

February 2019
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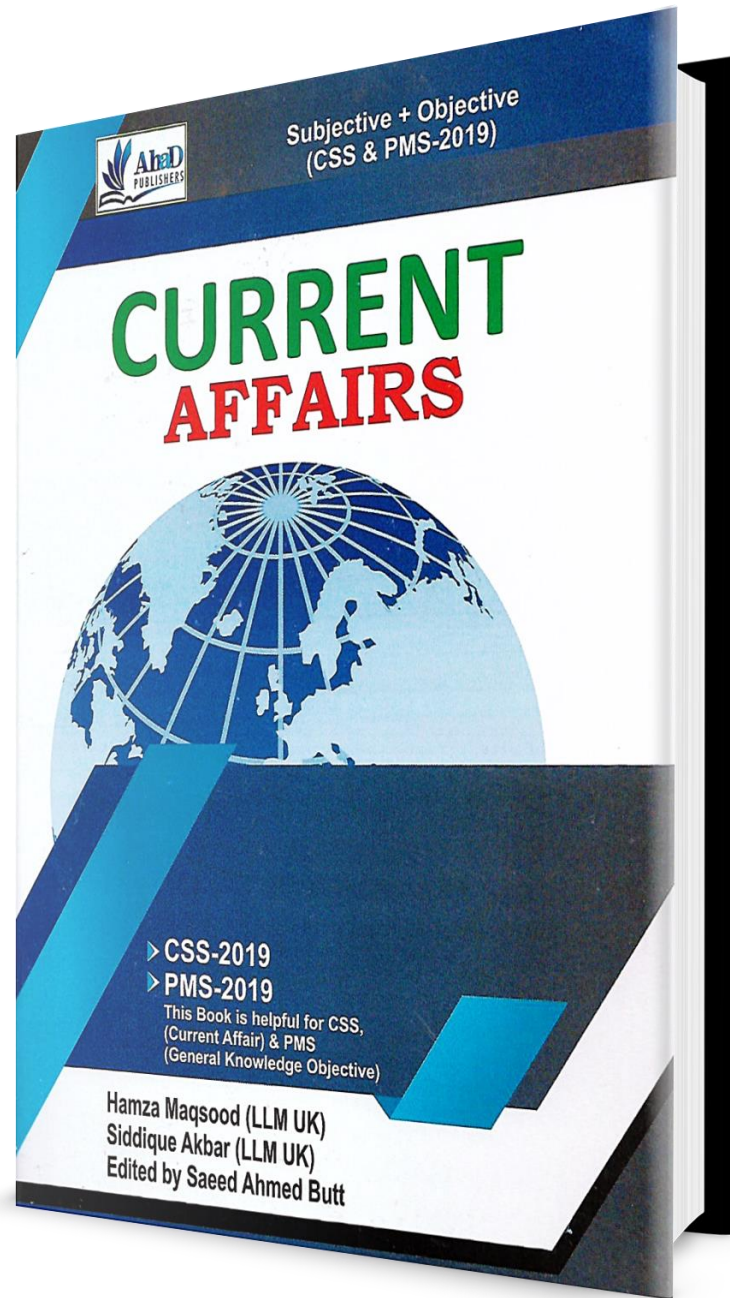
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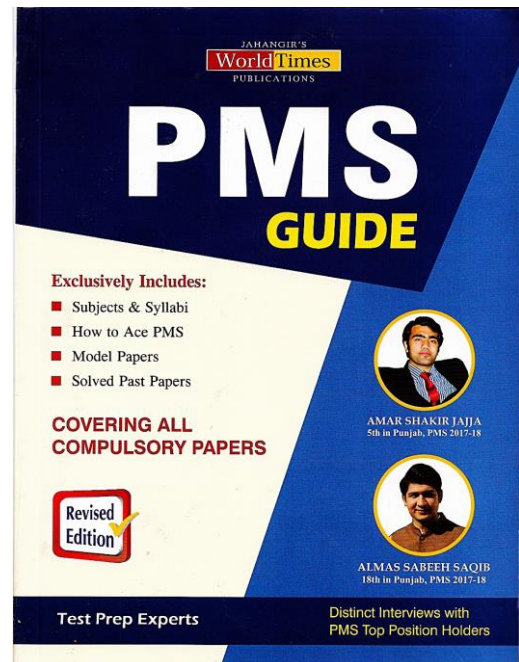
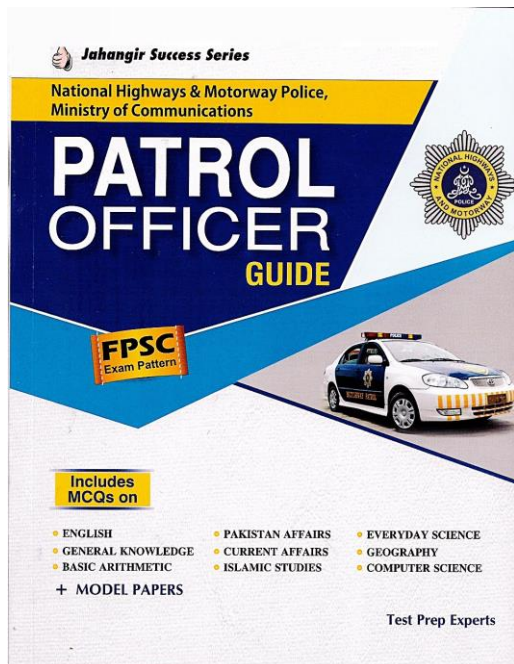
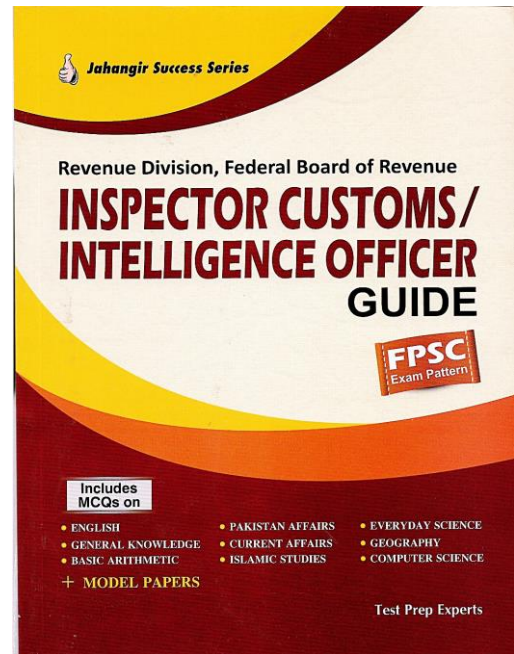
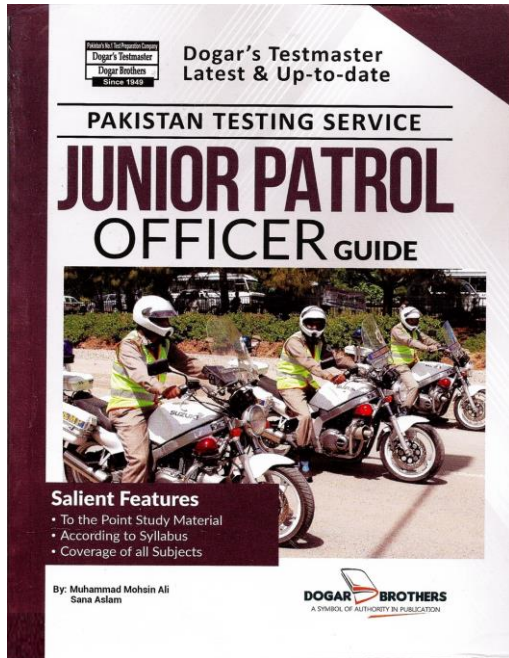
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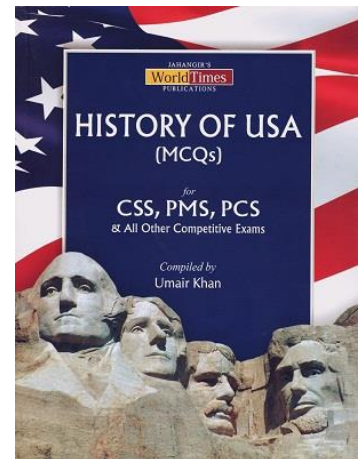
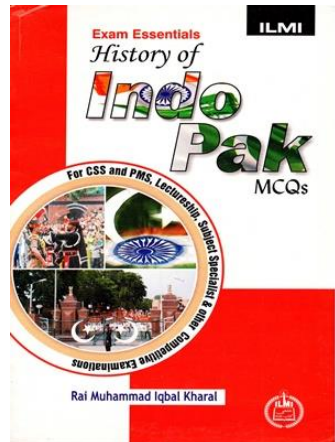
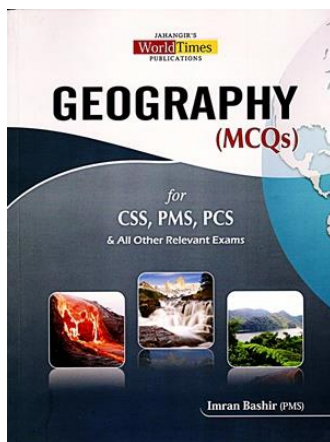
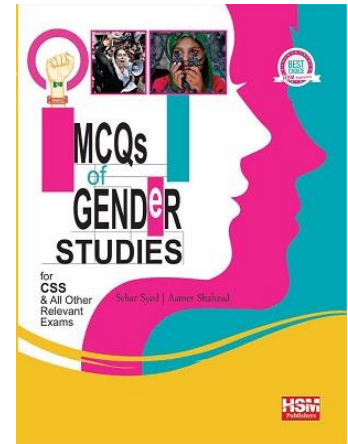
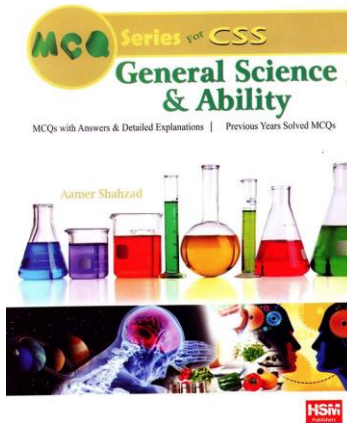
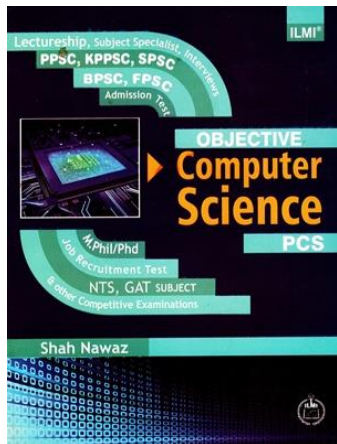
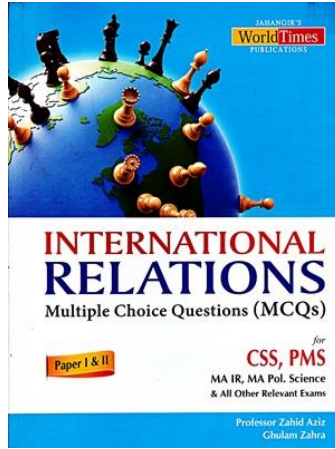
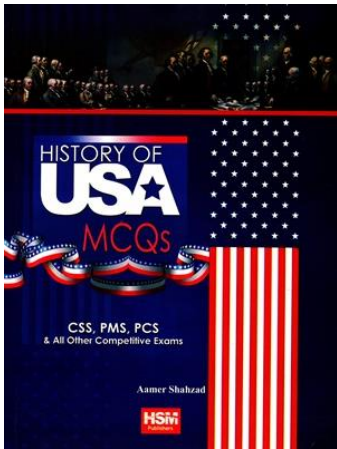


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PAKISTAN

Upcoming Visit of Saudi Crown Prince to Pakistan By Sultan M Hali

SAUDI Crown Prince Muhammad Bin Salman (MBS) is expected to arrive in Pakistan on the government's invitation. The dates for the upcoming visit have not been finalised yet, but it is expected to take place close to the middle of this month. It has been reported that the Crown Prince will announce investment worth almost \$15 billion in Pakistan in addition to other economic and diplomatic initiatives. The visit was announced by Federal Information Minister Fawad Chaudhry, who spoke to his Saudi counterpart on the telephone during which both discussed close relationship between the two countries. Fawad Chaudhry informed his Saudi counterpart Turki Bin Abdullah Al-Shabanah that Pakistan is awaiting the Saudi crown prince's visit to the country. He felicitated the Saudi Minister of Media on assuming new responsibilities. Mr. Chaudhry said Islamabad and Riyadh enjoyed ties based on mutual respect, cooperation and trust. He hoped that new vistas of cooperation will open in diverse fields, including media, in future with the Crown Prince's visit.

Earlier on 12 January 2019, Saudi Minister for Energy and Industry, Prince Engineer Khalid Abdulaziz Al-Falih said that Saudi Arabia will make historic investment in Pakistan. He expressed these views during a meeting with Minister for Petroleum Ghulam Sarwar Khan and Minister for Maritime Affairs, Syed Ali Haider Zaidi in Gwadar, according to state-owned Radio Pakistan. Both the sides reviewed possibilities of expanding exports and discussed the prospects of active cooperation to realize the existing potential of the Gwadar Port. They also discussed possibilities of financial cooperation to enable Pakistan exploit energy, sanitation and mineral resources. The Saudi Minister said cooperation of Pakistan, China and Saudi Arabia on Gwadar Port, which is in an important region, as exemplary. Petroleum Minister Ghulam Sarwar Khan informed that the state of art oil refinery in Gwadar will be launched with the Saudi investment; while the project will be the biggest investment by Saudi Arabia in Pakistan. A Memorandum of

Understanding (MoU) regarding the project will be signed during the upcoming visit of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman in February, he added.

Sources relayed that officials in Islamabad and Riyadh are likely to sign additional MoUs pertaining to cooperation in mineral resources. The kingdom is interested in investment in oil refinery, petrochemicals, renewable energy and mining apart from the \$10bn plus Saudi investment which is expected to be signed. The \$10bn investment will be in addition to the Saudi package of \$6bn approved by the Kingdom to Pakistan during Prime Minister Imran Khan's visit to Saudi Arabia in October last year. Unfortunately, whenever Pakistan makes overtures to its traditional friend Saudi Arabia, vested interests try and drive a wedge in the close ties. Pakistan is also a neighbour of Iran and both countries have very close ties. Saudi and Iranian rivalry has nothing to do with Pakistan, which cannot afford either a zero-sum game or "either/or relationship." Similarly, relations between Qatar and Saudi Arabia are strained. Pakistan, which is close to both brotherly Muslim nations, cannot take sides or abandon ties with one at the behest of the other. Similarly, Saudi Arabia and Yemen are at war, which is sad but again instead of taking sides, Pakistan has offered its good offices to act as a mediator to restore peace.

The brutal murder of renowned journalist Jamal Khashoggi in Turkey at the Saudi Consulate is cited as reason for Pakistan to distance itself from Saudi Arabia. It must be understood that all rational democracies in the world protect their own interests without indulging into politics of the other countries or becoming party to it. The relationship of Saudi Arabia with Iran, Qatar and Yemen and the issue of Khashoggi are the internal matters of Saudi Arabia and do not have any bearing on Pakistan. Saudi Arabia enjoys its relationship with the West despite various points of contention. Notwithstanding the fact that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is being ruled by a conservative autocratic monarchy with human rights concerns which are contrary to the standards of the West, the Kingdom has never really had to deal with pressure from the Western Governments or media to change its ways.

Lobbies which are close to Iran, rake up the Saudi-Iranian rivalry and quote Iran as another issue that is put on fire whenever some initiatives with Saudi Arabia are on their way. Pro-Iranian lobby in Pakistan, their sympathizers and other spoilers play this card whenever our relationship with Saudi Arabia takes fresh initiatives. After nearly a decade of hibernation, Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has put

its act together under the Imran Khan government and is making overtures to various states, which are bearing fruit. The economic crunch currently being faced by Pakistan is being resolved with the help of its traditional friends, China, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar. This is remarkable because in the absence of the financial support of its allies, Pakistan would be at the mercy of IMF and would be seeking bailout packages at stringent conditions. Detractors of Pakistan will seek to create impediments in the renewed Pak-Saudi ties. Any efforts to discolour the Pak-Saudi and Pak-Iran relationship before the visit would be nothing but to damage the Pakistan Government's efforts of building better diplomatic and economic ties with the brotherly countries which is considered "uncalled-for" by patriotic section of the Pakistani society. We need to shun such negative attitudes and proceed with the policy of "charity for all and malice towards none."

—The writer is retired PAF Group Captain and a TV talk show host.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/upcoming-visit-of-saudi-crown-prince-to-pakistan/>

Pakistan-Russia Gas Deal | Editorial

PAKISTAN and Russia on Wednesday signed an inter corporate agreement for the laying of more than 1,500 km offshore gas pipeline costing \$10 billion that would be transporting natural gas from the Russian gas company Gazprom's sources in the Middle East to Pakistan with possibility of extending it further to South Asian countries. Pakistan will import some 500 million to one billion cubic feet of gas per day (MMCFD) from these Russian sources, which would be transported via sea link, the agreement stipulates. The pipeline construction is expected to be completed in three to four years.

Russia has long been expressing its willingness to invest in both bilateral and regional energy corridors but unfortunately we have not been able to realize such offers because of various reasons including lack of required interest on the part of the institutions and departments concerned. The latest agreement augurs well as it comes at a time when Pakistan was facing acute shortage of gas despite import of LNG from Qatar and other sources. Import of up to one billion cubic feet of gas per day would alleviate sufferings of gas consumers and along with execution of Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline project the energy crisis would hopefully be addressed to a great extent. However, much depends on the actual pace of progress as in the first phase a feasibility study would be carried out. It is important to note that the proposed pipeline would be offshore and not dependent like TAPI on security situation in troubled Afghanistan. Its passage through Gwadar would also complement efforts for operationalization of the deep sea port by way of provision of required infrastructure and facilities while its possible extension to other regional countries would increase inter-dependability, which is always helpful in maintaining peace and security. It would also place Pakistan on the world map as transit country for offshore gas pipelines and could help attract more investment from other sources as well in the sector. Russian pipeline would be an integrated plan as it would also include Under Ground Gas storage, desalination and other power projects, generating a lot of economic activity besides ensuring sustainable provision of gas through storage.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/pakistan-russia-gas-deal/>

How Pakistan Can Get Kashmir By Kamran Yousaf

Every year on the 5th of February, Pakistan observes Kashmir Solidarity Day. This has been the practice since 1990 when the late Jamaat-e-Islami leader Qazi Hussain Ahmed first mooted the idea.

The day is marked by a national holiday. Statements eulogising the sacrifices of Kashmiris in the face of brutal use of force by the Indian forces are issued, rallies are staged across the country and resolutions are adopted showing support to the people of Kashmir for their right to self-determination.

This year, the PTI government led by Prime Minister Imran Khan went a step further to extend support to the Kashmiris. Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi travelled to London and attended several events, including one at the British Parliament, for the Kashmir cause.

All such efforts were aimed at highlighting the human rights violations being committed by Indian forces in Kashmir, which has long been the scene of tensions.

Pakistan, being a legitimate party to the dispute, has every right to highlight the Indian atrocities in the scenic Himalayan region. But do Pakistan's efforts really get any traction globally? Unfortunately, barring a last year's report by the UN Human Rights Council chief criticising the systematic human rights abuses in the occupied territory, rest of the world — even the Arab countries with which Pakistan has close ties — are not bothered much about what's happening in Kashmir.

The reason India gets away without any punitive measure is that in the international relations, economic interests trump issues of human rights and morality. In fact, morality and international laws are often used by powerful countries against weak nations.

It is estimated that more than a million people died as a direct consequence of Britain's flawed policies during partition in 1947. But no one has ever questioned Britain for the crimes it directly or indirectly committed in the subcontinent.

Interestingly, Britain today even lectures us on human rights. Why Britain was not held accountable is because it was powerful.

That's not the only example. After the 9/11 attacks, the US military interventions in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria claimed at least half a million lives. Did anyone think of dragging the US to the dock? This means no one can catch you if you are powerful.

India, under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has been using brazen tactics to crush the genuine uprising in Kashmir. It has also tried to change the rules of engagement with Pakistan.

Now even a mere telephonic conversation between the Pakistani foreign minister and Kashmiri leaders invites a strong reaction from New Delhi. There was a time when Kashmiri leaders from across the LoC travelled to this part frequently and India never objected to that.

India's hardened stance stems from its economic prowess that enhances its clout globally. This transformation has allowed India to neutralise any outside pressure on Kashmir.

In this changing scenario, what Pakistan needs to do is to formulate its Kashmir strategy based on realism. India and the world will take Pakistan seriously only when we unleash our true economic potential and create stakes in international trade.

It is foolish to think that India would give any concessions to Pakistan on Kashmir knowing where today we stand economically. The current government has borrowed money from Pakistan's friends to keep the faltering economy afloat.

The IMF package may be next. And this is a template followed by successive governments in Pakistan for decades. The reason we have never been able to grow is because of absence of structural reforms, longstanding issues pertaining to civil-military imbalance, fragile democracy and lack of industrial advancement despite being a nuclear power.

With these weak indicators and a plethora of issues, Pakistan can never forcefully plead its case on Kashmir to the world and India. Only an economically powerful and politically stable Pakistan can guarantee a better bargain on Kashmir.

Published in The Express Tribune, February 11th, 2019.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1907779/6-pakistan-can-get-kashmir/>

Exercise Aman 2019: Understanding Peace

By Ubaid Ahmed

The great exponent of sea power, American naval strategist Alfred Thayer Mahan, who died in 1914, is still read with attention by political leaders and their military advisers today. “Control of the sea,” he wrote in 1890, “by maritime commerce and naval supremacy, means predominant influence in the world; because, however great the wealth product of the land, nothing facilitates the necessary exchanges as does the sea.”

The seas and oceans are the principal empowering agents to make Earth home to mankind. They are spread over 75 percent of its surface and their physical, compound and natural properties make the marine condition basic to the presence of life in our planet. As pointed out by the United Nations, our water, drinking water, climate, atmosphere, coastlines, quite a bit of our nourishment, and even the oxygen we inhale, are for the most part regulated and provided by the sea.

The Indian Ocean is extremely important. It comprises nearly one fifth of the entire oceans of world. In the west of Indian Ocean, there lies Africa and the Arabian Peninsula, to the north lies the Indian Subcontinent while to east lies Australia. Pakistan is one of the littoral states of the Indian Ocean and claims its due share. Security imperatives and economic opportunities compel Pakistan to secure its wider interests in the maritime region.

Pakistan has always played a positive and contributory role in the promotion of regional integration and maintenance of order and peace in the Indian Ocean with special focus on North Arabian Sea (NAS) which encompass Pakistan’s Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and extended continental shelf. The importance of Pakistan’s 1000 kilometre long coastline that extends from Sir Creek to Jiwani towards Iran is undeniable in many ways. While aligning with the foreign policy and other regional and international obligations of Pakistan, the Pakistan Navy (PN) over the decades had undertaken certain very bold and far reaching initiatives. Exercise AMAN is one such example. PN’s calendar of activities also contain engagements with regional and extra regional counterparts like Exercise NASEEM-AL-BAHR with Royal Saudi Naval Forces (RSNF), THAMAR-AL-THAYAB with Royal Navy of Oman (RNO) to name a few.

Pakistan is hosting the event in order to prove her maritime capability and strength and contribution in maintaining peace worldwide

Notwithstanding, Pakistan has remained a very active and is an important member of Coalition Maritime Campaign Plan (CMCP) under the ambit of CTF-150 operating in the Gulf of Oman (GOO) and NAS from 2004 till early 2018. Pakistan also actively participated in Counter Piracy Deployment (CPD) under CTF-151 in Gulf of Aden (GOA) from 2009 till late 2017. In the aftermath of the US policy shift after President Donald Trump's election and to amicably discharge the international obligation to maintain order and peace at sea and to have a watchful eye for any illegal activity in NAS, PN has embarked on a Pakistan-led Regional Maritime Security Patrol (RMSP) since 2018. PN envisions a regional cooperation based on equality and sharing of information and maritime policing resources.

However, to enhance global cooperation and interoperability of maritime forces and to project a soft yet firm image of Pakistan, PN initiated holding of multinational biennial Exercise AMAN in 2007. The seventh exercise of AMAN series, Exercise AMAN-2019 is taking place in Karachi starting on 8th February 2019. A sizeable number of surface ships, air assets, Marines and Special Operation Forces (SOF) and observers from about 83 countries are participating in the exercise

The exercise is divided into two phases; the harbour phase which includes among other things a dynamic show of maritime air, Marines and SOF elements of Pakistan Navy. The main highlight of harbour phase is a Fleet Review which will held be off Karachi harbour at Manora. Surface combatants, Marines/SOF and air assets of PN will participate in the Fleet Review. The sea phase will comprise combined maneuvers of participating forces in the Arabian Sea aimed at enhancing interoperability and learning from each other's experiences and good practices. The mega event will end with an impressive cultural show and a food gala in which all the participating nations will showcase their national culture and cuisine.

Pakistan is hosting the event in order to prove her maritime capability and strength and contribution in maintaining peace worldwide. Pakistan is a peace loving country and does not have belligerent designs against any other nation state or country. Just like land borders, there are issues at sea which relate to territorial

waters, contiguous zones, exclusive economic zones and continental shelf and Pakistan is desirous to resolve them all with its neighbors in accordance with international law and expects others to reciprocate in the same spirit. Complete agreements and engagements are needed with all the stakeholders in the region and such maritime activities and naval engagements array Pakistan's yearnings for regional and global peace.

Published in Daily Times, February 13th 2019.

Source: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/354004/exercise-aman2019-understanding-peace/>

The Population Bomb By Mansoor Qaisar

Family planning is not only a fundamental human right that empowers individuals – especially women and girls – and helps save the lives of women and newborns, but it is also vital to economic prosperity and nation-building in the Asia-Pacific region and other parts of the world.

Modern contraceptive use has nearly doubled worldwide – from 36 percent in 1970 to 64 percent in 2016. Yet, some 214 million women in developing countries who want to avoid pregnancy are not using safe and effective family-planning methods.

Most women who lack access to contraceptives live in 69 of the poorest countries on earth. Around 70 million of these women hail from South Asia. Around 308,000 women, including 85,000 women who hail from Asia-Pacific alone, die every year from causes that are linked to pregnancy or child birth. In addition, an estimated 2.7 million babies, including 1.3 million in Asia-Pacific alone, die within the first month of their lives.

Pakistan is the fifth most populous country in the world, with 208 million people and a population growth rate of 2.4 percent per year. The rising population numbers are likely to outstrip development gains and continue to adversely affect the economy, our environment, health, education and the quality of life for all citizens.

It is important to realise that every woman has the right to exercise her reproductive rights and seek protection from violence and harmful practices in both the development and humanitarian contexts. The Pakistan Vision 2025 has embedded five components of women's empowerment into its objectives: activities that promote women's self-worth; the right to determine their choices; access to opportunities and resources; the right and power to control their lives – both within and outside the home – and the ability to influence social change. However, these rights still remain beyond the reach of most women in Pakistan.

Meeting the demands for family planning can also fuel large-scale economic growth by creating a demographic dividend, which emerges when a country's population shifts from being composed of mostly very young children and

adolescents to comprising a majority of working-age adults. This scenario reduces the overall costs of educating children and keeping them healthy, and increases a country's collective financial outputs and, ultimately, its GDP.

Moreover, the economic, environmental, and social strain of high fertility rates and rapid population growth can threaten the stability and security of an already fragile state. Family planning can reduce this stress at the familial, community, and national levels, contributing to more peaceful societies where the needs of all citizens are met more routinely.

Gaps in empowerment are seen at the earliest stages of a girl's life. At every step, girls and women face challenges and obstacles in making their own choices and determining their own path.

While most of the other Muslim countries can encourage the practice of family planning and birth control and bring down the population growth to manageable levels, Pakistan can't even afford to tackle the burden of a high population growth rate of 2.4 percent. With a growth rate of between three percent and four percent, and an annual increase of 2.4 percent in population, a majority of the population cannot even visualise a modest improvement in their standards of living in the decades to come.

It may be argued that Pakistan had to face a high cost of inaction in the past by not keeping a check on population growth. Pakistan has the slowest demographic transition in the region as the use of contraceptives had dropped to 33 percent as compared with 77 percent in Iran, 68 percent in Sri Lanka and 62 percent in Bangladesh. The continuation of this trend and further apathy on the matter could be damaging in many ways and tear apart the socio-economic fabric of society.

The prime minister and the chief justice also spoke in favour of family planning a few weeks ago. This seems to be the right time for all the provinces to be on the same page to check population growth and deal with the ticking population bomb.

Source: <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/431675-the-population-bomb>

Energy Evaluation | Editorial

The Asian Development Bank has issued an evaluation of its support to Pakistan's energy sector. The report is an indictment of Pakistan's failure to push through reforms in the power sector, which taken independently could cause serious problems for the country's ability to seek more support to solve the many issues in its power sector. While there can be other ways out of the power crisis, the Pakistan government has for the last three decades chosen a path to reforming the power sector that is based on empowering the private sector and preparing for privatising all components of the power sector. For some analysts, the failure was built into the strategy itself. However, for the ADB, which has been a key financier of the kind of power sector reforms that the government has declared its intention to pursue, the failure lies in incomplete and timid reform. The ADB seems to think that only shock therapy could work for Pakistan's power sector. The merits and demerits of that argument aside, a serious question to ask is: if the state has decided to go down this path, why has it not shied away from undertaking the changes fully?

