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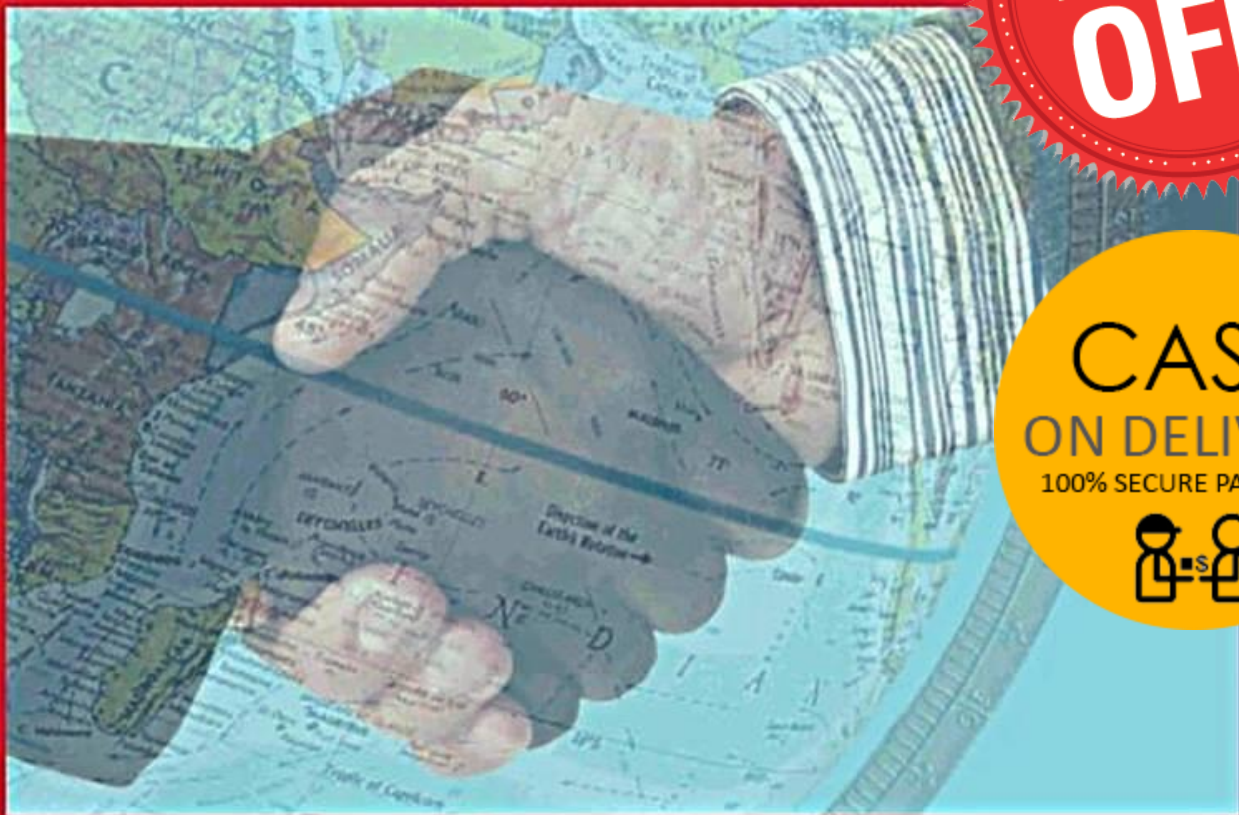
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# PAKISTAN

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## **It is no longer business as usual for Pak-US ties**



Trouble brewing

PRESIDENT Trump's New Year tweet has sent the Pakistan-US relationship into a tailspin. Incidentally, the decision to cut assistance to Pakistan had been in the works for some time. In fact, when this US administration came into office, there was chatter about "giving Pakistan a year" to see if things changed for the better. The year is just about up.

Last week's decision isn't a one-off. What we've witnessed is an initiation of a brinkmanship exercise — the firing of an opening salvo that declares intent to impose pain on Pakistan to get it to deliver on America's principal ask: action against the Afghan Taliban and Haqqani network.

Brinkmanship is a battle of nerves in which both sides believe they have more resolve to stay the course than the opponent. Failure to get the opposite number



to cave in adds to the pressure to try harder in the next move. Neither actor necessarily wants a total breakdown, but in the process of out-nerving the other, either can make a miscalculation.

