinations. Schools and parents can usually choose which boards they want to prepare their students/children for. The people and the state have an interest in ensuring that those who study for 10 or 12 years emerge with a certain set of competencies that are needed. But this can be set as minimum standards that are expected from all school graduates. But the boards can be free to go beyond the minimum.

Will forcing all schools to use the same medium of instruction (local language, Urdu or English) create uniformity? We have done this multiple times and we have not been able to achieve anything through this dictation. Punjab turned all its public schools into English medium at one point. This had no impact, as far as we can tell from the data, in the acquisition of English as a language. Some schools still teach languages better than others. And that is what drives the difference. If we want to ensure all children learn Urdu and/or English, we have to improve the standard of teaching of these languages. Changing the medium of instruction for some or even all schools is not going to achieve anything.

Insisting on the same books has the same problems. Some schools do not teach well; others do a much better job. Even if you hold the books constant, these differentials will persist. Again, how does forcing schools to use the same books achieve the purpose of 'uniformity' and equality of opportunity on the outcome side? It does not.

The state and society do have legitimate concerns. We do want all children to have access to quality education. We do want children who spend a certain number of years in school to have, at minimum, certain knowledge and skills. We do want to ensure that our children are brought up with certain values. And we do want to ensure equality of opportunity.

The right way to go about it does not seem to be through restrictions on curricula, books, examinations or language. Instead, we should be thinking in terms of setting minimum standards that have to be achieved at various levels of schooling (usually called learning objectives). The key here will be to ensure that all schools, especially government and the low-fee private schools, achieve these minimum standards. Changes in how we examine children are needed to ensure we test basic competencies well, but having the same examination for all is neither needed nor is it the way to ensure uniformity.

The bottom line here seems to be simple. If we want to ensure equality of opportunity for all children, we have to set minimum standards that all schools have to achieve. Practically speaking, this means that the state has to raise the standard of public schools and public education. If public schools can ensure a minimum standard, private schools will have to at least match this quality or do better to attract students. Till the public schools provide the minimum acceptable standard guarantee, how can we have any notion of equality of opportunity? But the raising of public school standards is not going to happen by forcing schools to teach the same books, appear for the same examinations or use the same medium of instruction.

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WORLD

The US-Turkey Tussle By Sajid Aziz

Recent months have witnessed increasing deterioration of the US-Turkey relations. Both sides have traded barbs and accusations and imposed sanctions against each other. Earlier this month, Washington slapped sanctions against Turkey's justice and interior ministries, prompting Ankara to reciprocate in kind. The Trump administration announced that it would double its tariffs on Turkish steel and aluminum, causing the Lira to nosedive abruptly. President Erdogan urged the Turkish people to boycott the US-made electronic devices, instigating some people to break their iPhones.

The apparent cause behind the antagonism seems to be the continued detainment of American Pastor Andrew Brunson (now under house arrest) by Turkey. The latter has accused him of espionage, working in cahoots with terrorist organizations and being complicit in the bungled military putsch of 2016. In his June 26 tweet, President Trump said, "The United States will impose large sanctions on Turkey for the long-time detainment of Pastor Andrew Brunson, a great Christian, family man and wonderful human being."

The detainment of Andrew Brunson might be a source of concern for the Trump administration, especially for vice-President Mike Pence, a Christian supremacist. More so given that congressional elections are in the offing in the coming November and the Republican Party would play to the gallery to appease its core constituency and garner votes. But the diplomatic rift between the two strongest NATO members cannot possibly be attributed to a single act of incarcerating of an evangelical missionary.

In recent times, Turkey and the US have pursued divergent geo-political interests, which, at one time, even brought them on the verge of direct military clashes in Manjib in northern Syria. The spectre of military hostilities was only averted when the US agreed in June 2018 to make the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) vacate the town and allow Turkish military forces to patrol the town jointly with American Special Forces. The US has been providing weapons,

training and air-cover to Syrian Democratic Forces, pre-dominated to the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG), since mid-2014, when it began its military campaign against the Islamic State (IS). Avowedly secular, battle-field tested and in need of a foreign patrol, the U.S found in Kurdish militia a ready partner that would compensate the lack of American ground troops in Syria to fight IS.

The Trump administration's silence over the detainment of other American citizens, like SerkanGolge, the NASA scientist, lends credence to the view that there is more to the US-Turkish relations than the continued incarceration of Pastor Andrew Brunson

But Turkey considers People's Protection Units a sister organization of Kurdish Workers Party (PKK), declared a terrorist entity not only by Turkey but also by the U.S and EU, which has waged an intermittent insurgency since 1980s in the southeastern part of Turkey for greater autonomy for the Kurdish people. Turkey has feared that an autonomous Kurdish region in northern Syria in control of a militia that has battle-field experience, a huge cache of modern American-supplied arms and organizational linkages with PKK would negatively affect Turkish national security by emboldening militant Kurds in Turkey and spread insurgency there. That came to materialise in 2015 when Turkey and the PKK ended the ceasefire and restarted the war.

To protect its interests, Turkey militarily intervened in Syria by launching operation 'Euphrates Shield' in August 2016, lasting till March 2017. Notwithstanding Turkish claims of fighting ISIS, the primary motive of the military operation was to deny Kurdish regions geographical contiguity by halting the movement of YPG on the Euphrates River. Turkey again sent its military forces across the border in January this year to take the north-western city of Afrin from Kurds. Islamic militants marched alongside Turkish military forces in what Ankara ironically called operation 'Olive Branch.'

Both sides have accused each other of working at cross-purposes to undermine their respective interests. America blames Turkey of weakening its campaign against IS by attacking its Kurdish allies in Syria. While Turkey resents the American decisions to support Kurdish forces and not to extradite Fetullah Gulen, the alleged hand behind the military coup of, 2016 in Turkey.

Despite the incident of Turkish warplanes downing a Russian SU-24 in November 2015, Turkey and Russia have moved forward to develop strong bilateral ties over the last few years. Both states have cooperated in nuclear energy and gas projects. Turkey is part of the Russian-led Astana peace talks in Syria, an alternative platform from the UN-led Geneva process to find a 'political settlement' to the conundrum of Syria. Last year, Turkey agreed to buy S-400 surface-to-air defense missiles systems from Russia. In 2015, the US, Germany and the Netherlands had decided to end the deployment of Patriot missiles in southern Turkey, prompting Ankara to look for Moscow to acquire missile batteries to meet its defense needs. Of all the above factors, this has been the most important driver of mutual acrimony between Turkey and the US. Officials in the Trump administration have raised concerns regarding the purchase of S-400 missiles by Turkey from Russia, citing unspecified security threats and dangers. Moreover, the US has also accused Turkey of undermining and diluting the effects of sanctions on Iran by maintaining trade ties and importing oil from it.

The diplomatic rift and political antagonism between the US and Turkey is the culmination of accumulated tensions emanating from divergent geo-political interests, pushing the two strongest NATO members on the path of a possible political collision. The case of Pastor Andrew Brunson is just the tip of the iceberg, not necessarily the primary driver pushing the Turkish-U.S estrangement. Had it been so, it would not have taken the US one and a half year to wait prior to earnestly taking up the case of an evangelical missionary. He was arrested in December 2016. Moreover, the Trump administration's silence over the detainment of other American citizens, like Serkan Golge, the NASA scientist, lends credence to this view that there is more to the US-Turkish relations than the continued incarceration of Pastor Andrew Brunson.

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Chellakere And India's Nuclear Aspirations

By Beenish Altaf

It is necessary to draw the international arena's attention towards India's growing nuclear aspirations. New Delhi's designs could have serious implications on regional security and strategic stability. Pakistan's former Foreign Office (FO) spokesman, Mr Nafis Zakaria has actually disclosed India's establishment of a huge nuclear city at Chellakere, Karnataka, which is also known as the 'Thermonuclear City'.

Although information on this subject is kept under the wraps by Indian officials, some known facts have been leaked by certain groups. In 2012, independent researchers, retired military analysts and scientists revealed there are two agencies involved in the Chellakere project. It is believed to be the largest military complex in the Subcontinent. It is used for weapons technology testing, aircraft testing and houses nuclear laboratories as well. This has allowed the Indian government to expand its nuclear research, to produce fuel for Indian nuclear reactors and to power the country's fleet of nuclear submarines.

India's main objective is to match China's nuclear arsenal warhead for warhead and missile for missile. Obviously, this effects Pakistan too. The recently released Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) 2018 report states that India currently has over 100 nuclear warheads. India is also one of the top five weapons importing countries of the world.

The Chellakere project has allowed the Indian government to expand its nuclear research, to produce fuel for Indian nuclear reactors and to power the country's fleet of nuclear submarines

The expansion of India's thermonuclear program would position the country alongside the United States, United Kingdom, China, Russia, France, and Israel, which already have significant stockpiles.

India's secret nuclear city reveals its desire to become a global power. According to Indian media reports, the nuclear city close to Chellakere is guarded by a security perimeter of thousands of military and paramilitary guards. India is

welcome to follow its ambitions, but not at the cost of regional peace and stability. Ironically, its excuse of matching the nuclear arsenal of China and Pakistan does not cut ice. Numbers matter little in open nuclear war. Furthermore, India's actions will only force Islamabad to increase military spending.

Despite all this, the international community — especially the west — has failed to reprimand India for its adventurism. Meanwhile, the safety of Pakistan's nuclear weapons continues to be a concern for the US, despite the fact that there has never been any nuclear weapons related security failure in the country. Washington has not asked New Delhi to take any safety or security measures to protect its own nuclear arsenal, as this could disrupt the planned expansion of US military sales to India.

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The U.S. Needs a New North Korea Strategy

By Christopher R. Hill

Maybe they were never really bolted on in the first place, but in recent weeks it looks very clear that the wheels have come off whatever was agreed to or understood between North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and U.S. President Donald Trump in Singapore. As bilateral negotiation efforts falter and North Korea returns to its pugnacious pronouncements of the evils and deceitfulness of U.S. policy, the question now is where to go from here. Of particular concern is whether “maximum pressure,” as the Trump administration sanctions program was dubbed, can be revived, and whether Washington can muster the diplomacy to ensure that the regional players are on board for what could be a bumpy ride ahead.

When Trump agreed to a summit with his North Korean counterpart, the initiative was widely hailed as a welcome departure from angry threats, a Nobel Peace Prize-worthy effort to solve the North Korean nuclear crisis through dialogue. It was music to the ears of many, especially to South Korea, where talk of war—from a U.S. administration no less—can be particularly alarming.

But in the ensuing implementation and follow-up, Singapore may turn out to have done more harm than good. To date, almost three months after the summit, there is scant evidence that North Korea is prepared to abandon its nuclear programs on an acceptable time frame, certainly not on National Security Adviser John Bolton’s one-year schedule or on Secretary of State Mike Pompeo’s seemingly more generous two-year term. Instead, North Korea has returned to the tired demand that what it needs before moving toward denuclearization is some kind of proof that the United States has abandoned its “hostile policy.” In the past, Pyongyang has been vague on what would constitute sufficient proof of this abandonment. But in Singapore and in the various track two negotiations that have followed it, it seems increasingly to come down to signing a peace treaty or normalization agreement that would eventually lead to the pullout of U.S. troops from South Korea. Although North Korea has not pushed for this to happen immediately, it has pressed for the United States to cease its joint military exercises with South Korea in the meantime.

U.S. forces are in South Korea to help defend that country from another invasion from the North. That they could be there as the vanguard of an invasion force is the stuff of North Korean fantasy, but in the absence of serious North Korean negotiation, Washington has oddly accepted Pyongyang's proposition that it needs to demonstrate that it has no hostile intent. Trump himself started this exercise in preventive capitulation by pledging that the United States would get to work immediately on a treaty to reassure North Korea that the United States will not attack or invade them. He also threw in the sweetener that Washington would cancel upcoming joint exercises with South Korea (which he referred to, echoing North Korean language, as "war games" that were "very provocative") and that, looking down the road, it will try to withdraw those very U.S. troops that supposedly make the North Korean leadership sleepless at night. Such ideas have been discussed before, but only in the endgame context of a denuclearized North Korea, or at the very least in the context of a North Korea that is committed to active denuclearization. Words, especially in diplomacy, are difficult to take back, and Trump is on record as being prepared to take unilateral steps never undertaken before.

As the potential for fruitful negotiations has waned, other ideas for addressing North Korean concerns pop up like mushrooms after a dreary rain. One plan for reassuring Pyongyang on a sort of interim basis is to conclude a declaration to "end the Korean war," that is replace the armistice, a kind of elaborate cease-fire, with a proto-peace treaty that signals preparedness to do exactly what Pyongyang seems to want, namely withdraw U.S. troops from the peninsula. Another idea circulating is diplomatic normalization. If the United States cannot open an embassy in Pyongyang immediately, advocates of this idea argue, perhaps it could establish liaison offices of the kind that served the U.S.-Chinese relationship so well in the years between the Shanghai Accords and the establishment of full diplomatic relations. North Korea already rejected this idea in 2007, and would probably do so again, but these are the sorts of things that come up when one is essentially negotiating with oneself.

Right now, the challenge for the Trump administration is to recreate its "maximum pressure" campaign, which involved unprecedented UN sanctions and an emerging enforcement regime, in the post-Singapore policy context. The last round of these sanctions included holding back refined petroleum to a country without refinery capacity—serious leverage, far more so than, for example, travel

bans for people who don't travel much anyway. It won't be easy, but a serious diplomatic effort would be a good start to ensure that the countries in the region are prepared to work with Washington to address the North Korean threat.

The Trump administration does indeed need a multilateral North Korea strategy that engages the region. A merely bilateral policy of speaking in real time with the North Koreans and informing everyone else after the fact is not such a strategy. Inevitably it leads to resentments, misinterpretations, and to the inevitable tendency of the international community to demand of both sides equal amounts of supposed reasonableness.

For starters, South Korea, the country that started the 2018 negotiating process, needs to be at the table. It has invested heavily in diplomacy with North Korea and the prospect of failure, looming now, will be far better accepted if Seoul is a full participant in negotiations rather than an anxious bystander.

Japan, too, is a vital ally of the United States and must have a sense that Washington treats it as a full partner on the North Korea issue. Pyongyang, after all, has abducted Japanese citizens, sometimes off the streets of Japan. Neither the Japanese public, nor frankly any public, can accept only vague explanations or accounting of what actually happened with these kidnappings. This does not mean that Japan has no interest in the broader issue of North Korean denuclearization or of the threat posed to its homeland by North Korean missiles. But it does mean that the Japanese public is engaged in a serious and personal way that cannot be ignored.

Even more complex is China's role. No doubt, Beijing welcomes a diplomatic approach rather than fire and fury, but to have the United States take the lead on talks with Beijing's neighbor and historic communist partner was too much for the Chinese leadership to endure. As a consequence, a bitter irony of the U.S. initiative has been a Chinese–North Korean rapprochement of the kind that hasn't been seen in a decade.