The answer has never been satisfactorily provided to the public as crippling loadshedding, a mammoth circular debt and spiralling electricity prices have become our fate in the last three decades. The situation has only worsened in the last decade as the issue of circular debt has consumed the power sector. Perhaps there is something the government can say in response to the ADB report. It should not only be foreign donors that make an assessment of how Pakistan has performed; Pakistan should also undertake periodic assessments of the value of external structural reform programmes. Any strategy to tackle issues of generation, transmission, debt and theft in the power sector will need to come from within. The trouble is that Pakistan has not attempted to develop a home-grown power sector reform strategy that the state itself is committed to. However, some of the questions asked by the ADB are important to keep in mind. Will increasing generation capacity not increase circular debt? Will the government not need to keep financing the debt through the Power Holding Company if structural reforms are not undertaken?

With the current circular debt now equal to three percent of the GDP, there is little doubt in the fact that the power sector's troubles are crippling the entire economy.

The ADB is understandably angry at a number of ADB programmes being cancelled unilaterally by the Pakistan government, but the government has a right to decide what the value of such programmes is for Pakistan. The bigger issue is that there is no domestic power-sector reform framework to compare international support with. This has meant that Pakistan has piled on external debt in the name of power-sector reform that is not part of any holistic strategy. Short-term planning is a serious issue , one which has aggravated the problems in the power sector. This will need to stop — whatever the government's take on the critical ADB report may be.

Source: <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/431669-energy-evaluation>

Pakistan's Water Crisis By Nabeel Qadeer

Pakistan is the third most affected country by an acute water shortage, as ranked in an IMF study. Global warming and climate change have affected the monsoon season and annual rainfall received. The annual water available has reduced from 1,500 cubic meters per capita in 2009 to only 1,017 cubic meters. That's barely above the minimum requirement of a thousand.

The alarming consumption pattern adds to the urgency of the problem. With the fourth highest rate of water consumption and the highest water intensity rate in the world — i.e. amount of water used in cubic meters per unit of GDP — Pakistan needs to reconsider aggregate water usage without further delay.

If the same trend remains, it will reach absolute scarcity levels of water, with a shortage of 31 million acre feet (MAF), and face a drought by as early as 2025. That's just over five years. An agriculture-based economy will face an irreversible situation of water depletion.

At risk is Pakistan's 20% of GDP, 75% of total exports revenue and 42% of total labour force, which the sector contributes directly. Add issues of sanitation, public health and industrial water supply, and you get why water shortage is a pressing challenge that requires immediate rectification.

In lines with successful global models of water management, multiple ways can be adopted to tackle the issue. These include conservation, desalination, recycling, innovation and governance. Considering the current situation, Pakistan has space to work in all these areas.

The much politicised debate about construction of new dams is still ongoing, with some progress on Diamer- Bhasha. The two major dams, Tarbela and Mangla, have gathered enormous silt deposits since construction and lost enough storage capacity to be hitting a dead level fast. Of the total 145 MAF that flows annually through Pakistan, up to only 14 MAF can now be stored by the two reservoirs. That's how dangerously low their current capacity is.

Construction of dams is essential but it is a medium- to long-term policy and requires strategic, inclusive and bold decisions to be made in national interest. However, for immediate results, more has to be done on a short- term policy front.

For example, public awareness has to be created about the matter and domestic level sensitisation be developed. Small, basic steps such as adopting a minimal approach towards use of water can save gallons per day.

That's where Pakistan's entrepreneurs have a major role to play. Cost-effective, localised smart solutions need to be made available for use at the domestic level, and by the industrial and agriculture sectors. For example, domestic solutions such as smart monitoring adopted by European countries, including the UK, can keep water usage and leaks in check.

Technology-based filtration at affordable prices can address water-borne diseases and contribute towards public health; startups such as Pak Vitae and Xyla Water are working on scalable models to provide safe drinking water to the poor.

About 95% of Pakistan's total fresh water is utilised for irrigation in the agriculture sector. Yet, the production scale per acre is lower than that of India and China in the region. Therefore, innovative entrepreneurial solutions such as smart irrigation methods, including micro-irrigation that utilises drip technology will not only increase cultivation but reduce water wastage.

Taking into consideration the intensity of the challenge and urgency of the matter, key integral steps have to be taken without delay. Pakistan's National Water Policy was approved in 2018 after much deliberation. A bigger question and concern still remains of its execution and implementation especially with respect to provincial coordination.

As the government takes policy measures for an inclusive strategy, the civil society needs to step up as sensitisation agents and the people need to adopt basic lifestyle changes. We need to do this for the next generation.

Published in The Express Tribune, February 16th, 2019.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1911457/6-pakistans-water-crisis-2/>

‘Pakistan Will be a Very Important Country in Coming Future,’ Says Saudi Crown Prince

By Sanaullah Khan

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman on Sunday expressed optimism about the economic future of Pakistan, saying his country had been waiting for a leadership like that of Prime Minister Imran Khan to partner with Islamabad in various areas.

Addressing a reception dinner at Prime Minister House hours after arriving in Pakistan, the crown prince — known as MBS for short — said Pakistan is a “dear country” to all Saudis and that the two countries “have walked together in tough and good times”.

He said Pakistan today had a great future in store “with a great leadership”, and noted that the country’s GDP grew by 5 per cent in 2018.

“We believe that Pakistan is going to be a very, very important country in the coming future and we want to be sure we are part of that,” the crown prince said.

Turning towards Prime Minister Khan, he said his country had been “waiting for that kind of a leadership” to partner with and “build a lot of things together”.

He noted that Saudi Arabia and Pakistan today signed Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) for investment cooperation.

“We believe the amount of that kind of investment is US \$20 billion,” MBS said. “It’s big, for phase one.”

He expressed the hope that the investment will grow to bigger numbers in the coming years and be beneficial for both the countries.

The Saudi royal said his country would collaborate with Pakistan economically, politically and in terms of security. “We believe in our region, that is why we are investing in it,” he added.

“This is my first trip [to the] east since I became the crown prince and the first country [that I have visited] is Pakistan,” the Saudi royal concluded.

Saudi Arabia a ‘friend in need’: PM

Prime Minister Imran Khan in his speech welcomed the Saudi crown prince and his delegation to the country, saying the Kingdom has always been a “friend in need” to Pakistan.

“For Pakistanis, this is a great day,” the premier said, adding that Saudi Arabia had always been there when Pakistan needed friends.

“I want to thank you for the way you helped us when we were in [a] bad situation,” Khan told MBS, adding that Pakistan and Saudi Arabia were now taking their relationship to a new level, where investment agreements would be mutually beneficial for the countries.

The investment would revolve around minerals, tourism, petrochemicals, agriculture, food processing and other areas, he said.

Prime Minister Khan also invited Riyadh to avail opportunities that can arise from the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and Pakistan’s close links with Beijing. “It is an exciting future where we have Saudi Arabia participating in what is going to be, in the next 10 years, probably the country with the biggest GDP,” he added.

Khan told MBS that if it hadn’t been for security concerns, “you would have seen thousands and thousands of people on the streets welcoming you.”

The prime minister’s speech preceded the address of the Saudi crown prince, but once MBS finished, Khan rose again to speak about two issues.

One, he requested MBS to allow Pakistani Haj pilgrims to undergo immigration at the three major Pakistani airports before leaving for Saudi Arabia for their convenience.

Secondly, Prime Minister Khan requested the Saudi authorities to look into the hardships of the Pakistani labourers working in the Kingdom.

“There are some 3,000 [Pakistani] prisoners there and we just would like you to bear in mind that they are poor people who have left their families behind,” Khan said.

Terming it a “special request”, the premier asked MBS to “look upon them [Pakistani labourers] as your own people”.

In response, MBS told Prime Minister Khan he could consider him the ambassador of Pakistan in Saudi Arabia.

“We cannot say no to Pakistan ... whatever we can do, we will deliver that.”

MoUs for bilateral cooperation signed

Prior to the dinner, Pakistani and Saudi officials signed MoUs for bilateral cooperation in a number of areas — a process overseen by Prime Minister Khan and MBS. The agreements signed include:

Technical cooperation programme between the Saudi Standards, Metrology And Quality Organisation (SASO) and Pakistan Standards and Quality Control Authority (PSQCA)

Cooperation agreement between Saudi and Pakistani governments in the field of sports

Financing agreement for the import of Saudi goods between the Saudi Fund for Development and Pakistan

Framework MoU regarding Saudi funds’ participation in the financing of power generation projects between the Saudi Fund for Development and Pakistan

MoU between the governments of Saudi Arabia and Pakistan to explore investment opportunities in refining and petrochemical sectors

MoU between the governments of Saudi Arabia and Pakistan in the field of mineral resource sector

MoU between the government of Saudi Arabia and Pakistan on the development of renewable energy projects

One-on-one meeting

Prime Minister Khan also held a one-on-one meeting with the Saudi crown prince at PM House. It was followed by the inaugural session of the Saudi-Pak Supreme Coordination Council.

Co-chaired by Khan and MBS, the council was formed to put in place a high-level institutional mechanism to fast-track decisions in key areas of bilateral cooperation, and for close monitoring of their implementation, a press release issued by the Prime Minister's Office said.

The council which was originally proposed by MBS will cover areas under three pillars: political and security, economic, social and culture.

Under the council, a steering committee and joint working groups have been set up at ministerial and senior officials levels to develop frameworks of cooperation in specific projects and submit recommendations to the respective ministers.

The functioning of the body will be coordinated by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the two countries. The Supreme Coordination Council will meet annually in Riyadh and Islamabad, alternately.

Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1464413/pakistan-will-be-a-very-important-country-in-coming-future-says-saudi-crown-prince>

Response To India | Editorial

The response of Prime Minister (PM) Imran Khan to the accusation of Pakistan's involvement in the deadly terrorist attack in Pulwama India by the Indian authorities puts forth a strong narrative of Pakistan. In the last decade, Pakistan has rigorously fought the wave of terrorism in the country which has resulted in the loss of over 70,000 lives. The newly elected government also showed interest in developing friendly relations with India along with participating in ending the war in Afghanistan. With such a precedent being set, it is unreasonable to point fingers at Pakistan, that too without any credible evidence and right before the elections in India, when the anti-Pakistan rhetoric is at its peak.

Pakistan has pledged to help India if credible evidence is provided of Pakistan's involvement in the incident. If anyone in Pakistan is proven guilty, PM Khan has promised to take action because he rightfully pointed out that carrying out extremist agendas is against the national interest of Pakistan – a country which at this point is aiming towards economic stability and greater regional cooperation. He also rightfully pointed out India's consistency of backtracking on its promises of dialogue and initiating anti-Pakistan rhetoric whereas Pakistan has been time and again pushing towards peaceful Indo-Pak relations.

India needs to adopt a new political narrative which does not encourage hate speech against Pakistan. After the attack, the Indian media has been contemplating war against Pakistan or aggression of some form in the least. Such measures will not go unanswered from the Pakistani side and it is definitely not a move that both countries can afford at this point. The lesson, as pointed out by PM Khan, from the Afghanistan war is that military solutions are not working out which is why dialogue is important. India should now pursue this frame of reference rather than playing the role of an aggressor in the region.

Lastly, it was intelligent of the Pakistan government to not respond immediately to the attack. Pakistan had an important visit which would have been overshadowed by engaging in rhetoric politics. The Pakistani economy has bright prospects which cannot be overlooked because our neighbour points fingers at us for everything wrong in their own country. Pakistan has been a victim of terrorism in the region

as well and if India wants stability, it should join the bandwagon of collaborative efforts because maintaining diplomatic clout will no longer work in their favour.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/20-Feb-2019/response-to-india>

Pak-Saudi Bonds: Hard & Soft Power Unity

By Syed Qamar Afzal Rizvi

WISELY moved by the drivers of geopolitics and rightly convinced by the growing geo-economic-cum-geostrategic imperatives, Saudi Arabia (Islamic spiritual power) and Pakistan (Islamic nuclear power) look forward to building an interwoven strategic relationship beyond the scope of traditional diplomacy — a partnership being anchored in strategic compact redefined by hard power and soft power synergies. The Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman's current visit to Pakistan is an affirmation of this objective. The soft power or the private sector partnership is reflected by the signing of seven MoUs between the two states. Pakistan-Saudi's hard-power cooperation, the bedrock of regional and global security is evidenced by Pakistan's official entry into the 41 member Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition (IMCTC) whose command is being headed by Pakistan's former Army Chief Gen Raheel Sharif.

Prince Turki Al-Faisal (who died on Monday), the former head of the General Intelligence Directorate, Saudi Arabia's main intelligence agency, once described the relationship between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan as "probably one of the closest relationships in the world between any two countries without any official treaty". Addressing the joint press conference with PM Imran Khan, MBS said, "It's going to grow every month, every year," he said of economic cooperation between the two countries. "We believe Pakistan is going to be a very important country in the coming future and we want to be sure we are a part of that." Saudi Arabia has recently helped keep Pakistan's economy by repairing its rapidly dwindling foreign exchange reserves with a \$6 billion loan thereby giving Islamabad a breathing space as it negotiates a bailout with International Monetary Fund.

Situated at the heart of the Arabian Peninsula, Saudi Arabia is well-known for its output of hydrocarbon resources; close proximity to some of the world's busiest maritime traffic lanes; and the custodian of the two holiest sites of Islam (Makkah and Medina). Saudi vision 2030 indicates that it must expand its global and regional clout. The three nation tour (Pakistan, Malaysia and India) has been characterized as part of a Saudi "pivot to the east. On the front of the soft power state-building between the two sides, Saudi Arabia has taken bilateral initiatives in the field of tourism, minerals, sports and youth affairs. PM Imran Khan stressed

hope that Islamabad was looking forward to an enhanced cooperation between the two sides in the banking sector, education sector, science and technology, trade and investment, construction sector and cultural cooperation. Saudi Arabia and Pakistan signed a spate of agreements totalling more than \$20bn. The Crown Prince's order to release 2107 Pakistani prisoners in KSA, seems an act of semblance. The formation of the Supreme Coordination Council to monitor the mechanism of soft power diplomacy between the two countries is a prompt and meaningful measure. With a renewed defence diplomatic effort in the Gulf and Afghanistan, Pakistan's Army is determined to dispel misconceptions and address allegations made by both adversaries and allies. In this regard, Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff (COAS) must be regarded as the man who sets the country's strategic agenda. In recent months, both the civil and military leaderships have played significant role in reshaping Pakistan foreign policy via corresponding to our geopolitical, geo-economic and geostrategic interests.

The military coalition presents an opportunity to advance Pakistan's footing in the region. The role being played by Gen Raheel as commander of IMCTC is a counterbalance to India's aggressive posture. Besides fighting terrorism and extremism, Pakistan sees IMCTC as a means to frustrate India's bid of diplomatic isolation. According to Mission statement, "The joint operations centre to coordinate counter-terror efforts is to set to be based in Jeddah and the member-states would target "any terrorist organization, not just ISIL, in countries like Iraq, Syria, Libya, Egypt and Afghanistan." The Saudi FM also advocated that all operations would be carried out in accordance with domestic laws and in compliance with the codes of international law. Therefore, such operations won't require any new national legislation. And that can be understood as an extension of existing intelligence sharing channels. Since original establishment of the coalition in 2015 number of member states has grown from 34 to 41.

Operationally, IMCTC is committed to halting and deterring the forces of trans-regional terrorism ranging from the North Africa, Mideast to the very South and Central Asian regions. Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Turkey, Afghanistan, Malaysia and Maldives may develop further military cooperation to boost up this alliance. However, Iran should never consider Pakistan-Saudi alliance against any country as has been currently clarified by the IMCTC Commander ex-Army Chief Gen Raheel Sharif that the military coalition that he heads is not aimed at countering a specific country or sect, according to a statement issued by the Senate Secretariat.

Ideologically, Islamabad-Riyadh partnership fully endorses the principles of our foreign policy once cherished by the founder of Pakistan in his address: “ Our foreign policy is one of friendliness and goodwill towards all the nations of the world. We do not cherish aggressive designs against any country or nation. We believe in the principle of honesty and fair play in national and international dealings and are prepared to make our utmost contribution to the promotion of peace and prosperity among the nations of the world...” It is reliably learnt that Saudi Arabia vowed to de-escalate brewing tensions between Pakistan and India during a high-profile summit in Islamabad on Monday (Feb 18).

And yet most significantly, in wake of changing regional and international scenario where Saudi Arabia faces complex peace challenges in Mideast accompanied by West’s diplomatic isolation in post Khashoggi phase; and while in South Asian region where US-Taliban peace talks are underway and where festering Kashmir issue seems central to peace scope between Pak-India, this emerging Pak-Saudi smart power relationship will hopefully provide potentials to promote peace, prosperity and stability both globally and internationally.

— The writer, an independent ‘IR’ researcher-cum- analyst based in Pakistan, is member of European Consortium for Political Research Standing Group on IR, Critical Peace & Conflict Studies, also a member of European Society of International Law (ESIL).

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/pak-saudi-bonds-hard-soft-power-unity/>

Seeking Peace, Not War | Editorial

In the wake of the Prime Minister's measured yet strong response to India after the Pulwama attack, Pakistan's military, through their spokesperson Director General (DG) Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Maj Gen Asif Ghafoor, has delivered their own response – and it too is exactly what was needed in these circumstances.

While the almost hour-long press conference touched on many subjects, what is immediately obvious from the start is the maturity of and restraint exercised by the DG ISPR compared to the wild hysterics that seem to be ruling the roost across the border. Communal tensions and warmongering feed off sabre-rattling bluster, and in a party of two only one member has to take the bait to start an uncontrollable escalation. It is quite commendable to see that despite being showered with threats of total annihilation, economic ruin and diplomatic isolation, Pakistan continues to believe in the path of peace. Not only is this the ethically correct stance to take, it is also one that leads to de-escalation and perhaps a lasting solution to the issue of Kashmir.

However, as Imran Khan reminded India in his address, a peaceful outlook does not mean the country is weak or unprepared for attack. It was also necessary to ward off ill-advised adventurism borne of homegrown political pressure that might spark off a larger conflict. While the Prime Minister was adamant and explicit in his address, the DG ISPR went into operational detail to assure India that military engagements would not favour them. In a nutshell: “we have studied you for 70 years, watched you, prepared our capability for you. Our response will also be for you.”

This should come as no surprise to India; the equilibrium between economic and military prowess may be numerically skewed in favour of India, but the balance of powers still makes successful military offensives impossible – for either side. All of this, without taking nuclear capabilities into account.

While Indian TV anchors maybe daydreaming of war, Indian policymakers must realize these self-evident truths. They must take active steps to dissuade this runaway jingoism and bring normalcy back to a country on edge. This war hysteria is harming India more than it is Pakistan. With its ugly history of communal and

ethnic violence, India must not play with the fire of communal politics for short-term gain, lest it engulf the country.

It is hoped that Indian policymakers and politicians pay heed to reason, and perhaps undertake that ever so difficult task – introspection.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/23-Feb-2019/seeking-peace-not-war>

Kulbhushan Case — How, Why and What?

By Hassan Yousaf Shah

On March 3, 2016, serving Cdr Kulbhushan Jadhav of the Indian Navy, working for their premier Intelligence agency RAW, clandestinely entered Pakistan from across the Saravan border with Iran and was arrested by the Pakistani authorities in the course of a counter-intelligence operation from Mashkel area in Balochistan. Cdr Kulbhushan admitted unspeakable acts of horror and terror against Pakistan. Based on evidence, a military court passed a death sentence. India went to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on May 8, 2017 against the military court's decision to execute Kulbhushan. The buildup between the two countries is around legal arguments, for which Pakistan's counter memorial dated Nov 17, 2017 is an exceptional document by many standards.

Pakistan's Field General Court Martial (FGCM), a military court, under section 59 of the Army Act 1952, read with Official Secrets Act section 3, passed the death sentence. The process was as per the Pakistani law, with Cdr Kulbhushan recording his statement in front of a magistrate (as per section 164 of Criminal Procedure Code), a mirror image of the Indian criminal law as well. Kulbhushan was represented by a law officer who was appointed for him. No consular or high commission access was granted to him on the grounds that international treaties, like the Vienna Convention or International Convention on Civil Political Rights (ICCPR), do not cover for a national involved in espionage, or terrorism in another country.

All of these legal points expressed above are important when shown in relevance to how India is pleading its case, and thereby the outcome.

Possible outcomes of the case: The following are assumed outcomes based on the set of documents available from the ICJ. There is possibility that Pakistan may win the case; the ICJ may find the matter beyond its jurisdiction, hence Pakistan may carry out the execution of Kulbhushan. There is another possibility that the ICJ ask India to take the matter directly with Pakistan through negotiation and suspend the execution till then. However if it were so, it would have happened during the first round of arguments when Pakistan argued that the ICJ did not have jurisdiction to entertain such cases as said in Pakistan's counter memorial (as per ICJ rules) sent in 2017. This did not happen and henceforth, this gives rise to the

notion that the ICJ wants more arguments from India and evidence-backed proof from Pakistan and by that the ICJ may hand down something more substantial, and perhaps not as favourable as Pakistan expects. There is, therefore, another possibility that Kulbhushan is asked to be handed back to India, or that there is a retrial in a different set of 'trial environment' i.e. non-military court or even in a different country. The court may also allow the Indian High Commission access to Kulbhushan. In a retrial, there is a possibility that Kulbhushan may retract from his confession, thereby weakening the most solid evidence against his conviction.

Reviewing few past cases between Pakistan and India at the ICJ: There have been few rows which India took against Pakistan in the ICJ such as below: Appeal relating to the jurisdiction of the ICAO Council; Trial of Pakistani prisoners of war; and Aerial incident of August 10, 1999.

Based on the past ICJ judgment on Pakistan-India disputes some of the following observations are: Dispute between the two countries should be resolved amongst themselves; the ICJ will not take a 'hard stand' and will try to play a role of an arbitrator instead of passing down a hard decision; and the ICJ prefers to take itself out of situations where the tempers boil as high as it does in Pakistan-India disputes.

The ICJ decisions in the above cases also reveal line of arguments and its possible stance on the Kulbhushan issue. The Indian point of view interestingly in the last case "Aerial Incident of August 10, 1999" (Indian air defence destroyed a highly sensitive and expensive Pakistani aircraft) that the ICJ did not have jurisdiction to adjudicate the case which Pakistan initiated, was accepted by the body. Pakistan's plea was not entertained. Interestingly Pakistan this time around also took this stance that the ICJ did not have jurisdiction (but from another angle), which is something India opposed. However, the ICJ seems to be entertaining Indian's stance and going ahead within the merits of the case.

Possible reason if it's an unfavourable outcome: With utmost care, only as a hypothetical case and without rendering prejudice to anyone, what if Pakistan does not get the expected or favourable outcome at the ICJ. Some of the reasons for that happening may be:

Firstly, the ICJ is not a criminal court or appellate court where an appeal can be lodged. Hence, the ICJ may not permit execution or hanging of a person.

Secondly, after examining its multiple judgments and nature of decision which flow out of the ICJ (nearing 60 cases which were reviewed), it seems the ICJ assumes the role of an arbitrator or rather one that resolves disputes. It is not going to declare India a terror-sponsoring state by declaring Kulbhushan a terrorist instructed by a sovereign country to execute activities in Pakistan. The ICJ's position in such a case would become extremely precarious.

Thirdly, the ICJ may accept India's argument that the Vienna Convention, especially Article 36 of the convention to which Pakistan is also a signatory, has given certain rights and privileges to war prisoners (including spies) which were not given to Kulbhushan and hence the decision by the military court has some limitations (possible argument from the ICJ accepting the Indian point of view).

Fourthly, the hearing could have been done in open court with evidence to be shared, and displayed for closer examination. This has to be read with the fact that the ICJ may not have approved of the military courts, or its process and along with the fact that Kulbhushan was not given any "Indian access" which included his preferred choice of an Indian lawyer, or other means through which he would have defended his case.

Fifthly, the ICJ may like to tone down the tension between the two countries in a manner similar to its decision in the case "Aerial Incident of August 10, 1999". The ICJ according to some analysts would not like to make strong decisions.

Hence Pakistan has never been at an advantage in the ICJ, something worth exploring internally as to why?

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Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1916438/6-kulbhushan-case-how-why-and-what/>

Pakistan – A Global Pivot State By

Mohammad Jamil

Last week, 'Eurasiafuture.com' published a treatise captioned "Pakistan: The Global Pivot State" written by Andrew Korybko, who is a political analyst, journalist and a regular contributor to several online journals. He is also a member of the expert council for the Institute of Strategic Studies and Predictions at the People's Friendship University of Russia. The author referred to the CPEC and Belt and Road Initiative, which is important for China; but he also highlighted the geostrategic importance of Pakistan. He started his treatise with the opening: "Pakistan's promising economic potential, international connectivity capabilities, and unparalleled geostrategic location combine with its world-class military and proven diplomatic finesse over the decades to turn the South Asian country into the global pivot state of the 21st century. As astounding as it may sound to most observers, the global pivot state of the 21st century isn't China, the US, nor Russia, but Pakistan".

One should read the captioned article on the above website, as no other writer whether Pakistani or foreigner has summed up the geostrategic importance of Pakistan. The author has given objective analysis in detail to show that Pakistan is a force to reckon with, and he used all superlatives for the emerging global player. He went on to write: "Major investment players such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE are jumping at the opportunity to take part in this before any of their competitors can, wanting to get ahead of the race by establishing a premier presence in Pakistan as it becomes the shortest trade route between their economies and China's. Simply put, Pakistan is the pivot state upon which all of China's future plans depend, therefore recasting it as the kingmaker of the New Cold War and the world-changing multi-polar processes of the 21st century".

Pakistan, indeed, has all the ingredients that could make it a modern welfare state. It has industrious people, vast areas of land, variegated seasons suitable for various crops and fruits, rivers, large coastline and abundant natural resources. Its mountains and valleys are the most scenic in the world. Its strategic position, which is confluence and meeting point between Sinkiang of China, Iran and Central Asian Republics, is acknowledged by all and sundry – foes and friends alike. Its principle city-port Karachi is a convenient route for Central Asian States for trade with the

western and other countries. And with the completion of Gwadar deep-sea port, it has the potential to become a hub of international trade. Apart from that, Pakistan is rich in culture, as people of various provinces with regional languages and traditions make it a beautiful bouquet reflective of unity in diversity.

The people of Pakistan are proud inheritors of traditions of great saints and poets who fostered the message of peace and brotherhood over the centuries. Pakistani cuisine is characterized by a blend of various regional cooking traditions of the subcontinent, Central Asia as well as from its Mughal legacy. Various cuisines are also derived from Pakistan's ethnic and cultural diversity, which offer unique culinary art praised by the foreigners. Pakistan's cultural heritage includes archaeological sites, stupas, forts, shrines, tombs, buildings, monuments, and places of worship.

It possesses remains of several ancient civilizations; the most famous is Indus Valley Civilization dating back to 3,000 BC – its sites are Moenjoaro (Sindh) and Harrappa (Punjab), and Buddhist civilization in the north. The historic monuments represent various periods of our history and demonstrate the rich cultural milieu of the land, which is a great attraction for tourists.

We find historic Hindu temples in Tharparkar (Sindh) and Punjab, Sultanate period monuments in Makli Tombs, Thatta, in Multan and Uch Sharif, and Mughal monuments in Thatta, Multan and Lahore etc. From the mighty stretches of the Karakoram in the North to the vast alluvial delta of the Indus River in the South make Pakistan a land of high adventure for tourists including trekking, mountaineering, water rafting, mountain and desert jeep safaris as well as camel and yak safaris. High Himalayas, Karakoram and the Hindukush ranges with their alpine meadows are tourists' attractions. Over and above all, Pakistan is an atomic power, which is a pride of Muslim world. Its people and armed forces have the ability to meet any challenge posed by internal and external enemies of Pakistan. And they have the capability and the will to defend the motherland.

In September 1991, the Ministry of Defence Production was created to promote and coordinate the military production facilities. The ministry also includes seven other specialized organizations devoted to research and development, production, and administration. By early 2000, a joint project of China and Pakistan developed the JF-17 Thunder fighter. Pakistan also has taken major steps to achieve self-

sufficiency in aircraft overhaul and modernization. So far as missile technology is considered, Pakistan is considered one of the leading countries of the world. The author, quoting the Quaid-i-Azam concluded: “Prophetically, Pakistani founding father Muhammad Ali Jinnah predicted all of this when he famously proclaimed in 1948 that Pakistan is the pivot of the world, placed on the frontier on which the future position of the world revolves, and each passing day proves that he was right.”

—The writer is a senior journalist based in Lahore.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/pakistan-a-global-pivot-state/>

Pakistan's Peace Stance | Editorial

It was Day 2 of non-military target practice. Pakistan downed at least two Indian fighter jets after a retaliatory strike a few kilometres from a military administrative unit.

DG ISPR Maj Gen Asif Ghafoor explained that the decision not to hit the actual target was aimed to show India that Pakistan could have hit the actual target, but decided not to because “We did not want to retaliate at the cost of regional peace. We do not want escalation.”