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The pressure to climb the escalation ladder was built into the US's first move as it was sure to draw a blank. Even proponents of last week's decision in Washington who argue that Pakistan can be moulded by leveraging US assistance agree that withdrawing security aid and the Coalition Support Funds was going to do little to deliver any strategic gains for the US. The fiscal year 2017's appropriated amount of US security assistance to Pakistan was around \$300 million. Actual disbursements are often lower. CSF authorisation was around \$1 billion annually for fiscal years 2015-17, but between a third and a half of it was already conditioned on Pakistan's anti-terrorism performance and withheld.

If you want to get really technical, you'd also have to factor in money from prior fiscal years that is still in the pipeline. This would push the overall amount up by another \$300-400m, although not all of this would have made it even in normal circumstances. All considered, the best estimate for the amount affected by the US decision is somewhere in the \$500-900m range.

These sums are not trivial. But merely their loss is not going to bring the Pakistan Army to a standstill, or pinch the national exchequer seriously if the army wants civilians to offset the losses from other budget heads. Pakistan's response has signaled as much. Overall, the take has been measured. But the ISPR has also stood its ground on the strategic disconnect with the US.

The list of further actions the US can take against Pakistan includes increased economic pressure through multilateral forums or trade restrictions, sanctions and diplomatic isolation, even unilateral use of force. All entail risks high enough for previous US administrations to not pursue them. This may have changed.

Mr Trump has consistently shown a propensity to break the trend lines of his predecessors. Also, champions of the Pakistan-US relationship in Washington are gone. Last week's decision is evidence of what this may mean in practical terms. Using assistance as negative leverage has been debated ad nauseam in Washington but US government deliberations on this and the larger Pakistan question have tended to be split between the hardliners and soft-liners who

advocated a carrots-first approach. These voices were crucial to preventing a break in ties in tense moments. This category draws a blank now, at least in offices that really matter.

Instead, those who matter most have a clear preference on how to approach Pakistan; their take isn't business as usual — not altogether surprising, given that unlike the Obama policy that actively sought Pakistan's support to bring the Afghan Taliban to the table, the Trump strategy is seeking to cut the Taliban to size on the battlefield before talking. Pakistan isn't a sideshow in their calculus. Rather, there is a consensus in Washington that Pakistan is a key impediment in the US's ability to make solid military gains.

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It is also pertinent to note that officials calling the shots have more space than usual to implement their vision because decision-making is currently not as evenly dispersed and the policymaking process is not as consensual across the various US government agencies as it typically is.

As the opponent in this brinkmanship, Pakistan will feel increasing pressure to respond stubbornly to every US move. A senior Pakistani policymaker crystallised the problem thus: "How long before the other side sees my restraint as weakness and pounces hard. I must retaliate sooner rather than later". In an election year, these words are likely to strike a chord with most who make decisions for the country.

As brinkmanship plays out, the possibility of a serious Pakistan-US discussion on finding a way forward on Afghanistan will dwindle further. There is more trouble ahead.

The writer is a foreign policy expert based in Washington, D.C.

Published in Dawn, January 9th, 2018

Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1381658/trouble-brewing>

## **‘Pakistan’s foreign policy not determined by its economic policy’**



FO Spokesman says no plans of establishing Chinese military bases in Pakistan

Pakistan, India, USA, China, Pak India, Pak USA, Foreign Policy, Chinese Air Base, US Air base

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Office (FO) Spokesman Dr Faisal has said that Pakistan’s sacrifices are apparent and a protest against US President Trump’s tweet has been recorded with the US ambassador to Pakistan.

“Pakistan’s foreign policy is not determined by its economic policy. Brave nations face challenges buoyantly. An elaborated statement on US aid will be released shortly,” the spokesman said.

Reiterating the message given by DG ISPR, he said that ‘any drone attack will be countered effectively’.

To a question about US President Donald Trump’s Pakistan policy, the spokesman said that the matter is with the highest forum, which is cabinet’s National Security Committee. He added that we are a strong nation and are able to face any challenges bravely and courageously.

Talking about the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) the Dr Faisal said that Pakistan does not have any plans of establishing Chinese military bases in Pakistan, neither has any request on the matter been made by China.

He said that this is just a fallacious propaganda against CPEC and the development of Pakistan.

To a question about Afghan refugees, Dr Faisal said that Pakistan has extended unprecedented support to Afghan refugees and has offered them educational and professional training facilities so that they can better serve their country when they return. He added that trade between Pakistan and Afghanistan has witnessed phenomenal increase last year with Pakistan's export to Afghanistan increasing by nine per cent.

He went on to say that they are also engaged with Afghanistan for the early convening of Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Cooperation Authority.

The spokesman urged India to stop atrocities in occupied Kashmir instead of playing political theatrics aimed at distorting Pakistan's humanitarian gestures.