Beijing does not want a nuclear North Korea, but neither does it want to be marginalized by the Washington in its own neighborhood.

Those who argue that working with China to resolve the North Korea nuclear issue would be difficult should consider the prospects of working against China.

Beijing does not want a nuclear North Korea, but neither does it want to be marginalized by the Washington in its own neighborhood. A sustained and focused U.S. policy toward China, one that calibrates the myriad of issues—including trade—is a challenge that past administrations have met with varying degrees of success. The Trump administration has got to do better if it is to succeed in the goal—shared by China—of denuclearizing North Korea. To castigate China in public for supposedly working against the United States is to set U.S. interests back, rather than to devise a course forward. Instead, Washington and Beijing need to sit down and make clear what their respective interests are (and are not) in the region and work together to hash out the best possible strategy for getting North Korea to yes on denuclearization. Presenting a united front would prevent North Korea from being able to go shopping for initiatives and to explore every crack in the U.S.-Chinese relationship.

Singapore has upped the ante for the United States. The failed aftermath requires that the administration show resolve, a sense of calm, and a renewed dedication to addressing the North Korean nuclear problem. Washington cannot walk away from the threat, but the key to convincing the regional players of that is not to walk away from them, either.

Source: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/north-korea/2018-09-05/us-needs-new-north-korea-strategy?cid=int-fls&pgtype=hpg>

Touting Ties: US, India Announce Military Drills

NEW DELHI: Top Indian and US officials on Thursday touted deepening ties that will see greater cooperation between the two countries' militaries and will likely result in India buying more American arms.

The US has gone to great lengths to forge a closer bond with India as Washington seeks partners to push back against China's economic and military rise across the region.

As an example, Indian Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced plans for the US and India to hold major military drills next year.

The drills would be a first of sorts the two countries' forces have not previously trained simultaneously in the air, on the land and at sea.

US, India seek to deepen defence ties and sign key accord

"We have decided to carry out for the first time a tri-services joint exercise with the United States off the eastern coast of India in 2019," Sitharaman said.

Joining Sitharaman for the talks was Indian Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Defense Secretary Jim Mattis.

After the summit, Pompeo said it had been "pretty special, historic, a level of relationship that the two countries had not previously had."

Aside from agreeing to joint drills, the two countries also signed a "Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement."

Known as COMCASA, this deal will allow the two countries to exchange sensitive military information quickly and securely.

Despite the friendly tone of the summit, there are plenty of issues India and the US do not see eye-to-eye on.

In 2016, Washington designated India as a “major defence partner”, making it easier for the two countries to do arms deals.

India however is finalising a deal with Moscow to buy new systems including its S-400 long-range, surface-to-air missiles.

None of the four officials who spoke to reporters after the summit but did not take questions mentioned whether the S-400 issue had come up.

Under current US rules, third countries could face sanctions if they transact with Russian defence or intelligence sectors.

If the S-400 deal is finalised, India has signalled it will ask Washington for a special waiver from sanctions, though a US official last week said there is no guarantee it would do so.

Thorny trade, defense issues await US diplomats in India

The US wants to wean India off Russian systems and onto American hardware. It already has sold US Apache attack helicopters and other gear, and is negotiating to sell armed drones to India.

In an apparent reference to China and its Belt and Road initiative which floods developing countries with cash for infrastructure projects that sometimes cannot be repaid Pompeo said the US and India wish to pursue “fundamental rights and liberties and prevent external economic coercion.”

The talks were first meant to be held in April and then in June but both were postponed, triggering speculation of a rift.

After the talks were over, a reporter asked Pompeo if he was involved in a scandal gripping Washington, after the New York Times reported an anonymous editorial penned by a Trump official that depicts the White House in a state of dangerous chaos.

Pompeo denied he had anything to do with the letter.

In May, Trump pulled the US out of the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran and said other countries, including India, must stop buying oil from Tehran before November 4 or face US sanctions.

India however is highly reliant on Iranian crude imports.

US, India to discuss sale of drones, exchange of satellite data

India has a \$25 billion trade surplus with the United States, and to reduce that the Trump administration is reportedly pressing India to take more US imports.

A draft agreement put forward by Washington last month committed India to accepting more imports of US in the areas of civilian aircraft and natural gas, taking Indian officials by surprise, the Hindu daily reported on Thursday.

“We will consider waivers where appropriate but ... our expectation (is) that the purchases of Iranian crude oil will go to zero from every country or sanctions will be imposed,” Pompeo said.

Mattis and Pompeo were due to meet with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi later on Thursday.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1796967/3/>

Trump's Policies Could Isolate America By

Mohammad Jamil

IN May 2018, Donald Trump withdrew from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), also known as the Iran nuclear agreement, which encompassed a rigorous set of restrictions and inspections guaranteeing that Iran would not obtain a nuclear weapon. It is important to understand that the JCPOA is not just an agreement between the US and Iran but one negotiated by the P5+1 – the UK, France, China, Russia and Germany – and endorsed by the United Nations Security Council. The US allies have declared that they will continue to support the agreement, as it is in their own national security interests. Trump also rejected the advice of his own top national security officials like the Chair Joint Chiefs General Joseph Dunford, and defence secretary James Mattis, who repeatedly stated that staying in the agreement is in the national security interests of the US.

By withdrawing from the JCPOA the US has lost the credibility, as no country in the world would sign non-proliferation or any other agreement with the US at least till President Trump is at the helm. Iran's 'sin' is that it backs Bashar al-Assad, supports Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Palestine, and is also accused of human rights abuses inside Iran. In fact, the US uses such pretexts to create disaffection and turmoil in any country that does not fall in line with it. Americans have seen 17 years of war in Afghanistan and 15 years of war in Iraq, and they do not want to be part of never-ending wars in the Middle East. They do not want to be drawn into a Sunni-Shia, Saudi Arabia-Iran regional conflict. By withdrawing from the nuclear agreement and his reckless statements, Trump and his administration has made the world unsafe.

The US feels that the Iranian regime is using the money earned from Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) to spread misery in the world by exporting terrorism, which needs to be stopped. The US believes that its withdrawal from the JCPOA and slapping sanctions has already strained Iranian economy, as "Iranian riyal is tanking, unemployment in Iran is rising, and there are widespread protests over social issues and labor unrest". The US leadership is expressing deep concerns about reports of Iranian regime's violence against unarmed citizens and supports the Iranian people's right to peacefully protest

against corruption and oppression without fear of reprisal. But with US sanctions people of Iran tend to suffer more, and they would understand that it was due to the US. Anyhow, this is continuation of US policy of regime change, but the US is not likely to succeed.

In April 2017, the US had bombed Syrian forces just days after Secretary of State Rex Tillerson suggested the administration would be fine with Assad staying in power. On June 9, Tillerson called on Saudi Arabia and its allies to end their isolation of Qatar. But within a couple of hours, Trump sided with the Saudis and accused Qatar of funding terrorism. Tillerson had once suggested holding negotiations with North Korea but President Trump rejected the idea in a tweet. And later Tillerson was shown the door. Now, President Trump has slapped more sanctions on Iran and says all countries should bring their oil imports from Iran to zero by the cut-off date of November 8, 2018 else, they will come under secondary sanctions from the US. European Union has asked companies of member countries to continue business with Iran, as the governments would watch their interests.

China has opposed the US' unilateral sanctions, declaring its business ties with Iran as open, transparent and lawful. China is biggest oil trading partner of Iran having invested in Iran's oil industry and being biggest importer of Iran's oil. China alone accounted for 25.6 per cent of Iran's imports and 19.7pc of its exports since March that are more than all European countries combined. Russia, Turkey and EU have declared the sanctions uncalled for. EU vowed to protect nuclear deal by continuing to trade with Iran. German foreign minister has warned that the unilateral US sanctions could further destabilize the Middle East and boost radical forces in the region. India also hinted to continue business with Iran stating that India's relations with Iran are not subject to third party influence. Afghanistan pleads the U.S. to exempt Kabul-Tehran trade deals from sanctions on Iran as the country heavily relies on Iranian port of Chahbahar.

Whereas Pakistan accepts the right of Iran or for that matter of any country to develop nuclear technology, it may stay neutral on the question of US sanctions on Iran, as Saudi Arabia had welcomed the sanctions. Pakistan is facing many challenges including economic challenge, and it is already at the receiving end in FATF. Since Pakistan wants to play positive diplomatic role in reducing tensions between all Gulf countries aiming at minimizing sectarian rift, it has to remain

neutral. Pakistan is under pressure from the US for different reasons. US Secretary of the State Mike Pompeo said that the US sought Pakistan's help in Afghanistan settlement, but meanwhile the US has stopped reimbursement of \$300 million Coalition Support Fund. The US should understand that a strong Pakistan can be source of strength for the regional peace; therefore the US should review its policy towards Pakistan and facilitate relations with Afghanistan.

—The writer is a senior journalist based in Lahore.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/trumps-policies-could-isolate-america/>

Russia and Turkey Will Collide Over End of Syrian Civil War By Gabriel White & Bogdan Belei

At the beginning of August, the Syrian military planes flew over the northwestern province of Idlib and dropped leaflets urging residents to surrender and threatening military action. It was the latest example of how Bashar al-Assad and his forces have ignored de-escalation agreements and continue a full-scale offensive against their opposition. The city of Idlib—the only major opposition-held territory left in Syria and also the last de-escalation zone remaining—is the next target for the Syrian regime's advance.

The looming conflict has significant implications for Russia, Turkey, and the future of the Syrian war. Since late 2015, Russia and Turkey have pursued their respective military strategies in Syria with a mutual understanding. Despite the Turkish downing of a Russian Su-24 warplane and the subsequent assassination of the Russian Ambassador to Turkey, the partnership has persisted, surprising many observers. Furthermore, both Russia and Turkey have carved out respective pockets of influence that have helped them secure their core objectives in Syria. On a long enough timescale, however, even the best of partnerships have their limits.

For Turkey, the security of Idlib is non-negotiable. The Turkish military deployed to the province last year, and it remains a crucial political leverage point for President Erdogan. Without security guarantees in Idlib, Turkey will either escalate their military involvement or cease their participation in shaping the future of Syria's governance. This presents Russia with a difficult choice—respect Turkish interests in Syria or estrange Ankara as a partner in the Astana talks.

An Unlikely Partnership: Russia and Turkey

The Russian-Turkish relationship has been one of convenience. President Vladimir Putin, to his credit, has been successful in leveraging Turkish security concerns into territorial victories for the Syrian regime. In return, Turkey has

received support against Kurdish forces in northwest Syria, largely diverting their attention from supporting the Syrian opposition against Assad. As a result, each country has recognized their limits and has achieved progress in numerous areas of cooperation, most significantly through the Syrian peace process in Astana

Since May 2017, the Astana talks—dominated by the Russians, Turks, and Iranians—formalized the introduction of four de-escalation zones in Syria. These zones included all significant areas remaining under control of the armed Sunni opposition and focused on the implementation and enforcement of ceasefire agreements in rebel-held territories around Daraa, Homs, Eastern Ghouta and Idlib.

Paradoxically, the process resulted in the complete regime takeover of three of the aforementioned ceasefire zones. After a regime offensive concluded in April 2018, rebel forces in Eastern Ghouta either surrendered or agreed to transfer to Idlib province. Similarly, rebel forces in Homs surrendered in May. Finally, a third regime offensive directed against opposition forces in Southern Syria just recently concluded.

Turkey's Commitment to Syria's End Game

Today, Idlib exists as the last major bastion for the Syrian opposition. Unlike other regions recently taken by regime forces, the city intertwines conflicting interests for all major powers involved, raising the stakes considerably higher .

Beginning in October 2017, the Turkish military established observation points along the line of contact between regime and opposition forces as a means to enforce the de-escalation agreement. This commitment, both significant and risky, underscores Ankara's priority in maintaining a degree of order in the governate. In part, Turkey's commitment to Idlib rises from the threat of an extinguished Sunni opposition. Any major regime operation, if unchallenged, would achieve such results—with the alternative being a protracted Sunni insurgency along Turkey's southern border. Neither outcome is one that Turkey desires.

Finally, to make matters even more complicated, Idlib has become one of the highest density areas of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees in the

world. It is estimated that half of the territory's two million residents have been displaced over the last eight years, and hundreds of thousands of new IDPs have already arrived in the governorate in the last year.

So how do these factors affect the future of the Turkish and Russian relationship? There are already mounting indications that regime forces may launch an offensive military operation against Idlib in the coming weeks. Emboldened by recent victories in Ghouta and the Southern Front, Assad may be willing to risk provoking Turkey especially if he perceives Russian acquiescence. The presence of al-Qaeda affiliated group Hayat Tahir al-Sham , which controls significant territory in the governorate, will further complicate facts on the ground if violence were to erupt.

Turkey has demonstrated a willingness to use military force in Syria to secure its perceived interests. Both Operation Euphrates Shield and Operation Olive Branch were focused on responding to developments principally related to Ankara's perceived security threat from Kurdish forces on its southern border. Erdogan himself has expressed concern of a regime offensive in Idlib on no shortage of occasions, and purportedly linked the fate of the governorate to that of the Astana talk process in July 2018. It is within reason to suspect that when provoked, in an area of high priority, Turkey will respond with force.

Fortunately, for now, it seems Russia recognizes the severity of the situation. In July, Russia's chief Syria negotiator Alexander Lavrentyev publicly stated , "Any large-scale operation in Idlib is out of the question." However, in recent days, Russia has accused the United States of preparing for an attack on the Syrian Army and the Syrian opposition of planning a chemical weapons attack . In response, Moscow has preemptively deployed up to thirteen Russian ships from the Black Sea Fleet through the Bosphorus into the Mediterranean.

In the event of a conflict in Idlib, what role will Russia assume? Russia's past policies—including tacit support of Turkey's Operation Olive Branch in Afrin, as demonstrated by the withdrawal of Russian military police from the region in January 2018—indicate that Moscow may appease Turkish interests given the costly alternatives. But close observers are equally familiar with Moscow's unrelenting willingness to support Assad's abhorrent regime to great lengths.

Moscow and the Assad regime should also not discard Turkey's commitment to Syria's future—after all, it was President Erdogan that first called for Bashar al-Assad to step down in 2011. Moscow should advise Ankara to tread carefully and reserve the option to distance itself from the possibility of a miscalculated assault by regime forces.

A Call for U.S.-Turkish Rapprochement

Almost exactly seven years after President Obama formally called on Assad to step down, the United States is all but sidelined in the events happening on the ground and discussions shaping the political future in Syria. While U.S. National Security Advisor John Bolton warned his Russian counterpart, Nikolai Patrushev, against the use of chemical or biological weapons, the discussions in Geneva did not include an understanding about the lasting security of Idlib.

As the last three years have shown, the United States is not well-positioned to cooperate with Russia in Syria; however, it could still regain a partner in Turkey. Recent clashes between the Trump administration and President Erdogan over the detention of American pastor Andrew Brunson, the imposition of sanctions on Turkey's economy through escalating U.S. tariffs on steel and aluminum has weakened the U.S. relationship. But Syria remains a priority for both countries—and if Washington wishes to salvage any remaining leverage on the peace process, it would be wise to reconsider its recent row with Turkey.