Soon after, Prime Minister Imran Khan addressed the nation. After justifying the retaliatory attack and the day-plus delay in the response, and offering some information about the Indian pilots held by Pakistan, he made what may be the most important statement of his political career.

“I ask India: with the weapons you have and the weapons we have, can we really afford a miscalculation?”

In one simple sentence, PM Imran summarised why the hawks on either side need to hold their silence, because an all-out war in the subcontinent will have no winners. Not in India. Not in Pakistan. Not in the world.

It has been heartening to see the political leadership and the media in Pakistan almost unanimous in their support for de-escalation, even if the paths suggested vary.

Until the Pakistani response, however, even the once sane voices across the eastern border seemed to have been replaced by crazed chicken hawks, baying for blood from behind their comfortable studio desks and political offices hundreds of miles from where the blood of innocent Indian and Pakistani soldiers will be spilt, all pawns in a game being played so that the grossly incompetent Bharatiya Janata Party government of Narendra Modi can win reelection.

Yes, Pakistan was late to the game, and the Indians were able to brutally slaughter dozens of Pakistani trees, but what happened when Pakistan actually showed up at the table?

The chicken hawks transformed back into voices of reason, calling for a drawdown.

Braying for war will be the death of us all, but of course, Modi is used to winning elections on the back of dead bodies. We must not abet him.

Published in The Express Tribune, February 28th, 2019.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1919720/6-pakistans-peace-stance/>

A Responsible State: Pakistan's Post-Pulwama Behaviour By Dr Ahmed Saeed Minhas

By all standards, the Pulwama terrorist attack can't be supported. However, not surprisingly, the Indian side did not take even a second breath to accuse the Pakistani state behind executing the said attack which cost precious lives of Indian active forces, leaving aside their atrocities in India-occupied Kashmir. Pakistan not only condemned the incident but also offered evidence based tangible joint investigations, an indicator of a responsible nation-state. The Narendra Modi government in India which is subjected to fear of losing in its upcoming elections naturally created hype of the attack being their old traditional political anti-Pakistani rhetoric that unfortunately has been instrumental in winning the hearts and minds of hardliner Hindu community associated with India's BJP. It is also a known fact that all Hindus in India are not fanatic and thus do not want to be indulged in an anti-Pakistan rhetoric. There are so many numbers of Hindus who are moderate and peace-loving, but somehow or the other hawks overcome their voices as mostly the perception making tool the Indian media is dominated by hardliners.

Without getting prejudiced, even a simple student of international relations would understand that Pulwama incident by no means has gained any advantage for Pakistan. Only three reasons would be enough to substantiate the argument, first, the Saudi Crown Prince was due in Pakistan two days after the Pulwama attack in which no state with so much of economic expectations could indulge in such an adventure, two, Pakistan's political and military leadership are focused on economic stability after having brought the most difficult War on Terror (WoT) in the history of fourth generation warfare to a logical end, third, Pakistani premier's resolve "not to let the Pakistani soil used by any terrorist element to plan or conduct terrorist activity against any state." Yet India built a war-like scenario and threatened Pakistan with dire consequences without any evidence. The Indian political leadership, perhaps, had two main aims behind their state approach. One, to divert the attention of Indian and international masses from Indian armed forces' atrocities in response to indigenous independence movement in IoK whose intensity exponentially increased post-Burhan Wani killing and secondly, of course the political gains in terms of winning polls using the Pakistan card.

Sequentially, as expected the Indian armed forces especially the air force succumbed to the Indian political/hawkish media pressures and tried to challenge the sovereignty of Pakistan through air violations, which were successfully repulsed. Naturally, a response was definitely needed to keep the morale of the Pakistan Armed Forces and nation to utmost level. Now here comes the test of Pakistani political and military leadership. The dilemma was 'not to let the situation escalate and at the same time keep the nation's morale high'. Pakistan, being a rationale actor in the community of nations, took almost all possible textbook-like actions to address the dilemma.

As a mature, sensible, peace-loving nation Pakistan took certain number of steps that could truly be listed as a case study for crisis management as well as international relations students. First of all, despite being at odds against one another, the Pakistani political parties gathered on the same page rather same side of the same page, and unanimously supported the government and the armed forces for their actions in case the Indian aggression spiralled. Suggestion of holding a joint session of parliament on one-point agenda by opposition parties amid Pakistani political parties differences on multiple issues truly reflects the 'Whole of a Nation' response, substantially enough for any aggressor to stay away from military misadventure. War is a serious business and the political democratic leadership united nuance leaves nothing to wild guesses. Meetings of the National Security Council (NSC) and the National Command Authority (NCA), followed by a joint session of parliament with an approach towards finding a peaceful solution to the crisis manifests Pakistan being a confident, rationale and responsible actor.

Secondly, the Pakistani military leadership exercised maximum restraint by not indulging in carrying out destruction-based responsive conventional strike and instead opted for firing warning shots next to the intended six targets which if destroyed would have pained the Indians most thus could result into spiralling up the escalation ladder. The approach demonstrated the Pakistani military's confidence in their capacities besides making friends and foes to believe that the armed forces have both brightest brains as well as toughest fighters. Moreover, the treatment extended to the Indian captured pilots is being appreciated not only domestically but on the other side of the border too, duly demonstrating restraint.

Thirdly, Prime Minister Imran Khan's speech to the nation after the NCA meeting was not threat based rather truly of a confident and peace-loving national leader. While mentioning the captured Indian pilots, he did not use the words 'Prisoner of War' rather opted to say 'they are with us'. It reflects that Pakistan still does not consider that Pakistan is at war with its eastern neighbour. Interestingly, Prime Minister Imran Khan yet again reiterated to hold joint investigations and offered dialogue even on the issue of terrorism. Pakistan-India composite dialogue is stalemated since 2012, which could get a kick-start with Imran's offer. Apparently, the sense has prevailed, which the Pakistani premier had asked for. Statement from Indian Foreign Minister Shushma Swaraj about not escalating the military situation is a welcome step towards bringing back stability in the region which the international commentators refer to be a 'fragile' one.

Fourth, the Pakistani Foreign Office played dynamically and got statements in favour of Pakistan's peace hugging approach. Statements from the OIC, UN and EU forums, the UK, US, Saarc countries especially the only Hindu state, Nepal, are a few to refer.

Lastly, there is no winner in war especially when it is between the two arch nuclear-equipped rivals. Humanity is the biggest loser, as the Pakistani premier highlighted. Perhaps few would be left to guess who had success. Only a sane leadership would opt for using the nuclear option, yet when sovereignty is at stake, Pakistani doctrine of First Use might see the day light. India must not try to call the bluff with respect to Pakistani nuclear capability and threshold, especially when the Pakistani premier's clear stance post-Pulwama could not be called a bluff. Sanity should prevail on both sides and let's give peace a chance.

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Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1920527/6-responsible-state-pakistans-post-pulwama-behaviour/>

PAKISTAN & WORLD RELATIONS

Pak-US Relations | Editorial

Still finding direction?

How must Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi be feeling after US Director of National Intelligence Daniel Coats' presentation, before the US Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, about militant safe havens in Pakistan, cross-border threats, and all that? Wasn't it only last Sunday that Qureshi claimed Islamabad had "reset" relations with Washington? This, of course, was after there seemed some momentum in the US-Taliban talks – which Pakistan of course felt it had played some part in facilitating – only to find that the Taliban poured cold water over all the excitement all over again. Now it turns out that the Americans are just as concerned as ever about the militant threat from Pakistan in 2019.

It says something about Pakistan's sense of the situation that the Americans are openly debating these issues when Pakistan just might be playing a pivotal role in the talks with the Taliban. That could mean that Qureshi's other claim, that the relation with Washington had moved from a transactional to a strategic nature, is also not quite true. That Coats also brought up concerns about Pakistan's nuclear program will give Islamabad yet more nightmares; not the least since that opens debates about theft, security incidents, etc.

That fact is that the Trump Administration views Islamabad only through the prism of Afghanistan. Already many in the western media are claiming that Trump's tough approach, of cutting off the money line, has pushed the Pakistanis into pushing the Taliban to talk, even though the Taliban's actions prove otherwise. And so long as Islamabad is willing to help wrap up the long, ugly war, perhaps something mutually beneficial can be worked out. But for the moment, as Coats noted, the Americans are continuing to exert pressure on the cross-border militancy front. If anything, now their concerns have increased from just Afghanistan to "neighbouring countries and beyond." It seems PTI will have to take another U-turn; this time on one of its foreign policy boasts.

Source: <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2019/02/01/pak-us-relations-14/>

Changing Dynamics of Pak-Qatar Relations

By Muhammad Asif Noor

Prime Minister Imran Khan was on a two day visit to Qatar to meet his counterpart in Doha besides meeting the Emir of Qatar His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani. During the visit, the Prime Minister was accompanied by an entourage of ministers and advisors including Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Finance, Petroleum, Adviser to the Prime Minister on Commerce, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Overseas Pakistanis, Chairman Board of Investment, Chairperson Prime Minister's Energy Task Force and the Foreign Secretary. Apart from meeting high level dignitaries at state level, Prime Minister Imran Khan also talked to the business and investment community based in Doha. Embarked on the mission to attract investment from foreigners, the Prime Minister addressed the Pakistani community during the visit inviting them to invest more in the country. Prior to this high level visit Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi and General Qamar Javed Bajwa made exclusive visits to Qatar during the last month on different occasions with diverse motivations which included talks with Taliban, lasting peace in Afghanistan and strategic and military ties with Qatar. These high level visits reflect the significance the two countries attach to each other. Pakistan is trying to maintain a balance in the gulf regional political dynamics keeping in view its interest but though it is tough and challenging, it is necessary for Pakistan to keep its neutrality intact.

In Qatar, Taliban have an international office led by their new head, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, who was released from a prison in Pakistan in October, last year. He has been authorized to lead the political team and take decisions

Qatar has remained a very important country for Pakistan over the years as a result of the significant geographical location and its political dynamics in the Gulf region. Both states since the start have had cordial relations based on not only religious affinity and brotherly ties but also based on geostrategic dynamics of what each country is facing in its own region of influence. The relation deepened especially after the launch of the maritime route created between Karachi Business port and the Hamad Port resulting in an increase in the supply of goods and services between the two countries. However, after the recent gulf crisis and the boycott by Saudi Arabia, UAE, Egypt and Bahrain for the past 18 months, this visit of Prime

Minister of Pakistan came as a watershed moment in the history of ties. Pakistan envisions building strong ties with Qatar. Keeping in view Qatar's role in the global energy market by owning two percent of the global oil reserves. However, last December, Qatar also announced to leave the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) to focus more towards production even though it was the founding member of the organization way back in 1961. The impact of this move is yet to be seen in the energy markets. Pakistan is attaching a significant importance to Qatar. It was in 2016, when Pakistan and Qatar signed one of the 'game changing' deals worth \$16 billion for Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG), for the next 15 years. During the visit of Imran Khan, the discussion was focused around promoting relations in the sectors of energy, food security, military to military ties and issues of bilateral, multilateral, regional and international nature. Pakistan is facing an energy shortage, as a result of the gulf crisis and boycott, Qatar is facing food security issues especially as the FIFA World Cup football is approaching nearer. Pakistan can be the bread basket in this regard, resulting in maximum for our agriculture and food related industries.

As a result of the downward trend of the Saudi economy recently, Saudi companies struggled to offer jobs to foreigners including Pakistanis. It was a difficult time for Pakistan as the economy faced a dent, however, Qatar came to the rescue offering 100,000 jobs for skilled and semi-skilled workers from Pakistan. This was again promised during the Prime Minister's visit, however, it was confirmed later after the recent opening of the Visa Facilitation Centre in Islamabad. This has also resulted in alleviating Pakistan's status as one of the eight countries to have a Qatari visa facilitation centre for swift processing of visa for the workers.

Over the years, from growing economic ties between Pakistan and Qatar, we have also witnessed a resonance of effective influence on the peace and security process in Afghanistan with significant influence over the war parties including Taliban. Pakistan and Qatar shared somewhat similar intentions of having a lasting peace in the war torn state with result oriented talks wherein Qatar is providing a neutral state to all the stakeholders for the peace talks. Qatar has taken a lead in playing the role of a peace mediator in this overall tough and complex situation especially being a Sunni Muslim Gulf State. In Qatar, Taliban have an international office led by their new head, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, who was released from a prison in Pakistan in October, last year. He has been authorized to lead the political team and take decisions. Taliban consider Doha as a neutral space where

they can live peacefully and have discussions based on political grounds. Having world's leading television network Al Jazeera, Qatar played a significant role as a mediator in regional conflicts. Apart from housing Taliban, Qatar tried to mediate in the Darfur, Syrian and Libyan conflict including settling the rift between Palestinian factions.

Pakistan needs to balance its relations with UAE and Saudi Arabia, where Prime Minister went before travelling to Qatar to invite investments from countries to resolve Pakistan's economic woes. Qatar has supported Pakistan in its tough times and has made substantial contributions towards uplifting its economic worries by providing jobs to the unemployed workforce. Pakistan needs to have a clear and defining foreign policy towards the Gulf region in order to sail smoothly among feuding states.

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Pakistan's Troubled Neighbourhood By

Talat Masood

As the US withdraws from Afghanistan the country is expected to undergo major changes in its political and economic structure. It is most uncertain as to how this transition would take place. Nonetheless, it is clear that the Taliban would be in a dominant position by virtue of the area they control and the military advantage they have over the Afghan forces. The US realising this has been directly negotiating the terms and conditions of withdrawal with the Taliban, despite President Ghani's serious reservations. This is a major departure from Washington's previous position but it shows how frustrated President Trump is with the prevailing situation in Afghanistan. It is also a reiteration of his commitment to disengage from unending conflicts especially this one that has lasted over 17 years and cost the US exchequer a trillion dollars. Moreover, until August of last year over 2,375 American lives were lost and 20,320 service members wounded in action in Afghanistan. In addition nearly 1,730 US civilian contractor fatalities occurred.

The current US approach indicates that President Trump, notwithstanding his idiosyncrasies, is pragmatic and has a set of priorities different from that of his generals who would like to continue with an unending war.

Even if the Taliban demands were met and they agree to a ceasefire it would not necessarily lead to peace in Afghanistan. There has to be a political understanding of the Taliban also with progressive forces that constitute mostly the urban middle class and elite of Afghanistan that previously were mostly part of the Northern Alliance and are Hazaras Tajiks and Uzbeks. Besides, the warlords that command support in their local areas will have to be taken into confidence. More importantly, the Taliban would have to ensure to the US that they would not allow any inimical groups like the ISIS to operate from Afghan soil. Assurance to deny the ISIS any space will not be difficult to implement, as it is as much in the Taliban interest. The most critical issue would be how the Taliban and the Afghan government and progressive Afghan forces agree to share power.

In many ways the emergence of Taliban as the major player in determining the future of Afghanistan vindicates Pakistan's policy. But the more pertinent question is whether the emergence of Taliban in a bigger role beneficial, especially while assessing it in terms of its impact on society and the region as a whole. The other

regional countries—Iran, Russia, China and also India would be reassessing their positions in the changing scenario. Already we were seeing that these countries had developed contacts with the Taliban leadership. India, of course, would have to make a major shift and develop a working relationship with the Taliban. It may not be difficult as the Taliban leadership has been fairly pragmatic and flexible in changing positions if it suits their interest.

The other significant event in the region is the Indian elections in April-May of this year. Indications are that the BJP would still secure the highest number of seats but with a lesser majority. A decisive victory for the BJP would make Prime Minister Narendra Modi more arrogant and dismissive toward Pakistan. It would turn India into essentially a Hindu state in which the security and freedom of minorities, especially Muslims, would be in danger. The situation in Kashmir would worsen which already is on the boiling point. What gives hope that the politics of hate and divisiveness is not paying back and PM Modi's popularity and that of the BJP is on the decline. If the discontent is reflected in the coming elections chances are even if the BJP assumes power it would remain constrained and that may allow Modi to rethink his policy towards Pakistan. The BJP government has been using Afghanistan territory to destabilise Pakistan. Shrinking presence of the US in Afghanistan and a Taliban dominated government likely to emerge in Kabul would restrain India from indulging in anti-Pakistan pursuits.

In addition, on several policy fronts—Afghanistan, Kashmir and dealings with its own Muslim community India would need to revisit its policies. No doubt, its economy is doing consistently well and it has broad support of the Western world and the international community but it cannot overlook indefinitely the negative side of its foreign and domestic policies.

Meanwhile, as Prime Minister Imran Khan has indicated Pakistan will wait out until Indian forthcoming elections. The ball is in India's court as far as its dealings with Pakistan are concerned. If still Modi or any other successor government moves forward Pakistan would reciprocate willingly.

The relationship with Iran is far more complex. Being an important neighbour with close cultural and religious ties one would have expected far closer collaboration in the economic and political spheres. International and US specific sanctions have adversely affected trade with Iran and major communication and energy projects

are on hold. Besides, Pakistan and Iran's economy are going through a major crisis.

Unfortunately, the Iranian and Pakistani Balochistan have remained restive that hinders smooth movement of people or trade to flourish. Pakistan has relied heavily on the armed forces to stabilise the region. Their efforts are commendable. They have focused on building schools, hospitals, and constructing roads. And now with Gwadar's eminence due to CPEC and the connecting highway and other infrastructural projects, Balochistan has acquired greater importance. There is, however, need for addressing the genuine grievances of the Baloch youth who feel rightly or wrongly disfranchised. There has to be a serious attempt by the political government at resolving the injustices. A stable Balochistan would vastly contribute towards building bridges with Iran. Developing complementarity with Iranian port of Chabahar port in future would further serve the interest of both countries.

The Saudi-Iranian conflict that has sectarian and political overtones places Pakistan in a difficult situation despite its earnest efforts at staying clear of it.

Pakistan has always aspired to derive maximum strength from its geo-strategic location. The present regional situation though complex, presents once again an opportunity to maximise its potential.

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Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1904234/6-pakistans-troubled-neighborhood/>

India's Pakistan Bashing | Editorial

IN a statement issued on Friday, Pakistan Foreign Office strongly rejected any insinuation by elements in the Indian media and government that seek to link the Pulwama attack to Pakistan without investigations. A 20-year old boy – Adil Ahmad Dar – from the village of Lethipora in Occupied Kashmir, rammed a car full of explosives into a convoy killing 44 paramilitary policemen. India has started blaming Pakistan with Prime Minister Narendra Modi threatening to isolate the country at international level, adding that those behind the attack would pay a “very heavy price” and had made a “huge mistake”.

As always before, India has shown knee-jerk reaction to Pulwama attack despite the fact that in the past a number of such assumptions and allegations proved wrong afterwards. Pakistan can ill-afford to sponsor such attacks at this critical juncture when the country was playing important role in regional and global affairs. There is strong possibility that Pulwama attack was stage-managed to blame Pakistan at a time when the Saudi Crown was visiting Islamabad, Financial Action Task Force (FATF) was reviewing Pakistan's case, CPEC was progressing ahead despite Indian machinations and Pakistan was playing a leading role in Afghan peace talks. Otherwise too, Pakistan does not need to provoke Kashmiris for such acts as Indian brutalities were enough to force Kashmiri youth to resort to such tactics in retaliation. Parents of the attacker told Reuters that the boy got himself radicalized after he was severely beaten by Indian occupation forces three years back. Human rights violations have been taking place in Occupied Kashmir since long but these assumed dangerous dimensions during tenure of PM Modi and even puppets like Farooq Abdullah had to tell India that instead of blaming Pakistan look towards its own policies and actions. However, India has over-reacted in blaming Pakistan may be because of the electioneering in that country where Pakistan-bashing helps yield extremist votes. The world community would not buy India's version as blame game against Pakistan started even before arrival of the 12-member investigation team in Pulwama. And the world also knows what is happening in Occupied Kashmir on the basis of latest in-depth reports by UN Human Rights Office, OIC and British Parliament.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/indias-pakistan-bashing/>

MBS Visit: Transformation of Pak-KSA Relations By Kashif Ahmad Mohaar

Saudi Crown Prince Muhammad Bin Salman, commonly known as MBS, arrived in Pakistan on Sunday for a historic two-day visit. It was his first visit to Pakistan, and indeed Asia, since his elevation to the throne. His selection of Pakistan as a first country to be visited, in his Asia tour, holds enormous importance not only for Pak-KSA strategic partnership but also for people of both Muslim nations. This was the reason for his warm welcome by Pakistanis. Furthermore, this visit would transform the strategic nature of Pak-KSA ties into a more economic and cultural sphere of cooperation. Though, retrospectively, Pak-KSA had a strong relationship throughout decades. However, it was political and strategic in its entirety; whereas now, multi-billion dollars investment by KSA in different fields would open new avenues of cooperation, particularly economic. Ultimately, it would not only strengthen their political and strategic relations but also empower both the countries to establish strong economic ties on the basis of mutual interest.

As the maxim goes, there is no free lunch in international relations, and how it can be in this age when competition between different entities, which is supposed to allocate all resources with the greatest possible efficiency, have led to the commodification of human relations. It would be naive to think that we are having a free lunch. Therefore, to gain a relative advantage Pakistan would need to pay for that; increased cooperation, a little more than it has been doing for the Muslim brother since decades. Here arise some questions: what are the Saudi Interests? What Pakistan will gain in this cooperation? What would be the regional and global implications for this affair? Would there be any threats to sabotage this cordial relationship? And, what should be the counter strategies? This article endeavours to answer these questions.

As for as interests of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) are concerned, First, economically speaking, due to deteriorating oil prices Kingdom's economy is challenged. Therefore, as enshrined in Saudi Vision 2030, it has started to diversify economy and investments in order to lessen its economic dependence on a single commodity, oil. For that, it needs trans-border markets; and Pakistan, that had been enjoying cordiality with KSA since decades and also enrich in natural resources and investment avenues, would serve the Kingdom's purpose of

economic diversification. In what is called by MBS as a “first phase of investment” KSA will invest \$20 billion in Pakistan. Out of these, \$8 billion would be invested for the establishment of oil refinery and petrochemical complex in the port of Gwadar. Also, Saudi Arabia may acquire two major natural gas power plants in Pakistan, which are to be sold out, through bidding process, as a result of privatization drive. KSA would also invest in different sectors of energy, power, water, renewable energy resources etc. These areas of investment and cooperation would, undoubtedly, provide diverse investment avenues for the Kingdom.

Secondly, as the Prince, himself, explained his desire for the establishment of a greater Middle East. Obviously, it means the Kingdom endeavours for a greater role, of hegemon, in the region. For this purpose, Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition has already been constituted under the supervision of Kingdom. This alliance is headed by ex-chief of Pakistan army, General (r) Raheel Shareef. KSA wants a proactive involvement of Pakistan to actualise the benefits of alliance. Since, Pakistan army is a well disciplined and battle hardened military, so it can serve the Kingdom countering terrorism in the Middle East. Earlier, Pakistan was coaxed by the Saudis to participate in a war against Yemen, but Pakistan restrained and showed neutrality. If any such demand is raised by KSA, at any later moment, neutrality would be the best strategy. Therefore, till the coalition counters terrorism Pakistan should proactively support it, the moment it works for aggressive nefarious designs against any country, Pakistan should remain neutral.

Third, MBS has been facing diplomatic isolation internationally since after Jamal Khashoggi’s crisis. Revival of his repute was the prioritised objective. His incumbent Asia tour – starting from Kingdom’s historical ally, Pakistan, and ending in China – is an effort to end isolation and restore diplomatic engagement.

On the other hand, MBS visit holds great importance for Pakistan. As described earlier, historically, the mode of Pak-KSA relationship has been political and strategic in nature. This visit would usher new fields of cooperation, particularly, economic. Ultimately, transforming the nature of relationship from political and strategic to economic. It is suffice to say that advantage is mostly relative in economic cooperation. Therefore, Kingdom’s advantage, in the under discussion projects, does not mean disadvantage of Pakistan. On the contrary, this

coordination would provide equal opportunities for economic progress of both the countries. Domestically speaking, Pakistan is facing dwindling economy due to different reasons: balance of payments crisis, deteriorating foreign exchange reserves- currently amounting to \$8 billion, trade deficit, and foreign debt. In order to reinvigorate its economy, Pakistan needs to address aforementioned problems. As, KSA has already supported Pakistan with \$6 billion bailout package to survive the ailing economy, the new investment of \$20 billion, and more to follow, would rejuvenate the country's economy.

Foreign investment in different sectors would mitigate the economic throes of Pakistan. For example, the establishment of oil refinery and petrochemical complex would create enormous opportunities for economic growth. Similarly, three government-to-government MOUs for oil refining, Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG), and mineral development have been signed. In total, eight multi-billion dollars Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) have been signed in different fields: energy, water, power, investment, renewable energy, internal security, culture, and sports. This investment will create employment opportunities for unemployed and alleviate poverty in Pakistan; help us in resolving energy crisis; and, ultimately, boost our economy.

Regionally speaking, owing to its geostrategic location Pakistan enjoys great importance. Pak-KSA strong alliance would lead to the expansion of Pakistan's influence and fulfilment of her national interest not only in South Asia but also in the greater Middle East region. First, as regards South Asia, Saudi participation in CPEC – a game-changer project – after Chinese consent would exponentially increase the importance of project. Then, after all, Pakistan being at the centre stage would be in a better position to achieve its goals. Second, in Middle East, Pakistan should play a role of interlocutor between different Arab countries to resolve their internal conflicts for achieving maximum benefits of this partnership. The case in point here is Saudi-Iran rivalry. Iran is an important immediate neighbour of Pakistan. Therefore, we should not be a part of any plan plotted against Iran. On the contrary, Pakistan should exert her influence and play a neutral role for peaceful resolution of conflicts to avoid any untoward situation, which could outweigh the benefits of partnership. It should be taken care of that Pak-KSA cordiality of relationship should never be at the expense of our relations with other countries.

It is pertinent to mention here that although this relationship is based on mutual interest and strong politico-religious bonds. However, like all other alliances, it is not immune to external threats. Enemy forces had already manoeuvred their means and executed two attacks: one in Kashmir; and another in Iranian province bordering with Pakistan, in order to sabotage the enchanted visit of MBS. However, these attacks could not isolate Pakistan; and the enemy miserably failed in achieving its objectives. So, enemy forces would continue such subversion activities to disrupt the cordial relationship. Therefore, both the countries need to work on countering such manoeuvres by intelligence sharing and realising the importance of partnership.

In a nutshell, The MBS visit has transformed the nature of relationship between the two countries from strategic and political to economic sphere. Pak-KSA relationship is based on mutual interests and strong politico-religious bonds. This new dimension of alliance means a lot for a prosperous future of Pakistan. However, it is not immune from threats of disruptive forces that continue to undermine Pakistan's efforts for regional peace and prosperity. Therefore, the affair should be protected by enemy forces. For that, Pakistan should play a smart game on the regional and global strategic chess-board.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/22-Feb-2019/mbs-visit-transformation-of-pak-ksa-relations>

Pak, UAE Relations at Highest Level: Envoy **By Khalid Mehmood & Rizwan Ghilzai**

ISLAMABAD: United Arab Emirates (UAE) Ambassador Hamad Obaid Al Zaabi has said relations with Pakistan are at the highest level in history due to sincere efforts by both the governments during the previous five months.

Addressing an event here on Pak-UAE relations, the ambassador said, “Sincere relations exist between the UAE and Pakistan. Both the countries agree on mutual cooperation for regional peace and economic development.”

Special Adviser to the PM on Overseas Pakistanis Zulfikar Bukhari said, “The UAE and Pakistan have a key role to play in regional peace and stability. UAE is the home of cricket for Pakistan. Institutions of both the countries are determined for the formation of a digital Dubai model in Pakistan.”

He said Pakistan was ready to render its services for the success of Expo 2020.

Minister of State for Climate Change Zartaj Gul said, “Pakistan appreciates the efforts by the UAE for the protection of wildlife and the environment. Negative propaganda has been spread across the globe against Pakistan; however, it is working towards a stable and peaceful future.”

Adviser to the PM on Accountability Shehzad Akbar said, “The UAE has set its priorities in the right direction due to which much development has been achieved.”

He lauded the efforts of the UAE in resolving the conflict between Yemen and Saudi Arabia.

“Muslim countries in the light of their culture and trends must demonstrate unity towards each other,” he said.

Board of Investment Chairman Haroon Sharif said, “In the light of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and the role of the Pakistani community in the UAE, great trade opportunities exist between the two countries.”

Both countries agreed to cooperate on ease of doing business.

UAE Policy Centre President Dr Ibtesam Alkatibi shed detailed light on the efforts of the UAE in the war against terror.

She said, “Terrorism cannot be linked with any religion. Terrorism has been linked with Islam as part of a conspiracy as history tells us that extremism has no place in any religion.”

National Disaster Management Authority Chairman Lt General Umar Mehmood Hayat said, “The UAE, during all natural disasters, helped Pakistan wholeheartedly. Not only did the UAE play an effective role in the reinstatement of areas victimised by terrorism but also helped Pakistan in raising awareness regarding natural disasters.”