He said that Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front Chairman Yasin Malik's letter to Indian external affairs minister bears witness to the Indian gimmickry and the situation of human rights in Indian jails.

Later responding to questions by media, Dr Faisal said that Pakistan is clear and not confused like India, which has put travel restraints on sportsmen and general public visiting for religious purposes.

"India has not issued visas to pilgrims going to Urs of Khawaja Moinuddin. India's refusal to send its national blind cricket team to Pakistan is also regretful," he added.

He said Pakistan believes dialogue is the ultimate mode of resolving disputes.

To another question regarding India's arms buildup, the spokesman said that Pakistan has always maintained that anti-ballistic missile systems entail instability in the region and provoke an arms race. He added that Pakistan is desirous of a peaceful neighborhood in which countries utilize their resources for the betterment of the common man, instead of squandering them in a futile arms race.

He further said that Pakistan is fully committed to, and has proposed to India some restraint measures to promote strategic stability.

On tensions in the Korean peninsula, the spokesman said that Pakistan shares concerns with international community and maintains that all concerned parties should fulfil their obligations and follow a policy of peace and reconciliation. He added, "We encourage the relevant parties to resume meaningful dialogue."

Responding to question about protests in Iran, Dr Faisal said, "Iran is our brother Muslim country. Protests in Tehran are its internal matter."

Source: <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2018/01/04/pakistans-foreign-policy-not-determined-by-its-economic-policy/>

## **Pakistan Has All the Leverage Over Trump by** **C. CHRISTINE FAIR**



Pakistan responded as it has in the past for being called out for its mendacity and perfidy: It rallied its trolls; it summoned the U.S. ambassador in Islamabad for a démarche; and, in all forums possible, it denied the allegations of nefarious deeds with all of the sincerity and credibility of the wholesome human resources manager of the Chicken Ranch.

Even as the tweet continued to titillate Trump enthusiasts in India and at home, however, the responsible members of Trump’s government were strategizing how to roll it back. Later that same day, a White House National Security Council spokesperson explained what, specifically, to expect: “The United States does not plan to spend the \$255 million in FY 2016 foreign military financing for Pakistan at this time.” This is not the sweeping cutoff that Trump implied in his braggadocios tweet.

In fact, there is little that is, or ever will be, new in Trump's Pakistan policy. In fact, there is little that is, or ever will be, new in Trump's Pakistan policy. That's true for two simple reasons: the logistics of staying the course in Afghanistan and the night terrors triggered by imagining how terrifying Pakistan could be without American money.

Obama did the same thing, too, and nothing changed

Trump is not the first U.S. president to express distaste for Pakistan's actions. In August 2007, then-presidential candidate Barack Obama threatened to undertake unilateral military strikes against the terrorists harbored by Pakistan. Obama, upon being president, took the fight to Pakistan with his zealous use of airstrikes by remotely piloted aerial vehicles. Moreover, in March 2009, when Obama announced his so-called Afghanistan-Pakistan strategy, he specifically identified the latter as a terrorist safe haven. "You know, eventually those snakes are going to turn on whoever has them in the backyard." And it was Obama who ordered U.S. Navy SEALs to unilaterally attack a compound near Pakistan's famed military academy in which Osama bin Laden had been residing in plain sight for numerous years.

The Obama administration also withheld funds from Pakistan for several years. It did so because the U.S. Congress passed legislation that authorized \$1 billion in coalition support funds (CSF) but rendered \$300 million hostage to Pakistan taking decisive action against the Haqqani Network and in later years against the Lashkar-e-Taiba. This money could only be paid if the administration certified that Pakistan had complied with the requirements. On several occasions, it demurred to do so.

It is also worth noting that Trump's tweet only reinforced what the New York Times reported on Dec. 29, that the Trump administration was going to withhold — wait for it — \$255 million in foreign military financing (FMF). FMF funds enable partner countries to buy "U.S. defense articles, services, and training" and are provided either as a nonrepayable grant or on a loan basis. This is hardly a sweeping punishment that will persuade Pakistan to begin acting against terrorism. Historically, FMF funds have not been the mainstay of the American dole to Pakistan. Out of the more than \$33 billion given to Pakistan since fiscal year 2002, FMF has accounted for less than \$4 billion. The most lucrative payouts have been through the CSF program, which totals more than \$14.5 billion.

## America's preferred roads to Afghanistan go through Pakistan

Why is it that the United States continues to make huge payouts to Pakistan even though it is widely recognized that the country continues to fund the very organizations — such as the Haqqani Network, the Taliban, and groups like the LeT — that are killing U.S. troops and allies in Afghanistan? Why can't the United States simply take its checkbook and let China take over paying Pakistan's bills as Pakistan continually threatens will happen should the United States walk away from this abusive relationship for good? There are several important reasons, none of which are easily ignored.