In coming weeks, the security of Idlib will define the state of affairs in Syria. A major escalation would significantly add to the ongoing human toll of the eight-year war, and it would prove devastating to the remnants of the Syrian opposition. If Ankara deems that the fight for Idlib is too costly and concedes its political interests, it will ultimately forfeit its functioning role—and leave Washington without an ally—in the Syrian peace process. Thus, it is imperative that Washington support its Turkish ally and actively work to repair its relationship with Ankara to retain whatever leverage remains on the ground.

If the U.S. ally and NATO member departs from defending the final pockets of resistance in Syria—Assad, Russia, and Iran will remain the last ones standing.

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Source: <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/middle-east-watch/russia-and-turkey-will-collide-over-end-syrian-civil-war-30662>

The End of History By Harlan K Ullman

Francis Fukuyama famously and wrongly argued that the end of the Cold War, Communism and the Soviet Union assured the perpetual ascendancy of some form of liberal democracy as the governing foundation for mankind. How quickly ex-cathedra pronouncements fall to the vagaries and realities of geography, local politics and economics. For the moment, Western liberal democracies are not in the ascent, as authoritarian regimes are reversing Fukuyama's thesis.

But a larger reality looms, a reality that is causing angst, fear and outrage in many Western democracies. That reality is what is causing discontent in these societies. It is the failure of governments to govern adequately to solve even the most basic needs, let alone the aspirations of the governed. This failure to govern extends much further from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe, with Brussels and Washington in between.

As this column has argued, several parallel factors have contributed to failing governance in America. The first has been declining public credibility, trust and confidence in the Federal government. This began with the Vietnam War. Watergate and the resignation of Richard Nixon combined with the excesses of the CIA and FBI accelerated the rot. Jimmy Carter's self-righteousness was not helpful.

With Ronald Reagan began the further polarisation of politics that George H.W. Bush's one term could not reverse. While Bill Clinton was popular, his impeachment hardened even further the already massive gaps between both parties. George W. Bush bungled into Iraq by way of Afghanistan in wars that are still ongoing and have contaminated much of the region.

With Barack Obama, tribalism tragically became a defining force in politics not helped by dangerous and fanciful "birther" arguments. Now Donald Trump has brought the office of the Presidency to a new low in terms of conduct, let alone possibly irreversible blunders he has made. And both parties have moved further away from each other to more extreme positions of left and right. Indeed, at this point in time, unless one is a die-hard Trumpista, the pickings for 2020, in both parties for 1600 Pennsylvania are quite slim.

This failure to govern is inflicting many other democracies. Britain is torn over Brexit. Angela Merkel leads a weak coalition. A democratic Turkey seems like a distant memory with the powers seized by its president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Italy remains ungovernable with an extraordinary coalition of extreme rights and lefts.

That only 60 percent of Americans disapprove of Donald Trump's presidency is as surprising as the fact that 40 percent of Americans approve

Russia, China and other increasingly autocratic leaders in Austria and Hungary for example appear to be in the ascent. It is not that these states are governing well or not failing. It is that each is governing well enough to curb discontent through a combination of some economic incentives and very muscular security services that make dissent and discontent come at a considerable price.

What does this mean for America? That only 60 percent of Americans disapprove of Donald Trump's presidency is as surprising as the fact that 40 percent of Americans approve. And of that figure, his base of perhaps 30 percent is unwavering in its support, no matter what the president does.

Yet at this point, the Democrats offer no real leadership. Nancy Pelosi and Chuck Schumer are by no means Congressional giants. Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders seem too ideological to make acceptable leaders. Newcomers such as Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez lack seasoning and possibly common sense. Experienced hands such as Joe Biden and John Kerry probably have had their chance. Hillary Clinton remains unelectable.

Many or most Americans are rightly worried or afraid of the future. The costs of healthcare, education, retirement and improving quality of life are outstripping wages. This fear has led to anger. And to many, anger has provoked outrage. As a result, Donald Trump became the beneficiary of this imperfect political storm.

What will happen? Perhaps the surge in younger generations that are more pragmatic and less dogmatic will bring fresh blood into politics, and to Congress and State Houses. Perhaps the towering debt of \$20 trillion and annual deficits of

more than \$1 trillion will explode in a crisis. Perhaps some foreign policy disaster will force competence back into government.

In the meantime, perhaps one of the few good things about American politics today is its entertainment value. But as Romans learned millennia ago, bread and circuses are no substitute for good government.

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North Korea Denuclearization Is Nice, But Peace Is Better By Daniel L. Davis

North Korea celebrated the seventieth anniversary of their founding on Sunday, with a massive military parade featuring tanks, artillery, and goose-stepping combat troops. It was what the parade didn't include, however, that made global headlines—no intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs). While not an “irreversible” step towards denuclearization, it does contribute to the potential for peace on the Korean peninsula.

Before either the April summit between South Korean president Moon Jae-in and North Korean dictator Kim Jong-un or the June summit between President Trump and Kim, a military parade in early February featured their two most potent ICBMs, the Hwasong 14 and 15. Sunday's parade included neither.

Just as significant, in preparation for the third Moon-Kim summit in September, South Korean officials who met with Kim last week and said the North Korean leader “reaffirmed his determination to completely denuclearize.”

It is still far too early in the negotiation process to say whether or not Kim genuinely intends to denuclearize completely—I am skeptical—but substantive actions and symbolic gestures continue to move in a direction that makes peace possible. However, it's crucial to note that American security and continued economic prosperity are not dependent on Kim making good on his promises. That power continues to reside in Washington.

The key to wielding that power effectively requires the administration to recognize two essential truths. First and foremost, is that while multiple paths could lead to peace on the peninsula, there is only one way to lose: if America were to ever engage in the unprovoked use of force.

Doing so would almost certainly spark a war in which U.S. interests would suffer substantial losses, wholly irrespective of how the war ended. Despite what some suggest, a sober analysis of the military and political factors involved reveals that Kim can be effectively deterred—indefinitely—by America's overwhelmingly superior nuclear arsenal and conventional capability.

Senior Chinese Communist Party official Li Zhanshu represented China at Sunday's parade. Reuters reported that Li and Kim met together and noted, "North Korea was focusing on economic development and hopes to learn from China's experience in this regard." Evidence suggests Kim is not focused on creating a powerful offensive military to conquer other states, but to have an effective deterrent to allow his regime to survive while he strengthens his domestic economy.

The North Korean dictator again emphasized publicly that he is seeking the lowering of tensions in Korea, not military domination. Chinese state media paraphrased Kim after the parade as saying he "upholds the consensus of the Singapore meeting between the leaders of North Korea and the United States and has taken steps for it and hopes the United States takes corresponding steps, to jointly promote the political resolution process for the peninsula issue."

Kim continues to take actions consistent with a leader that desires to remain in power by strengthening the economic basis that will ensure his regime survives well into the future. While there is no doubt Kim is a ruthless dictator that will not hesitate to kill or imprison any in his country who threaten his authority, his desire to survive and retain power means he can be deterred from ever using his weapons. After all, he rightfully recognizes the United States would obliterate him and his regime should he ever use them.

The second key is setting the right objective. Many, such as uber-hawk Sen. Lindsey Graham, argue the objective should be complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearization (CVID). This should be a long-term goal of the administration, but it is not a must-have outcome.

Trump's non-negotiable requirements should be the preservation of American security, the protection of U.S. economic interests in Asia, and the pursuit of peace on the peninsula.

Making CVID a must-have would set America up for near-certain failure. If full denuclearization is eventually possible, it is a virtual certainty it would not come for many years. Kim may be brutal, but he is also pragmatic. It is unlikely he would completely dismantle his entire nuclear program before he receives iron-

clad security guarantees that the United States will not pursue regime change, which will only come with diplomacy.

It will take many years of trust-building to convince the North Koreans that Washington is committed to peaceful coexistence. That means the U.S. military will not use any military force to denuclearize North Korea or remove Kim from power.

Many in the administration and Congress desire near-term resolutions. National Security Advisor John Bolton said he preferred a one-year timeframe . If America expects a CVID outcome in the near term and doesn't get it, some will argue for a return to military threats or ultimatums—to which Kim is not likely to submit. That is the path to war, to the deaths of potentially millions of American allies and U.S. citizens, and significant harm to U.S. national interests.

What is realistic is a phased approach in which America exchanges actions for actions. North Korea has taken real steps toward peace—the United States should reciprocate. This will build trust between both nations over time and may lead to additional and increasingly substantive steps by Pyongyang, which could make peace on the peninsula a reality and denuclearization more likely (though certainly not guaranteed).

What's paramount in the short-and long-run is U.S. security and prosperity, which the president can always guarantee with deterrence and diplomacy.

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Source: [https://nationalinterest.org/blog/skeptics/north-korea-denuclearization-nice-peace-better-31032?page=0%](https://nationalinterest.org/blog/skeptics/north-korea-denuclearization-nice-peace-better-31032?page=0%0)

For Palestinians, America Was Never an Honest Broker By Dalia Hatuqa

For decades, Palestinian leaders have engaged in a rigged peace process, seeking to force the international community's blueprint for a Palestinian state onto the population of the West Bank and Gaza. The United States, meanwhile, has sought to maintain the fiction that it is an honest broker and neutral mediator.

The Trump administration has finally dropped that mask, revealing Washington's true colors. As offensive as the pro-Israel mantras emanating from the White House may be for Palestinians, it is a clarifying moment.

Since 1967, the Palestinians have tried everything to free themselves from Israel's brutal occupation. They tried armed resistance, which got them exiled from Arab states, paving the way for the Oslo Accords; they tried unarmed resistance, which got them media coverage but also jail time; they tried neoliberal economics, which got them aid money and nice cafes in Ramallah; and they tried diplomacy, joining international organizations and United Nations bodies as a state, which got them threats from Israel and the United States.

Washington has long brokered peace negotiations under the flawed premise of two equal sides vying for the same piece of land. When President Donald Trump came to power, many Palestinian officials viewed him with guarded eagerness, holding out hope that his unpredictable shoot-from-the-hip style could translate into a win for them. They could not have been more wrong.

When rumors began emerging that Trump actually did plan on moving the U.S. Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem in support of Israel claiming the city as its "undivided capital," there were murmurs that he would also open a U.S. Embassy somewhere in East Jerusalem. But there was no twin embassy opened. Instead, there was a triumphalist ceremony headlined by Trump's son-in-law and advisor Jared Kushner, four Republican senators, and, oddly, Steven Mnuchin, the treasury secretary. Just 60 miles away, in the Gaza Strip, protests erupted over the move, where 58 unarmed demonstrators were killed and over 2,000 others were injured by the Israeli army.

Then, on Aug. 31, the Trump administration went after the U.N. agency responsible for Palestinian refugees. The United States has long been a lifeline for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), but the administration cut all aid to it, calling it “irredeemably flawed” and “unsustainable.”

The final straw was the closure of the PLO representative office in Washington earlier this week on the grounds that Palestinian leaders had failed to advance final status negotiations with Israel while seeking the prosecution of Israeli officials at the International Criminal Court in The Hague. In fact, the Trump administration has been working hard to settle the final status issues—borders, Jerusalem, and the refugees—in Israel’s favor. The only hurdle they have faced is finding a way to bully the Palestinians into acceptance.

The White House has made clear that it is willing to weaponize aid, and U.S. officials have not concealed the fact that they are seeking leverage over the Palestinians in order to force them to submit to Trump’s long-promised “deal of the century” peace plan.

U.S. officials have not concealed the fact that they are seeking leverage over the Palestinians in order to force them to submit to Trump’s long-promised “deal of the century” peace plan.

Palestinian officials are aghast. But ask the average Palestinian what they think and it might surprise you: Yes, the closure of the PLO office is a slap in the face. But this is not an aberration in U.S. policy—it is the logical conclusion of years of a pro-Israel orientation.

Without that historical basis, it wouldn’t have been so easy to defund UNRWA, move the embassy to Jerusalem, and close the PLO representative office. After all, the existence of the policies Trump has scrapped depended on waivers that were signed by previous administrations. All Trump had to do was refrain from signing them.

Israel has already carved out its borders through the 1948 and 1967 wars. Since then, it has built a wall, an intricate web of settlements, settler-only roads, and

closed military zones in the West Bank that define every aspect of Palestinians' lives.

With Jerusalem recognized as Israel's capital, the Palestinian future holds no capital, no meaningful independence, and no right of return for refugees—meaning that any future state would be stillborn.

The so-called peace process has empowered the worst and most corrupt actors in Palestinian society.

The so-called peace process has empowered the worst and most corrupt actors in Palestinian society.

The PLO hasn't spoken for the majority of Palestinians for decades and is now mainly a one-party entity. Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas has made sure of it. In recent weeks, as the world looked elsewhere, he took a series of steps to tighten his grip on Palestinian governmental bodies. He took over as chairman of the National Fund, the PLO's finance ministry, in defiance of the PLO's bylaws, which stipulate that this position be elected by the Palestinian National Council, the Palestinian parliament in exile.

He has ensured the ouster of his few remaining critics within the PLO Executive Committee by approving a new structure with compliant members. In addition to controlling the executive branch (he is head of the PLO Executive Committee and the ruling Fatah party, as well as president of the Palestinian Authority), he has also undermined an independent judiciary, creating a Constitutional Court that can revoke the immunity of parliament members, effectively silencing critics.

For years, the Palestinian security forces' crackdown on journalists and critical activists has been a source of worry for rights groups. They have noted the adoption of decrees like the Electronic Crimes Law, which paves the way for the arbitrary detention of those who criticize the PA online.

In light of these changes, the PLO representative office may not be so sorely missed by many Palestinians. Finally, people can see the duplicitous nature of the Oslo process, and of the economic and security policy that has failed to

empower the majority of Palestinians and has instead made them worse off than they were.

Indeed, Palestinians find themselves in a lonely, isolated place; there is no help coming from the Americans, the Gulf Arabs, or the U.N. The future will be filled with the sort of pain and misery that was staved off in the past thanks to the steroid of international aid.

But Washington's moves are also clarifying. In a recent survey, the majority of Palestinians said that if and when the United States unveils its much-touted peace deal, they expect it to work in Israel's favor. The peace deal is pretty clearly laid out already: Jerusalem is Israel's, and if the Palestinians want their own "Jerusalem," it will be behind the separation wall, in Abu Dis or another nearby village; the wall is in fact the border; and the U.S. plan to dissolve UNRWA will take the right of return off the table, because refugee status would not be passed down through the generations.

The Trump administration figured that the time was ripe for this sort of deal, because Saudi Arabia and other Arab states are abandoning the Palestinian cause as they shift their attention to Iran. As the U.S. strategy under Trump has crystallized, it has become clear that Washington plans to use pressure tactics to coerce Palestinians into accepting whatever breadcrumbs are thrown their way.