Measures taken to protect tailorbird from extinction were also discussed in the meeting. Tailorbird Protection Organisation representative Ali Shamsi said that with the UAE’s help, there has been an increase of about more than four million in the number of tailorbirds.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1919103/1-pak-uae-relations-highest-level-envoy/>

Pakistan-India Relations By Mudassir Saeed Laghari

Pakistan's relationship with India has remained among one of the most contentious in the world. Both have been influential enough at containing each other for the past decades. For hawks across the borders, their mutual enmity and distrust of each other forms the most important and even the sole support. But hawks are not the only beneficiary: there is in fact a tremendous level of military buildup that amounts to billions of dollars annually which relies on their mutual enmity. It is therefore hardly surprising that peace across the border is not an entity to be cherished universally.

A violent partition, three wars, long years of enmity, the paranoia of a life under constant rivalry — all this have left deep imprints upon India's and Pakistan's practice and outlook as nation-states.

Since their birth, it has been the fundamental tenet of their respective foreign policies to ensure a relatively friction-free and peaceful external environment. There is a deep recognition, at least in abstract, that doing so will help both to concentrate their efforts and energies on economic well-being. Thus far, however, the goal remains elusive.

India considers itself the geographic centre of South Asia. On geographic terms maybe it is; but judging on economic parameters, it is far from being a backbone of the regional financial system. It's been more than a decade that the Chinese-led investments have begun to replace India as the region's leading trade partner.

India has found itself with a new rival in the form of China. The force of India's influence in South Asia has been steadily undermined by the effects of the increasing trade activities led and owned by the Chinese.

The decline in India's external influence is precipitous: against the developments in the region, India has always considered it as legitimate to interact and intervene in internal affairs of its neighbouring countries in a way to influence the outcome to its own favour. But that has changed. Take the case of Sri Lanka: against the

recent political turmoil in Sri Lanka, India has refrained from interfering and has kept a marked level of restraint.

There are considerable evidences, financial, economic, political, and cultural to suggest that India is no longer economically strong enough to underwrite, much less direct, the present regional economic order and obtain a role as the region's leading economic power.

Consequently, as part of the impacts of India's regional decline, it has grown reactionary, aggressive, thin-skinned and clueless.

And it is this fact that we, the Pakistanis, are generally tempted to disregard: that we always see in India an aggressive big brother, a power which is bent upon its offensive instincts and has no regard for values like equality and sovereignty. However, based on the quality of arguments and quantity of evidence it is difficult to establish an unequivocal link on India's offensive nature.

Currently, India is faced with severe threats and its foreign policy is suffering from severe crises of confidence and reach.

Having serious challenges abroad and facing general election at home, the Modi government is tending to choices on the basis of their likely positive impact on the election. Since minimising these international challenges and ensuring survival of his government is of prime importance, Modi is fashioning narratives and environment in which he looks strong and credible enough.

Drastically contaminating all this environment is the recent attack on a convoy of the Central Reserve Police Force in India-occupied Kashmir, killing at least 40 personnel. As expected India has accused Pakistan of the attack. As it's only a matter of weeks that the general election will be held in India, therefore, the attack, deadliest in decades, carries significant repercussions.

The Modi-led government has shown little sign of restraint and rationality. Being guided by a mix of guile and expediency and to garner maximum political support, it has threatened to break stone after stone out of the already-crumbling foundation of Pakistan-India relations.

So, for the foreseeable future Pakistan is destined to be seen as a foe. Hatred against the country is and will continue to be woven deeply into the identity and culture of India.

India is militarily superior and the language of hard power is deeply rooted in the psyche of India's nationalist politicians. But if history is any guide, the employment of hard diplomacy, from Sri Lanka to Bhutan and Nepal, has never truly benefited India.

Hatred cannot be a national property and therefore mustn't be preserved in the psyche of people. Therefore, it is advisable that in situations of crisis and turmoil Indian politicians and policy-makers must refrain from responding opportunistically, no matter how much intensified vested interests there might be.

The atmosphere is polarised, so much so that it has complicated even the reality of the Kashmir dispute: what was originally a dispute based on territory is being ratcheted up into something much deeper, destructive struggle that seeks to destroy history, economy, culture, and national identity.

The moment shall pass. But what's important for Pakistan is that it must continue to reaffirm its commitment to the development of region-based connectivity infrastructure.

Both India and Pakistan must remember that pursuing a zero-sum relationship and embarking on needless military confrontations represents strategic and intellectual degradation. Notwithstanding the rising level of unemployment and mass deprivations that both countries have been experiencing more or less since their independence, such an approach has consistently burdened them to entangle themselves in growing levels of military spending. The strategy is diametrically opposed to what they need now.

Imran Khan has promised to reforming the country and strengthening its deteriorating institutions. He has spoken in terms of attaching overriding importance to economic development. If it is the context, it must also strictly be adhered to improving relationship with India.

Here it is important to underline one of the major problems with our strategic thinking: it is extraordinarily short-term. If there is any underlining strategic article of faith, if we call it so, it is essentially characterised by short-term, myopic, vacillating reactions. Nothing is unanimous, uncontested.

We are living in an era better described as 'contested modernity'. In this era of multiple and often competing values, in the changing circumstances, Pakistan will have a substantial say only if it develops its economy. How we handle our internal mess matters most. We must, therefore, acquire interests and instincts of a reviving economy.

As the world is becoming more and more multilateral and alliance systems experiencing greater fluidity, ever since the end of the Cold War, Pakistan is placed in an enviable position to facilitate great power cooperation and play a role conducive to great power peace. Led by China, as the power balance in the region changes, it inaugurates a golden age in Pakistan's regional position. To what extent Pakistan succeeds on capitalising on it will largely depend on the level of Pakistan's economic prowess.

In the current state of affairs, both India and Pakistan have much more to lose from poor foreign policy performance. Therefore, it is fundamental that both Pakistan and India adjust their domestic imperatives to the dictates of international political economy. Whether India does it or not, Pakistan surely has more incentive to tailor its internal behaviour towards facilitating greater cross-border economic, cultural and trade activities.

Published in The Express Tribune, February 28th, 2019.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1919755/6-pakistan-india-relations-6/>

ECONOMY

Monetary Policy Statement | Editorial

THE State Bank's recent monetary policy statement, and its attendant action of hiking the key discount rate by a quarter per cent, provides a cleverly nuanced insight into the state of the economy at the present moment. This is the halfway mark of the new government's first fiscal year, the crucial period when it has to capture the imagination of the public, establish its credibility in the eyes of its creditors and stakeholders in the economy, push through tough decisions and set a direction for economic and institutional reform. This is not an exhaustive list of course, because accompanying the list of expectations on the economic front, the government also has to set the tone in the political space and build its relationship with the other tiers of the state. In short, the moment has a big agenda, and given the serious economic pressures that the government inherited, there is also an added sense of urgency to find its footing and get on with the task of running the affairs of state.

So on this halfway point, what does the State Bank tell us about how the economy is faring? It rightly points out that there are "visible signs of deceleration in domestic demand", the crucial plank upon which the government's economic policy must be built, given the growing deficits on the fiscal and external accounts. It also rightly points out that this deceleration owes itself to "stabilisation measures implemented during the last twelve months", meaning if the government inherited an economy drifting towards crisis, it also inherited the policy direction through which it has sought to arrest this drift. It notes that the external deficit is narrowing, but still remains high despite the nearly \$4bn worth of support from "friendly countries", so much remains to be done and victory remains a far-off goal. Beyond this, the fiscal deficit "remains elevated" and core inflation is "persistently high" despite a near doubling of interest rates since January of 2018.

The result is that the economy continues to slow drastically, and the government is financing itself through massive printing of money, where borrowing from the State Bank jumped to Rs3.775tr between July 1 and Jan 18, "which is 4.3 times the amount borrowed during the same period last year". The fiscal deficit will

remain elevated, the State Bank says, and “fiscal policy will have to be proactive” in the remaining months of the fiscal year. Even though the State Bank does not spell this out, it takes only a little common sense to note that this means an emphasis on greater revenue mobilisation, something the government is shying away from. The picture is painted carefully, but it is unmistakable: the economy needs a firmer hand on the tiller, and the drift towards crisis has been temporarily arrested, but not reversed.

Published in Dawn, February 1st, 2019

Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1461177/monetary-policy-statement>

Moody's Terms Mini-Budget Positive For Export Sectors By Salman Siddiqui

KARACHI: Moody's – one of three big global credit rating agencies – has termed the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government's second mini-budget positive for manufacturing and export-oriented sectors, which will lend much-needed support to enhancing the country's foreign income and curb the current account deficit (CAD).

The US-based rating agency, however, stated that new budgetary measures weakened the government's income generation side as tax incentives awarded to industries and the agriculture sector further toughened the challenge of achieving the tax revenue collection target of Rs4.398 trillion. Accordingly, the budget deficit is expected to remain high.

“While the mini-budget will bolster the export sector, there is a greater risk of fiscal slippage and slower fiscal consolidation in the absence of additional revenue-raising measures,” the rating agency said on Thursday in a commentary on the second mini-budget which Finance Minister Asad Umar presented last week.

Last year in June, the agency downgraded Pakistan's credit rating to 'B3 negative' from 'stable' after it found that the country's foreign currency reserves were insufficient to pay back foreign debt.

The latest commentary suggested that foreign currency reserves were inclined to improve, which might lead the credit rating body to consider revising upwards the country's credit rating going forward. The agency, however, failed to provide any statement on the future credit rating of the country.

“Specific measures taken in the latest mini-budget include reduction in import customs duties on essential raw material and machinery, abolition of tax on retained earnings and incentives for the agriculture sector, which accounts for around 20% of the country's exports,” it said.

If effective, the new budgetary measures will aid Pakistan's manufacturing sector, fostering export and import substitution, and help narrow the current account deficit. However, in the absence of new spending cuts or revenue-raising

measures, these steps will keep Pakistan's budget deficit wider for longer, potentially eroding the credibility of government efforts to achieve fiscal consolidation.

Pakistan's revenue base was a slim 15.4% of GDP in fiscal year 2018, which ended on June 30, 2018.

The government presented limited revenue-raising measures, primarily taxes on large vehicles and high-end mobile phones. "As a result, the mini-budget places greater weight on improvement in tax administration and spending restraint for the government to meet its deficit target of 5.1% of GDP," it said.

"We expect the deficit to widen to 6% of GDP in fiscal year 2019 because revenue growth is likely to be below government projections provided slower economic growth and new revenue-based incentives, before gradually narrowing to 5% of GDP by fiscal 2021 as the economy picks up."

The mini-budget comes in the backdrop of low export growth in the first six months (July-December) of fiscal year 2019, despite the Pakistani rupee's 25% decline against the US dollar since December 2017. The government was seeking to narrow the current account deficit by reducing some of the tax distortions which exporters face.

"Weak exports aside, Pakistan's current account dynamics have been largely positive in recent months," it pointed out. "Remittances rose by 10% year-on-year in US dollar terms in the first half of fiscal year 2019, while goods' import slowed sharply by around 3% year-on-year as non-fuel goods import contracted."

"Although we expect the current-account deficit to narrow to 4.7% of GDP in fiscal year 2019 and to 4.2% in fiscal year 2020 from 6.1% in fiscal year 2018, it will remain sizable and wider than in 2013-16 driving Pakistan's external financing needs."

Foreign financing

"The government has secured \$12 billion in financing from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates – in each case amounting to \$6 billion and divided equally

between deposits and deferred oil payments – which is likely to largely cover the country’s net financing needs for fiscal 2019,” Moody’s Investors Service said.

However, a net financing gap beyond fiscal 2019 remains because of the still sizable current account deficit, it said.

Pakistan remains in negotiations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) over a new programme, which will provide a stable additional source of external financing as well as technical support and assistance on macroeconomic rebalancing and structural reform policies.

Published in The Express Tribune, February 1st, 2019.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1901278/2-moodys-terms-mini-budget-positive-export-sectors/>

Pakistan Banao Plan | Editorial

The Prime Minister has always held a special affinity for Overseas Pakistanis- he has credited them for their contributions to the Pakistani economy, and to his own project, Shaukat Khanum Hospital, time and again, even before taking office. It is apparent that the government sees overseas Pakistanis as a useful asset for the economy- and now it is setting in place policies to utilise this asset.

On Thursday, the Prime Minister and the Finance Minister, while lauding the charitable efforts of overseas Pakistanis and the contribution that expats have made to the economy by way of remittances, formally launched 'Pakistan Banao Certificates' (PBCs) to tap into the savings of over eight million overseas Pakistanis for securing much-needed foreign exchange reserves to stabilise the country's economy. According to Finance Minister, the PBCs are available with three-year and five-year maturity period at profit rates of 6.25 per cent and 6.75pc per year, respectively. The scheme also involves several further incentives for investors including exemptions from withholding tax and compulsory deduction of Zakat, and the option to encash the certificates prematurely in Pakistani rupee without any deduction.

A new economic policy was direly needed considering the past few months have been difficult. Hikes in prices of electricity, gas and other commodities have hit the lower-income consumers particularly hard, and foreign debt is high. The announcement was a response from the government to alleviate the hardship afflicted by the harsh economic conditions.

Pakistan makes most of its revenue through its foreign remittances and it is a good initiative of the government to increase incentives for investment from Overseas Pakistanis. Remittances had slowed down massively in late 2018 and it is hoped this step by the government brings back trust in the economy. However, Pakistan should not be a country overly dependent on its expats-this should not be the only step the government takes to increase foreign reserves.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/02-Feb-2019/pakistan-banao-plan>

An Economic Miracle For Pakistan By

Naseem Javed

Once Pakistan's mid-sized business economy gets professionally digitalised and is fully globally accessible. This will enable small and medium sized businesses of the nation showcased on national platforms to project their identity, talent, production of quality goods and services and open for global inter-connectivity. Four amazing things will happen; quadrupling of exports, extra foreign exchange and a boosting of the entrepreneurial talents with superior global image around the world. This will also awaken the most valuable but currently dormant Pakistani diaspora to bounce with this massive mobilization. An economic miracle is a possibility. But what will happen if all this was achieved within 300 days?

Two critical hurdles; This is not possible, without a new understanding of global age economic transformation and demands creating top level world-class real hardcore debates, bringing right thought leadership, engaging with blueprints and global expertise leading to consensus and acceptance to become an aggressively driven digitally minded nation. Secondly, lay out national agenda with full knowledge that such deployments of national mobilisations are primarily knowledge and execution centric and have less to do with new funding.

The following are four critical steps to creating an economic miracle:

Every big and small enterprise, right across the nation should be allowed free access to massive national digital platforms to enable cross-fertilization and showcase their talents, goods and services. This national and global exposure with world-class quality will create trading opportunities and will mobilize the dormant Pakistani diaspora. Not to be confused with current old-style websites and disorganized social media buzz, this is an ultra-sophisticated global-scale maneuver.

Every national trade association and every major chamber of commerce across the nation must be mandated to share such national umbrella platforms with cross-fertilization and large pools of knowledge shared to enable vertical sector growths. All this activity will further enhance already structured trade groups via fast digital to open flood gates to new global customers

Every entrepreneur of the nation must be allowed to showcase their talent ideas, no matter how big or small but recognized to be part of custom designed national platform. This fully digital national entrepreneurial deployment programs with detailed profiles showcasing special expertise will create cross-fertilization with national and global alliances creating expansion and innovative excellence. This is not to be confused with start-ups, existing pools of large but disconnected data as these are global age savvy marketing and image building platforms curated to intelligently representsmart and experienced entrepreneurs of the nation of all ages.

Every national trade association and every major chamber of commerce across the nation must be mandated to share such national umbrella platforms with cross-fertilization and large pools of knowledge shared to enable vertical sector growths. All this activity will further enhance already structured trade groups via fast digital to open flood gates to new global customers. Not to be confused with current newsletter and broken mailing lists, this is very advanced footwork on global stage.

Immediately: This work will also make it possible for national mobilization of massive unlearning programs to drift away from the past procedures and new relearning of the future and global age skills, across the million frontline workers in both public and private sectors. Furthermore, across the vast nation, this deployment and framing will boost the morale of small and midsize businesses the real but currently stalled economic engines of Pakistan. Digitalization will open a brand-new world for those missing global accessibility and limited on showcasing of their talents on trading and creating foreign exchange possibilities.

Can Pakistan's midsize Economy become fully digital within 300 days... yes, but with some difficulty.

Can midsize economy gatekeeper and owners become digitally oriented...yes, but with great difficulty.

Can leaders of trade groups and trade associations agree to mobilize...yes, but with extreme difficulty.

Can there be a high-level debate and discussion to explore any miraculous option... yes, very easily.

Failure to achieve such speedy executions will only force the populace to lose faith in any economic revival. How can the digitalization of Pakistan's midsize business economy become a miracle for the nation? Your call!

The author is the founding chairperson of Expothon Worldwide

Published in Daily Times, February 6th 2019.

Source: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/351597/an-economic-miracle-for-pakistan/>

The NFC Debate | Editorial

The National Finance Commission (NFC) has finally had a meeting to set agenda for resource distribution between the Centre and provinces for the next five years. While the details of the meeting have not been publicly known, media reports say that participants agreed in principle that the population census of 2017 would form the basis for the resource-distribution formula. It was also agreed that the federal government would involve the provinces in its negotiations with the IMF.

The Wednesday meeting was held amid speculations that the federal government intended to withdraw the powers of provinces to collect sales tax on services as well as income tax on agriculture. Punjab and Sindh have, however, publicly declared that they would strongly resist any such move by Islamabad. The Sindh chief minister the other day even took exception to the federal government's recent decision to determine property valuation in some urban centres of the country. Sindh had also been complaining about receiving less than its due share from the divisible pool. The federal government, reportedly failing in its targets of revenue generation, should find itself in a difficult position to enhance the share of provinces. According to the Constitution, "The share of the provinces in each Award of National Finance Commission shall not be less than the share given to the provinces in the previous Award." In fact, the last NFC award that was signed in December 2009, after a gap of 20 years, envisaged substantial reduction in the share of the federal government from the divisible pool, besides authorising provinces to collect sales tax on services and agricultural income tax. Another landmark decision taken in the last award related to population not being the sole basis of resource distribution among federating units. Poverty and backwardness are two other factors that have been taken into consideration for resource distribution from the divisible pool.

However, if the initial reports about the Wednesday meeting agreeing to take 2017 population census as basis for the next NFC award are correct, it is unlikely to be welcomed by some political parties which dispute census results and claim that they were manipulated, especially in case of Karachi.

Published in The Express Tribune, February 8th, 2019.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1905796/6-the-nfc-debate/>

PayPal In Pakistan | Editorial

In order to boost the online economy, the government has to take steps to ensure that companies which manage online payment have access to the economy of Pakistan. A large portion of the Pakistani population, primarily the youth, have been working online distantly for several international platforms. The hindrance in this transaction is the transfer of money. Many users across the globe use Paypal or Alibaba accounts for this purpose, however, these companies do not have a set up in Pakistan. This makes transnational payments difficult and home-based workers have to find their way around this difficulty to be paid for the tasks they perform.

For several months, this workforce was under the impression that the new government is not interested in pursuing Paypal to enter into the market of Pakistan. However, recently Finance Minister Asad Umer has clarified that there is no truth in that statement. In fact, the government realises the need for such platforms. These are the little ways which can help boost the economy. The new channels of income need to be introduced. Several among the workforce also do not go out to work, rather look for options for working from home. Paypal would be a good and secure opportunity that will encourage them to look beyond the national market for work.

Minister Asad Umer also clarified that a statement has been sent to the Paypal chief executive officer to set up a meeting. The Minister also offered to travel to the United States (US) in case traveling to Pakistan is not feasible for them. The government should ensure that if not Paypal, then at least AliPay is on board with the idea of venturing into the Pakistani market. The IT Ministry back in 2015 announced that it was set to invite global online payment giants to Pakistan but it was not pursued. Delaying this further will only damage the economy.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/13-Feb-2019/paypal-in-pakistan>

IMF Bailout and Structural Reforms in Pakistan By Foqia Sadiq Khan

It seems Pakistan's talks with the IMF are back on track again. There is no conclusive end in sight, yet there has been some contact by the both sides again. It seems PTI government wants to get another bailout package from the IMF, yet they do not want too harsh conditions to be imposed, particularly in their initial time in the government.

IMF will no doubt push Pakistan towards implementing structural reforms in the economic management. It is not the first time, the talk of reforms is reverberating through the corridors of powers in Pakistan. It has been happening since the early 1990s.

As per the literature, the structural adjustment programme is essentially a sequence of reforms inspired by the neo-liberal school of thinking. Structural adjustment is based on an economic philosophy whose main elements are "liberalization, deregulation and privatization" of the economy. Structural adjustment policies were first implemented in the industrialized countries in the post-1973 oil crisis period to check inflation, tighten monetary and fiscal balance and liberalise trade. After their implementation in parts of the developed world, similar prescriptions were made for the developing countries. In the 1980s, they were "exported" to the developing countries as a panacea for economic problems. These policies had huge impact on the economy and politics of developing countries, including Pakistan. They aimed to replace the state led economic management with market driven forces. Therefore, the basic tenet of the structural adjustment programme is a shift of focus from government controlled to private sector run economy to reduce fiscal deficit. Economic structures in trade, financial, fiscal, monetary sectors underwent a liberalization transformation during the structural adjustment (SA) reforms.

Despite over a dozen of IMF programmes, Pakistan has not been able to bring about structural reforms. Now IMF seems focused on raising the power tariffs to deal with circular debt. PTI government has already increased the interest rates and devalued the Pakistani currency, as the IMF might have demanded it

International Financial Institutions (IFIs) also wanted to bring in corporate governance in Pakistan. The Structural Adjustment Programme back then wanted to cut back on the interventionist role of the state in Pakistan. Its prescriptions that have remained unchanged over the decades are tightening the fiscal belt, bringing in macroeconomic stability, liberalization of trade, free flow of currency exchange, and cutting down subsidies. IMF imposed the General Sales Tax (GST) in Pakistan to phase out revenue earned from tariffs and to increase revenue.

IFIs were also keen to bring in institutional second-generation governance reforms. These second generation reforms dealt with modernization of accounts and audit functions, tax reforms, regulation of government borrowings, institutionalization of a securities regulatory tasks, provision of access to information, and judicial system reforms.

Despite over a dozen of IMF programmes, Pakistan has not been able to bring about structural reforms. Now IMF seems focused on raising the power tariffs to deal with circular debt. PTI government has already increased the interest rates and devalued the Pakistani currency, as the IMF might have demanded it.

In a way, it is good that PTI government has not rushed into another IMF bailout this time around. Though, the government's thinking is quite fuzzy and pros and cons of waiting on the IMF have not been made public to a large extent. It would have been worthwhile to know the blueprint of economic programme that PTI has in store for us.

There is also a need to determine whether the IMF demanded structural reforms are going to promote the welfare of people and strengthen the institutions. If so, then there is need to analyze the structural impediments blocking such reforms in the past and strategize ways on overcome those challenges.

It is also encouraging the PTI government is focused on bringing in more investment in the country rather than just being focused on handouts. Foreign direct investment is a more sustainable way to promote economic growth. Investments should not only be seen in terms of bringing in the scarce foreign exchange, efforts should also be made to transfer technology. Prime Minister Imran Khan is fond of quoting China's success. China not only successfully

brought in foreign investment and spurred its manufacturing, it also actively worked on acquisition of technology.

There are powerful interest groups in Pakistan who have resisted previous efforts to introduce structural reforms in the country. As political economy literature has been discussing for a long time that there are winners and losers when new measures are introduced. In Pakistan's case, the potential losers from the reforms have been powerful enough to subvert the process of structural reforms. The government needs to become strong to impose its will and carry out reforms, if they are indeed going to improve the lives of us citizens of this country.

The writer is an Islamabad-based social scientist

Published in Daily Times, February 15th 2019.

Source: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/354692/imf-bailout-and-structural-reforms-in-pakistan/>

Pakistan Meets All FATF Requirements By Shahbaz Rana

Pakistan has taken all the five actions prescribed by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) ahead of its first review, but India is expected to play the spoiler's role and may push the case to get tougher on eight proscribed organisations.

The FATF's plenary meetings would take place from February 17 to 22 in Paris. The global body that is working to combat money laundering and terrorism financing would hold the first review of Pakistan after placing the country on its grey list with effect from June 2018.

Islamabad had been given a 27-point action plan that the country will implement till September 2019.

Pakistan's case would be presented by the Asia Pacific Group that will report progress on five out of 27 agreed actions, according to the Ministry of Finance officials. The authorities are hopeful that the country will be able to pass through the first milestone.

A Pakistani delegation comprising officials from the Ministry of Finance, Foreign Affairs and Financial Monitoring Unit would leave for Paris at the weekend. The FATF has placed Pakistan on the grey list of countries whose terrorism financing and anti-money laundering laws are described as deficient.

The FATF will review progress in four key areas –Terrorism Financing Risk Assessment report, report of the customs department on cash couriers, implementation on the United Nations Security Council resolutions, and inter-agency coordination. On basis of these four areas, the FATF had identified five actions for the first review of the implementation on the 27 point Action Plan.

Based on an interaction with the Asia Pacific's Joint Review Group, Pakistan expects that lengthy discussions may take place on Terrorism Financing Risk Assessment report. Out of five actions, three relate to terrorism financing risk assessment.

The risk assessment report has been prepared on the World Bank methodology and has already been approved by the National Executive Committee on Anti Money Laundering (AML).

A coordination committee on the AML and Counter-Terrorism Financing also met last week to finalise responses to the questions raised on the report by the Asia Pacific Group.

Last month, an Indian delegation had raised the issues of Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD), Falah-e-Insaniyat Foundation (FIF), Lashkar Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammed, and four other organisations.

In light of these discussions, the Joint Review Group had sent a questionnaire to Pakistan that primarily revolved around eight proscribed organisations, according to the Finance Ministry officials.

They said India wanted Pakistan to share details of the threat assessment of these organisations. The officials said New Delhi may push the FATF to ask Pakistan share the evidence and actions taken against these organisations. Indians were looking for data that could address their concerns about the activities of these organizations in areas that are near to its borders.

The government officials involved in these discussions believed that Pakistan has done enough and some European countries are also now supportive of its stance. Pakistan has also used diplomatic channels to convince the FATF member countries about its commitments to curb terrorism financing.

The Finance Ministry officials said the terrorism risk report has clearly demonstrated the geographical locations of these organisations and the risk-based approach has been adopted to tackle challenges emanating from these organisations.

They said the second action that relates to proper identification and the nature of risks of cash couriers being used for terrorist financing has also been met. The law enforcement agencies have also taken measures to curb smuggling of cash at international borders, including at the Afghan border.

The third action relates to the assessment and understanding of both domestic and trans-national terrorism financing risks to guide terrorist financing investigations. This was also an area where Indians were focusing, said the officials.

Pakistan is confident on the remaining two actions that relate to targeted financial sanctions regarding asset freezing and ongoing prohibitions to provide funds and financial services and publication of an updated list of persons and entities proscribed under the Anti-Terrorism Act and UN-designated entities.

The list is available on the website of National Counter Terrorism Authority (Nacta) website that shows that 67 organizations, splinter outfits have been notified as proscribed by Ministry of Interior under the Anti Terrorism Act, 1997. The Al Rahmah Welfare Trust Organisation was also pro-scribed on Dec, 13.

However, the government has to work hard in the remaining 22 actions, particularly related to convictions and prosecutions in the terrorism financing cases. There will be two more reviews in May 2019 and Sept 2019 before the FATF takes a decision on whether to remove Pakistan from the grey list.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1910797/2-pakistan-meets-fatf-requirements/>

CPEC and Iran | Editorial

Iran is eager to join the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, or CPEC – a part of the gigantic One-Belt One-Road initiative envisioned by President Xi Jinping.

This is not the first time that the neighbouring Muslim country has expressed desire to be a part of the multi-billion-dollar project with an intent to enhance land connectivity for trade purposes. The latest ‘expression of interest’ came during a meeting of Iranian Ambassador to Pakistan Mehdi Honardoost with members of the Pak-Iran Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

That economic integration and trading blocs are fundamental elements of the contemporary world order needs no debate. Examples in the context are the success stories of the European Union i.e. the EU and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, or Asean. While the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, i.e. Saarc, so far failed to take off, CPEC has fortunately provided our region a much better substitute.

Billed as game changer and fate changer, the giant project has all the potential to integrate the region into a strong economic and trading bloc, which can then serve to decrease the global role of the United States and its allies.

That a lot of countries, including Britain, Turkey, Russia and several Central Asian states, have expressed the desire to join CPEC speaks volumes about the growing regional interest in the project and its potential to turn into an effective trade bloc.

Bringing Iran on board CPEC can be the first step towards regional integration. Iran believes “regional cooperation is one of the best ways to overcome poverty and other problems in the region” and says it is “ready to be a part of CPEC with all our capabilities and resources”.

Understanding full well that it is trade that trumps diplomacy, Iran is optimistic that CPEC can serve to narrow down diplomatic differences among the various states in the region by becoming a common platform of cooperation.

Published in The Express Tribune, February 16th, 2019.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1911463/6-cpec-and-iran/>

Pakistan Has Come Out of Financial Crisis: **SBP Governor By Shahid Iqbal**

KARACHI: Governor of the State Bank of Pakistan Tariq Bajwa has said the country has come out of the financial crisis with the help of friendly countries and the economy has been set on the right path.