Source: <http://foreignpolicy.com/2018/01/03/pakistan-has-all-the-leverage-over-trump/>



## **Terrorism — a critical examination | Editorial**

For those with the motivation and skills to seek out objective evidence of the penetration and effectiveness of extremists and terrorists there is no shortage. That motivation rarely extends to the political cadres, whose unwise statements on the ‘eradication’ of terrorism occasionally litter the media. Thus it is that we should be thankful for organisations such as the Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) which has just issued a detailed report. As noted in these columns on many occasions’ terrorism and extremism are moving targets. They are in a constant and accelerated process of evolution — unlike many of the agencies tasked with countering them — and certainly unlike our government which is forever playing catch-up when it is not actively delusional.

The PIPS report is compiled from open-source material augmented with interviews and analysis by prominent and knowledgeable commentators. It shows a 16 per cent decline in terror attacks in 2017 which is the good news, the bad being that the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and its franchises continue to be a potent threat and their influence is expanding, especially in northern Sindh. Following the TTP it is nationalist-insurgent groups that present the greatest threat, an assessment borne out by the patterns and severity of attacks. Islamic State has only claimed six attacks in 2017, but they were the deadliest. The numbers of people killed is down by 10 per cent but the numbers of attacks that originate cross-border have increased.

There are hints in the report that the government is beginning to stir at a policy level in response to the sophisticated threats it faces internally. There needs to be a revision of the National Action Plan — long overdue — and parliamentary oversight of a national counter-terrorism plan, the failure to develop which is perhaps the greatest deficit that attaches to NAP. There needs to be a better understanding of how global events impact on the national security with the churn in the Middle East and the Arab world to the fore. Also likely to impact on the security environment in 2018 is the Trump administration re-swinging of its geopolitical compass. Less bombast, more focused action required. Get to it please.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1603555/6-terrorism-critical-examination/>

## **Trump's Flawed Pakistan Policy By Shuja Nawaz**



### Why Islamabad Is Unlikely to Change

On January 4, the United States announced the suspension of nearly all security-related assistance to Pakistan until Islamabad could prove its commitment to fighting terrorism and cut its ties with militant groups such as the Taliban. This decision came just days after U.S. President Donald Trump had accused Pakistan, on Twitter, of giving “safe haven to the terrorists we hunt in Afghanistan.” Pakistani leaders responded with a familiar refrain, claiming to have moved against all militant groups without distinction and pointing to the enormous costs in terms of money (over \$120 billion) and lives (nearly 80,000 civilian and military dead) sustained by Pakistan in the fight against terrorism since 2001.

For Trump, it may feel good to vent his frustrations about Pakistan, especially now that his administration is desperate to salvage something from the United States’ prolonged and losing conflict in Afghanistan. These new sanctions, however, are unlikely to influence Pakistani behavior, which is rooted in realities on the ground that the United States has little ability to change.

Pakistan is a complicated country in a tough neighborhood. Its main strategic concerns are to contain the surging power of its neighbor and rival, India, and to combat Islamist militancy inside its own borders—in particular, it wishes to fight the Pakistani Taliban, which now operates from sanctuaries in Afghanistan. Pakistan launched a military operation in 2014 to clear the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of insurgents, including the Pakistani Taliban, many of whom escaped across the border into Afghanistan. Pakistan, however, is reluctant to please the United States, which it considers a distant and fickle ally, by moving against the leadership of the Afghan Taliban. The United States, for its part, regards Pakistan as a duplicitous partner that is willing to take U.S. funds but unwilling to cut ties with militant groups or eject Afghan Taliban leaders, particularly those affiliated with the Haqqani network, a Pakistan-based faction that has orchestrated high-profile attacks in Afghanistan, particularly in Kabul.

The dwindling and now relatively small amount of financial assistance that the United States currently provides Pakistan is another reason to suspect that its threats will be ineffectual. Pakistani officials have been defiant. Miftah Ismail, the adviser to the prime minister for finance, revenue, and economic affairs, told Reuters, “Aid cuts will not hurt us,” since U.S. aid has been “reduced drastically over the years.” (Annual U.S. aid to Pakistan peaked at about \$3.5 billion in 2011, before declining to about \$1 billion in 2016.)