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Trump has dispensed with the usual White House lip service about peace: talk of a two-state solution, condemnations of settlement-building, and other cliches that Palestinians have heard repeatedly over the years. Instead, he and his underlings have unapologetically regurgitated Israeli talking points. That's hardly surprising given the deep personal ties Kushner and the U.S. ambassador to Israel, David Friedman, have to Israel and its settlements.

Young Palestinians, meanwhile, make up about a third of the population, and many have lived their entire lives under Abbas's rule, seeing nothing but empty promises from consecutive U.S. administrations. This has empowered them to look elsewhere: Some have embraced civil disobedience, long championed by

many West Bank villages, on a national level or the tactics of the boycott, divestment, and sanctions movement, which, despite its limitations, has seen some successes.

But they have also paid a price. Since March, 179 Palestinians have been killed, mostly in demonstrations taking place in Gaza. The footage of young Palestinians being gunned down stands in stark contrast to the suits in Ramallah fighting over political breadcrumbs as Abbas, who has no heir apparent, approaches his 83rd birthday.

For too long, the PA leadership has adhered to a peace process that benefited only a few elites within their ranks, while refusing to acknowledge that another path was possible.

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Trump's moves against the Palestinians may be infuriating, but they are merely the culmination of decades of a failed and one-sided U.S. policy.

Freed from the reins of a dishonest American interlocutor, the Palestinians now have an opportunity to carve out their own path by further embracing grassroots organizing, supporting independent Palestinian institutions that eschew international aid, and rallying new supporters around the world.

Source: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/09/13/for-palestinians-america-was-never-an-honest-broker-israel-abbas-netanyahu-middle-east-peace-process/>

Russia-Sino Strategic Alliance | Editorial

Nearly thirty years after the fall of the Soviet Union and Moscow is firmly back in the military game. It is conducting its largest-ever war games since its lost its empire. And it is not alone. China is tagging along.

The week-long Vostok-2018 drills are taking place in eastern Siberia, close to the Chinese border. Some 300,000 Russian troops are participating; or, nearly one-third of the country's one-million-strong army. In addition, there are more than 1,000 aircraft and around 36,000 tanks. And while Beijing's contribution pales somewhat in comparison — just 3,200 troops, 900 combat vehicles and 30 aircraft — experts note that this is significant for a country that has not been involved in military combat since its 1979 war with neighbouring Vietnam. Indeed, Chinese state media have touted the 'deployment' as representing the country's largest-ever when it comes to joint war games.

Naturally, the West and NATO are on high alert. Possibly irked at now having to surrender a unipolar world order — that has long seen the US as the only power at the helm — for the inevitability of a multipolar one. For to be clear, such a scenario is no longer a vague possibility but a stark reality. And the Russian-Sino strategic partnership is the driving force behind this.

Many will welcome the end of the US reign as the world's lone superpower. And it is hard not to see why. After all, the decades of unilateralism that have been characterised by American exceptionalism have failed to make the world safer in a way that had perhaps been envisioned. Indeed, it brought about a paradoxical situation whereby Washington was able to launch wars with or without UN-backing in a bid to consolidate control over as many of the world's natural resources before the Russian bear awoke for the second coming. Though it never quite went it entirely alone, of course. Britain has for the most part been obediently snapping at its heels. Yet the biggest facilitator to US military adventurism, that some describe as being evidence of an empire on the march, has been that old Cold War rhetoric: NATO.

The rise of the Russian-Sino alliance ought to counter the unbridled power of the US. Though pundits have expressed concern that China's focus on these joint

drills are aimed at making it operationally ready in the event of any aggression it could encounter over lingering territorial disputes.

That being said, in the short-term at least, the emergence of a multipolar world will benefit countries such as Pakistan that have suffered at the hands of American caprice. Meaning that those wishing to usurp the US will have to strive harder to reassure; either in terms of military training or say, huge infrastructure projects. Or even by way of support at certain multilateral forums. Though caution must be advised here, too. For bloody and increasingly violent conflict appears to be part and parcel of global capitalism; and as war becomes privatised for maximum profit the stakes naturally become higher. Thus weaker nations would do well to refrain from picking a definite side. After all, it is surely in the national interest to make as many friends and as few enemies as possible. *

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Source: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/298560/russia-sino-strategic-alliance/>

Never-Ending Conflict | Editorial

The unending conflict in Afghanistan continues to trudge on and there is no telling when this horrific cycle of death and violence will end for Afghans. For nearly two decades, the world's mightiest military forces have failed to establish durable peace in the long forsaken country. The 2001 US-led invasion of the country swiftly evolved from a mission against al Qaeda's head honcho, Osama bin Laden, to one in which the focus became battling the Taliban. Seventeen years and tens of billions of dollars later, the conflict is stalemated — perhaps because the Afghans have never been allowed to negotiate a deal that serves their national interest. According to analysts this year, the Afghan war is on track to inflict more than 20,000 battle deaths. The toll alone could exceed statistics collected during any other conflict, possibly even the war in Syria.

Despite the surge in deployment of foreign forces, certain facts remain constant: the Taliban are not going anywhere anytime soon, especially if they haven't after enduring 17 years of conflict. The Afghan state will not achieve a level of maintainable stability without adding the Taliban to the peace equation. And the indefinite Korea-style presence of the US forces will remain a threat to any peace deal. As these facts remain unchanged, the war in Afghanistan continues to destroy the lives of Afghans, who have suffered on and off conflicts for more than four decades. But now is the time to reach a negotiated end to this conflict. Perhaps, outgoing US General John Nicholson made some sense as he relinquished command of US forces in Afghanistan by saying it is time for the war in Afghanistan to end because seventeen years of war have shown no plausible theory of success to justify additional US presence and more killings in the country.

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Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1805131/6-never-ending-conflict/>

Global Warming And Climate Challenges By Hyder Ali Abbasi

The modern world is dealing with terrorism, war, and natural disasters. Of these the most debated but least attended concern is that of global warming. Global warming as suggested by evidence has led to rising temperatures and sea levels and as a consequence, natural disasters, extreme weather events and health problems are also occurring at a rapid rate. The matter's urgency requires immediate attention. In its synthesis report, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) confirmed that there has been a 0.6 Celsius degree rise in global temperatures and predicated a surge of 1.4 to 5.8 Celsius by the year 2100. Precipitation levels also indicate that the planet is becoming warmer and climate data reveals an upward trend in global precipitation. Precipitation has also increased over areas located in the northern hemisphere even during winter.

A UN report stated that sea levels have risen by 20 CM during the 20th century and could increase a further 20 to 80cm by 2100

As a result the world is experiencing frequent and stronger hurricanes and fiercer storms. In 2005, Hurricane Katrina wreaked havoc in the United States, and a couple of years later, Pakistan witnessed the devastating floods of 2010. The IPCC report also states that sea levels have risen by 20cm during the twentieth century and could increase a further 20 to 80cm by 2100. As both the poles of the Earth are covered with ice – Arctic and Antarctic – melting glaciers can cause a cataclysmic rise in ocean levels, resulting in oceanic calamities. The greenhouse effect as caused an increase in earth's surface temperature. This natural process keeps the planet warm by trapping heat in the atmosphere. Increase in carbon emissions has caused the planet to be warmer than required. A layer of greenhouse gases primarily include water vapour, carbon dioxide and small amounts methane and nitrous-oxide. Carbon emissions are also a result of deforestation as plants absorb carbon dioxide. Each year forest area, roughly the size of Panama is lost. According to United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) deforestation is responsible for 20 percent of greenhouse gas emission. As the result of rapid industrialisation and technological boom the level of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere has sharply increased. The

industry's dependence on fossil fuels has caused a soar in the CO₂ levels. All this will result in an increase in natural disasters like floods, draughts tsunamis and hurricanes that are a huge threat to life. A look at the floods of 2010-2012 that killed more than 3000 people and resulted in loss of Rs 816 billion illustrates this point.

Published in Daily Times, September 18th 2018.

Source: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/299464/global-warming-and-climate-challenges-2/>

World in Search of Peace By Reema Shaukat

UNITED Nations declared September 21 as an International Day of Peace in 1981, after which every year many people, political and military observer groups and many countries devote this day to strengthen peace efforts in world. Every year UN, announces a theme for this day to reinforce the ideals of peace, both within and among all nations and people. The year 2018 theme is “The Right to Peace – The Universal Declaration of Human Rights at 70”. This theme tends to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This declaration is considered as a milestone document in history of human rights. It was adopted by UN General Assembly in Paris on 10th of December, 1948 and is considered mandatory for all countries while setting goals. UN Secretary-General António Guterres in his message for peace day said that “It is time all nations and all people live up to the words of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which recognizes the inherent dignity and equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human race. This year marks the 70th anniversary of that landmark document.”

According to the UN Sustainable Development Goal # 16 which strives for “Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions”, A peaceful society is one where there is justice and equality for everyone. Peace will enable a sustainable environment to take shape and a sustainable environment will help promote peace. Whereas sustainability addresses the fundamental needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Modern challenges of poverty, hunger, diminishing natural resources, water scarcity, social inequality, environmental degradation, diseases, corruption, racism and many other factors pose challenges for peace and create fertile grounds for conflict. After World War II, the United Nations was established by the United Nations Charter, the foreword of which states: “Save successive generations from the two scourge of war which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind”. The Preamble to the United Nations Charter also aims to further the adoption of fundamental human rights, respect obligations to sources of international law as well as to unite the strength of independent countries in order to maintain international peace and security.

How unfortunate that today we are still on a quest of peace not on an individual level but among countries. Lust for more power, obsession for possessions and paranoia of terrorism is making this world a deadly place to live in. Wars come to an end but their shadows prevail in years to come, and they cannot be obscured from pages of history. Apart from efforts for sustenance of peace, there are many conflicts on-going which defeat peace efforts. Though many skirmishes in different parts of the world have emerged due to ideological differences, but despite being suggested no peaceful solution can be applicable to these countries. Presently, we see Muslim states facing many challenges, particularly due to the West under the burden of accusations of terrorism. Be it Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen, Occupied Kashmir or any other Muslim state they are linked to phenomenon of terrorism, directly or indirectly. We see that UN and other peacekeeping organisations are toothless whereas superpowers are busy in accomplishing their agendas.

Though during the era of the Cold War many nations were bound to be part of Bloc Politics and the everlasting impact of alliances paved the way for future liaisons among nations. Superpowers try to achieve their goal through coercive use of power and we are witnessing that the United States continues to practice a policy of 'a la carte multilateralism', favouring only those international efforts, which correlate with its national interests. America's belief in 'a la carte multilateralism' gives her advantage to pick and choose its allies and mechanisms as circumstances suggest. We have seen this policy in the case of Pakistan too, where notion of either "with us or against us" was prominent in many crucial decisions for South Asian peace and stability. In an arena of globalisation, it's really difficult for states to remain isolated and rehearse harmony so peace within society can only be attained through good governance and rule of law and justice.

Though there are many theories and models presented for peace, practicality and adaptability matters the most. But with very less followers of peace models, we see that humanity is paying the price for racism, sectarianism and terrorism. Currently we are witnessing skirmishes in Kashmir, Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and other disputes among countries on smaller scale but yet an effective forceful body is needed to stop all the bloodshed. Generally countries who are involved in war acts announce 24 hours ceasefire in war hit areas just to honour this World Peace Day, but stopping war for few hours or a single day is a not a solution for

permanent peace. Current scenario of war hit areas, refugee crisis and use of force militarily, economically or politically disturb the balance of power equilibrium along with denial of basic human rights. Sustainable Development Goals by UN create the building blocks in the global architecture of peace and it is critical that we should organise means of implementation, including financial resources, technology development and transfer, and capacity-building, as well as the role of partnerships. To establish peace in the world we must remember that everyone has a stake and everyone has a contribution to make. In today's scenario the words of Ronald Reagan rightly portray peace: "Peace is not absence of conflict, it is the ability to handle conflict by peaceful means."

— The writer works for Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies, a think-tank based in Islamabad.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/world-in-search-of-peace/>

Hopscotch Indian Foreign Policy | Editorial

The escalating war of words between Indian and Pakistani officials is not a novel experience. The heated words will tone down. However, what is needed to keep in mind is that elections in India are nearing. In April or May 2019, the general elections will constitute the 17th Lok Sabha. The current ruling party, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), relies on spewing hate against Pakistan in its electoral campaign. It is not to forget that last time too, BJP used hate against Pakistan as one of its electoral slogans.

While India has withdrawn from the meeting between foreign ministers of the two nuclear neighbours by stating that Pakistan was a terrorist state and it had glorified a terrorist, Burhan Wani; however, India needs to engage into retrospection. Calling Burhan Wani a terrorist is nothing but an attempt to suppress Indian brutalities with a holed veil. Indian state does not want to comprehend the reasons that make people believe in retaliating to suppression with weapons.

India backing out from the meeting reveals the Indian mentality. India does not believe in negotiations. India's wish to become a regional hegemon has clouded the official thinking and understanding of reality. Whether such negotiations are with its people –whom they call “Naxalites”– they are at war with or any talks with states they have disputes with. India needs to be very careful while using the word “terrorist”. If any state can qualify the label of a “terrorist state” it is no other but India, given the repression that it believes in while suppressing the legitimate of demands of people in Kashmir.

One cannot remain neutral on a moving train, as Howard Zinn says. Pakistan is morally obliged to show solidarity with the people of Kashmir that are under the illegal occupation of India since 1947. If fulfilling the moral obligations makes one a terrorist state then the India understanding of how the world works is deeply rotten.

What is more ironic is that the Indian Army Chief is also falling for the political rhetoric of BJP. Instead of believing in professionalism, his statement is nothing but the discharge of emotions and adrenaline gush. If BJP does not like

Pakistan's criticism, it can, at least, attempt to comprehend the naivety of its decision by going through the local media who call the move a "headless chicken policy". The inconsistency in India's policy on Pakistan shows Indian confusion, which compels the Indian civilian and military leadership to opt for warmongering and hawkish behaviour.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/24-Sep-2018/hopscotch-indian-foreign-policy>

The Age Of Cyber War – OpEd By Zaheema Iqbal

The innovations in technology have brought infinite benefits to the modern life. Today, the world is interconnected as never before. But, inspite of having all technological advancements, there is a bleak side to it; the cyber age is reshaping the warfare. The age where weapons and threats were once identifiable and visible are now anonymous and invisible. Where, there were clear boundaries and rules of warfare; cyber age has borderless and anarchic warfare. This evolving threat landscape by state and non-state actors calls for a new collective security discourse.

According to the Europol 2018 report, terrorists misused more than 150 social media platforms for their propaganda dissemination. They not only used file sharing sites which were used to disseminate and store terrorist messages, and content but bot services were also misused to advertise links for streaming content to many other social media platforms. As a counter-measuring mechanism, law enforcement agencies have tried to minimize the abuse of mainstream social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook and YouTube by the terrorists. Besides being active on the online surface, there are few terrorist organizations which are active on Darknet. These activities mostly concern with fundraising campaigns, and use of illicit markets for the purchase of malwares and botnets.