Speaking at a private university in Lahore on Monday, he said uncertainty in the economy had ended. The government, he said, was on the right path and it was capable of meeting all economic challenges.

Take a look: 'Tough measures are necessary to rescue the economy,' says Hammad Azhar

The governor spoke about the current account deficit, which had hit the economy badly during the current financial year.

The current account deficit was the real cause of concern for the new government headed by Prime Minister Imran Khan. Mr Khan visited friendly countries like China, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Malaysia and Turkey to seek investment and managed to get financial help to bridge the external deficit.

Mr Bajwa said a plan had been prepared to eliminate the current account deficit and the work in this regard was in progress. He said the deficit was the biggest hurdle for the country and the government was still negotiating with the International Monetary Fund for a package to minimise it.

He said the government had not crossed the limit for borrowing from the SBP. It had borrowed Rs3 trillion from the central bank and returned Rs2tr, he added.

Since the beginning of the new financial year, the government has been borrowing from the SBP for budgetary support, while it has retired loans taken from the scheduled banks. It has so far retired about \$2.9tr to the scheduled banks.

The policy shows the government wants to keep the scheduled banks liquid so the private sector could borrow more from the banking system.

According to a latest SBP report, the private sector borrowing has more than doubled from July 1 to Feb 8 to Rs571 billion from Rs264bn in the same period of the last financial year.

The SBP governor said the cases involving Rs600bn were pending in banking courts. He said capacity building was being developed to deal with the huge number of pending cases and for their quick decisions.

He said the cases must be decided quickly so that the banks could use the money involved in litigation.

Mr Bajwa said the SBP had offered to bear expenses of training of judges to help the courts decide the pending cases urgently.

He said the policy to depreciate the rupee had been adopted to reduce the trade deficit, which was the main reason for high current account deficit.

Published in Dawn, February 19th, 2019

Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1464714/pakistan-has-come-out-of-financial-crisis-sbp-governor>

WTO's Potential Game-Changer: Global E-Commerce Rules? – Analysis By Eunice Huang

The recently launched WTO negotiations on e-commerce seeks to establish a new rulebook for e-commerce trade, and could be a potential game-changer for the global economy.

Amidst the glitz and glamour of the annual Davos shindig last month, a potential game-changer for the global economy was launched to less fanfare than it deserved. Some 76 Members of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) announced their intention to commence WTO negotiations on trade-related aspects of electronic commerce.

The launch of the negotiations marked a major milestone in a process that started almost 2.5 years ago, when it became abundantly clear that the WTO could no longer ignore the realities of the digital economy. Global e-commerce trade totalled almost US\$28 trillion in 2016, an increasing proportion of which were cross-border e-commerce transactions. It was clear that digital trade was the future of international trade. The establishment of a global rulebook on e-commerce was therefore not only critical to the functioning and health of the global economy, but also to the very relevance of the WTO.

Major Leap Forward

But as multilateral consensus to move ahead on e-commerce rules proved elusive despite best efforts in Geneva, the next best alternative was to work through a joint initiative on e-commerce, open to all interested WTO Members. This initiative, shepherded by Singapore, Japan and Australia, was launched at the Eleventh WTO Ministerial Conference in Buenos Aires in December 2017.

2018 was spent locked in intensive discussions on what an e-commerce rulebook could look like, and how it could take into account the interests of all Members, especially those of the developing and least-developed economies, as well as the challenges faced by micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs).

The 25 January 2019 launch was therefore a concrete and bold pushback in the face of concerns, including at Davos, over mounting trade tensions as well as the erosion of the international order and multilateral cooperation. Its significance should not be underestimated.

Four Major Developments

There are four noteworthy developments in particular:

One, the composition of WTO Members confirming their participation in the negotiations represents over 90 per cent of global trade. Most notably, major economies such as the United States, China, Japan, the European Union, Nigeria and Russia are participants. China was a last-minute entrant to the group.

What this means is that the eventual outcome of these negotiations, if successful, will set the new baseline of rules and norms for global e-commerce trade. The opportunity to be at the table to shape and influence the contours of this new rulebook is a powerful proposition for participation.

Two, the US and China's participation in this initiative creates additional space for strategic engagement. US-China strategic rivalry is underpinned by competition for technological supremacy. Trade is but one manifestation of this rivalry. Digital trade, which lies at the intersection of the two spheres, will no doubt be where the competition will be most intense and contested.

Finding an eventual landing zone will be tough. But the fact that both the US and China have agreed to participate in this negotiation process is a positive sign that both sides will continue to engage and create multiple channels for dialogue and mutual understanding.

Three, a wide range of developing countries and LDCs have agreed to participate in the negotiations. China is the most notable example, but others such as Thailand, Mongolia, Honduras, Georgia, El Salvador, the United Arab Emirates and Nicaragua have come aboard since Buenos Aires. The negotiating group also includes LDCs such as Myanmar and Laos, which recognise the potential of e-commerce as key growth drivers for their economies by allowing them to leapfrog and be plugged into global supply and value chains.

The strong participation of developing economies in the negotiations necessitates an eventual outcome that reflects a fine balance of interests, rights and obligations. This has also been set as a negotiating objective from the very beginning, where the participants pledged “to recognise and take into account the unique opportunities and challenges faced by Members, including developing countries and LDCs, as well as by MSMEs, in relation to e-commerce”.

Looking Ahead

Finally, the launch of the e-commerce negotiations is a demonstration of an underlying resilience in the WTO’s rules-based system and more importantly, its community of Members. The WTO has come under fire in recent years for being ineffective, outdated and irrelevant. Some of the criticism is warranted, especially the failure of the Doha Round.

But what many pundits fail to recognise is that the WTO’s agenda is ultimately defined and constrained by the interests of its constituent Members. The launch of the plurilateral negotiations is not a breakdown in multilateralism, but a resounding “no” against paralysis. It is a decided and bold move by WTO Members who recognise the relevance and importance of the WTO system to shape the future of international trade.

The path ahead will be arduous and fraught with complexities. Deep schisms exist amongst the current crop of participants on key issues such as cross-border data flows and privacy. Negotiators will have to carefully navigate the “tri-lemma” of ambition, coverage and time. Support and continued engagement from the international business community will be crucial in ensuring that new rules match up with commercial realities.

The architecture of the eventual agreement will also be a major determinant of its success, especially in gaining buy-in from more developing countries and LDCs. It will not be easy to find that happy balance, but there is no alternative to not trying.

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Source: <http://www.eurasiareview.com/15022019-wtos-potential-game-changer-global-e-commerce-rules-analysis/>

CPEC and Saudi Investment: The Way Forward By Shakeel Ahmad Ramay

Pakistan is celebrating the announcement of \$20 billion investment by Crown Prince Muhammad Bin Salman (MBS). Indeed, this is a cause of great relief and satisfaction for Pakistan's investment hungry economy, which was struggling to overcome the shocks and devastating impacts of the war on terror, frequent floods and bad governance. There were offers from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), but they were not acceptable. Moreover, our allies in the war on terror were using the IMF as leverage against us.

In this dire situation, Pakistan executed a plan to engage our friends and brothers. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates responded to Pakistan's call with generosity. Qatar and Oman are also not far behind. Qatar has already offer 100,000 jobs for Pakistanis.

MBS visited Pakistan to re-enforce Riyadh's commitments with Pakistan. Pakistan and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) signed a diverse range of agreements in multiple sectors including energy, agriculture, culture, information and tourism during the visit. The cherry on top was that MBS announced that this was just the beginning. These investments are in addition to the CPEC-related investments that had already come in previously. So, Pakistan will have to enhance its capacity to tackle and absorb the investment flow. Capacity to absorb the investment or use it efficiently is a weak area in the context of Pakistan, as we have already witnessed this during the implementation of CPEC.

There are many commonalities between CPEC and the Saudi investment. The Saudi package is similar to CPEC and covers a wide range of areas of economy. It is a long-term program. It is mainly focused on people. It is about creating jobs. Most importantly, it has a human face and human priorities like CPEC. Lastly, it has vital importance for our economic revival like CPEC. Therefore, it is anticipated that it will attract opposition from the enemies of Pakistan. Pakistan needs to devise a policy to avoid this situation by learning lessons from the CPEC related propaganda and shortcomings in our system.

CPEC provided the basic required infrastructure in energy and transport along with other sectors, which was required to attract investment. Now Pakistan has started to reap the benefits in the form of investment from other countries

There are areas where Pakistan needs to start working immediately. Pakistan will have to overhaul its investment policy, trade policy, provision of utilities and governance. Pakistan is very poorly placed on many indicators of ease of doing business and better governance.

Previous governments could not divert much attention in these areas. In the past, this performance led to the shrinking of investment in Pakistan, even Pakistani investors started to look for other countries for investment. It is positive sign that the present government is trying to resolve these issues. However, they have to speed up the process and put more human resources in to get results quickly. It is a huge task and the government needs much more resources in the human and financial sectors to execute it. The government does not have the required human resources to tackle this task. Therefore, it would be advisable for the government to build partnerships with independent Think-Tanks and other research institutions.

Another area of that needs attention would be countering social media propaganda. Pakistan has been a victim of this trend on multiple fronts. In recent times, CPEC has been a favourite target. Opponents applied all types of instruments to defame or malign CPEC and China. China and Pakistan were able to sustain the pressure due to their deep-rooted trust and friendship. Although Pakistan and Saudi Arabia also enjoy deep-rooted trust and brotherhood, this time the campaign would be more aggressive. It would require a multi layer strategy and tools to counter the negative propaganda.

The first line of defence would be the information ministry. Second line of defence would be the political class of Pakistan. They will have to put aside their differences and work for the country. CPEC became a subject of debate among the provinces and political parties without any reason. All provinces and political parties started to play at the cost of CPEC. It set the wrong precedent and the country's opponents a chance to use it for their negative propaganda. Therefore, this time it would be advisable to avoid this and try to solve all issues within political circles not on social, print or electronic media.

The third and most important actor would be the Foreign Office (FO) of Pakistan. The FO would have to redefine its public diplomacy department and concepts. Now we are living in an age of digital diplomacy and new innovative tools of engagement and pursuing national agenda. The FO would have to develop a policy which employs diplomatic experts, economic experts, culture advocates, military and strategic minds and the people of Pakistan (DECMP). Economic experts and military and strategic minds would be key in assisting the FO and developing national narrative and strategy. Economic experts would be leading on the front of “data” and real picture of economy. Data and explanation of data would be very critical in maintaining image of country. Military and strategic minds would be helpful to define and implement the security measures.

Engagement of people and promotion of culture would be a tool for countering psychological warfare. Ownership of common people will save people from being trapped in a negative agenda. Success on these fronts would determine the success of KSA’s investment and future prospects of investment.

The last area that needs special attention would be countering the notion of competition between CPEC and Saudi investment. This will be done just to create a misunderstanding between Pakistan, KSA or China. Pakistan needs to be very clear on this and adopt a transparent and comprehensive policy. First of all we need to be clear that CPEC is a unique and transformative program for Pakistan. China came to offer the program at a time when nobody was investing in Pakistan. CPEC provided the basic required infrastructure in energy and transport along other sectors, which was required to attract investment. Now Pakistan has started to reap the benefits in the form of investment from other countries.

Now, Saudi Arabia came forward to address the investment issues of Pakistan and help in managing the financial crises along with UAE and China. Saudi investment would be crucial to revive the economy and create jobs. It also presents an opportunity to increase trade with Saudi Arabia, which would be beneficial for managing the trade deficit. The establishment of an oil refinery could help the country save \$1.2 billion. It will also open new avenues for building cooperation in tourism and the services sectors. In conclusion, both will compliment each other. There will not be any competition between them. Therefore, Pakistan should keep both initiatives as one initiative and treat them equally. It would be wise to create

a trilateral group (China-Pakistan-Saudi Arabia Group of Investment) to steer the future initiatives in a smooth manner.

The writer is COO Zalmi Foundation

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FTA With US – An Opportunity Pakistan Should Not Miss By Dr. Manzoor Ahmad

ISLAMABAD: During his recent visit to Pakistan, Republican Senator Lindsey Graham, a close aide of US President Donald Trump, indicated that he could use his influence with the US government to enable Pakistan to clinch a free trade agreement (FTA) with America.

In response, the Pakistani government spokesman said “although Pakistan is helping the United States in restoring peace in Afghanistan, when we talk about the FTA, it is very difficult as it takes five to seven years.”

The reality is different. Average time for the US to conclude is merely 18 months. There are many cases where FTAs were concluded in a short time. For example, the US-Jordan FTA took only four months. Similarly, in case of Bahrain and Oman, it took seven and 10 months respectively.

The longest the US has taken to conclude any of its 14 FTAs is the one with Panama, which took 38 months from the beginning of negotiations to the signing of an agreement. Of course, once an agreement is concluded, it could take some time for its implementation. The average time span is 45 months.

The US-Jordan FTA can serve as a good precedent. Jordan got the FTA as a reward for playing a constructive role in achieving Oslo Accords between Israel and Palestine in 1993. Now, Pakistan is being asked to play a similar role in bringing Taliban to the negotiating table and signing a peace agreement to enable the US to exit Afghanistan.

Pakistan is already playing an important role but as in the past it may miss the chance to translate this opportunity into any long-term trade gains for itself.

Pakistan lost a good opportunity when it sided with America in the aftermath of 9/11 attacks. It could have pressed hard for an FTA but instead settled for military and other financial aid. Now, the present opportunity should not be allowed to slip away. Aid is short-lived whereas trade is beneficial in the long term.

After Jordan signed the FTA with the US, several large American companies established factories in that country to avail duty-free access. Within five years after the FTA, Jordanian exports to America increased twentyfold.

Although Jordan had no previous record of exporting textiles and clothing to the US, now exports of these products exceed \$2 billion.

The US is already Pakistan's top most export destination with exports of about \$3.56 billion or more than twice as much as the second placed country, the United Kingdom with \$1.63 billion or the third place export destination, China with \$1.5 billion.

If through the FTA, import duties averaging 10-16% could be removed from Pakistani products, it could easily double exports to the US in a short time. On the other hand, exports of the US to Pakistan are about \$2.85 billion as compared to China's exports of \$15.38 billion or the UAE's \$7.52 billion. These consist of products such as soybean, aircraft and railway vehicles, cotton, seeds, etc, which pose no threat to either Pakistan's industry or revenue.

Trade deficit shrinks 5% to \$16.8b as imports go down

Another benefit of having an FTA with the US would be to bring more direct investment. In 2017, US foreign direct investment in Pakistan was \$518 million, which was just a fraction of its investment of \$44 billion in India in 2017.

Any jump in FDI from the US would not only greatly increase employment opportunities, but will also help with Pakistan's external-sector issues.

Pakistan has to realise that the window of opportunity is very narrow. Once the US withdraws from Afghanistan, it may be too late. Also expiring in July 2021 is the US president's trade promotion authority under which the American leader has the mandate from Congress to negotiate trade deals.

Trade deficit slightly contracts to \$14.5b in five months

It is, therefore, essential that Pakistan plays a proactive role and do the necessary. It should insist on parallel negotiations for an FTA when the Taliban-US negotiations are taking place.

At the same time, Pakistan has to be ready with its preparatory work. So far Pakistan's FTAs and Preferential Trade Agreements have been very sketchy, which only covered goods and services. On the other hand, if the US agrees to have an FTA with Pakistan, it would ask for a comprehensive agreement covering issues relating to labour and environment.

Pakistan needs to be ready if such an opportunity comes its way. It needs to clearly identify its objectives. It has also to realise that success is where preparation and opportunity meet.

The writer served as Pakistan's ambassador to the WTO from 2002 to 2008

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EDUCATION

Piecing Together Pakistan's Education Puzzle By Maha Dania Qazi

If we wish to accomplish progress in the education sector, a major part of the effort should be to make teacher training compulsory. Teaching capacities should be enhanced through professional training. Only then can teaching as a profession make its contribution to meeting the challenges of the 21st century. This applies to schools in both the government and private sectors.

A World Bank study (2007) shows a significant correlation between the quality of education during school years and the quality of economic growth and social security. The quality of an individual teacher does not depend on just having so many years of teaching experience. It depends as much or more on the individual teacher having training and qualifications in the field of teaching.

For this to happen on a national scale it will be important to develop a culture that prioritizes the hiring of individuals of merit and quality over other more subjective considerations. This is true of all professions including teaching. Wherever subjective or arbitrary criteria are used for the selection and appointment of teachers the standards of teaching and education accordingly suffer. The longer-term costs of this for society are very considerable.

The provision of good quality education at affordable cost, especially in a developing country, is a basic governmental obligation. For that matter so is healthcare and the provision of a clean environment. Unfortunately, in Pakistan decent levels of school education – that equip children for the challenges of today – are only available in some private schools. The fee structures of these schools, however, rule out children from poorer families availing of better educational services. Moreover, many private schools avoid hiring qualified and trained teachers in order to increase their profits. There are, however, a few private schools that conduct in house teacher training such as Beacon house.

Teacher training programs should enable teachers to understand different learning methods as all children do not learn in the same way

The government has been trying to achieve the targets of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by prioritizing equitable quality education, and to increase the supply of qualified teachers by 2030. The problem has been the attitude of private school owners and their senior management staff who often look upon the provision of primary and secondary education as a private profit-making business rather than a social and public obligation. There is one piece that is essential to secure a job and that space is reserved for the favored. Accordingly, to save costs there is a tendency to underrate the need to have professionally trained teachers who will have to be paid decent salaries. The Supreme Court of Pakistan has taken note of this situation. The government has often spoken of an education revolution.

Bridging the educational gap has assumed the status of an urgent national priority given the ticking time bomb of population increase and climate change. The future of Pakistan will depend on harnessing the potential of Pakistan's biggest asset, its children and youth. Parents of school going children should demand the constitutional right of all Pakistanis to a decent education and at the same time be cognizant of the challenges and adopt new modes of thinking alongside schools. Parents and educators need to encourage technological education as early as elementary school to meet the challenges of the 21st century. It is good that robotics as a subject has been introduced in some private schools but streamlining education across the board should be a priority, as well as trained instructors who can keep students engaged and on task.

According to Pakistan's National Education Policy (2018) one of the biggest challenges facing the country are out of school children who are estimated to number around 22.5 million. If the country is to survive this is unacceptable. Enrollment of school age children must reach as close to 100 percent as quickly as possible. There is no higher national priority. The Prophet (SAW) said: Seek education, even if it be from China!

My recommendations are, firstly; create opportunities and allocate resources to provide training courses to school teachers for early childhood and adolescent education and development. Such courses should include a range of ideas,

concepts, and collaborative activities to get teachers engaged with curriculum and materials. One of the big challenges is that few teachers have been trained to know how to engage students in the curriculum or materials at their disposal.

Teachers need external support and mentors as they begin their teaching in a new environment to help them succeed. There is ample empirical research evidence that shows students achievement is significantly related to professional preparation of teachers. (Darling- Hammond,2000; Ferguson, 1991a; Goe,2002; Goldhaber and Brewer, 2000).

Even in private schools the number of students far exceeds the desired norm of 14 to 15 students per classroom. This is because of the tendency to maximize profits at the expense of the quality and quantity of attention received by each student. For this it is essential for private schools to raise the salaries of trained teachers instead of building profits on the backs of underpaid and untrained teachers. A government that claims to give priority to education must address this situation through laws and regulations.

Similarly, government schools must raise the salary of the teachers while ensuring they are fully trained. Their training should in addition be upgraded on five year basis with certification of upgrading made mandatory at the end of their training. This would enable teachers to market their services different schools and raise the overall quality of education. Currently, teachers in the government sector are given security of employment irrespective of competence and training. In return they are paid minimum salaries. This is exploitation not education. Students and their families suffer as a result of this state of affairs.

Establish monitoring mechanisms to assess reforms at schools, and provide feedback to civil society, schools, and government policy makers.

Teacher training programs should enable teachers to understand different learning methods as all children do not learn in the same way. Teachers need to have a general awareness about about a child's brain, physical growth, and activities involving imagination linked to problem-solving. In the Elementary school and Middle school years boys generally like to participate in group games and learn the rules, whereas girls tend to use physical and social skills. (?)

Prioritize a curriculum that contributes to general education and economic productivity. This is in consonance with the National Education Policy (2018) where the government seeks to prioritize skills based education to ensure better job opportunities for citizens in the future.

Donors should be encouraged to focus more on training teachers and establishing polytechnics for skills based learning and IT, rather than solely building facilities and schools.

Salary and grade increases should be tied to experience, upgraded qualifications and objectively assessed performance. Teachers have traditionally had an honoured place in our society. But today this is more fiction than fact. Their status needs to be restored in a 21st century environment which requires teachers to have access to modern methods of training and standards of professionalism. For this to be possible informed public opinion and organized lobbying by parents and experts will be essential.

The writer is a teacher and a poet

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Education and Political Interest | Editorial

Education in this country has always been exploited to serve political interests of certain groups and individuals. Political expediencies have determined the context and direction of a number of education policies formulated— never implemented though — by successive governments since the establishment of Pakistan.

Educational institutions, especially those of higher learning and universities, have seldom been free from political interference. Even the locations for establishment of educational institutions in the public sector, whether schools or colleges, are selected keeping in view the electoral or political interests of individuals or parties.

A recent report from Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP) has revealed that at least 55 colleges had been set up by the previous government on political grounds at places where they were hardly needed.

A government document refers to Government Girls Degree College, Haripur. It has 161 students and 126 staff members with a monthly expenditure of Rs50,000 per student.

Government Commerce College, Dagar, in Buner district, established in 2017, has 82 students and 46 staff members with an expenditure of Rs30,000 per student per month. The document also reveals that each of the 55 colleges was established at a cost of Rs250 million.

Most of these colleges were established in areas where there were hardly any primary or secondary schools in the vicinity which could serve as feeder institutions for these colleges.

The K-P government has, however, framed a new policy for establishment of colleges in the future. New colleges would only be established in localities where there are required numbers of primary or secondary schools to provide at least 250 students admission to first year of intermediate class of the college.

According to this new policy, the buildings of the colleges already established at 'unfeasible' locations or areas would now be utilised for other public purposes.

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Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1904899/6-education-political-interest/>

Science, Diplomacy and Higher Education By **Professor Dr. Muhammad Mukhtar**

Science diplomacy is an evolving concept without any defined boundaries having broader implications in the development of knowledge economies. Traditionally, general diplomatic relationships are confined to a triangle of i) dialogues ii) negotiations and iii) representation in international relations. However, collaboration in science is also an essential tenet of the diplomatic missions having a more profound impact in mutual ties among countries. The Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations Article 3(e) stating “Promoting friendly relations between the sending State and the receiving State, and developing their economic, cultural and scientific relations.” highlights the role of diplomatic missions in promoting scientific research among nations. Unfortunately, the past few decades have seen vast global disparities in scientific development and technological advances confined to defined global geographical pockets – an apparent failure of science diplomacy. This scenario ultimately resulted in smarter nations harnessing the benefits of science through innovative technologies, whereas, countries putting lesser efforts in developing scientific relations are lagging far behind. Science diplomacy experts believe that all this is due to inability of diplomatic missions to fulfill their job appropriately, i.e., aligning their efforts with the Vienna Convention mandate on promoting scientific research exchanges among the sending and receiving nations.

During the Global Presidential Conclave on the Future of Higher Education held in West Chester University, Pennsylvania, USA, in the year 2012, I was the only Muslim delegate to present my vision for sharing of science and technology – an option for bringing global peace and prosperity. The idea was very well received, and in discussion sessions, several gaps between the countries reaping the benefits of innovative, high-quality research and those lacking behind were identified. Sadly, most of the states identified were from the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) countries. Furthermore, during deliberations, it also gleaned out that intellectual property rights give an edge to the scientific savvy nations, however, upon the expiry of proprietary rights very few governments have strived for generic benefits of new inventions. To clarify my point, I always discuss simple technology, the production of insulin – a hormonal medical preparation used for the treatment of people who have diabetes is produced through a biotechnological

process. The saga about the production of this life-saving drug spans over the past hundred years. People who have diabetes used to have a short span of life. Now diabetes is considered as a chronic disorder, and there are millions across the world having a longer life and surviving with the disease. Intriguingly, every country has people suffering from this disease impacting their quality of life. The next question is “Do all nations have the capability to produce insulin drug used to treat diabetes?”. Scientifically speaking, insulin is produced through a simple biotechnological procedure, and almost every nation has ample resources and necessary workforce. Furthermore, countries manufacturing this medicine has monopolised the respective technologies, whereas diplomatic missions have never been able to identify this gap. For the OIC countries, I will advise and propose them to have a science diplomacy conference just focusing on diabetes disorder in Ras Al Khaimah, United Arab Emirates and watch how a small Emirati state is producing insulin marketed across the Muslim world and globally. The company Julphar Pharmaceuticals is a good example for the Muslim nations to start thinking about sharing of technologies through science diplomatic measures. This idea very much resonate with the definition of science diplomacy by one of the former directors of the American Association for the Advancement of Sciences stating “the use and application of science cooperation to help build bridges and enhance relationships between and amongst societies, with a particular interest in working in areas where there might not be other mechanisms for engagement at an official level”.

Threatened by the challenges of science diplomacy including its stratified benefits regional blocks are emerging. One such effort is European nations initiatives “Inventing a Shared Science Diplomacy for Europe (InsSciDE)” focusing on creating an environment for shared science diplomacy across Europe by taking into consideration high-value interdisciplinary research. The Muslim world initiated such programmes through The Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) and COMSTECH – an Organization of Islamic Cooperation’s Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation for the promotion and cooperation of science and technology activities. The intended and expected outcomes and the overall benefits from these organizations yet to be evaluated. For the Muslim world, It is time to assess the performance of existing organisations towards promoting exchange of their scientific and technological strengths, science diplomacy efforts and create new collaborative

opportunities through diplomatic and non-diplomatic avenues for their survival in the near future to face the challenges by the industrial revolution 4 (IR4) is to offer.

One of the prerequisites for promoting science diplomacy is what we can offer from our ends? Diplomatic relations including science diplomacy are mediated through reciprocal exchanges between the sending and receiving nations. In Pakistan, existing federal and provincial higher education commissions can play an important role in generating environments conducive to promoting science diplomacy. However, first we should have a proper discipline wise inventory of our strengths and human resources in science and technology, and it should be shared with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, currently headed by a very seasoned leader well apprised of science diplomacy. Efforts should also be directed to reckon the past efforts by the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan in encouraging science diplomacy. Worth quoting is a program initiated during the founding chairperson Higher Education Commission of Pakistan era ‘Foreign Faculty Hiring Program’. The willingness of the current government to promote science diplomacy through high quality collaborative scientific research, developing trained human resources having contemporary skills and establishing public health systems are the high-value science diplomacy avenue. What is needed is to devise or revise preexisting innovative programmes in higher education commissions. It might involve a strenuous exercise among the public, private and non-profit academic organisation of Pakistan through a consultative process with universities across the countries including research organisations and health sector setup. This could be through prioritising research domains having relatively higher opportunities for scientific collaborations. Such efforts will not only align with the vision and mission of the foreign ministry rather will help in building economically stable and viable Pakistan having sustained growth and capable of exchanging science and technologies through science diplomacy avenues. LET’S NEVER FORGET; WE ARE THE BEST IN EXPORTING OUR SCIENTISTS AND TECHNICAL MANPOWER THAT NEED TO BE REVERSED. IT IS TIME TO THINK HOW!

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/13-Feb-2019/science-diplomacy-and-higher-education>

Education Quality | Editorial

GETTING children into school is one thing, educating them is quite another. The Annual Status of Education Report 2018, launched in Islamabad on Tuesday, shows that while there is an improvement in Pakistan's school enrolment rates, the students in its rural areas are appallingly behind in their levels of learning. The findings are based on a survey of 260,069 children between three and 16 years of age enrolled in public and private schools. For an overall snapshot, consider the following. Of the fifth graders surveyed in rural areas, 48pc cannot read a sentence in English and 44pc are unable to read a story in Urdu, Sindhi or Pashto from class 2 level textbooks. Forty-seven per cent of them cannot do two-digit division. Comparing how the provinces score today with the results in the 2016 report is an illuminating exercise. For example, Sindh and Balochistan remain where they were two years earlier in terms of the percentage of fifth graders unable to read a sentence in English from a class 2 level textbook, while Punjab, KP and Gilgit-Baltistan have shown improvement. Where reading a story in Urdu, Sindhi or Pashto is concerned, Balochistan, KP and GB have improved their scores, Punjab has remained static, while Sindh has actually regressed.

For decades, the abysmal level of school enrolment was the principal concern in Pakistan's education sector. A number of initiatives — particularly targeting girls of school-going age — were launched, such as providing basic facilities that were missing, linking school attendance with stipends or free ration, etc. These measures are to some extent bearing fruit, although access to secondary education for girls remains a huge challenge in some parts of the country for various socio-cultural reasons as well as resource constraints. Enrolment is of course only one aspect of Pakistan's 'education emergency'; it is, or should be, the means to getting a quality education. However, according to the Aser report, "although students in Pakistan are expected to achieve nearly nine years of schooling, this equates to only 4.8 years of actual learning". That places us behind our regional neighbours, including Afghanistan. Fortunately, better prospects await. Provinces have enhanced standards of teacher recruitment, and improved their training and salary structure. They must persevere on this path. While improvement in school infrastructure and management gives instant, visible results, it is the quality of education that will drive economic growth and determine the future of this nation.

Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1465906/education-quality>

WORLD

US, Taliban Talks on Positive Trajectory By Mohammad Jamil

US and Taliban negotiators have agreed in principle to the framework of a deal that could pave the way for peace talks in Kabul and ultimately the withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan. US Envoy Zalmay Khalilzad said, “The Taliban have committed, to our satisfaction, to do what is necessary that would prevent Afghanistan from ever becoming a platform for international terrorist groups or individuals.” Washington agreed on the withdrawal of its approximately 14,000 troops from Afghanistan while the Taliban vowed to halt any terrorist attacks abroad from Afghan soil. Under the terms of the draft framework, the Taliban would promise to stop Afghan territory being used by terrorists. The draft requires the Taliban to agree to a ceasefire and to talk directly with the US-backed Afghan Government led by President Ashraf Ghani – two conditions which Taliban have not agreed to so far.

Nevertheless, Taliban leaders are sending positive vibes. Statement of their spokesman in Qatar that ‘they were not seeking monopoly on power in a future administration in Afghanistan but were looking for ways to co-exist with Afghan administration’ shows paradigm shift in their stance. On the other hand, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani said on Wednesday that the “keys to war are in Islamabad, Quetta, Rawalpindi”, suggesting Pakistan was a safe haven for cross-border militant activities. He added that ‘key to peace was in Afghanistan’, as talks between Taliban and US officials on ending the 17-year war in Afghanistan appear to be gaining momentum. Earlier, he had expressed his doubts about a rushed process from which his ministers had been excluded, not realizing that the Taliban had already agreed to hold talks with the Afghan Government after concluding the agreement with the US. President Ghani should wait for finalization of the deal.

Pakistan’s role in peace efforts and persuading the Taliban to come to the negotiating table has been acknowledged by the US. Both sides appear to be serious for ending 17-year conflict. Of course, Pakistan would be happy to see

reduced India's influence in Afghanistan, as support to the PTM and TTP from Afghan and Indian agencies is likely to dry up. Durand Line and Pakhtunistan issues peddled for decades at the behest of Afghanistan and India were buried under the rubble of Afghan jihad. President Ghani said the other day that 45000 personnel of Afghan National Army have been killed since 2014. The question is whether he wants to see more deaths of ANF personnel and also civilians after total withdrawal of US forces? Instead of preparing the ground for national reconciliation and accommodating the Taliban, President Ghani is trying to throw spanner in the works.

Last year, President Ashraf Ghani had made an offer to the Taliban for talks without preconditions during his address in the Kabul Process for Peace and Security Cooperation meeting, which was aimed at finding negotiated settlement to the country's lingering crisis. New measures for the peace and reconciliation efforts included a ceasefire, recognition of the Taliban as a political force, making efforts for trust-building process as well as holding free and fair elections. "If we did not have the confidence and assurance that a peaceful and stable future is within our grasp, we might have lost the will to forge ahead", Ashraf Ghani said, adding that the Afghan government was ready for amendment in the country's constitution. The new peace map included releasing Taliban prisoners and removing some Taliban leaders' names from international sanction lists as well as opening an office for Taliban in Kabul or other Afghanistan cities.

Meanwhile, US intelligence agencies have warned that neither the Taliban nor Afghan government can win the war, even if the US and coalition support remains at the present level. Afghan Government will have to accept the ground realities and give due share to the Taliban in the government to bring peace and to avert major disaster. Present Ghani Government should realize that after US forces' withdrawal, the US may stop funding ANF, and it will not be possible for Afghan government to maintain and sustain the present level of ANF and police. Last year, the Washington Post had published a treatise authored by Pamela Constable and Haq Nawaz Khan, which was supportive of the PTM, and highlighted the outpourings of its leaders maligning Pakistan's defence forces. It however admitted foreign hand behind the movement. Anyway, PTM has lost steam after FATA's merger with the KP.

After the assassination of Naqeebullah Mehsud, Pakistan's detractors tried to use the situation to bring Pakistan in disrepute. Afghanistan's Mashaal Radio and Deewa Radio had started a tirade and exploited Pashtun community by stirring anti-Pakistan sentiments. However, father of Naqeebullah Mehsud, who was killed in a fake police encounter in Karachi, recently warned against using the name of his martyred son for doing politics maligning the state institutions. Talking to media, Muhammad Khan said anyone who talks against the Pakistan Army, in fact, talks against the country, as Pakistan Army has restored peace in most of the areas previously held by the terrorists and they offered countless sacrifices. He added that those raising funds in the name of his son will themselves be responsible for their actions, as he never allowed anyone to raise funds, and only thing he wants is justice for his martyred son.

—The writer is a senior journalist based in Lahore.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/us-taliban-talks-on-positive-trajectory/>

US-Russia Treaty Under Strain | Editorial

The Trump administration's decision to put in limbo one of the last major nuclear arms control treaties with Russia has rung alarm bells, with the possibility that the move could set off a new arms race. The US said on Friday it was withdrawing from the landmark Cold War INF missile treaty with Russia, saying Moscow was in violation. Ahead of a deadline set by Washington, the US said that Russia had not addressed concerns over a new medium-range missile system that Western states believe goes against the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty.

Effective Saturday, "the US will suspend its obligations under the INF Treaty and begin the process of withdrawing from the INF Treaty, which will be completed in six months unless Russia comes back into compliance by destroying all of its violating missiles, launchers and associated equipment," President Donald Trump said in a statement. The US has fully adhered to the INF Treaty for more than 30 years, but we will not remain constrained by its terms while Russia misrepresents its actions, Trump said. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, announcing the decision at a news conference, said that Washington still wanted to engage in arms control negotiations with Russia and hoped Moscow would come into compliance.

The US is hopeful that it can put our relationship with Russia back on better footing, but the onus is on Russia to change course from a pattern of destabilising activity, not just on this issue but on many others as well, Pompeo said. The Russian government, in retaliation, accused the Trump administration of looking for any excuse to end the Cold War-era agreement. A spokesman for President Putin said the US failed to negotiate in good faith. The reluctance of the Americans to listen to reason shows that Washington decided to crush the treaty a long time ago, he charged.

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Syrian Civil War By Shahid M Amin

FEW civil wars in recent times have been as destructive or protracted as the Syria civil war, which is now in its ninth year. It was ignited in early 2011 by the Arab Spring that had brought down long-established dictatorial regimes in Tunisia and Egypt. This gave hope to pro-democracy activists in Syria to launch a struggle against the al-Assad regime in Syria. Hafez al-Assad had seized power in a military coup d'état in 1970. He was an Air Force officer who had helped bring the socialist Ba'ath party to power in 1966. But he set up one-man rule in Syria till his death in 2000, when he was succeeded by his son Bashar who has continued the same repressive rule. The al-Assad family comes from the 10% minority Alawite sect whereas Sunnis constitute 70% of Syria's population. The two main motives for seeking to overthrow the al-Assad regime are ending dictatorial rule and liberation from Alawite repression. But unfortunately several other countries have got involved in the Syria civil war, resulting in the horrific destruction of the country. Over 465,000 Syrians have been killed in the war and 12 million displaced, constituting more than half of Syria's population. Large sections of the main Syrian cities have been turned to rubble.

The ground situation after eight years of war is that Bashar al-Assad has survived and even looks like the winner, mainly because of the support given by Iran and Russia.

Hezbollah militants in Lebanon have taken part in the fighting in support of al-Assad. On the other hand, the forces opposing al-Assad received varying degree of support from Saudi Arabia, Gulf States, Turkey and USA. But the Syrian Opposition is divided into various factions, ranging from democrats to Islamist extremists. Al-Qaeda has had a presence in Syria but the extremist group Da'esh at one time controlled large swathes of territory in both Syria and Iraq. However, practically everyone was opposed to Da'esh and after concerted action by the US and others, Da'esh was dispossessed of the territory occupied by it. On this ground, President Trump announced on December 19, 2018 that he was withdrawing 2,000 US troops deployed in Syria, even though he was advised by his own experts, and allies like Britain and France, not to take precipitate action. Many predicted that US withdrawal would allow Da'esh to regroup and would further strengthen the al-Assad regime. The US withdrawal also looked like forsaking Syria's ethnic Kurds who have been allies in fighting against Da'esh. But

by announcing the withdrawal, Trump fulfilled his expressed desire to bring home American forces from messy foreign entanglements.

Iran has played a key role in defending the al-Assad regime. Thousands of Iranian troops and irregular forces have fought alongside the regime forces. The elite Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps lost over 2,100 soldiers in combat, including several Generals. Iranian-allied militias reportedly include Afghans and Pakistanis. Iran sees the survival of the Syrian regime as crucial to its own security. Syria has been the only consistent ally of Islamic Iranian regime since 1979. It also provides a transit route to Hezbollah. Iran has given substantial economic aid to the Syrian regime. Ali Akbar Velayati, a top Iranian official, has told Syrian media that Iran provides \$8 billion a year to Damascus.

Russia has been also a major supporter of the al-Assad regime. For decades, Russia has kept a naval base at Tartus in Syria since the Cold War. Russia sees Syria as its only ally in the Middle East. It has extended diplomatic as well as material support to the al-Assad regime which has helped it to avoid international isolation. In September 2015, Russian Parliament authorized the use of Russian armed forces in Syria. Russian Air Force has helped the al-Assad regime all along. The Russian government is concerned that many Chechens and other Russian Muslims have joined Da'esh in the Syrian civil war.

Turkey has taken a huge burden of Syrian refugees and has also faced terrorism linked to the Syrian war. Many Syrian refugees have used the Turkish route to seek refuge in Europe, creating a serious issue of Muslim immigration in Europe. Turkey has intervened in the Syrian war in important respects. Firstly, it condemned President Bashar al-Assad at the outset of the Arab Spring and helped the creation of Free Syrian Army. Secondly, Turkey is directly engaged in Syria due to its opposition to establishment of an autonomous Kurdish zone close to its borders. It has threatened to use force against the Kurdish zone and fears that its success in Syria could encourage Kurds in Turkey as well. Thirdly, Turkey is officially opposed to the presence of Da'esh and Al-Qaeda in Syria and has cooperated with other countries in seeking to eradicate such groups. But there have also been accusations by many countries including USA and Russia that Turkey has at times supported Islamist groups in Syria. President Bashar al-Assad seems to have survived the worst and his forces are controlling much of Syria. But he remains discredited, particularly due to use of chemical weapons against his

opponents. He is likely to remain highly isolated internationally even if the Syrian civil war comes to an end. In strategic terms, Iran has made gains in Syria, much to the dismay of Saudi Arabia as well as USA.

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

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/syrian-civil-war-2/>

New Twists in Afghanistan End Game |

Editorial

Things aren't looking good for the Afghan government. A little over a week after its representatives were excluded from a six-day long talk between negotiators representing Washington and the Afghan Taliban in Doha – where the Taliban agreed to never allow Al-Qaeda or the Islamic State (IS) to have space in Afghanistan — the Ashraf Ghani government has been snubbed again. The Afghan Taliban announced on Sunday that it would be sending a delegation to Russia for a rare meeting with Afghan opposition leaders. This includes former Afghan President Hamid Karzai, former warlord Atta Muhammad Noor and Haneef Atmar – who will be running against Ghani in the next Afghan presidential elections.

Historically the Afghan Taliban has refused to recognise the legitimacy of the Afghan government, and has used this pretext to justify its refusal to negotiate with Kabul, insisting on direct talks with Washington. In the last days of January Ghani did call on the Taliban to “enter serious talks” with Kabul. However, why would they do this? The Taliban is all but dominating Afghanistan. It's active in 70 percent of Afghan districts, fully controlling four percent of the country and demonstrating an open physical presence in another 66 percent. This is a major improvement for the militia since October 2017, when they contested or controlled only 44 percent of Afghan districts. In short, the Taliban's position is simply too strong for them to consider compromising on their stance against the government. Why play by the other team's rules when your own team seems to be winning the game?

To make matters worse for Ghani, now major world powers like the United States and Russia have practically endorsed the Taliban's position. Alas, this should have been expected. Moscow is concerned by the IS footprint in Afghanistan, which could expand upward into Central Asia. In the US, President Donald Trump is under increasing political pressure to make good on at least one of his campaign promises. One of them was to pull out of Afghanistan, where it is estimated the US spends \$45 billion a year. In short, it is no longer 2001 and the world can't wait for the Afghan government to pull its socks up.

Pakistan too has a stake in all this. One of Islamabad's main priorities must be to ensure that whoever is left in Afghanistan after the US pull out of Afghanistan is to ensure that anti-Pakistan factions like the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan aren't allowed to conduct their activities across the Durand Line, while reciprocate with similar measures on our side of the border.

Additionally, should things go south once American troops aren't in Afghanistan to keep the peace, and a civil war like situation emerges, Pakistan could find itself dealing with a refugee crisis it isn't equipped to deal with. Not only would this be a humanitarian crisis, it could also undo years of progress made in Pakistan's fight against polio.

What must be ensured is that Afghanistan is not abandoned and left to the devices of hardliners once more. That is what the US and Russia did when the Soviet-Afghan war concluded in 1989. And the world has been dealing with the consequences of that misstep since. *

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Climate Change and the Hindu Kush |

Editorial

That Pakistan is a country highly vulnerable to climate change is not exactly breaking news. A Germany-based think tank had already termed the country the seventh most vulnerable nation to climate change in 2017. Before that in 2012, the Worldwide Fund (WWF) for Nature report had stated that average temperatures in the Subcontinent would rise by up to four-degree Celsius by the year 2100. Now there has been another disturbing revelation.

Scientists at the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development — a regional intergovernmental learning and knowledge sharing centre serving the eight regional member countries of the Hindu Kush Himalayas based in Nepal — have warned in a report that 33 percent of the ice in the Himalayas and Hindu Kush will thaw by the end of this century. According to their study, the effects will be disastrous, not only disrupting river flows essential for growing crops, but also reducing the region's ability to produce hydropower. The study — authored by 210 researchers — specifically mentioned the Yangtze, Ganges, Indus and Mekong river systems as vulnerable.

The Hindu Kush Himalayas are considered the “third pole” because of the large amount of water they store in ice form. According to scientists, if all the ice in this region melted, it could push up global sea levels by a whopping 1.5 metres.

To make matters bleaker, the scientists have stated in the report that this situation is no longer preventable. Meaning that even if Pakistan and all the other regional governments made halting climate change their foremost priority today, the Hindu Kush Himalayas will still lose a third of their ice by the year 2100. This means all the associated problems — including problems with power production, agricultural issues and more frequent floods and landslides — are also not preventable.

Regardless action must still be taken, lest these figures rise even further. The governments of Pakistan, China and India must put aside all their differences and deal with this problem on a war footing. Not only will this crisis economically devastate all three countries, the Hindu Kush Himalayas are home to 250 million people, with 1.65 million people living in the valleys below. In short, the

Subcontinent and China could become the site for the biggest environmental refugee crisis in the planet's history in the near future if proactive measures aren't started today to deal with the catastrophe.

This report must also serve as a moment for those in Islamabad still insisting on construction of mega hydropower projects, despite mounting evidence on the devastating environmental costs of such infrastructure projects. The authorities must realise that the mega hydropower projects they're planning aren't sustainable any longer, considering river flows in the country could completely recreate themselves within the century.

It is hoped that this latest piece of bad news regarding climate change will turn some heads in Islamabad. Global warming is currently the biggest threat facing humanity, and it deserves greater priority than any other issue that may be occupying our government's attention. That Pakistan alone cannot do much to counter the problem must not be presented as an excuse to avoid it altogether. Instead, we must join other states as well as non-governmental organisations in raising voice against the threats of climate change and pushing global powers to take notice of the threat so that action can be ensured. *

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US Drawdown and its Implications By Syed Akhtar Ali Shah

The United States may be jubilant hammering out a draft peace agreement with the Taliban in Doha. Reports indicate that the US and Taliban negotiators had made 'significant progress' in the six-day talks in Doha, amidst hopes of return of peace to the war-torn country after 17 years of death, destruction and displacement.

The same sources also revealed that the 'draft peace deal' agreed upon stipulated withdrawal of foreign forces from Afghanistan within 18 months of the agreement being signed.

Reciprocally the Taliban gave assurance that the Afghan soil would not be allowed to be used by al Qaeda or Islamic State militants to attack the US and its allies — a major condition of the negotiated settlement by Washington.

The other key provision of the deal encompassed a ceasefire but the timeline has not yet been disclosed. The Taliban are told to be adamant that they would only open talk with representatives of the Afghan government once the ceasefire was implemented.

"If foreign forces are withdrawn and ceasefire is implemented within 18 months, other aspects of the peace process can be put into action," a Taliban source told a news agency. Other clauses in the draft include an agreement over the exchange and release of prisoners; the removal of international travel ban on several Taliban leaders by Washington; and the prospect of an interim Afghan government after the ceasefire is struck.

Acting shrewdly and to maintain pressure both on the US and the Afghan government, the spokesman for the Taliban denied having reached any agreement on ceasefire and talks with the Kabul administration.

Until the issue of foreign forces was agreed upon, the progress on other issues would be impossible, he quipped. From his statement it appears that their major focus is to ensure withdrawal of foreign forces within the specific timeline. Achievement on that score will be a strategic victory.

Once such a goal is achieved the future course of things will shape the way as they want things to be. The other important clause in the draft is that Baloch militants would not be allowed to use Afghan soil to target Pakistan, a consoling point for Pakistan.

The plans about the interim future set-up and its composition is ambiguous; it is also not clear whether the Taliban would register as a political party and participate in elections or not.

While hopes are high in many circles, President Ghani and his likes are not singing the same chorus. They are averse to the formation of an interim government in Afghanistan at a time when top politicians, including Ghani, have filed their nomination papers for the presidential polls in July this year.

This makes the task a bit difficult as any unilateral withdrawal without settling details of future formation may further lead to chaos than order.

In this backdrop the United States might have achieved its strategic goals by eliminating potential threat to its national security and social order. But the deal appears to be horrendous for national democrats. It may serve the purpose of the US and Europe.

After all they have been tolerating dictatorial and retrogressive regimes in the Middle East as long as these regimes synched with their strategic interests. They just pay lip service to human rights violations and are indifferent to internecine tribal feuds resulting in deaths as long as they are not posing a threat to them.

Having achieved its goals the US is again walking out the same way as it did in the 80s. The new draft is silent on many issues directly related to the society in Afghanistan.

What will be the state of human rights? What will be the state of education? What will be the political system? Will it revert to the system of Amr ul Maroof Wa Nahi Ul Munkar? What will be status of women? Will they again be caged? Will the females be allowed for education and jobs? These are some of the questions which remain in oblivion due to the euphoria of peace.

The question is: peace at what cost? Will the Taliban and other violent non-state actors lay down their arms; abide by the constitution and law of the land? Will the ultimate use of force be with the Afghan National Security Force? Will it be at the cost of human rights? The fundamental question remains what will be the shape of society with the emergence of Taliban as dominant force in the future set-up of Afghanistan? If such questions are not answered clearly and left to ambiguity, the results may be what we witnessed in Swat and Waziristan in the past.

Many analysts assert that it is not hard to predict what Afghanistan will likely look like. With the religio-political forces in the driving seat the country will likely turn into a theocratic state.

Qazi courts will likely spring up administering justice and awarding punishments. Gender equality and rights of minorities will likely be main casualty. Religion will likely be used as a yardstick to determine all rights.

Pakistan is not an island but part of the mainland, to quote John Donne, and as such cannot remain aloof from the currents blowing from Afghanistan. The trends in Afghanistan will have definite social and political implications for Pakistan. Some religio-political pundit can question, what is the justification for not having a Taliban's model in Pakistan?

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NATO's Make-Or-Break Moment – Analysis

By Armen V. Sahakyan and Erik Khzmalyan

The recent meeting and subsequent signing of the Treaty of Aachen by President Macron and Chancellor Merkel is indicative of a growing rift within the Western collective defense system, as if the political fracturing was not enough. In their meeting, the two leaders gave further steam to the idea of establishing an EU army, which in the words of President Macron would defend the Old Continent, “with respect to China, Russia, and even the United States of America.”

This development comes at a time when the West is gearing up to mark the 70th anniversary since the creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, NATO – one of the most enduring, cohesive, and sophisticated collective defense formations in history. With the original intent to serve as a bulwark against the threat of communism, the core national interests of some NATO members began shifting with the dissipating threat emanating from the USSR. The collapse of the Soviet Union deprived the member states of their overarching uniting purpose. Since the early 1990s, NATO's mission evolved beyond military cooperation, taking on a new set of responsibilities including upholding human rights, democracy, and freedom globally. Ironically, this newfound noble quest has become a double-edged sword as it has ensured the continuity of the alliance, but in the meantime has not proven to be strong enough of an incentive to keep the organization bound.

Trends like the rise of illiberal democratic governments in some central and eastern European states, the reluctance of wealthy members to meet their own NATO defense spending obligations, lukewarm support from some capitals for NATO missions, as well as Turkey's flirtation with Russia and China reflect cracks in the alliance that have long been overlooked. In light of these developments, the earlier hopes for NATO's complete transformation into a fully-fledged security organization seem to be evaporating.

History has demonstrated the impermanent nature of classical military alliances. The international system is dynamic and ever-evolving, forcing states to constantly adapt to new geopolitical and domestic realities. It is only natural and expected that over time NATO, similar to all other military alliances, would come under stress

due to this fact. In addition, the 141% increase in membership over the past seven decades has further complicated the consensus-forming mechanism within NATO. One just needs to ask how long it would take the alliance to mobilize and respond in the case of a surprise external attack, especially against a smaller member of the pact. This in fact is NATO's "make-or-break" moment, where the alliance would need to find a new internal consensus to stay relevant and unified. This new consensus, among other topics, would include crystalizing the organization's purpose, ensuring a more equitable burden sharing, undertaking some structural reorganization, and (re)committing to shared values and ideals.

The alliance should draw lessons from the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), NATO's Asian analog. Despite its structural weaknesses and cultural differences, SEATO was called on to essentially carry out the same security obligations in Asia, by halting Soviet and Chinese advancements. Granted, SEATO did not have its own military force and the member states were eventually consumed by internal insurgencies. Nevertheless, it was the failure of member states to achieve a consensus and uphold their common purpose that led to the organization's demise. France and Pakistan grew increasingly disenchanted with America's intervention in Vietnam, resulting in both withdrawing from SEATO. The organization as a whole ceased to exist in 1977, and it is essentially the US-Japan bilateral treaty that has assumed the role of "Asian NATO" in the Pacific ever since.

The establishment of an EU army and/or NATO's waning could repeat the SEATO scenario, in which the United States would embark on formalizing bilateral security commitments with willing parties instead; a process that has arguably already begun. In particular, Poland and Romania stand out with their eagerness to forge closer military ties with the U.S.

As the driving force behind NATO, the United States has singlehandedly kept the alliance afloat. Despite the overall support for the pact from both Washington and the U.S. public-at-large, recent years have witnessed a growing backlash against the U.S. issuing blank checks. Economic shifts within the United States have contributed to this sentiment, making it more politically costly for the political establishment to justify this practice. The Europe of today is incomparably better off than when NATO was founded. As such, calls from Washington for more contributions are not only warranted, but can be expected to intensify over time. President Trump has received a lot of heat for his harsh and blunt rhetoric towards

NATO and allies, but his words are the symptom and not the cause of the crisis. The United States having bankrolled the organization since its creation is now looking for a more equitable participation from allies. In short, for this military alliance to remain, Europeans need to roll up their sleeves.

Conversely, European countries seem to have grown tired of America's demands and wish to drift off on their own. Never mind the financial, logistical, and organizational challenges of an undertaking of such magnitude. Instead of starting from scratch and exerting immense financial and other resources into creating a so-called EU army, a simpler solution has always been on the table. That is: beefing up the already-existing NATO, which has a rich record of joint military operations and structural foundations propped up by American military prowess. Rather than European capitals complaining over Washington's heavy involvement in driving NATO's internal conversations, they would be better served in increasing their own voices, partially to be achieved through a fair and more reasonable support for the alliance.

Notwithstanding NATO's record – especially in regard to deterring armed aggression and developing military capacity – the European response to American criticism is borderline childish. A healthier and more pragmatic response would be increasing defense budgets under the auspices of NATO, not only to satisfy U.S. requests, but also gain a stronger voice within the organization. Instead, the Franco-German plan is to walk away from previous arrangements in exchange for unrealistic aspirations, at least in the short-term. Although not a new idea, the EU army concept has been gaining more support in recent years. The fact that the idea has been welcomed by the Russian President Putin and condemned by senior NATO officials is telling enough.

This being said, a few questions arise:

What happens to NATO if the EU army idea comes to fruition? Keeping NATO as a parallel organization would mean duplication of effort and immense waste of resources. Disbanding NATO would be even more devastating for the global security architecture.

Would a separate military bloc exacerbate the already evident fragmentation within trans-Atlantic and trans-European relations?

Given the bureaucratic nightmare of EU governance, how viable and legitimate would Brussels be in commanding a continental army? The refugee crisis exposed the incoherence in addressing this humanitarian tragedy. How confident are European leaders that they will be able to come up with a solution in times of serious military crisis?

What would be the fate of EU member states who have an official neutral policy as well as NATO members that are not in the EU? Would EU neutral states get a deal similar to UK's 'rebate' where they get to opt-out from the security mechanism and free-ride at the expense of the rest?

These are just a few serious hurdles that the European Union would have to tackle within its bureaucratic labyrinth. For over a century, the United States has demonstrated time and again its resolute commitment to defend the continent. In fact, Europe would not be able to achieve this level of prosperity without the American security umbrella. Like most international agreements (e.g. NAFTA), NATO is destined to be renegotiated at some point. Perhaps now is the right time for allies committed to preserving the Western-led security arrangement to work in adapting NATO to modern realities and challenges quite different from those of the Cold War.

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The opinions, beliefs, and viewpoints expressed by the authors are theirs alone and don't reflect the official position of Geopoliticalmonitor.com or any other institution.

Source: <http://www.eurasiareview.com/07022019-natos-make-or-break-moment-analysis/>

N-Weapons Race? | Editorial

IN today's chaos-filled world, with crises aplenty, the threat of nuclear war has seemingly receded from the global list of imminent dangers to humanity. However, while one should not be alarmist, as a recent call from the Red Cross, and developments in US-Russia relations indicate, the threat very much exists and may be getting bigger. The Red Cross has called for a total ban on nuclear weapons, saying that states were disregarding their "long-standing nuclear disarmament obligations" and work was afoot to modernise national nuclear arsenals. The Red Cross's appeal is not without reason; over the past few weeks, the US and Russia have threatened to withdraw from the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, negotiated between the Americans and the Soviets at the fag end of the Cold War, while more recently, both sides have said they may not renew the New START treaty, which will expire in 2021. Russian officials claim their US counterparts have refused to negotiate an extension.

While memories may be short, the world should never forget the devastation nuclear weapons have wrought. The brutal use of nukes by the US in Japan during the Second World War stands as perhaps the biggest reminder of the destructive capability of these cruel weapons. Thereafter, the Cold War was full of close calls where rival commanders mistakenly thought the other side was preparing for a nuclear strike. The most perilous moment was of course 1962's Cuban Missile Crisis. However, it was hoped that with the end of the Cold War the threat of nuclear apocalypse had receded. Yet as recent developments have indicated, rash decisions being made by the leaderships of some nuclear states may be pushing the world towards a new arms race. There is also a smug hypocrisy that members of the nuclear club have shown; while they are quick to point the finger at states that have more recently acquired nuclear weapons, they continue to build and update their arsenals. Moreover, states feel threatened when those in their neighbourhood acquire nukes. For example, Pakistan had legitimate concerns about its security when the Indians conducted their nuclear test in the mid-1970s, and it was arguably this threatening move that put this country on the nuclear path to preserve its own security. Also, while the Trump administration has attacked the Iran nuclear deal and accused the Islamic Republic of pursuing a weapons programme, there is a strange silence where Israel's suspected arsenal is concerned.

Instead of ripping up existing nuclear protocols, the US, Russia and other atomic powers must strengthen arms-reduction efforts and work to eventually rid the world of these abominable devices. Let the leaders of nuclear-armed states show statesmanship and eschew populist rhetoric where nukes are concerned, for using the nuclear card as a gimmick to boost nationalism and domestic popularity will only pave the way for disaster.

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Brexit Clock Ticks On As UK-EU

Negotiations Deadlocked – OpEd By

Cornelia Meyer

There are fewer than 50 days to go until the UK leaves the EU, and we are no nearer a deal than we were the day after the referendum on June 24, 2016. Alas, the country seems more divided than ever.

Two weeks ago, Parliament voted for the Brady amendment, which instructed the government to renegotiate the so-called Northern Irish “backstop” and replace it with “alternative arrangements to avoid a hard border.”

Much of the anguish — but by far not all of it — stems from the post-Brexit relationship between the North and the Republic of Ireland. Some 20-odd years ago, the Good Friday Agreement brought peace to Northern Ireland after decades of armed sectarian conflict. Opening the border between the North and the Republic was part and parcel of that peace agreement. The backstop legislates that, in case the EU and UK fail to sign a trade agreement, Northern Ireland would remain in the customs union, while Great Britain had a lesser arrangement with the EU. This has never been acceptable to the Democratic Unionist Party, whose 10 Members of Parliament importantly prop up Prime Minister Theresa May’s minority government.