Studies suggest that few terrorist organizations have turned to online criminal markets using crime-as-a-service industry to buy cyber capabilities which they are lacking. If it holds true, the cyber capabilities of terrorist organizations would grow rapidly and they may strike and launch a cyberattack which may create the real-world-impact such as cyberattack to disrupt emergency or essential public services.

The terrorists' use of cyberspace besides using internet to identify the followers and disseminating the messages, remained active. The Austria reported large number of females including minors who left or moved to war zones. They were radicalized through the use of internet. Some of females married to foreign terrorists' fighters via social media platforms.

The cyber espionage activity was reported during French presidential candidate Emmanuel Macron's campaign last year. In 2016, the San Francisco was destroyed by the ransomware attack which caused great concern over the security and safety of transport network system of United States of America. In the same year, half of the UK businesses suffered huge breach in their electronic systems. On May 12, 2017, the cyberattack named 'WannaCry' affected hundreds of thousands of systems worldwide. The WannaCry was basically a ransomware which was launched with five to ten ransom attempts and affected over 190 countries. In the same year, the Electronic Ghosts of the Caliphate (EGC) of Islamic State (IS) claimed and threatened to launch a great cyberattack in December 2017, but it did not materialize.

In cyber war, enemies can strike anytime from anywhere in the world. It is mostly done by small dedicated group or groups who wear uniform with no identity. They are armed with invisible malwares and unknown codes having no borders and boundaries. The problem of identifying a cyberattack is mostly multifaceted by the fast advancements of malicious codes. The launch of cyberattacks are gearing up with the rapid progress in connectivity escalation between people, and organization all over the world.

In this cyber war, the ideal response would be to match technology with technology; in other words, the cyber-arm race. In this cat-and-mouse game, the evermore lethal weaponry is to be developed to counter the latest arsenals being deployed. The time of taking a paradigm shift has drawn near. The warfare today is no more a question of weaponry rather it is a matter of strategy. Only a strategic approach can triumph against this never-ending futile battle.

Source : <http://www.eurasiareview.com/24092018-the-age-of-cyber-war-oped/>

The End Of ‘Strategic’ Relationship? How American-Turkish Relations Hit Historic Lows – Analysis By Michael A. Reynolds

(FPRI) — The onset of fall finds American-Turkish relations undergoing the most severe crisis in their history. In August, the Trump administration slapped sanctions on Turkey and imposed tariffs on some Turkish imports. These steps sent the vulnerable Turkish lira tumbling in currency markets. In response, Turks from across the political spectrum, including President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, charged the United States with waging economic war on Turkey and vowed to resist. Turkey and the United States have cultivated close ties for over six decades. Today, not only is the possibility of a full break real, but some mainstream American foreign policy experts are advising Washington precisely to do just that: end the partnership.

Yet, as the current disarray in America’s Syria policy demonstrates, the consequences of a break with Turkey will be significant. In 2011, while a mass uprising was sweeping Syria, American President Barak Obama declared that Syria’s dictator, President Bashar al-Assad, must go. It was a directive, and Obama and his administration issued it with the expectation that they could oversee Assad’s ouster on the cheap, i.e. relying on proxies and covert action to overthrow the Assad regime without the direct commitment of U.S. forces. They miscalculated. Seven years later, despite the presence of U.S. military units inside Syria’s borders, Assad’s army, with the support of Russia and Iran, is preparing to launch an offensive against the remnants of the armed opposition, who are holed up in the city of Idlib in northwestern Syria. Victory in Idlib will cement the triumph of Assad and of Russia and Iran, who have outplayed and outthrustled the U.S. in Syria. American policymakers can regard this outcome only as a decisive defeat.

As Dennis Ross, a fixture of American Middle East diplomacy, conceded in an op-ed in the Wall Street Journal on September 9, the U.S. now has no choice but to compromise with Russia in Syria. The U.S. can still attain a satisfactory outcome in Syria, Ross proposes, but warns that this is possible only if the U.S. can draw on support from Turkey and Israel. In what can only be described as an

act of desperation, the Wall Street Journal, formerly known for its trenchant criticism of Erdoğan, opened its pages the very next day to an op-ed from the Turkish president calling for immediate coordinated action to halt the Syrian government from retaking Idlib. The desperation runs both ways. Erdoğan and his ministers in recent weeks have been verbally assailing America and representing it to the Turkish public as an enemy, yet now openly plead for cooperation in American newspapers.

Wellsprings of Discord

The current locus of tension in Turkish-American relations is the status of Andrew Brunson, an American pastor of a small church in Izmir, Turkey. In late 2016, Turkish authorities arrested Brunson and subsequently charged him with a number of violations, including being a member of the network of Fethullah Gülen, collaborating with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê, or PKK), and assisting the attempted coup of 2016. In September 2017, Erdoğan publicly suggested that Turkey might swap one American pastor, Brunson, for another Turkish one, Fethullah Gülen.

Gülen fled Turkey in 1999 and took up residence in Pennsylvania, where he has remained. His followers over the course of more than three decades have established a global empire of schools, test centers, businesses, and organizations. More to the point, they have also been implicated in various forms of systemic financial and visa fraud in multiple American jurisdictions and far more serious crimes in Turkey, including the failed 2016 coup attempt.[1] The Turkish public, as well as the government, overwhelmingly desire his extradition and trial. American authorities thus far, however, have regarded as insufficient the evidence the Turks have presented.

If Erdoğan thought the seizure of Brunson might be a creative solution to the problem of obtaining Gülen's extradition, he miscalculated terribly. The gambit created the impression that the Turks were attempting to coerce America via a hostage swap. It only hardened the attitude of the Trump administration, which in August 2018 took the unprecedented step of sanctioning two Turkish officials involved in Brunson's detention. In the meantime, the lira's fall against the dollar only accelerated, spurring the aforementioned belief that Turkey is a victim of an economic war. Given the stock both Trump and Erdoğan put in their personal images of dominance and the high profile of Brunson's case in Turkey and the

U.S., it is quite possible that both sides will now stubbornly refuse any compromise resolution and Brunson will remain in Turkish custody for years to come.

A plausible interpretation of this standoff would be that it is the product of a contest between two headstrong, bombastic, and mercurial heads of state. That would be a mistake, and not simply because such assessments underestimate the considerable political skills of Trump and Erdoğan. The wellsprings of discord lie deeper. The tensions driving Washington and Ankara apart are not new, but for a decade and a half now they have been outpacing the bonds of mutual interest that have held the two countries together. Washington's desire for a reliable and pliant client in a part of the world it would prefer to forget has been clashing with Ankara's aspiration to achieve full or total independence, i.e. the ability to stand wholly on its own without need for allies or partners. This goal is encoded in the Turkish Republic's very DNA.

Security concerns have always been at the core of the Turkish-American relationship. The two countries began drawing nearer to each other in the waning days of World War II. Not only was it becoming increasingly clear that the Soviet Union would emerge from the war as the dominant power in Eurasia, but Stalin had already started making demands, including territorial ones, on Turkey. In response, the Turkish Republic's second president and confidant of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, İsmet İnönü, began drawing closer to the Western powers, declaring war on Germany and Japan. For much the same reasons, he introduced a simulacrum of multi-party politics to Turkey 1946 and then in 1950 oversaw Turkey's first openly contested elections, which his party lost decisively. Turkey's moves toward the West culminated with its formal entry into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1952.

The U.S. and Turkey subsequently developed a close, albeit far from untroubled, security partnership. Over the course of the next six decades, however, they failed to build up other aspects of their relations to the same degree, and their relationship remained lopsidedly focused on security concerns. Ties in the spheres of economy and culture, for example, remained comparatively undeveloped.

Thus, at the end of the Cold War, many Turks feared that the disappearance of the Soviet threat that had motivated and sustained the Turkish-American partnership would precipitate the end of that partnership. That threat had guaranteed Turkey's value as the guardian of the southern flank of NATO. Its evaporation, Turks anxiously concluded, would entail a waning of American interest in Turkey and inevitably Washington would discard its Cold War ally. They were mistaken. America's standoffs with Iraq and Iran, as well as its compulsion to expand, not dismantle, NATO, led Washington to continue to assign value to Turkey through the 1990s and into the 21st century.

Ironically, it was in Ankara where the more profound recalculation of interests occurred. The dissolution of the Soviet Union and the absence of a common border with Russia meant that Turkey, perhaps for the first time since the beginning of the 19th century, had no pressing need for a great power patron to protect it. Moreover, the rise of the Justice and Development Party (AK Party), of which Erdoğan is a founder and member, in 2002 represented a sea change in Turkish politics as a rising class representing the Anatolian heartland displaced the old republican elites with roots in the Balkans and the Aegean coast.

The AK Party was, and remains, a comparatively mild Islamist party—it has not pursued anything like a sharia agenda and indeed the majority of its members neither want a sharia-based order nor have a concept of what that might even look like. Nonetheless, the crucial fact remains that its leaders and members do assign high importance to their identities as Muslims and conceive of that identity as distinct from, and often in opposition to, the West. The arrival of a Turkish elite that looks askance at the West represents less a rupture with the past than the ineluctable product of a process of evolution.

Although Turkish elites through the second half of the 20th century qualified as pro-Western on the basis of their opposition to Soviet Communism, membership in NATO, commitment to secularism, and faith in the possibility of science and technology for the improvement of human society, an abiding ambivalence toward the West qualified their worldview. The founding narrative of the Turkish Republic is a story of the defiance of the Western imperial powers and their regional partners. It highlights the victimization of the Turkish nation at the hands of the European Great Powers and promises to deliver that nation from future exploitation by forging a state that will be able to stand on its own, wholly

independent of outside entities, and defend its interests against the Great Powers. The ascent of a political leadership that was more confident and assertive in its non-Western identity was inevitable.

This political transformation coincided with two other novel developments. The first was a period of sustained economic growth that endowed Turkey with unaccustomed resources and confidence. The second was the opening of an exceptionally fluid environment in regional politics, made possible first by the withdrawal of Soviet power in the 1990s and then by the destabilization of the Middle East following the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003. This new environment granted Turkey unprecedented scope for activity, allowing it in some areas to act on and pursue new regional ambitions (e.g., Qatar, Libya, Egypt, Sudan, and Somalia), and in others compelling it to act (such as with Iran, Iraq, and Syria).

In this new environment, Turkey's interests and actions sometimes aligned with those of the U.S., while, at other times, they came into direct conflict. The clashes between Washington and Ankara varied in significance. Some of Ankara's actions, such as accommodation of Iran and challenges to Israel, contradicted fundamental American policies, and Washington could not write them off easily. The scuffling gradually corroded mutual trust.

From the Turks' perspective, the Americans have been, at best, cavalier about Turkey's interests and even security. A great many Turks, whose numbers span both opponents and supporters of the government, suspect worse, namely that the Americans are deliberately subverting their country. The American intervention in Iraq did create severe headaches for Turkish security planners, particularly as the chaos began to spill out of Iraq and into Syria. The question of the future of Iraq's Kurdish north, Iranian penetration into Iraq, and the intensification of sectarian warfare were intertwined, and all were necessarily of primal concern to Ankara. Some Turks came to believe that the Americans were stoking disorder in Iraq deliberately as a way to keep Turkey and other Middle Eastern states off balance and preoccupied. It was a baseless, even absurd, notion. But when, for example, ISIS acquired its formidable arsenal by taking possession of abundant amounts of captured American weapons, including M1 Abrams tanks (and Iranian militias also laid their hands on captured M-1 tanks), for some the belief that the Americans were playing double games became difficult to shake.

But the revelation that the American military was working closely with the Kurdish Democratic Union Party (Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat, or PYD) in Syria was something that earlier only paranoid Turkish nationalists could have imagined. To the Americans planning the military campaign against ISIS, the militias of the PYD were natural, and perhaps essential, partners. In order to vanquish ISIS, the Americans needed allies on the ground, and those militias are disciplined, capable, and bitter enemies of ISIS. They possess both the necessary attributes and motivation to counter ISIS. But what the Americans overlooked, whether out of neglect or indifference, was the PYD's status as a subsidiary of the PKK. The PKK is an organization that has been waging a sustained violent campaign against the Turkish Republic, utilizing tactics that have included suicide bombing, over the course of more than three decades. Indeed, in 1997, the U.S. Department of State designated the PKK as a foreign terrorist organization.

Turkey has no more dangerous or tenacious foe than the PKK, and the sense of betrayal that American collaboration with the PYD provoked is impossible to overestimate. Washington, however, has by all appearances regarded the matter as something akin to an inconvenience to Turkey. Moreover, in directing their outrage at Ankara for its backing of jihadist elements opposed to the Assad regime in Syria, American critics of Ankara too conveniently overlook both the cooperation with the PYD as well as American efforts to mobilize so-called "moderates" from jihadist ranks, including from groups affiliated with al-Qaeda.

American strategic myopia has unquestionably been a crucial factor compounding the disintegration of the Turkish-American relationship. As I have written elsewhere, American inattention facilitated Russia's efforts to draw Turkey closer. Those efforts, while thus far falling short of pulling Turkey decisively away from the West, have been remarkably successful in stoking Turkish recalcitrance by feeding into Turkish delusions of having a viable strategic alternative to the United States. Coming after the sharp clash between Turkey and Russia over Syria that resulted in Turkey downing a Russian jet in 2015, the Russian success, and concomitant American failure, is all the more remarkable. Yet, there is no denying that Turkish ambitions, be they misplaced or sound, are the key driver in the unraveling of the relationship, and the salvaging of the relationship is not solely in Washington's hands.

Emotional Breakdown

It is common, indeed stereotypical, for practitioners of international and security affairs proudly to forswear sentiment in favor of “cool” and “hard” reasoning and “logical” analysis. The reality, however, is that emotion is no less a factor in international politics than in any other form of politics. Emotion has exacerbated and deepened the sense of betrayal in America and Turkey alike. Turkish-American relations are unraveling against a background of grand foreign policy failures for both countries. These foreign policy failures and embarrassments color attitudes and thought processes in Washington and Ankara.

For nearly two decades, the Middle East has served as the focus of American foreign policy. Despite the expenditure of inordinate attention, exorbitant amounts of money, and considerable blood, American policy has yielded results precisely the opposite of what policymakers promised. Fiasco is perhaps the proper description.

Far from becoming a beacon of pro-Western democracy, Iraq became both a font of instability and a vassal of Iran. The Arab Spring, initially ballyhooed as the overdue democratic windfall from the overthrow of Saddam Hussein’s Ba’thist dictatorship, failed, and in doing so reinforced the cycle of government repression and Islamist opposition that American intervention was supposed to break. Al-Qaeda has not been vanquished. Indeed, radical Islam has proven resilient, making bids for power in Syria, Egypt, Libya, and elsewhere and metastasizing into still more virulent forms, notably the Islamic State, powerful enough to dictate the course of U.S. policy. The rise of the Islamic State made shreds of Obama’s much-heralded pivot to East Asia. In Afghanistan, despite 17 years of fighting, all the U.S. can do is hold on to prevent the Taliban from triumphing.

Amidst this unfolding string of disappointments and failures, Turkey, formerly taken for granted as a pro-Western pillar of stability and a promising example of democracy in the region, emerged as a cantankerous and quarrelsome partner, or even rival. Turkey’s newfound defiance was yet another indication of a flailing American policy and flagging American power. Turkey’s diffidence in the face of Russia’s trouncing of Georgia in 2008 was one example. Although Georgia’s bid to reconquer South Ossetia was indisputably reckless, because Washington had already billed Georgia as a beacon of democracy and close ally, Ankara’s reticence to back the U.S. and Georgia was a telling indicator of a decline in

American power. Similarly, Turkey's collaborative effort with Brazil in 2010 to offer a nuclear fuel swap to Iran represented a brash challenge to American leadership and efforts to deter Iran from developing a nuclear weapons program. Turkey's decision to sign a contract to purchase the Russian S-400 air defense system for \$2.5 billion in December 2017 represented an unprecedented move by a NATO country and was a deliberate act of defiance toward the United States.

Turkey: Irreplaceable, but not Indispensable

After years of emitting a steadily increasing stream of complaints, criticisms, and expressions of outrage at Turkish policies, American policymakers and Turkey watchers are now calling to end the pretense that any meaningful partnership exists with Turkey. One forthright such call has come from Steven Cook of the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), who states flatly, "Turkey is no longer an ally or a partner." This is not bomb throwing for effect or clickbait. The CFR is as centrist and sober as an American think tank can get. Indeed, the President of the CFR, Richard Haass, similarly declared the Western partnership with Turkey finished and is calling for America and Europe to adjust accordingly. Haass is not a Turkey-watcher, but a senior diplomat, prolific author, and president of the CFR, and his judgment is indicative of mainstream thinking. The aggrieved tone of his analysis betrays a powerful emotional undercurrent in American thinking.

That America can manage without Turkey is an unassailable proposition. Indeed, America can thrive without Turkey. What it cannot do without Turkey, however, is to continue to pursue the same policy goals in the Middle East, Eurasia, and Eastern Europe that it has been pursuing for the past decade and a half or more. The strategic value of Turkey's geography is a cliché. And for good reason: it reflects a truth.

The adjective "strategic" is one of the most abused and overused in the English language. Among the common tasks that American commentators use that adjective to fulfill is to imbue remote, poorly understood, and "exotic" lands with significance. Commentators routinely tag Afghanistan, for example, as "strategic," despite the fact that it is poor, landlocked, and near the center of the Eurasian landmass, remote from any appreciable center of power, and incapable of projecting any real power beyond itself. To be sure, Afghanistan neighbors

“strategic” territories, such as Iran, Pakistan, and China, but its innate strategic importance to the United States is marginal.

The Ellipse of Instability and Its Center

Turkey is not Afghanistan. Here, the adjective strategic is meaningful and multidimensional. Turkey’s service as the guardian of the southern flank of NATO against Soviet invasion secured its importance in the Cold War, but it also supported U.S. efforts in the Middle East during that period. Ankara served as the headquarters of the Central Treaty Organization from 1958 to 1979. Following the Iranian revolution, Turkey hosted American and European listening posts expelled from Iran, and it lent its territory as a platform for the conduct of surveillance and other intelligence operations against revolutionary Iran, Iraq, and others in the Middle East. A partial list of the U.S. military operations and international flash points that have erupted in Turkey’s neighborhood since 1991 make clear Turkey’s strategic value: Yugoslav wars (1991-1995), Kosovo (1998-1999), Nagorno-Karabakh (1988-1994), Iraq (Gulf War, 1990-1991; Operations Supply Comfort and Northern Watch, 1991-2003; Operation Iraqi Freedom, 2003-2011), Syrian Civil War (2011-current), Russo-Georgian War (2008), and the Russian annexation of Crimea (2014). To have at the center of this ellipse of instability a resilient state and durable host of American military facilities has been a boon for American policy. The death of the Turkish-American partnership will reverberate throughout the regions that ring Turkey.

The containment of Iran, the containment of Russia, and the containment of radical Islam are three of the most pressing objectives of American foreign policy. Critics of Turkey are correct to question Turkey’s contributions toward these goals. Turkey’s intention to purchase the S-400 air defense missile system from Russia, the role of Turkish bankers in subverting sanctions on Iran, and Ankara’s collaboration with jihadists in Syria and sympathy for Hamas and Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood illustrate how in recent years Turkish priorities have been at cross-purposes with American.

Washington is experiencing difficulty pursuing each of the three objectives named above. The rout of the Islamic State in 2017-2018 did represent a victory in the struggle against radical Islam, but there is no reason to believe that it represents a decisive blow to radical Islam, especially given the inability of the U.S. earlier to even anticipate ISIS. In addition, the U.S. and its allies were not

alone in battling ISIS. It had picked fights with multiple local constituencies, and Russia and Iran contributed to its defeat as well. As for containing Russia and Iran, the successes that those two countries have achieved in Syria testify to the ineffectiveness of American policy there. Russia's defeat of Georgia in 2008 and annexation of Crimea in 2014 cannot be considered American successes either. Israeli, Saudi, and Gulf state expressions of fear of Iran, as well as European alarmism over Russia, may be exaggerated and directed at extracting benefits from Washington, but the increase in expressions of anxiety sooner testifies to the erosion of containment than its fulfillment.

Breaking with Turkey may help clarify the diplomatic terrain. The stripping of illusions is always a prerequisite for sound planning and action. But such a break will not advance American efforts toward achieving the aforementioned three goals. Depending upon the nature of the break, it may so significantly impair American policies as to render those goals impossible to achieve. An actively anti-American Turkey could create multiple headaches for Washington in each of the three policy areas. Although Turkey's relations with the countries of Western Europe are also strained, there is little reason to expect that the Europeans would follow the American lead and downgrade their relations with Ankara. This is particularly the case for Germany, which has a long and complex relationship with Turkey, one that is inherently contentious, but also robust and, unlike the American, multifaceted and more durable. Not least important, because NATO has no mechanism for expelling members, a recalcitrant Turkey could sabotage and gum up Washington's efforts to mobilize NATO. The failure of Western policy elites, and particularly American, to restructure NATO prior to pushing its expansion is one more indictment of their carelessness after the end of the Cold War. It may very well be true that Turkey has been an overrated, uncooperative, and at times even troublesome partner for the past five decades. But from this fact it does not follow that a hostile Turkey inside NATO will be incapable of working against U.S. policy effectively. This could deliver to Russia in particular enormous benefit. Undoubtedly, one of the motives for Moscow's courtship of Ankara in recent years has been the chance to stoke dysfunction and friction within NATO. On the other hand, in the event such a scenario comes to pass, creative American policymakers perhaps could exploit it to create a new alliance system to supersede NATO.

If the loss of Turkey as a partner will force Washington to reconsider core foreign policy goals, a break with America will have still greater consequences for Turkey. Some will be grim. There is no other country that can replace the U.S. for Turkey. Although it is true that Russia does much larger volumes of trade with Turkey than does the U.S. and could also go far to supplant America as an arms supplier, a close partnership with Moscow would be difficult—and dangerous—for Ankara to sustain. Turkey is an energy poor country, and is among the world's most dependent upon imports. Russia supplies over half of Turkey's natural gas and is that country's third-largest source of oil. Turkey is pursuing a nuclear power program precisely to lower its dependency upon imported gas and oil. The rub here is that Turkey has chosen Russia to supply the nuclear technology and expertise it needs. Russia is the lead partner in building the first Turkish nuclear power plant at Akkuyu on the Mediterranean coast.

Russia thus holds formidable leverage over Turkey in the area of energy. To be sure, it is true that economic dependency often runs two ways. If Turkey depends on energy from Russia, Russia needs the income generated by those sales. Yet, we already know that the Russo-Turkish relationship is asymmetrically structured in Russia's favor. As Vladimir Putin demonstrated in the wake of Turkey's shooting down of a Russian jet in 2015, Moscow can and will use economic leverage to bend Ankara to its will.

What is more, Russia has more than economic leverage at its disposal. Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, Russia posed the greatest of military and political threats to Turkey. Although Turkey and Russia no longer share a border, Russia through its intervention in Syria is again in position to squeeze Turkey politically and militarily, including through the sponsorship of Kurdish separatism, a force that Russia began cultivating in the 19th century. The future of the Kurds in Syria is one of the questions that awaits resolution, and, however it is decided, it will impact Turkey's future prospects for civil peace and prosperity. The PKK in the past used Syrian territory as grounds for training and staging operations into Turkey. Although as of late Russia has seemingly been solicitous of Turkish concerns about the PYD in Syria, it can, of course, change its attitude. Moreover, should Russia in the future opt to play the Kurdish card, Turkey would find itself alone. However justly Turks might lament America's recent cooperation with the PYD, it is a fact that the U.S. has a long record of backing Turkey in its fight against the PKK. Not the least illustrative example is

the assistance the U.S. provided to make possible the tracking and capture of Abdullah Ocalan, the founder and leader of the PKK, in Kenya in 1999. A Turkey without America will be more vulnerable, not less, to subversion, chronic insurrection, and potentially even partition.

Is There a Way Out?

As discussed above, behind the current crisis in Turkish-American relations are the sharply differing worldviews of Turkish and American political elites. Although these worldviews are not so starkly divergent so as to dictate a breakup in ties—see the oscillation on the editorial pages of the Wall Street Journal—they do create a predisposition on both sides to magnify, rather than minimize, disagreement. Miscommunication, discoordination (particularly in Syria), and negligence on both sides have exacerbated those differences, contributing to what has become the most sustained and serious crisis in the history of Turkish-American relations.

One step that Washington could take that would advance U.S. interests and improve relations with Turkey while at the same time also bolstering the principle of the rule of law would be to take seriously the Turkish request for the extradition of Fethullah Gülen. Given the litany of documented crimes and subversive activities that Gülenists have perpetrated in Turkey, presenting a credible case for extraditing Gülen should not be impossible. Yet, by all reports, American authorities have deemed the evidence submitted by the Turkish government thus far as not sufficient for extradition. If the Turkish request is incomplete or incompetently presented, professional help should be rendered to remedy this situation. If the Turkish request for extradition is too tainted by legal and procedural irregularities to accept, there is the option of putting Gülen under investigation for the multitude of crimes and infractions he and some of his followers committed in the U.S. In itself, putting Gülen on trial will not repair Turkish-American relations, but it would send an important message that the U.S. understands the concerns of the Turkish public (not to mention the signal it would send to the American taxpayers defrauded by Gülen's network). Given the current state of relations and the depth of suspicions, that message could spur both sides to step back and evaluate their mutual interests more dispassionately and to ask what unites them rather than dwell on what should divide them.

Source: <http://www.eurasiareview.com/21092018-the-end-of-strategic-relationship-how-american-turkish-relations-hit-historic-lows-analysis/>

Modi Under Fire | Editorial

Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi has been accused of nepotism whilst striking a deal with a French aircraft manufacturing company named, Dassault. Instead of giving preference to the public sector; Hindustan Aeronautics Limited, the contract was hand over the Reliance Group, led by Anil Ambani.

Since 2016, India has been working on a deal with France for the Rafale fighter jets. Indian and French officials had previously stated that Dassault had chosen to work with the Reliance group, despite their lack of expertise in the aeronautical industry. The controversy arose when the former French president, Francois Hollande stated that it was infact the Indian government that chose Reliance, over any other Indian company. The matter was further complicated, when it was disclosed that Anil Ambani funded 16 percent of, Hollande's girlfriend's film set on Mount Everest. While the deal was initially for 126 fighter jets to be manufactured in India — the number was reduced to 36 Rafale planes that were made in France. This has raised questions regarding the exuberant cost of the aircrafts as well.

After Dassault, Hollande and his girlfriend Julie Gayet all issued the same statement with evidence. Modi and his government are now in a tight corner. Moreover, the shadow of Anil Ambani's dubious industrialist past has not helped the situation. According to reports, the Reliance Group Limited was registered merely 14 days before Modi's announcement of the purchase in France. While it's subdivision; Reliance Aerostructure Ltd was created 14 days later.

The Indian opposition has been protesting and Rahul Gandhi, President of the Congress has demanded for Modi's resignation over the sordid affair. According to Gandhi, Modi has practiced "clear cut corruption" by delivering the contract for an inflated price to Ambani, who has no experience in manufacturing military hardware. Many others have cited this incident as the greatest example of corruption in Indian history.

Critics are now linking this to Modi's refusal to conduct talks between the Pakistani and Indian foreign ministers regarding trade and peace in the region.

When things go bad in either country, politicians have been known to distract public attention to the neighbouring 'other'.

Whatever the case maybe, we hope for the sake of Indian public that the matter is sorted with due diligence and fairness. And despite the current state of bilateral affairs, India and Pakistan must set aside their differences, to ensure regional stability and progress.

Source : <https://dailytimes.com.pk/302022/modi-under-fire/>

India's Unending Hostility By Talat Masood

The small ray of hope that kindled regarding improvement in Pakistan-India relations after the congratulatory message of PM Narendra Modi to Imran Khan soon turned into an ugly exchange of mutual recriminations. It is a reflection and continuation of the deep feelings of insecurity that the two countries have betrayed against each other since their independence seven decades ago.

Pakistan raises India's water aggression issue with World Bank

India's pretext to cancel the meeting of foreign ministers on the sidelines of the UNGA was based on flimsy grounds. According to the Indian version, Pakistan was involved in a recent terrorist attack in which the body of an Indian soldier was decapitated. It was apparent India was making baseless allegation to wriggle out of its commitments. As has been rightly stated by the DG ISPR that a professional army like ours would never commit such a heinous crime and offered for a joint inquiry. The statements of prime ministers that followed after the incident only added acrimony to a wounded relationship. Much worse were the unwarranted comments by Indian Army Chief Gen Bipin Rawat. He seems to have made it into a habit to threaten Pakistan frequently and his claims of "surgical strikes" at the Line of Control, although imaginary, reflect how belligerent and political the Indian military leadership has become.

What exactly was the motive behind India's reversal when the incident of the soldier's decapitation had taken place before the two governments decided that their FMs would meet? Was it an afterthought by the Modi government that it will have adverse fallout on the Indian national elections in 2019? Or the logic was why let up the pressure, as gains for India are more than losses at least in the near term. The other fact is that it becomes difficult for the Indian military to sustain the state violence in Kashmir at such a high pitch if any form of political interaction between the two states is taking place? Moreover, the Indian establishment must have realised that any peace gesture can be equated to condoning Pakistan's so-called support to Lashkar-e-Taiba and other India-and Afghanistan-specific groups. More significantly, with national elections not far away the BJP government would much rather pursue policies that win favour with the Hindu nationalist groups that are vehemently opposed to any interaction with

Pakistan. The BJP government is becoming increasingly dependent on their vote bank that has domestic and foreign policy implications. Interestingly, this ultra-nationalism synchronises well with the divisive trend that President Trump seems to have initiated and has become a norm of the US foreign policy.