The reaction from Brussels was a clear “no, nein, non, nie.” The withdrawal agreement was not up for renegotiation.

Last week, May dispatched herself to Belfast to find out just how much of an issue the open borders on the island are. On the same day, Irish Taoiseach Leo Varadkar visited the presidents of the EU Commission and EU Council, Jean-Claude Juncker and Donald Tusk respectively, as well as the EU parliament. Tusk stirred up a hornets’ nest when he remarked: “I’ve been wondering what that special place in hell looks like, for those who promoted Brexit without even a sketch of a plan how to carry it out safely.” It reflected the EU’s frustration at the negotiations and at the apparent unwillingness of Her Majesty’s Government to listen to the clearly delineated EU position.

On the other side of the English Channel, Tusk's comments unleashed a real firestorm and did the EU position little favor. It supported the Brexiteers' argument that the Eurocrats in Brussels were arrogant, aloof and out of touch.

When May visited Brussels the next day, her demands met with resistance. Worse, opposition leader Jeremy Corbyn had written a letter to the prime minister advocating that Labour might support her Brexit deal if the UK stayed in the customs union. This, however, is a clear no-go zone for the Tory party's Brexiteers. The timing of Corbyn's letter was a masterclass in how to undermine the government's negotiating position. Juncker said that the EU was open to the UK remaining in the customs union and that he was willing to discuss the political declaration — a loosely worded document that puts down the guidelines for the negotiation of the future relationship between the UK and the EU. However, he and Tusk stood firm on blocking a renegotiation of the withdrawal agreement.

Last Friday, May had dinner with Varadkar in Dublin. While it is always good to keep the lines of communication open, there is very little that Varadkar can do. Ireland is part of the EU and, as such, is not authorized to negotiate with the UK on a bilateral basis.

Meanwhile, “back at the ranch,” politicians have been acting up. Corbyn's refusal to support a second referendum risks splitting the Labour Party. In the Conservative Party, meanwhile, hardline Brexiteers and supporters of a second referendum are at each other's throats — so much so that there is a real danger that the Tories might split too. The “original Brexiteer,” Nigel Farage, has backed a new Brexit-supporting party to put himself in pole position in case the UK's departure is delayed. There is much angst among the general population. Some Brexiteers feel so ostracized that they have formed a nationwide “Leavers of Britain” support group (Remainers do not feel much differently either).

The Bank of England cited uncertainty surrounding Brexit as one of the reasons it shaved half a percentage point off its economic growth forecast for 2019. Worse, the Bank warned of a possible recession. The press has also run story after story of just how unprepared the country is for leaving the EU without a deal. As if all of this was not enough, Liam Fox's Department for International Trade had to admit that, after the UK leaves the EU, Japan would not be willing to trade with it along

the lines of the current agreement Tokyo has with Europe. Japan would be looking for better terms. The same holds true for many other jurisdictions, such as Canada or Mexico. So much for the claim that leaving the EU would enable the UK to become a truly global trading nation — a key argument of the Brexiteers.

While all of this is going on, we can hear the tick-tock of the Brexit clock: As of Sunday, 47 days and counting. There seems to be no parliamentary majority for the prime minister's Brexit package, whatever it may be, and the talks with Brussels are deadlocked. The government is now floating the idea of resuming talks with the EU on the margins of the EU-Arab League summit in Cairo on February 24 -25 and postponing the vote in Parliament until after that. This has a whiff of brinkmanship, for the closer we push final negotiations and parliamentary voting procedures to the deadline, the likelier the UK is to leave without an agreement.

- Cornelia Meyer is a business consultant, macro-economist and energy expert.

Source: <http://www.eurasiareview.com/11022019-brexit-clock-ticks-on-as-uk-eu-negotiations-deadlocked-oped/>

Reorienting The World Order By Remshay

Ahmed

What we have now is the rise of far right in international politics

It was Richard Nixon who said that it took about a hundred years for a political paradigm shift to take place. The world we know now is changing drastically. The New World Order that formulated and incepted itself at the end of World War I, but more formally came to describe the zeitgeist of a post-war, free world has only existed for around three decades — the relevance of which seems to be fading now. The most prominent examples of this are the exit strategy by the US in its attempt to pull back from its extensive overseas engagements and the decision by UK to opt out of the European Union.

While both are independent events; these two have been the epoch of a free world in this 20th century. Initially, the US intervened in weaker states to halt the progress of a global communist expansion, which it proclaimed would make the states fall as dominoes under the influence. The UK led an economic bloc which allowed for free cultural exchanges and improved the living standards of an average European to unprecedented levels.

Where the two went wrong is with their over reliance on this hyper globalism that has put a strain on their economies.

While it is a common idea that most people don't vote for candidates based on the candidates' views on foreign policy decisions, in the last US presidential elections the opposite has been true. In a country where Obamacare became a household name, people opted for a populist rhetoric which they thought would dedicate more resources to them. In it was the promise of a better America, which would tailor its policies for its people – halting the flow of illegal immigrants and pulling out from overseas operations. Work around these two have been at the centre of Donald Trump's administration, who has since his election, been formulating policies around these, though to little effect.

The UK faces a similar crisis where people want their state to provide more economic opportunities for them. And because of this, the majority of Britons have voted for Brexit, and those in power are trying hard to strike a good deal out of this.

What we have now is the rise of far right in international politics, perpetrated by what the pioneers of the free world described as a movement away from state-ism. As some wise people would say, “too much of anything is a curse”, extensive globalisation has exacerbated the global issues that it set out to prevent and solve. Socio-economic dependency was supposed to eliminate chances of conflict and competition between states, but we have ended up with a plummeted global economy and more conflicts than the combined resources of the free world can solve.

It hasn't been 100 years and we already see a drastic shift in international relations. This can be partially attributed to technology which has facilitated the transmission and absorption of ideas

The Arab Spring Revolution followed by the planned melting down of states' boundaries and successive humanitarian interventions have caused the global refugee crisis — uninhibited in its sprawling. What began in 2001 in Afghanistan, went to Iraq in 2003, and manifested itself as a calculated risk in Arab Spring Revolution of 2011 has now merged into a much bigger threat where US' position as a global hegemon has started to fade. These mighty interventions and the forces they have engendered are self-invigorating, and adopting the phenomena of a borderless world, are far-reaching in their influence.

We have groups of insurgents holding states hostage and threatening the very existence on which international cohesion and security rests. And this has only been possible because those states that felt ideologically threatened by the spread of free world, built a counter narrative in the war theatres where the humanitarian interventions had left a political vacuum. Again, exploiting the bounds of borderlessness, these groups have fostered consensus in the international arena; and today they negotiate sitting at the same tables where years ago resolutions were passed condemning them. And we see the world seeing them as national political representatives of states and as able persons for the realisation of an armistice.

It hasn't been 100 years and we already see a drastic shift in international relations. This can be partially attributed to technology which has facilitated the transmission

and absorption of ideas and the formation of ideologues which continues sustains the counter narratives.

These counter narratives, in retaliation to the penetrative regimes of the free world, are nationalistic in orientation and aim to serve the populist demands of their people. Now the question is how the world would come about, now that the main precepts of the Old World are crumbling.

Source: <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2019/02/14/reorienting-the-world-order/>

Trump's Military Doctrine and its Implications By Khurram Minhas

None of the presidents in American history has scuttled so many agreements as Donald Trump did in the past two years. The Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP), North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), Paris Climate Agreement, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program (DACA), Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces treaty (INF) and the Iran Nuclear Deal are glaring examples of Trump's flip-flop policies.

Trump has mercurial tendencies with unexpected and unpredicted decisions. He is following the doctrine of disengagement from various overseas military commitments, mainly Syria and Afghanistan. He wants other Nato member countries to contribute more in the organisation. Southeast Asian allies have also been asked to pay more for their security. Consequently, his actions have created anxiety amongst American allies. Why does Trump maintain such fickle attitude on strategic front?

Primarily, it is because of American domestic politics and Trump's own campaign promises that compelled him to adopt this unpopular and premature military doctrine. In American history, reelection has been remained top priority of presidents in the first term and in the second term they try to find possible place in history.

There is a general consensus that chaotic regions particularly the Middle East and South Asia protect American strategic and economic interests. The sense of insecurity provides an environment conducive to business for military-industrial complex of the US. For instance, the US signed a deal worth \$20 billion to supply F-15 jets to Qatar amid the latter's insecurity owing to blockade by Arab neighbours. These defence contractors are the backbone for election campaigns in American politics. The American Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Rule 501 (C) (4) allows groups and individuals to lobby for Congress and presidential candidates through generous donations for political campaigns. Due to these generous donations, policymakers in general and presidents of the US in particular try to secure interests of these individuals and groups, which largely affect the foreign policy of the US.

Therefore, the role of defence contractors is vital in Trump's abrupt withdrawal from Syria, exit from the Iran nuclear deal and unilateral drawdown from Afghanistan. Peace in the Middle East and the Iran nuclear deal is detrimental to their economic interests. For instance, Lockheed Martin that manufactures F-22 fighter jets had lobbied against the Iran nuclear deal and financially supported Trump's election campaign. It had hired Heritage Foundation, which wrote a series of articles and policy papers to manage perceptions of American public and policymakers. Resultantly, Trump has expanded sanctions on Iran and enhanced arms sales to American allies in the region.

Trump's domestic compulsions and military doctrine have drastic ramifications for its allies in South Asia, the Middle East and beyond. The Trump military doctrine has been openly criticised by Syrian Kurds and the Afghan government. In case of Syria, the unilateral withdrawal of the US from the Kurdish region has provided an opportunity to Turkey and the Assad regime to regain control of the Kurdish region. Turkey has many times threatened invasion of northeastern Syria. This is why the Syrian Kurds have considered withdrawal as betrayal.

In Afghanistan, it is widely believed that the announcement of drawdown during the next 18 months will not only boost the morale of the Afghan Taliban but also may damage the legitimacy of the Afghan government. Moreover, the insecurity would further damage FDI and the already fragile economy of the country. This is why the Afghan government has labelled it a premature decision.

To conclude, Trump has been trying to prove to the American public that he is a man of his words. He wants to be seen different from other American politicians who often speak a lot but remain reluctant to take decisions. Therefore, this year will more likely witness a series of such hasty and unpredicted actions from the American president.

Published in The Express Tribune, February 18th, 2019.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1912846/6-trumps-military-doctrine-implications/>

Climate Change: Time to Panic? By Shahid Javed Burki

The question posed above is about climate change; the age of climate panic is here wrote The New York Times in a special report on the subject of what mankind faced if it did not urgently address the issue of global warming.

The heatwave in 2018 that produced the fourth hottest year in the history of the United States killed dozens from Quebec in Canada to Japan. There were the most destructive wildfires in the Californian history that turned more than a million acres to ash. Pacific hurricanes forced three million in China to flee and wiped away almost all of Hawaii's East Island.

There are many other climate-related stories from around the world. We are experiencing a world that has already warmed one degree Celsius since the late 1800s when records began to be kept.

Scientists have determined that we are adding Earth-warming carbon dioxide to the atmosphere at a rate faster than any other point in history since the beginning of industrialisation.

Scientists no longer quarrel about their findings. In October 2018, the United Nations Panel on Climate Change issued what has come to be called the 'Doomsday' report — a deafening, piercing smoke alarm going off in the kitchen, as one United Nations official described the document — outlining climate consequences at 1.5 and two degrees Celsius of warming.

They have also begun to examine the consequences of temperatures moving beyond three to four degrees Celsius. In the latter case, the world as we know today would cease to exist. There is no one in the already crowded Democratic field for the presidential poll of 2020 in America who does not endorse an agenda concerning climate change. Panic has hit the Democrats in the United States. Panic has also hit the American youth.

An initiative taken by Alexandria Villasenor, a 13-year-old girl from New York has grown into a global movement. She is one of a group of young, mostly female, activists behind the 'School Strike 4 Climate' campaign.

On March 15, with the support of some of the world's biggest environmental organisations, tens of thousands of kids in at least two dozen countries and possibly 30 states in the United States plan to skip school, come out in the streets and march, and demand action.

“Their demands are uncompromising: Nations must commit to cutting fossil fuel emissions in half in the next 10 years to avoid catastrophic global warming,” wrote The Washington Post in a front-page coverage of the movement. “And their message is firm: Kids are done waiting for adults to save their world.” Said Villasenor: “My generation is really upset.

The deal struck at COP24, the United Nations climate meeting in December 2018, was insufficient. We are not going to let them hand us down a broken planet.”

A United Nations report produced to help the COP24 delegates address the issues governments faced found that humanity has until 2030 to achieve rapid and far-reaching transformation of society if it wishes to avoid the dire environmental consequences of warming 1.5 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels. The story is well known.

Humans keep emitting greenhouse gases, temperatures keep increasing, and the outlook for the future keeps growing more and more bleak. Yet the agreement reached in December's climate gathering by the conferees fell far short of what scientists say is urgently required.

Government action will only come if there is willingness on the part of policymakers. That may have begun to happen in the United States, the country that under Donald Trump has retreated a great distance. There was a dramatic change in the United States' political climate as a result of the mid-term elections of November 2018.

In early February 2019 Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez sponsored the Green New Deal that has the support of four leading Democratic contenders for the presidency. The ideas they laid out aspired to power the US economy with 100 per cent renewable energy within 12 years and called for “a job guarantee programme to assure a living wage to every person who wants one,” “basic

incomes programmes” and “universal healthcare,” financed, at least in part, by higher taxes on the wealthy.

But some on the left of the political spectrum were not supportive of the Green New Deal agenda. Nancy Pelosi, the Democratic Speaker of the House, waved off the initiative as impractical. But those who supported the effort were of the view that it had not been fully explained by its sponsors.

For instance, Jedediah Britton-Purdy, the author of *After Nature: A Politics for the Anthropocene*, made a case for the Green New Deal’s approach. “In the 21st century environmental policy is economic policy. Keeping the two separate isn’t a feat of intellectual discipline. It is an anachronism,” he wrote in a newspaper article. He argued that carbon emissions are basically about infrastructure.

For every human being, there are about 1,000 tonnes of built environment: roads, office buildings, power plants, cars, trains and trucks. Human beings have created an artificial world which cannot survive unless far-reaching policies are adopted.

What role should Pakistan play in the renewed effort to address the problem posed by climate change? The government headed by Imran Khan should operate at three different levels — local, regional and international. At the local level there is an urgent need to improve the quality of air in the country’s large cities.

This will require the removal of brick kilns that burn soft coal; the banning of burning of crop residue after harvests; and strict regulation of motor vehicles, including rickshaws, pertaining to the fuels they use.

At the regional level, Prime Minister Imran Khan should seriously consider convening a conference involving all the countries that receive river waters from the Himalayas.

This would mean inviting Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India and Nepal to a well-prepared regional policy document to discuss and take action on.

This effort would contribute to Pakistan playing a major role at the international level. Imran Khan has the name recognition and charisma to pull off such an initiative.

Published in The Express Tribune, February 25th, 2019.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1917620/6-climate-change-time-panic/>

Beyond The Second Trump-Kim Nuclear Weapons Summit – OpEd By Jonathan Power

Kim Jong-un, paramount leader of the North Korean dictatorship, arrived in Vietnam by train and limousine ready to meet President Donald Trump. The two leaders met in June 2018 in Singapore, applauded themselves and each other and made some sort of a deal even if it wasn't the one Trump boasted about – the total elimination of the North's nuclear weapons.

Nevertheless, the North has stopped nuclear testing. The U.S. only stopped in 1992 and France in 1996, so this is a very important step forward. It should not be minimized as the American "Blob" is doing. (The "Blob", a creation of the White House of President Barack Obama, is the highly influential industrial/military/legislative/media complex, a majority of whom are hard line on foreign affairs.)

The North also has begun dismantling a missile-engine test site. Set against that, the U.S. intelligence community and independent observers say it is continuing to build intercontinental missiles and is preparing to conceal its nuclear assets and activities.

In the wings of these negotiations will be China. It has long opposed what North Korea is doing, at one time joining the West and Russia in imposing sanctions. But it has never quite squeezed hard enough to have a real effect.

Some observers wonder how steadfast an ally China will be in the future. If war broke out between the North and South Korea how would it deal with the North's nuclear weapons? Would it seek to quickly impound them? And if it tried to, does its army have the capability of doing so? Or would it tolerate U.S./UN troops crossing the border from south to north to do that job, fearing that the U.S. would then effectively take over the North?

A handful of U.S. scholars, most notably Oriana Skylar Mastro of Georgetown University, who writes in the current issue of Harvard's "International Security",

believe the evidence shows that China could and would invade if it thought it necessary. She has interviewed two-dozen Chinese scholars – think tank researchers, scientists and military officers – as well as senior people in the main relevant bodies in Washington. From that and a number of international seminars she draws her conclusions.

The U.S. should tolerate a Chinese intervention as being in its own interests. To do the job itself would require nearly 200,000 troops. (It has already in the South a relatively modest 30,000.) Indeed, if necessary, it should provide to China its intelligence and, later, its nuclear demolition expertise. The U.S. should also accept the fact that if there were reunification between North and South China would only agree to it if it didn't swing a unified Korea against China. This would mean no American troops north of the border.

China has a lot to be angry about. North Korea tests its nuclear tests only 130 km from the Chinese border. The North has constantly refrained from Chinese requests to avoid provocative activities, completing eighty-six missile tests and four nuclear tests. In return China has snubbed the North by courting the South economically. There is no communist brotherhood here.

China has its contingency plans in place in case of a North/South war. China will move troops 50 km across the border. It will probably create two buffer zones. First, to blockade North Korea's major ports. Second, to intercept and search fleeing refugees and military personnel.

Within that 50 km the North has a good proportion of its nuclear and missile sites – 45% of the former and 22% of the latter. A fast Chinese invasion, carried out at dawn, could capture these sites within the hour.

China would welcome an improved relationship with the South. Chinese experts expect that trade volumes would increase dramatically after reunification. China would be able to export goods across the North to the South. It could use Korean ports, reducing congestion in its own southern ones.

On the other hand China does worry that South Korea would seize that part of the North's bombs and missiles which are located far from its border with China.

China hears about the ongoing debate in the South about whether to be nuclear armed or not. It should not worry. To possess nuclear weapons itself would be a very extremely unpopular decision among the South's voters. Moreover, the South would confront irresistible international pressure not to call the North's nuclear arsenal its own.

Chinese diplomats in Hanoi will be tuning in to the summit as much as they can. The meeting place is probably bugged, and their informants among Vietnamese diplomats are many.

It's important that Trump is well briefed by the Chinese and vice versa. America has power. But in this situation China probably has the whip hand.

If Trump doesn't make use of this – with a private agreement from President Xi Jinping to be his proxy – the talks will probably fail. Trump must make use of China's strength.

Note: For 17 years Jonathan Power was a foreign affairs columnist and commentator for the International Herald Tribune – and a member of the Independent Commission on Disarmament, chaired by the prime minister of Sweden, Olof Palme. He forwarded this and his previous Viewpoints for publication in IDN-INPS Copyright: Jonathan Power. Website www.jonathanpowerjournalist.com.

Source: <http://www.eurasiareview.com/27022019-beyond-the-second-trump-kim-nuclear-weapons-summit-oped/>

A Saudi Arabian Pivot to Asia? By M Waqas Jan

As Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince, Mohammad Bin Salman (MBS) wraps up his week-long tour of Pakistan, India and China, many have been left contemplating the implications of his travels in light of the region's evolving geopolitics. For Western observers, MBS's attempts at shoring up Saudi Arabia's alliances with these states are being seen as an attempt at shifting Riyadh's focus eastwards as an alternative to his ties to the West. This 'pivot to Asia' has been further characterised as the result of MBS being snubbed and sidelined by Western powers as part of the condemnation and fallout resulting from the death of dissident journalist Jamal Khashoggi. As evident from his interactions (or lack thereof) with world leaders at the G20 Summit held in Buenos Aires last November, the more immediate objective of this visit appears as an attempt to disassociate the crown prince from the personal ignominy he faced at the summit.

However, looking beyond the timing and contextual background of MBS's current standing in the West, there exist a broad range of long-term objectives which Riyadh appears to be working towards within the ambit of the Crown Prince's 'Vision 2030.' While Western media outlets have termed this tour as MBS's attempts at bolstering and re-affirming his relevance as the Middle East's premier strongman, the Crown Prince's statements otherwise suggest a clear acknowledgment of the shifting strategic and economic dynamics of Asia, vis-à-vis the rest of the world.

His focus has thus not only been on consolidating and re-affirming past relationships such as with Pakistan, but also on laying the foundations of key trade and economic partnerships with India and China. In the case of the latter two, these partnerships are understandably based on the growing energy needs of two of the world's fastest growing economies. This in turn bears both economic and strategic implications, especially considering how both China and India are also two of the largest importers of oil from the Kingdom's arch-rival, Iran.

Even though India may be more amenable to US pressures on curbing its imports of Iranian oil, China remains a completely different story

Hence, out of the key agreements signed during the Crown Prince's tour, the most salient investments that stand out are the ones aimed at developing long-standing partnerships around the three countries' expanding energy sectors. In China, this entails the \$10 billion refinery and petrochemical complex to be developed jointly by Saudi Aramco and Chinese Norinco in the Chinese city of Panjin. In India, there is the \$44 billion refinery being built in Ratnagiri, Maharashtra in which Saudi Aramco holds a joint 50 percent stake with the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company. And in Pakistan, there is the \$10 billion oil refinery planned for Gwadar, a key component of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

All of these investments represent Saudi Arabia's attempts at building more long-term economic ties in line with the growing energy needs of these countries. The scale of these investments, along with the Crown Prince's own statements given during this tour mark the stark reality that it is Asia rather than the West that is to serve as an increasingly important market for the Middle East's energy supplies in the years to come. Even in the case of Pakistan, whose economic capacity for large investments pales in comparison to the economies of China and India, the Saudi Crown Prince was unequivocal in stating that Saudi investments in Pakistan were representative of his firm belief that Pakistan is to play an increasingly important role in the region's future.

This role is likely to emanate directly from the key geo-economic and geo-strategic position Pakistan holds as part of China's Belt and Road Initiative. Hence, out of all the investments in energy outlined above, the recently announced Saudi investment in Gwadar holds immense significance within the region's broader strategic and economic dynamics. It is in effect a clear indication of Saudi Arabia's willingness to play a more prominent role within the BRI framework set by President Xi Jinping,

This however, does come with its own set of implications for China. On the one hand, China is actively looking for external investors and sources of funding to help shoulder the risks and liabilities being incurred by BRI projects. On the other hand, China's ties with Iran both within and outside the BRI framework would require it to carefully balance its relationship between both countries. China's willingness to engage with Saudi Arabia under the ambit of the BRI is also likely to be determined by the extent to which Riyadh is willing to do business beyond its attempts at

isolating Iran. This would in turn also be determined by the extent to which Saudi Arabia's long and historic ties with the US play into its equation with respect to both China and Iran.

At present, both Saudi Arabia and the US are equally aligned on the issue of Iran. As US-sponsored sanctions against the import of Iranian oil begin to gradually take effect, for Saudi Arabia therein lie the benefits of economically isolating Iran while filling the resulting supply gap with Saudi crude. Based on these dynamics, however, even though India may be more amenable to US pressures on curbing its imports of Iranian oil, China remains a completely different story.

The writer is a Researcher and Program Coordinator for the China Studies & Information Centre (CSIC) at the Strategic Vision Institute, a non-partisan think tank based out of Islamabad

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Source: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/359139/a-saudi-arabian-pivot-to-asia/>

Afghan Peace Talks | Editorial

‘All the right people’

There is, most certainly, visible progress in the ongoing Afghan peace talks. And with the presence of Mullah Baradar on the Taliban side and senior military personnel figuring in the US team – both for the first time – there is every reason to believe that peace might finally be just round the corner. That, precisely, is why US officials told news wires that ‘We have all the right people in the room on both sides’, while the Taliban spokesman believed “If we do not reach a solution in this round of talks, then we will in the next round of talks.”

The pressing issues, regarding the US withdrawal and guarantees that Afghanistan will never be used for attacks on other countries especially America, have apparently been ironed out to both parties’ satisfaction. This should bring some relief to President Trump, especially, as he wriggles desperately for good news in his otherwise problematic presidency. The next few outings, hopefully, will work on the timeline of the withdrawal and the nature of the Taliban commitment.

There is still one problem though. The Taliban still refuse to recognise or talk to the official Afghan government. And, of course, they do not accept the constitution in its present form. Now, while the latter can still be worked upon by drafting a new constitution acceptable to all Afghans, what is the whole working group – Taliban, Americans, even Pakistanis – going to do about President Ghani’s government in Kabul? Surely they cannot expect to make peace with the insurgents, promise them a share in government, and simply impose the decision on Kabul. Already Ghani has been very upset and said so loudly at every available forum. Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah, however, has hinted at accommodative steps that might just make the Taliban a little more flexible in their stance. They also know, at the end of the day, that at some point they will have to shake hands with Kabul, no matter how much they despise the government, otherwise everything done to push the talks to where they have come will be lost. Now that all the right men have assembled, hopefully they will make all the right decisions.

Source: <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2019/02/27/afghan-peace-talks/>

Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty — A Dilemma

By Mahvish Malik

The global peace and threat to international security is a well-debated theme at the United Nations (UN) since many decades, especially since the inception of nuclear weapons. The global nuclear politics had significantly influenced such debates related to various nuclear treaties and conventions.

In this context, at institutional level, the UN First Committee on Disarmament and International Security addresses the challenges to the global peace and offers cooperative arrangements towards many issues including universal nuclear disarmament. The latest 2018 session of UN First Committee on Disarmament and International Security debated the emerging trends of the nuclear non-proliferation regime including the humanitarian aspects of nuclear weapons. Such emerging trend has been attributed to the involvement of many international civil societies for translating this debate into a treaty.

In this context, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons received Nobel Peace Prize in 2017 for “ground breaking work” for pushing the debate on humanitarian aspects of nuclear weapon and hence, pitching this theme in a Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty.

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), also known as Nuclear Weapons Ban treaty (NBT) was formally opened for signature on 7 July, 2017 at UN General Assembly. So far, there are sixty nine signatories and nineteen state parties to this treaty. This Treaty will be enforced in ninety days, after seeking ratification from the fifty UN member states.

This presents the legal requirement of binding the NBT articles on all UN member states. However, the existing political divergences among UN member states on NBT requires an attention that would eventually help to understand the relevant perspectives and concerns.

For this, the debate on NBT has been mainstreamed into three main groups. One group represents the voice of Non-Nuclear Weapon States (NNWSs) that argue in favor of NBT and align their concerns with the humanitarian fallouts from the use

of nuclear weapon technology anywhere in the world. Rest of the two groups within Nuclear Weapon States (NWSs) argue in opposition of NBT.

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), also known as Nuclear Weapons Ban treaty (NBT) was formally opened for signature on 7 July, 2017 at UN General Assembly. So far, there are sixty-nine signatories and nineteen state parties to this treaty. This Treaty will be enforced in ninety days, after seeking ratification from the fifty UN member states

NWSs, in general, argue that the nuclear weapons are essential for the states' survival and it deters its respective opponent from potential nuclear attack or threat in future hence, deterrence is maintained resulting in peace and stability. In addition, the U.S. allied NNWSs who seeks positive security assurances- allow U.S. to deter or attack against nuclear threat on their behalf- also strongly oppose this Treaty.

Considering the reservations on NBT, the inter-linked security challenges of the states and the role of nuclear weapons in retaining deterrence stability is worth to explore. The overview of statements by the NWSs at NBT suggests that the NWSs are not in denial of this debate of humanitarian consequences of use of nuclear weapons, but their national interest for state's survival comes first to retain deterrence capability against their respective enemy.

Another reservation on the NBT mentions the existing overlap of the treaty with other nuclear non-proliferation treaties including the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and Nuclear non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). In this context, on issue of nuclear disarmament, the P-5 NWSs- U.S., Russia, France, China, UK- are still not able to fulfill their decades old legal obligation of nuclear disarmament under 'good faith' under article VI of NPT.

Then, why would these NWSs pursue another legal obligation towards nuclear disarmament under NBT that lacks any incentives or quid-pro-quo like NPT that retains the P-5 monopoly over NPT. Also, before joining the treaty, the NBT calls for signing of Comprehensive Safeguard Agreements with IAEA and urge NWSs to declare its all nuclear facilities that is an already existing measure in case of NPT-NNWSs.

Whereas, the NPT NWSs will continue to seek the IAEA's Voluntary Safeguard Agreements and will never compromise on declaring its nuclear weapon facilities that guard against their national security. At CTBT front, the banning of nuclear testing, which is also replicated under NBT, is facing a challenge of its entry into force and requires forty four member-states including all NWSs to ratify it.

In all this debate, the NBT has lost its focus from addressing the theme of nuclear weapons and its relevance to the International Humanitarian Law (IHL). Defining the link between nuclear weapons and IHL offers a huge dilemma. Similarly, the NBT would never be able to offer any progress until NWSs would be a part of it.

The informal participation of NWSs on this subject will highlight the pros and cons of the existing issues to the deterrence stability with respect to their concerned region. For instance, the legitimate security concerns of the smaller NWSs against the developed ones definitely widen the threat to their respective state territory.