Imran Khan had endorsed the view that improvement in relations with India could open up new avenues for trade providing it access to the Central Asian States and beyond. But these optimistic scenarios to materialise will have to wait a few years. It is becoming increasingly clear that there are no prospects for detente and Pakistan will have to be prepared to deal with a hostile India in the near future.

There has been considerable criticism that the PM acted in haste in trying to break the logjam with India. This was a reflection of his lack of experience in dealing with foreign policy. The counter-argument that must have motivated Imran Khan was to seize the initiative at the very early stage of his premiership. After all his party enjoys a substantial majority in the National Assembly. People have overwhelmingly supported him in the elections and he should take advantage of the mandate to change the direction of Pakistan-India relations. The irony is that PM Modi is facing innumerable challenges back home and the shine of his party's rule is giving way to financial scandals and misrule by his party members. The latest episode is the statement by former president of France Hollande that the Indian partner of the Raffale deal was not selected on merit but on recommendations of the BJP leadership. This has put PM Modi and his government on the defensive. And the best way of deflecting peoples' attention is by choosing the bogey of Pakistan.

Anti-Pakistan slogans sell in India before elections, says Fawad Chaudhry

India over the years has built a broad support base in Afghanistan through economic and political support and cultural and media penetration. The US fully supports and encourages India's dominant role in Afghanistan and this creates problems for Pakistan. Whereas relations with countries is no more a zero-sum game yet India's relations with Kabul has made it lean heavily towards it. This has, however, not prevented Pakistan from striving to work towards building a stable and long-term institutional relationship with Afghanistan. Whether it would

be possible for Afghanistan to maintain a balance in its relations with major neighbours would largely depend on its internal coherence and stability.

For Pakistan the bigger challenge that remains is that how can it transform its relationship with the US and Afghanistan with Indian hostility persisting? Pakistan has been trying but with limited success as Washington looks at it through the Indian and Afghan lens.

Meanwhile, Pakistan's further deepening of strategic, political and economic ties with China in the form of CPEC and support at international forums provide it greater flexibility to ward off external pressure. Besides, Pakistan's growing relations with Russia, close and strategic ties with Saudi Arabia and Turkey and good relations with neighbouring Iran provide greater flexibility in dealing with a hostile India. Especially, when it is being supported by Washington to act as a counterweight to China at the regional level. The other area of contention is that the US considers Pakistan not putting enough pressure on the Taliban leadership so that they are willing to engage in finding a political solution. It has also been insisting that Pakistan should take stern measures against radical militant groups that are operating against India. Pakistan's view has been there are limits to its influence on these groups and has to protect its own interests as well. Moreover, Pakistan cannot be made a scapegoat for India's excesses in Kashmir or the US failure in achieving a peaceful solution to the Afghan imbroglio.

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Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1811391/6-indias-unending-hostility/>

New Sanctions Won't Hurt Russia By Andrei Movchan

For all the brave talk on Capitol Hill about “crushing” new sanctions against Russia, you’d think that someone might have done their homework about what actually makes the Russian economy tick, let alone whether any of the ideas circulating among U.S. policy experts are likely to change the Kremlin’s calculus.

The dirty secret is that the Russian economy has become well-insulated against sanctions. Thanks to Russia’s orthodox version of monetary policy, approved by the International Monetary Fund, and the recent rise in oil prices, Moscow’s foreign currency reserves have recovered since their post-2014 dip and are now at an all-time high of almost half a trillion dollars. (That’s equivalent to one-third of Russia’s GDP and can cover 17 months of imports.)

Although Western politicians love to talk about the falling value of the ruble, the 25 percent drop in the currency so far this year is actually a blessing for the state budget. Luckily for President Vladimir Putin, Russia’s dollar inflows are driven by hydrocarbon exports, and the government’s social spending and pet projects are priced in rubles.

Russia’s sovereign debt levels are eminently manageable, accounting for a mere 17 percent of its GDP (as of 2017), or approximately 50 percent of reserves. While some sanctions advocates want to choke off new sovereign debt issuance, the government has little desire or need to raise money since its coffers are already flush with oil revenues.

The state’s relentless domination of the economy provides the Kremlin with additional protection. At least 80 percent of the Russian economy either belongs to the state or is controlled through so-called oligarchs who are essentially appointees of the regime. About 38 percent of the workforce is employed by the state itself. That means most Russians’ economic well-being depends not on the ups and downs of the market but rather on the state’s willingness to redistribute a portion of the revenues from its hydrocarbons exports.

The Kremlin has wasted no time exploiting the sanctions regime for political purposes. As Putin tells it, any problems are obviously all Washington's fault, not the Kremlin's. The sanctions have dramatically reduced capital flight from Russia. The state has used the retained funds to consolidate its political power by mobilizing the elite and revving up public anti-Western sentiment. The country's unpopular (and, arguably, unnecessary) pension reform is also being blamed on the West: The government is short of money, so the argument goes, because the West imposed sanctions and distracted foreign investors.

Crucially, the sanctions have put serious pressure on Russian asset prices. According to recent polls, 89 percent of Russian entrepreneurs want to sell their businesses, which is great news for the 12 or so key families around Putin that want to monopolize the country's sources of wealth and rents. They are now buying such assets on the cheap, using loans provided by state-owned banks.

But the most useful sanctions for the Russian government are personal ones. Imposing sanctions on various oligarchs simply drives them closer to the Kremlin. That's because there is no true ownership of companies in Russia, only temporary management. Any oligarch who deviates from the regime's wishes stands to lose everything the very next day. The hungry mouths around Putin are all too happy to help arrange a sale of their assets.

Take the case of Oleg Deripaska, an aluminum tycoon caught by U.S. sanctions this year together with his company, the aluminum producer Rusal; the energy group En+; and many other enterprises. (He had to sell his shares in En+ to the state in order to save its business.) While shares of Rusal plummeted in the wake of the April sanctions announcement, the company's market capitalization and earnings are actually small potatoes compared with that of Russian oil and gas giants. Nor did Russia's aluminum exports suffer because the Trump administration has been busy issuing licenses and waivers from the very sanctions designation it had just issued. That's because no one in the administration is comfortable disrupting global supply chains or throwing U.S. or EU workers out on the street.

To be sure, the Russian economy's main structural vulnerability is the overwhelming dependence on exporting hydrocarbons and other raw materials, mostly to Europe. However, the government is betting that the West won't cut off

such sales since the negative impact would be felt first and foremost by European consumers.

Russia could also be vulnerable to restrictions on critical imports of advanced technology and equipment. But those kinds of sanctions would also hurt international companies such as Siemens and ABB. Likewise, the Russian civil aviation sector depends on the United States for spare parts, services, and aircraft—but curiously, sanctions on that sector have been neither widely discussed nor implemented.

None of this is to suggest that Russia's economy is blemish-free or all that productive these days. The growth outlook is mostly stagnant, with no one predicting GDP growth above 2 percent per year for the foreseeable future. Personal incomes of the vast majority of households continue to decrease. Many of Russia's best and brightest are looking for jobs in Europe or in the United States.

But Russia's leaders do not care much about the long-term prosperity of the country. Their focus is on stability and regime preservation. They have mastered the art of managing popular expectations and convincing people that all of their economic problems are the result of Western hostility.

If the much-threatened next wave of Western sanctions turns out to be a flop, they might even enjoy a nice popularity boost for keeping all the bad things at bay.

Andrei Movchan is a scholar at the Carnegie Moscow Center. Since 1993, Movchan has served in senior roles at a variety of Russian and Western financial institutions.

Source: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/09/26/new-sanctions-wont-hurt-russia-putin-oligarchs-rusal-deripaska/>

How to Fix the U.N.—And Why We Should

By Recep Tayyip Erdogan

This week, leaders from all over the world are gathering at the United Nations in New York to exchange their views on mankind's most pressing problems. The main theme of this year's meeting—"Making the United Nations relevant to all people"—is telling. It encapsulates the real challenges the organization is facing: Namely, despite the hard work of U.N. staff across many different agencies, the body is suffering from an unprecedented crisis of credibility.

The main reason for the U.N.'s current troubles is the Security Council's failure to keep its promise of promoting peace and security around the world. From Bosnia and Rwanda to Syria, Yemen, and Palestine, the U.N.'s top decision-making body has neither prevented atrocities nor brought to justice those responsible for heinous crimes. On the U.N.'s watch, authoritarian regimes around the world have used conventional weapons and weapons of mass destruction against innocent civilians. Some regimes have even carried out genocide without facing consequences. The U.N. has also failed the millions of children who suffer from extreme poverty and malnutrition and, as Turkey knows all too well, has been unable to take necessary steps to ease the suffering of refugees.

The list goes on, but it is clear that the United Nations, which was intended to be the beating heart of humanity, has no pulse. Among the organization's critics, two main camps are divided on what to do. In the first group are countries such as Turkey and Germany that would like to reform the U.N. to address its shortcomings. The second camp is smaller and includes the United States. This camp prefers to exploit the U.N.'s weaknesses to undermine the liberal international order. Take, for example, the recent decision by U.S. President Donald Trump to withdraw from the U.N. Human Rights Council; to pull out of UNESCO, the U.N. body for educational, scientific, and cultural collaboration; and to cut funding to UNRWA, the U.N. relief agency for Palestinians. On Tuesday, Trump described his stance as a "policy of principled realism" at the General Assembly.

At a time when global leadership is desperately needed, it is crucial to improve the United Nations rather than destroy it. If the great powers are unwilling to

assume responsibility; if a handful of countries that reap the benefits of the existing international system do not want to commit to reform; and if some of the U.N.'s architects, including the United States, continue to damage multilateralism by taking increasingly unilateralist steps, it will be time to redefine global leadership. We must end the monopoly of a small number of nations and promote the collective leadership of countries that aim to resolve key global challenges. If the great powers prove unwilling or unable to act, the community of nations—under the umbrella of the United Nations or other organizations—must do what is necessary.

One member of that community will be Turkey. Over the past two decades, the country has focused on raising the profile of neglected issues. In 2013, Turkey launched a campaign to stress that “the world is bigger than five”—a reference to the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council. It warned that the United Nations was experiencing a serious crisis of credibility and urged all parties to take steps to make the organization more democratic, equal, and multilateral. I continue to urge the community of nations to abolish the practice of permanent membership in the U.N. Security Council, increase the number of its members to 20, and adopt new rules under which all nations will take turns sitting on the committee.

Although Turkey is no military or economic superpower, it has emerged as a global leader by becoming part of the solution in Iraq, Syria, and elsewhere. Today, it is home to 4 million refugees, including 3.5 million Syrians, and is among the world's top donors of humanitarian assistance. Others in the international community should do their part, but the scale of the refugee crisis shows that it is impossible to solve pressing problems without working together through organizations such as the U.N., too.

If the global powers won't help, the rest of the international community must take matters into its own hands and launch a comprehensive U.N. reform process. After all, we do not believe that to build a more relevant international system, we need to dismantle the current order. People from all around the world have an obligation to come together and take necessary steps to promote peace, stability, and security for all mankind. The U.N. General Assembly must be more than a venue for world leaders to make speeches and share complaints. This year has to be when we lay down the foundation of a new United Nations system.

Source: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/09/26/how-to-fix-the-u-n-and-why-we-should/>

Syria's Three Wars By Steven Simon

With the Islamic State largely eliminated militarily and the Bashar al-Assad regime in control of Syria's densely populated western reaches and pausing prior to a major campaign to retake Idlib, a major rebel stronghold, the Syrian civil war is entering a new phase. Iran, Israel, Russia, Turkey, and the United States are still engaged in the conflict, while Qatar and Saudi Arabia seem to be out. Three separate regional battles among the remaining players—in Idlib, in the territory near the Golan Heights, and in Syria's eastern reaches—will determine the country's future.

President Donald Trump has been explicit about his desire to wind down U.S. involvement as quickly as possible. In March, he told political supporters that “we’re knocking the hell out of ISIS. We’ll be coming out of Syria like very soon. Let the other people take care of it now. ... We are going to get back to our country, where we belong, where we want to be.” The government he presides over, though, takes a different view. The United States now has a “new policy,” James Jeffrey, the U.S. secretary of state's new special representative for Syria engagement, told the Washington Post in September. “We’re no longer pulling out by the end of the year.” Jeffrey said the administration aims for a more “active approach” to ensure the “enduring defeat” of the Islamic State and to push Iran out of Syria. “That means we are not in a hurry,” he said, adding, perhaps to convince himself, “I am confident the president is on board with this.”

Whether or not the president is on board, the truth is that the United States has almost no real influence in Syria and lacks the resources, capacity, and political resolve to sustain a major military and diplomatic commitment to shape the region's future. In this latest phase of the war, then, restraint would be the better part of valor.

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For the moment, the most consequential of the three struggles—over Idlib province—is in its early phases. This province, in Syria's northwest, is nearly two-thirds the size of Lebanon and is very mountainous. To the west, its high ground overlooks Syria's coastal plain, the city of Latakia, a Russian naval base, and a largely Alawite population. To the east, Idlib verges on Aleppo, Syria's largest city

before the war and the object of a brutal fight between the regime and the Islamic State in 2016. Looking southward, the territory abuts the city of Hama, which was destroyed in 1982 by President Hafez al-Assad in his campaign to exterminate the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood. In 2016-2017, villages just north of the province's capital changed hands several times until the Syrian army secured them, apparently for good. To the north lies the Turkish border.

Like mountainous terrain elsewhere, Idlib has attracted settlers for whom isolation is essential to survival; it's the natural environment for dissidents. Like mountainous terrain elsewhere, Idlib has attracted settlers for whom isolation is essential to survival; it's the natural environment for dissidents. The conservative Sunnis there rejected the secularism of the Baathist regime and the heterodox Alawism of the Assad family. For decades, they have resisted Damascus and provided safe haven for religious malcontents.

It is not surprising, then, that one of the first firefights in Syria's ongoing civil war took place near the city of Jisr al-Shughur in western Idlib, where insurgents assaulted a military outpost, killing more than 120 people. After four years of fighting, the Syrian regime lost control of Idlib in 2015. In 2017, as the United States pushed jihadi forces out of Raqqa in Syria's east, survivors fled to Idlib. Their numbers were swelled more recently by men of all political stripes seeking to evade conscription into the Syrian army, which has been Hoovering up all males between 18 and 51.

In the interim, Turkey inserted about 1,300 troops and a dozen observation posts into the province. These were meant to contain any threat to Turkey emanating from Idlib, as well as provide the country with a forward base for further operations, as Ankara somewhat unrealistically described its mission. Instead, Ankara was primarily focused on corralling extremists who might otherwise make their way to Turkey, keeping refugees from crossing the border, and attempting to filter hard-core jihadis out of the larger rebel population, even as it sustained more moderate rebels as weapons to be used against the Assad regime. Once the civil war is over, Turkey will likely aim to convert a long-term occupation of Idlib into a permanent arrangement as part of a larger postwar settlement.

For its part, the Assad regime has been champing at the bit to re-enter Idlib for months. Assad is determined to stitch Syria into a unified whole under his rule,

and Idlib was long thought to be his next mark after victory in Aleppo and Daraa. The deployment of Turkish forces to Idlib likely added urgency to that goal, as did the strategic threat posed by jihadis. Militants there often talk about using Idlib as springboard for a perpetual battle against Assad. How militants would carry out that threat without air cover, armor, or heavy artillery is a mystery, of course, but the regime has taken their posturing seriously.

Damascus has indicated its readiness to move against the rebels in Idlib soon, but a drumbeat of warnings from the United States, United Nations, Turkey, and others against a reckless offensive seems to have deterred the expected assault for now. From the regime's perspective, the delay represents pragmatic restraint. A campaign in Idlib would be labor-intensive, and the regime lacks manpower. It would also be difficult—the foreign fighters, especially Central Asians, who have lived and battled in Syria for years have nowhere to go and would fight to the death. Intensive combat would push a wave of desperate refugees toward the Turkish border, which might inject unwelcome vigor into Turkish operations in the province. In addition, neither of Syria's backers, Russia and Iran, want to be tarred as facilitators of the humanitarian disaster that most observers expect to result from an offensive. It is no wonder, then, that things have been put on hold.

For the moment, Turkey and Russia have reached an agreement to kick the can down the road. They plan to set up a demilitarized zone 10 miles deep around Idlib. The zone will be patrolled by Russian military police on the Syrian-held side and by Turkish forces backed by drones within Idlib. Turkey will take responsibility for moving all the extremist fighters and heavy weapons out of the demilitarized zone. How it will do so is left unexplained, but the Turks have referred to an increase in troop levels within Idlib. By the end of the year, according to the text of the agreement, both the M4 and M5 highways that traverse Idlib and are frequently cut by rebels will be open to traffic. In the meantime, Russia has promised to send new S-300 missile defense systems to Syria.

On its face, this is a good deal for Russia and for the regime. But whether hard-line rebels trapped in Idlib will really refrain from attacking Assad-controlled territory is unclear, as is the degree of force that the Turks would use to stop them. Implementation of the deal will entail a kind of Kabuki theater, where the Turks pretend to enforce the terms of the agreement and the radicals pretend to

disarm by rebranding. In the long run, the Assad regime's strategic interest in territorial unification and in destroying a rebel stronghold will likely outweigh the risks of an assault, and the deal will collapse. That the latest agreement makes Damascus appear to have meekly ceded Syrian territory to the Turks is probably enough to motivate Assad to proceed. Indeed, the resemblance between the situation in Idlib and the forced acceptance of Israel's occupation of the Golan Heights since 1967 must be too awkward for Assad to contemplate.

That brings us to the lower tip of the Golan Heights and the Syrian territory adjacent to it. This plateau is the second major theater still in play. The Assad regime lost control of the area to rebels early in the civil war. But over the past year, it has reasserted authority. Israel and Iran, however, still compete for operational freedom there.

Israel is worried that Iran and Hezbollah will use this area to try to establish a second front—the first being the one on the Israeli-Lebanese border—against it. In 2015, Israelis signaled their intention to prevent Iran or its proxies from digging in on the Syrian side of the Golan by killing an Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) general and a senior Hezbollah official who were touring there.

Israel has also taken full advantage of anarchic conditions in Syria to open something of a free-fire zone. Israel has also taken full advantage of anarchic conditions in Syria to open something of a free-fire zone. Since 2012, it has launched hundreds of airstrikes against Syria to stop the movement of weapons into Lebanon and the delivery of Iranian military assistance to the Assad regime. Over the past year or so, Israel also began supporting a cluster of so-called moderate Islamist forces on the Syrian side of the Golan Heights to prevent Iranian encroachment. Israel tried to do something similar in Lebanon in the 1980s, when it backed the Christian South Lebanon Army as a buffer on the Lebanese side of the border. The arrangement proved unsustainable, though, and led to a long-term Israel Defense Forces (IDF) presence in southern Lebanon. The IDF was withdrawn in 2000 when public support for paying the cost of the mission in blood and treasure collapsed. Maybe the strategy will prove more durable in Syria.

Russia, for its part, has usefully attempted to bring Iran and Israel into an arrangement that would keep Iran and its somewhat ragtag band of proxies from

Afghanistan and Iraq at least 60 miles away from the Israeli frontier. Israel seems to have rejected the proposal, holding out for the full removal of Iranian forces from Syria. As far as Israel is concerned, since it has nearly unfettered access to Syrian airspace and an endless supply of munitions, it makes more sense to pound away at Iran and its affiliates than to agree to a partial withdrawal that would tacitly legitimize Iran's role in the Syrian civil war.

The Assad regime, meanwhile, would like Iran to stay because its forces are still useful and because Iran has been a reliable ally. It does not wish to see Iran provoke a war with Israel that would mostly damage the regime itself, however. Thus, Assad theoretically has the incentive to keep Iran and other anti-Israeli forces near the Golan Heights in check. Both Israel and the Trump administration remain skeptical that Assad has any clout over Iran, but it is noteworthy that there has not been a single strike on Israel from the region since the regime re-entered the area. Further, Iran's response to Israeli strikes on Iranian assets in Syria has been largely confined to threats of retaliation rather than actual retaliation.

It is hard to know the exact reasons for Iran's caution. It could reflect a view among regime officials that the targets of Israel's strikes have been insignificant. Alternatively, Tehran might just not have plans to open a second front. It could also want to avoid doing anything that could diminish European support for the Iranian nuclear deal, or it might believe that it is overmatched. It is also possible that the skeptics are wrong and that the Assad regime has effectively banned counterattacks. Whatever the reason, Tehran could at some point decide that it has had enough and respond either from Syria or Lebanon.

At the same time, Israel cannot know which bomb it drops on an Iranian proxy in Syria will trigger the barrage from Lebanon that escalates into a devastating war. At the same time, Israel cannot know which bomb it drops on an Iranian proxy in Syria will trigger the barrage from Lebanon that escalates into a devastating war. Israel is fairly confident in its ability to dismantle Hezbollah and destroy its missile inventory, although the government concedes that Israel would pay a high price for doing so. Lebanon, on the other hand, would be devastated.

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Finally, in Syria's east, 2,200 U.S. soldiers, working alongside a much larger cohort of Kurds and Arabs under the banner of the Syrian Democratic Forces,

have crushed the Islamic State's combat capability. Many Islamic State fighters are still around—the battle for Raqqa was not, as the Trump administration advertised, a war of annihilation—but their ability to seize and hold territory is gone. In the process, however, the coalition wrecked much of Raqqa city, leaving the immiserated residents to till the rubble. The United States has denied funding for reconstruction, thereby contributing to conditions that favor the eventual return of the Islamic State or something equally harmful with a different name.

Now that the campaign against the Islamic State is largely over, U.S. forces are branching out. They are currently conducting an exercise at Tanf, a city on the border with Iraq, presumably to signal U.S. resolve in its intention to deny Iran a “land bridge” to western Syria and Lebanon that could threaten Israeli interests. (Israel has already raided the area from the air.) Yet the U.S. presence is not really sufficient to control land access to Syria from Iraq, and Iranian movement across the border seems largely unconstrained. We will soon see whether the administration's new policy of staying on in Syria for the duration leads to an increase in the U.S. military presence there and a redeployment of forces from their current staging areas in the north to the Iraq-Syria border in the south. Should such an adjustment be made, a direct clash between the United States and Iran would become more likely.

The other open question is whether the Kurds in the area can count on perpetual U.S. protection now that they have served their purpose in the campaign against the Islamic State or whether they should start preparing for an eventual U.S. withdrawal that will leave them exposed to a revanchist Assad regime on one side and a paranoid Turkey on the other. Presumably, they will choose to take their chances with the Assad regime, which has been fairly vocal in its invitation to parley with Kurdish representatives about the Kurds' place in a reconstituted Syria.

For the foreseeable future, foreign forces will be a feature of the Syrian landscape. For the foreseeable future, foreign forces will be a feature of the Syrian landscape. A relatively small number of Iranian troops, roughly equal to the U.S. presence, will remain in the area, along with a larger number of Iranian-controlled Shiite fighters. Where these young men are deployed at any given time will depend on where the regime needs bodies to stop bullets. Much of the IRGC personnel will be billeted at Syrian bases, and some forces will presumably

remain as close as possible to the Israeli border. At some point, Syria's many battles could shift east, and these militias, along with their Iranian officers, will flow in the same direction. Turkey will maintain a presence at locations along the border with Syria to defend against Kurdish antagonism and to poke Assad in the eye. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has begun to appear in public wearing military battledress, which suggests an ambition for a long-term presence in Syria.

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As things stand, an empowered Assad regime is determined to reunify Syria under its rule. The opposition is fragmented, friendless, and ineffectual. Russia and Iran continue to back a willful and occasionally uncooperative client to further their own regional goals. Turkey has accepted responsibility for a seething cauldron of violent rebels. And Israeli air operations over Syrian territory are largely unconstrained. At this point, it is worth asking whether there is any scope for meaningful U.S. intervention. At this point, it is worth asking whether there is any scope for meaningful U.S. intervention.

The answer would appear to be no.

"No" also seems to reflect the mood at the White House. Although the Trump administration has taken credit for the Idlib agreement, the consensus among the parties involved is that the United States played neither a direct role nor a tacit one by threatening force. Indeed, the U.S. message on Idlib has been, if anything, confusing. In early September, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki Haley, said that "[Idlib] is a tragic situation, and if [the Assad regime] want[s] to continue to go the route of taking over Syria, they can do that. ... But they cannot do it with chemical weapons. They can't do it assaulting their people, and we're not going to fall for it." This was a classic April Glaspie moment as the administration soon realized. For those who don't remember, Glaspie, then-U.S. ambassador to Iraq, had the misfortune of telling Saddam Hussein in 1990 that "we have no opinion on the Arab-Arab conflicts, like your border disagreement with Kuwait." Saddam is thought to have heard this as a green light from Washington to invade Kuwait.

Haley, a week after her previous remarks on Idlib, said to Bret Baier in an interview on Fox News, "Don't test us again. ... Any offensive on the civilian people in Idlib was going to be dealt with," regardless of whether chemical weapons were used. What she meant by "dealt with" is anyone's guess, but she

was careful to differentiate between an assault on Idlib that focused on jihadis and one that threatened civilians. For now, this is academic, but if the regime does enter Idlib and refrains from using chemical weapons, the administration's options will be limited by the risk of a clash with Russia and burdened by the absurdity of a humanitarian intervention that willy-nilly benefits extremely violent jihadis.

Although both U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Rex Tillerson before him laid out big goals for the United States in Syria—to pressure the regime to negotiate by weakening it, take away its oil resources until it gets serious about humanitarian relief, destroy the Islamic State, and expel Iran from Syria—the country's appetite and capacity to do any of these things seem pretty small. Accordingly, the administration has said a hodgepodge of things including that it is not the United States' job to get rid of Assad; that it cannot get rid of the Iranians there alone; that it will continue to focus on the fight against the Islamic State; and that it will withdraw existing funding for reconstruction activities and withhold future funding until Assad is gone. It has made no commitment to the Kurds one way or the other, and when the Syrian regime has used chemical weapons, it has responded perfunctorily and ineffectually. And perhaps unsurprisingly, actual U.S. policy on the ground reflects the president's preference to spend as little and get out as quickly as possible.

This could change. Israel or Iran could conceivably pull the United States into a war against Iran in Syria. The Assad regime could commit a hideous atrocity that impels the United States and perhaps the United Kingdom and France to risk a clash with Russia in order to punish Assad in some decisive way.

Barring such scenarios, however, the Trump administration's derisory commitment in Syria is proportional to the United States' actual strategic interests there. Humanitarian intervention, unlike strategic intervention, is a political issue. The Trump White House clearly does not believe that the popular support exists for a long-term humanitarian campaign. And in strategic terms, Syria represents only one among many issues in the competition between the United States and Iran. The Russians maintained a close relationship with the Assad regime and its predecessors for decades. U.S. interests did not suffer then, except when Washington stepped on Assad's toes in Lebanon in the 1980s, and they won't suffer now. Fighting the Islamic State still seems worth continuing a relatively

inexpensive effort. Thus, the “new policy” heralded by the appointment of Jeffrey as special representative will likely look very much like the old one.

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Trump and Rouhani at the UN | Editorial

Donald Trump's second coming at the UN General Assembly proved less explosive than many analysts had predicted. For while Iran was singled out as the "world's leading sponsor of terrorism" — a preferred presidential slur — his address fell far short of the anticipated verbal showdown with Tehran.

Instead, what was on show was a self-congratulatory endorsement of the America First policy that was rolled out this time last year. And just in case there remained any confusion as to what this entails in real terms, Trump made it clear. Under his stewardship the US rejects "the ideology of globalism" in favour of the "ideology of patriotism". In short, "America is governed by Americans". Washington's commitment to unilateralism prevails.

Thus much of the speech was dedicated to how well the US economy has fared under this policy; defence spending, too. Indeed, the Trump vision is to have the US military become "more powerful than ever before". All of which naturally begs the question as to the pricey cost of going it alone in an increasingly interconnected world. Not to mention who pays for this.

Of course, there exists a marked difference between unilateralism and the pursuit of isolationist politics. And this White House rejects the tenets of international cooperation and consensus. In its place comes repudiation of the International Criminal Court's (ICC) legitimacy and the de facto recognition of Jerusalem as the Israeli capital. Or denouncing the impact of Chinese membership of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) on the US manufacturing industry. As well as calling on OPEC nations to cough up for American military protection as financial retribution for not lowering oil prices. This allows the US president to wash his hands of any moral or humanitarian responsibility for the future of Yemen and its children; which is framed as a regional matter. Paradoxically, however, Trump seeks to reinvent his unilateral withdrawal from the Iran nuclear pact as being in the global interest. The re-imposing of sanctions is meant to represent American efforts to thwart Tehran's alleged financing of terrorism.

By stark contrast, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani's address to the gathering of the world's peace-loving nations was one that paid glowing tribute to

multilateralism. There was the timely reminder of how the nuclear accord belongs to the entire international community; not least because of its endorsement by UNSC resolution 2231. While reminding those present that Israel, Washington's most important regional ally, neither adheres to international nuclear safeguards and continues to rob the Palestinians of fundamental rights.

But the most articulate rejection of America First came from Rouhani's focusing on moderation as the fastest track to peace. "But a just and inclusive peace, not just peace for one nation, and war and turmoil for others". Linked to this was condemnation of US manoeuvrings in the Middle East by way of deadly weapons exports which "instead of contributing peace and stability has only brought war, misery, poverty and the rise of terrorism and extremism" to the region.

When all is said and done, Iran has made a much more convincing case for its contribution to regional peace and security. The international community has been put on notice. *

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