In such a scenario, the political use of nuclear weapons for deterrence stability against war-fighting becomes an essential notion for the survival of the state as well as attaining the political strength and stability round the globe. Hence, regardless of adopting the endless mechanisms, the nuclear disarmament could only be achieved through universal and non-discriminatory approach towards all States. Without focusing on these, the nuclear disarmament will always remain a challenge at global nuclear non-proliferation regime.

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Source: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/359522/nuclear-weapons-ban-treaty-a-dilemma/>

Current Affairs

MCQs

1. Who is the current foreign minister of Saudi Arabia?
 - (a) Dr. Ibrahim bin Abdulaziz Al-Assaf
 - (b) Faisal bin Abdul Salah
 - (c) Adel al-Jubeir
 - (d) None of these

2. Pakistan and Russia in Feb 2019 signed Inter Corporate Agreement to conduct feasibility study of _____ offshore gas pipeline project.
 - (a) \$7 billion
 - (b) \$10 billion
 - (c) \$12 billion
 - (d) None of these

3. Mirani Dam become operational in _____?
 - (a) 2003
 - (b) 2004
 - (c) 2005
 - (d) None of these

4. LOC Originally known as the Cease-fire Line, it was redesignated as the "Line of Control" following the Simla Agreement, which was signed on
 - (a) 02 July 1972
 - (b) 13 July 1972
 - (c) 19 July 1972
 - (d) None of these

5. Who was the Alfred Thayer Mahan?
 - (a) British Musician
 - (b) Naval Officer & Historian
 - (c) American Senator
 - (d) None of these

6. The Indian Ocean is the _____ largest of the world's oceanic divisions.
 - (a) 2nd
 - (b) 3rd
 - (c) 4th
 - (d) None of these

7. Multinational Maritime Exercise 'AMAN 19' was held in

- (a) India
- (b) China
- (c) Russia
- (d) None of these

8. Which one of the following is not the official language of OIC?

- (a) English
- (b) French
- (c) Arabic
- (d) Spanish

9. According to Predictions and Survey 'Pakistan to be fourth most populous nation by

- (a) 2025
- (b) 2030
- (c) 2050
- (d) None of these

10. Who currently serves as the Federal Minister for Privatization?

- (a) Shamshad Akhtar
- (b) Azhar Shah
- (c) Muhammad Mian Soomro
- (d) Dr Aftab Khan

11. Smallest Dam in Pakistan

- (a) Warsak Dam
- (b) Nai Gaj Dam
- (c) Chotiari Dam
- (d) Darawat Dam

12. NIEO relates to:

- (a) A regional grouping
- (b) An international sports organization
- (c) An economic concept
- (d) None of these

- 13.** The largest opium producer province of Afghanistan is:
- (a) Helmand
 - (b) Nangarhar
 - (c) Badakhshan
 - (d) None of these
- 14.** Who wrote “Voyage Through History”?
- (a) Chaudhry Muhammad Ali
 - (b) Musarrt Hussain Zuberi
 - (c) Ishtiaq Hussain Qureshi
 - (d) Khalid Bin Sayeed
- 15.** Saudi Arabia signs _____ in deals with Pakistan in Feb 2019.
- (a) 12 Billions
 - (b) 20 Billions
 - (c) 23 Billions
 - (d) None of These
- 16.** Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition (IMCTC) was founded in
- (a) 2013
 - (b) 2014
 - (c) 2015
 - (d) 2016
- 17.** When was The European Society of International Law (ESIL) held?
- (a) 2001
 - (b) 2002
 - (c) 2004
 - (d) 2006
- 18.** When was Pulwama attack carried out in Indian Occupied Kashmir?
- (a) 14th Feb 2019
 - (b) 18th Feb 2019
 - (c) 22nd Feb 2019
 - (d) None of these

- 19.** ISPR Director Generals Major General Asif Ghafoor occupied his office in
- (a) 15 Dec 2016
 - (b) 27 Dec 2016
 - (c) 13 Jan 2017
 - (d) None of these
- 20.** India went to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on _____ against the military court's decision to execute Indian Spy Kulbhusan
- (a) May 8, 2017
 - (b) May 17, 2017
 - (c) May 21, 2017
 - (d) None of these
- 21.** In Qatar, Taliban have an international office led by their new head
- (a) Haiz Noor Abdullah
 - (b) Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar
 - (c) Qari Ismail Khattak
 - (d) None of these
- 22.** The last time Pakistan was removed from the FATF grey list was in
- (a) February 2015
 - (b) December 2015
 - (c) March 2016
 - (d) August 2016
- 23.** in June 2017 following King Salman's decision to remove _____ from all positions, making Mohammed bin Salman heir presumptive to the throne.
- (a) Ibrahim bin Abdullah Al Suwaiyel
 - (b) Faisal bin Abdulaziz Al Saud
 - (c) Saud bin Faisal Al Saud
 - (d) Muhammad bin Nayef
- 24.** Who is the current Special Adviser to the PM on Overseas Pakistanis?
- (a) Tariq Bashir Cheema
 - (b) Ghulam Sarwar Khan
 - (c) Zubaida Jalal
 - (d) None of these

25. Who is current Minister of State for Climate Change?

- (a) Zartaj Gul
- (b) Aamir Mahmood Kiyani
- (c) Muhammad Shahzad Arbab
- (d) Abdul Razzak Dawood

26. Who gave the idea of 'Peaceful Co-existence'?

- (a) Nikita Khrushchev
- (b) Leonid Brezhnev
- (c) Molotov
- (d) None of these

27. Polemology is the study of

- (a) Forest Environment
- (b) Music
- (c) Difference of inhabitants atmosphere
- (d) None of these

28. Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) was established in:

- (a) 1960
- (b) 1968
- (c) 1970
- (d) None of these

29. The headquarters of 'Green Peace International' is located at:

- (a) Vancouver
- (b) Amsterdam
- (c) London
- (d) Paris

30. Indian Congress came into power under the leadership of Sonia Gandhi in:

- (a) 2000
- (b) 2004
- (c) 2006
- (d) None of these

31. Christine Lagarde is currently serving as the Managing Director (MD) and Chairwoman of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). She is

- (a) French Lawyer
- (b) Italian Lawyer
- (c) German Lawyer
- (d) None of these

32. Moody's Corporation Headquarter is located in

- (a) London
- (b) Paris
- (c) Geneva
- (d) New York

33. Pakistan Banao Certificates (PBCs) launched by the PTI Government on

- (a) January 31, 2019
- (b) February 07, 2019
- (c) February 13, 2019
- (d) None of these

34. International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women is observed annually on:

- (a) 25th December
- (b) 23rd November
- (c) 25th November
- (d) None of these

35. National Education Policy Framework 2018 launched in

- (a) August 2018
- (b) September 2018
- (c) November 2018
- (d) December 2018

36. The Kabul Process for Peace & Security Cooperation in Afghanistan Declaration was adopted in

- (a) 28 February 2018
- (b) 01 March 2018
- (c) 13 March 2018
- (d) None of these

37. Who is Sergey Lavrov?

- (a) American Diplomat
- (b) Russian Foreign Minister
- (c) French Head for Supreme Court
- (d) None of these

38. Who was the president of Syria before Bashar Al Assad?

- (a) Najam ul Asad
- (b) Ahmed Al Asad
- (c) Hafez al-Assad
- (d) None of these

39. Who is the current President of WWF?

- (a) Pavan Sukhdev
- (b) Prince Philips
- (c) Duke Harthan Jr
- (d) None of these

40. Iran Nuclear Deal was signed in

- (a) 14 July 2013
- (b) 14 July 2014
- (c) 14 July 2015
- (d) 14 July 2016

41. Bishkek is the capital of: -

- (a) Tajikistan
- (b).Kyrgyzstan
- (c) Turkmenistan
- (d) None of these

42. Pakistan Air Force (PAF) on 27th Feb 2019 shot down _____ Indian Jet.

- (a) Mirage 2000
- (b) MiG-29
- (c) MIG-21
- (d) None of these

43. Which one of the following is not the member state of North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)?

- (a) USA
- (b) Canada
- (c) Maxico
- (d) None of these

44. 2018 United Nations Climate Change Conference was held in

- (a) New York USA
- (b) Paris France
- (c) Katowice Poland
- (d) None of these

45. Asian Development Bank (ADB) current members are

- (a) 36
- (b) 39
- (c) 44
- (d) None of these

46. International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination is observed annually on:

- (a) 23rd May
- (b) 21st March
- (c) 1st March
- (d) None of these

47. The US ambassador, J. Christopher Stevens was killed by militant in

- (a) Tripoli, Libya
- (b) Misrata, Libya
- (c) Benghazi, Libya
- (d) None of these

48. Operation Desert Shield was launched by US in?

- (a) 2 August 1990
- (b) 17 January 1991
- (c) 28 February 1991
- (d) None of these

49. Who is the current Governor of State Bank of Pakistan?

- (a) Tariq Bajwa
- (b) Shahid Hafeez Kardar
- (c) Ishrat Husain
- (d) None of these

50. 'Silk Air' is an airline of:

- (a) Sri Lanka
- (b) Switzerland
- (c) Singapore
- (d) China

Answers with Explanation

1. Answer (a)

Note: Ibrahim bin Abdulaziz bin Abdullah Al-Assaf born 28 January 1949 is Saudi Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs from 27 December 2018. He is the former long serving finance minister of Saudi Arabia and former state minister of Saudi Arabia. On 4 November 2017, Ibrahim Abdulaziz Al-Assaf was detained in Saudi Arabia in a "corruption crackdown" conducted by a new royal anti-corruption committee. However, the investigation found no evidence of wrongdoing, where he returned to his official duties and his name was cleared.

2. Answer (b)

Note: Pakistan and Russia Wednesday signed Inter Corporate Agreement to conduct feasibility study of \$10 billion offshore gas pipeline project. Under the agreement, Russian state run company Gazprom will conduct a feasibility study to build offshore pipeline from Iran to Pakistan. The Inter Corporate Agreement was signed by Managing Director Inter State Gas Systems, Mobin Saulat, and Vitaly A Markelov of Gazprom on the behalf of their respective companies. A Russian delegation, headed by Vitaly A Markelov, deputy chairman of the Management Committee, PJSC, 'Gazprom' International, visited Petroleum Division.

3. Answer (d)

Miraani Dam. Dasht River south of the Central Makran Range in Kech District in Balochistan province of Pakistan. Its 302,000 acre feet (373,000,000 m³) reservoir is fed by the Kech River and the Nihing River. Mirani Dam was completed in July 2006 and began impounding the Dasht River in August 2006.

4. Answer (a)

Note: The Simla Agreement (or Shimla Agreement) was signed between India and Pakistan on 2 July 1972 in Simla, the capital city of the Indian state of Himachal Pradesh. It followed from the Bangladesh Liberation war in 1971 that led to the independence of

Bangladesh, which was earlier known as East Pakistan and was part of the territory of Pakistan. India entered the war as an ally of Bangladesh which transformed the war into an Indo-Pakistani War of 1971. The agreement was ratified by the Parliaments of both the nations in same year. The agreement was the result of resolve of both the countries to "put an end to the conflict and confrontation that have hitherto marred their relations". It conceived the steps to be taken for further normalisation of mutual relations and it also laid down the principles that should govern their future relations.

5. Answer (b)

Note: Alfred Thayer Mahan September 27, 1840 – December 1, 1914 was a United States naval officer and historian, whom John Keegan called "the most important American strategist of the nineteenth century." His book *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660–1783* (1890) won immediate recognition, especially in Europe, and with its successor, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon the French Revolution and Empire, 1793–1812* (1892), made him world-famous and perhaps the most influential American author of the nineteenth century.

6. Answer (b)

Note: The Indian Ocean is the third largest of the world's oceanic divisions, covering 70,560,000 km². It is bounded by Asia on the north, on the west by Africa, on the east by Australia, and on the south by the Southern Ocean or, depending on definition, by Antarctica.

7. Answer (d)

Note: Multinational Maritime Exercise AMAN 19 was held in Karachi Pakistan. AMAN-19 is a multinational Naval Exercise conducted biennially by Pakistan Navy since 2007. The exercise is based on Pakistan Navy led initiative to bring in world navies under one umbrella for collaborative peace and security in the maritime domain.

8. Answer (d)

9. Answer (d)

Note: Due to poor effort by authorities in the field of family planning, Pakistan is bound to face greater challenges by 2030 when it would be the fourth most populous nation of the world, expert report. "Pakistan is the sixth most populous country in the world. If it continues to grow with the same pace, it will be ranked fourth by 2030," said an expert while speaking at a panel discussion regarding family planning in the country organised by the Dow University of Health Sciences.

10. Answer (c)

Note: Muhammad Mian Soomro born 19 August 1950 is a Pakistani politician and a banker who currently serves as the Federal Minister for Privatization and Aviation. Previously, he served as the Chairman of the Senate from 2003 to 2009, the caretaker Prime Minister of Pakistan from 2007 to 2008 and the acting President of Pakistan from 18 August 2008 to 9 September 2008. Soomro hails from an influential Sindhi feudal family that has been active in national politics since 1923. His father, the late Ahmed Mian Soomro, was Deputy Speaker of the West Pakistan Assembly and a member of the Senate and helped to establish the Senate Committee Systems. He is the grandson of another politician, Khan Bahadur Haji Moula Bux Soomro. He was Prime Minister of Pakistan in an acting capacity from 16 November 2007 to 25 March 2008 to oversee the 2008 General Elections and became the 3rd Acting President of Pakistan upon the resignation of Pervez Musharraf on 18 August 2008, both by virtue of his office of the Chairman of the Senate.

11. Answer (a)

Note: Warsak Dam is the Smallest dam of Pakistan. Warsak Dam is defined as the mass concrete gravity dam. It is located on the Kabul River around 20 km northwest of the city of Peshawar in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. The total installed capacity of the Warsak Dam Hydropower Project is 243 MW. In June 2012, the Pakistan WAPDA (Water and Power Development Authority) decided to add a 375 MW powerhouse to Warsak, which will raise Warsak's total power generation capacity to 525 MW.

12. Answer (c)

Note: The New International Economic Order (NIEO) was a set of proposals put forward during the 1970's by some developing countries through the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development to promote their interests by improving their terms of trade, increasing development assistance, developed-country tariff reductions, and other means. It was meant to be a revision of the international economic system in favour of Third World countries, replacing the Bretton Woods system, which had benefited the leading states that had created it – especially the United States. This order was demanded by the Non-Aligned Movement.

13. Answer (a)

Note: Helmand also known as Hillmand or Helman, and, in ancient times, as Hermand and Hethumand is one of the 34 provinces of Afghanistan, in the south of the country. It is the largest province by area, covering 58,584 square kilometres (20,000 ... Helmand is believed to be one of the world's largest opium-producing regions.

14. Answer (b)

15. Answer (b)

Note: Saudi Arabia has pledged investment deals worth \$20bn with Pakistan which is seeking to bolster its fragile economy. The deals include funding for an \$8bn oil refinery in the city of Gwadar. It comes as part of a high-profile Asian tour by the kingdom's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. Saudi Arabia has a long history of providing financial support to Pakistan. That includes funneling money through Pakistan's madrassa education system, cushioning the impact of international sanctions following its nuclear test in the late 1990s, and loaning Islamabad \$1.5 billion when the Pakistani rupee crashed in 2014.

16. Answer (c)

Note: The Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition (IMCTC) is an intergovernmental counter-terrorist alliance of countries in the Muslim world, united around military intervention against ISIL and other counter-terrorist activities. Its creation was first announced by Saudi Arabian defence minister Mohammad bin Salman Al Saud, on 15 December 2015. The alliance was to have a joint operations center in Riyadh, Saudi

Arabia. When the coalition was announced there were 34 members. Additional countries joined and the number of members reached 41 when Oman joined in December 2016. On 6 January 2017, the Pakistani former chief of Army Staff, General (retd.) Raheel Sharif was named the IMCTC's first commander-in-chief. Most of its participants are members of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation.

17. Answer (c)

Note: The European Society of International Law (ESIL) is a dynamic network of researchers, scholars and practitioners in the field of international law. The Society's goals are to encourage the study of international law, to foster inquiry, discussion and innovation in international law, and to promote a greater understanding of the role of international law in the world today. The process of creating ESIL began in 2001 and the inaugural meeting was held in 2004 in Florence. Since then, the Society has provided a forum for the exchange and promotion of new ideas, and ESIL events and publications continue to illustrate the breadth and range of members' interests and activities.

18. Answer (a)

Note: On 14 February 2019, a convoy of vehicles carrying security personnel on the Indian Occupied Jammu Srinagar National Highway was attacked by a vehicle-borne suicide bomber at Lethpora (near Awantipora) in the Pulwama district, Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir. The attack resulted in the deaths of 40 Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel and the attacker. Most of the Indian internal and external sources claimed that attack was carried out internally from India to get help in Modi Election 2019. Without evidence India blamed Pakistan for the attack. Pakistan condemned the attack and denied any connection to it.

19. Answer (a)

Note: The Inter-Services Public Relations Reporting name ISPR, is the media wing of the Pakistan Armed Forces which broadcasts and coordinates military news and information

to the country's civilian media and the civic society. Major General Asif Ghafoor was commissioned in an Artillery regiment in September 1988. He is graduate of Command & Staff College Quetta, Command & Staff College Bandung (Indonesia) and National Defence University, Islamabad. He holds master's degree in Strategic Studies. He was appointed as DG ISPR in Dec 2016.

20. Answer (a)

Note: India went to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on May 8, 2017 against the military court's decision to execute Kulbhushan. On March 3, 2016, serving Cdr Kulbhushan Jadhav of the Indian Navy, working for their premier Intelligence agency RAW, clandestinely entered Pakistan from across the Saravan border with Iran and was arrested by the Pakistani authorities in the course of a counter-intelligence operation from Mashkel area in Balochistan. Cdr Kulbhushan admitted unspeakable acts of horror and terror against Pakistan. Based on evidence, a military court passed a death sentence. India went to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on May 8, 2017 against the military court's decision to execute Kulbhushan. The buildup between the two countries is around legal arguments, for which Pakistan's counter memorial dated Nov 17, 2017 is an exceptional document by many standards.

21. Answer (b)

Note: Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar also called Mullah Baradar Akhund or Mullah Brother, is a co-founder of the Taliban movement in Afghanistan. He was the deputy of Mullah Mohammed Omar. Baradar was captured in Pakistan by a team of Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) officers in February 2010 and was released on 24 October 2018 at the request of the United States. Now he is new head of Taliban Office in Qatar.

22. Answer (a)

Note: Pakistan has been on and off the grey list in the past. The last time we were removed from the grey list was in February 2015. If the ongoing consultations between

the FATF and the Pakistani government are successful, we will be taken off the grey list and placed on the white list. The Financial Action Task Force (on Money Laundering) (FATF), also known by its French name, Groupe d'action financière (GAFI), is an intergovernmental organization founded in 1989 on the initiative of the G7 to develop policies to combat money laundering. In 2001 its mandate expanded to include terrorism financing. It monitors progress in implementing the FATF Recommendations through "peer reviews" ("mutual evaluations") of member countries. The FATF Secretariat is housed at the OECD headquarters in Paris.

23. Answer (d)

Note: in June 2017 following King Salman's decision to remove Muhammad bin Nayef from all positions, making Mohammed bin Salman heir presumptive to the throne. Muhammad bin Nayef Al Saud is a prominent member of the House of Saud. He is a nephew of King Salman and grandson of the founding monarch King Abdulaziz. He has served as First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior of Saudi Arabia and chairman of the Council for Political and Security Affairs. On 29 April 2015, he was appointed Crown Prince by King Salman, making him first in line to the throne of Saudi Arabia. On 21 June 2017 he was replaced as Crown Prince and First Deputy Prime Minister by the king's son, then Deputy Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman, and relieved of all positions by royal decree of King Salman.

24. Answer (d)

Note: Zulfi Bukhari is the current Special Adviser to the PM on Overseas Pakistanis.

25. Answer (a)

Note: Zartaj Gul Wazir is a Pakistani politician who is the current Minister of State for Climate Change, in office since 5 October 2018. She has been a member of the National Assembly of Pakistan since August 2018.

26. Answer (a)

Note: Peaceful coexistence was a theory developed and applied by the Soviet Union at various points during the Cold War in the context of primarily Marxist–Leninist foreign

policy and was adopted by Soviet-allied socialist states that they could peacefully coexist with the capitalist bloc (i.e., U.S.-allied states). This was in contrast to the antagonistic contradiction principle that socialism and capitalism could never coexist in peace. The Soviet Union applied it to relations between the western world, particularly between the United States and NATO countries and the nations of the Warsaw Pact.

27. Answer (d)

Note: War studies, sometimes called polemology, is the multi-disciplinary study of war. The word derives from Ancient Greek (πόλεμος, "war") + "-logy". Polemology is distinct from military history in that it encompasses a variety of fields:

28. Answer (a)

Note: The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries is an intergovernmental organisation of 14 nations, founded in 1960 in Baghdad by the first five members (Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela), and headquartered since 1965 in Vienna, Austria. As of September 2018, the then 15 member countries accounted for an estimated 44 percent of global oil production and 81.5 percent of the world's "proven" oil reserves, giving OPEC a major influence on global oil prices that were previously determined by the so called "Seven Sisters" grouping of multinational oil companies.

29. Answer (b)

Note: Greenpeace is a non-governmental environmental organization with offices in over 39 countries and with an international coordinating body in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Greenpeace was founded in 1971 by Irving Stowe and Dorothy Stowe, Canadian and US ex-pat environmental activists.

30. Answer (b)

Note: Legislative elections were held in India in four phases between 20 April and 10 May 2004. Over 670 million people were eligible to vote, electing 543 members of the 14th

Lok Sabha. The Lok Sabha, or "House of the People," is the directly elected lower house of the Parliament of India. On 13 May, the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its alliance National Democratic Alliance conceded defeat. The Indian National Congress, which had governed India for all but five years from independence until 1996, returned to power after a record eight years out of office. It was able to put together a comfortable majority of more than 335 members out of 543 with the help of its allies. The 335 members included both the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance, the governing coalition formed after the election, as well as external support from the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), Samajwadi Party (SP), Kerala Congress (KC) and the Left Front. (External support is support from parties that are not part of the governing coalition).

31. Answer (a)

Note: Christine Madeleine Odette Lagarde born 1 January 1956 is a French lawyer and politician who is currently serving as the Managing Director (MD) and Chairwoman of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Lagarde has held the position since 5 July 2011.

32. Answer (d)

Note: Moody's Corporation, often referred to as Moody's, is an American business and financial services company. It is the holding company for Moody's Investors Service (MIS), an American credit rating agency, and Moody's Analytics (MA), an American provider of financial analysis software and services. Its headquarter located in New York.

33. Answer (a)

Note: Pakistan Banao Certificates (PBCs) launched by the Government of Pakistan on January 31, 2019. As part of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government's goal of increasing investment and providing profitable packages to Overseas Pakistanis, it has launched the Pakistan Banao Certificate or PBC. PBCs are being launched keeping in mind the fact that the Pakistani diaspora is the sixth largest diaspora in the world. If you were to study this diaspora you would find that millions of Pakistanis reside in major economic hubs of the world including: the US, the UK, United Arab Emirates, Canada and Australia; playing a vital role in the economic development of Pakistan through remittances.

34. Answer (c)

Note: The United Nations General Assembly has designated November 25 as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women (Resolution 54/134). The premise of the day is to raise awareness of the fact that women around the world are subject to rape, domestic violence and other forms of violence; furthermore, one of the aims of the day is to highlight that the scale and true nature of the issue is often hidden.

35. Answer (c)

Note: The PTI-led government launched the National Education Policy Framework 2018 in November 2018 as part of its first 100 days plan, identifying four key focus areas that the authorities will work on reforming. These areas of focus will be improvement in the quality of education, improving enrolment of out-of-school children, introducing a uniform education system, and helping youth develop skills.

36. Answer (a)

Note: This Declaration is adopted on 28 February 2018 in Kabul, Afghanistan by Australia, Azerbaijan, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Iran, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Korea, Norway, Pakistan, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Sweden (Nordic Plus), Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, United Kingdom, Uzbekistan, United Arab Emirates, United States, EU, NATO and UN.

37. Answer (b)

Note: Sergey Viktorovich Lavrov is a Russian diplomat and politician. In office since 2004, he is the Foreign Minister of Russia. Previously, he was the Russian Representative to the UN, serving from 1994 to 2004. On 9 March 2004, President Vladimir Putin appointed Lavrov to the post of minister of foreign affairs. He succeeded Igor Ivanov in the post. On 21 May 2012, Lavrov was reappointed foreign minister to the cabinet led by prime minister Dimitri Medvedev.

38. Answer (c)

Note: Hafez al-Assad was a Syrian politician who served as President of Syria from 1971 to 2000. He was also Prime Minister from 1970 to 1971, as well as Regional Secretary of the Regional Command of the Syrian Regional Branch of the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party and Secretary General of the National Command of the Ba'ath Party from 1970 to 2000. Hafez died in 2000 and Bashar succeeded him as President.

39. Answer (a)

Note: Pavan Sukhdev is current President of WWF, he is an environmental economist whose field of studies include green economy and international finance. He was the Special Adviser and Head of UNEP's Green Economy Initiative, a major UN project suite to demonstrate that greening of economies is not a burden on growth but rather a new engine for growing wealth, increasing decent employment, and reducing persistent poverty.

40. Answer (c)

Note: Note: The Iran nuclear deal framework was a preliminary framework agreement reached in 2015 between the Islamic Republic of Iran and a group of world powers: the P5+1 (the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council—the United States, the United Kingdom, Russia, France, and China—plus Germany) and the European Union. Negotiations for a framework deal over the nuclear program of Iran took place between the foreign ministers of the countries at a series of meetings held from March 26 to April 2, 2015 in Lausanne, Switzerland. On April 2 the talks came to a conclusion and a press conference was held by Federica Mogherini (High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy) and Mohammad Javad Zarif (Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iran) to announce that the eight parties had reached an agreement on a framework deal. The parties announced, "Today, we have taken a decisive step: we have reached solutions on key parameters of a Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action," which they intended to complete by June 30. Announcing the framework, Foreign Minister Zarif stated: "No agreement has been reached so we do not have any obligation yet. Nobody has obligations now other than obligations that we already undertook under the Joint Plan of Action that we adopted in Geneva in November 2013.

41. Answer (b)

Note: Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan, borders Central Asia's Tian Shan range. It's a gateway to the Kyrgyz Ala-Too mountains and Ala Archa National Park, with glaciers and wildlife trails. The city's arts scene encompasses the monumental State Museum of Fine Arts and the colonnaded Opera and Ballet Theater. The vast, central Ala-Too Square features the Manas monument, honoring the hero of the Kyrgyz Epic of Manas.

42. Answer (c)

Note: Indian Air Force MiG 21 aircraft was shot down by the Pakistan Air Force in Kashmir 27th Feb 2019. One pilot was arrested. One plane crashed in the Kohi Rata sector of Azad Kashmir while one crashed in Indian-Administered Kashmir's Budgam area.

43. Answer (d)

Note: North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) has three member states, USA, Canada and Mexico.

44. Answer (c)

Note: The 2018 United Nations Climate Change Conference was the 24th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP24), also known as the Katowice Climate Change Conference. It was held between 2 and 15 December 2018 in Katowice, Poland. The conference agreed on rules to implement the 2015 Paris Agreement.

45. Answer (d)

Note: Asian Development Bank (ADB) current members are 67. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is a regional development bank established on 19 December 1966, which is headquartered in the Ortigas Center located in the city of Mandaluyong, Metro Manila, Philippines. The company also maintains 31 field offices around the world to promote social and economic development in Asia. The bank admits the members of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP, formerly

the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East or ECAFE) and non-regional developed countries. From 31 members at its establishment, ADB now has 67 members, of which 48 are from within Asia and the Pacific and 19 from outside.

46. Answer (b)

Note: The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination is observed annually on 21 March. On that day, in 1960, police opened fire and killed 69 people at a peaceful demonstration in Sharpeville, South Africa, against the apartheid pass laws. Proclaiming the day in 1966, the United Nations General Assembly called on the international community to redouble its efforts to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination.

47. Answer (c)

Note: Stevens was killed when the U.S. Special Mission in Benghazi, Libya, was attacked by militants on September 11–12, 2012. Stevens was the eighth U.S. Ambassador to be killed while in office.

48. Answer (a)

Note: Note: in 1990, President George Herbert Walker Bush orders the organization of Operation Desert Shield in response to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait on August 2. The order prepared American troops to become part of an international coalition in the war against Iraq that would be launched as Operation Desert Storm in January 1991. To support Operation Desert Shield, Bush authorized a dramatic increase in U.S. troops and resources in the Persian Gulf.

49. Answer (a)

Note: Tariq Bajwa is a retired Pakistani bureaucrat who served in BPS-22 grade as the Finance Secretary and Economic Affairs Secretary of Pakistan. Bajwa currently serves as the 19th and current Governor of the State Bank of Pakistan. He is the only Pakistani who won the Littauer fellowship at Harvard University. He also received a MPA from the same institution.

50. Answer (a)

Note: SilkAir Private Limited is a full service regional airline with its head office in Airline House in Singapore; previously the head office was on the fifth storey of the SIA Superhub in Singapore.