Pakistan also has its own leverage against the United States. Islamabad could, for instance, threaten to cut off the United States’ air- and ground-based supply routes to Afghanistan. That leverage has been diminished somewhat in recent years, both by Washington’s reduction of U.S. troop levels in Afghanistan (thereby lessening its need for supplies) and by the proven efficacy of the Northern Distribution Network (NDN), which moves supplies through Russia and Central Asia. In 2011, for example, when Pakistan closed its ground routes to the United States, the NDN allowed the International Security Assistance Force commander, General John Allen, to store nearly six months of reserve supplies inside Afghanistan. Yet Pakistan’s ability to threaten U.S. logistics is still formidable: in 2015, Russia shut down the NDN, and there is always a chance that Moscow could decide to play hardball if the United States sought to reopen it. In 2014, the United States lost the use of its Manas airbase in Kyrgyzstan, the last U.S. base in Central Asia, as the Kyrgyz government sought to win favor with Russia. Another option is for the United States to use an Iranian land route moving through the port of Chabahar, but this is likely off the table given the

heightened war of words between the Trump administration and Tehran. Depriving the United States of its air routes into Afghanistan, moreover, would end Washington's ability to conduct air support with Gulf-based fighters and bombers.

The current standoff is further complicated by this year's electoral calendar. The United States faces midterm elections in November, Pakistan has a parliamentary election in June, and Afghanistan has one in July. India, too, might bring forward its elections, currently scheduled for 2019, to this year. In all of these countries, then, domestic politics will dominate decision-making for the foreseeable future. Pakistani Foreign Minister Khwaja Asif's belligerent, rapid-fire Urdu tweets on the U.S. sanctions, which pronounced the death of the alliance, are a good illustration of how this domestic focus could make compromise with the United States difficult. Trump, meanwhile, is anxious to show that the United States is winning in Afghanistan, which might lead him to increase pressure on Pakistan by imposing additional sanctions. (As strategic thinker Harlan Ullman's recent book *Anatomy of Failure* maintains, the United States has never won a war that it started.) Meanwhile, Afghanistan and India could support U.S. attempts to influence Islamabad. This would in turn fortify Pakistan's perception of an international conspiracy against it.

A final obstacle in getting Pakistan to change its policy is the fact that it currently has an ersatz government run by a competent, albeit weak, prime minister, Shahid Khaqan Abbasi. Abbasi has no political clout within his party, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz, which still bears the name of former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, who was forced to step down over corruption allegations in July but continues to call the shots. Dynastic politics in Pakistan weaken civilian governance and democratic legitimacy, allowing the well-organized military to dominate policymaking and take a strong position against U.S. demands. Since 2001, moreover, the United States has tied itself to successive unpopular, autocratic, and corrupt administrations in Pakistan, including that of the dictator Pervez Musharraf. In doing so, it has failed to build a relationship with the 200 million people of Pakistan, a majority of whom, even at the height of the Afghanistan war and U.S. drone strikes on their country, wished to have better relations with the United States.

Against this backdrop, it is unlikely that threats to cut off U.S. funding—or Trump's inflammatory tweets—will have much effect in terms of changing Pakistan's behavior. Rather, they will only inflame tensions between the two and

worsen the situation in Pakistan. After all, the last time that such a break in ties took place was in the 1990s, in the wake of Pakistan's development of a nuclear weapon and the United States' withdrawal from the Afghan theater following the end of the Soviet occupation. Pakistan was left to cope with the aftershocks of the Afghan war on its own. The United States also stopped all U.S.-based training programs for Pakistani military officers, beginning with the Pressler Amendment in 1985 and lasting through the 1990s. This "lost generation" was deprived of contact with its American counterparts, leading Pakistani officers to develop a view of the United States as an untrustworthy ally. Yet today, more than 200 of the brightest Pakistani officers come to the United States for training purposes every year. If the U.S.-Pakistani relations continue to deteriorate, this training program may disappear again.

Indeed, the current public contretemps will likely produce a train wreck for the U.S.-Pakistani relationship unless meaningful dialogue resumes. It is important that the discussions between the two be led by diplomats, rather than politicians, so that solutions can be found that build on the two countries' dependence on one another and serve both of their interests. It is important, moreover, for Washington to inform and engage with the people of Pakistan in these exchanges. Washington is right to favor results-based assistance. Why not let Pakistan set attainable targets for aid, and agree with the United States on these before aid is disbursed, rather than quibble over reimbursements, as is the case now? The United States, meanwhile, could use its influence with India and Afghanistan to develop a more sustainable, long-term regional plan to fight terrorism and militancy. If Trump can pull this off, he can declare victory before exiting Afghanistan. If not, the current dispute could portend a messy defeat.

Source: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/pakistan/2018-01-10/trumps-flawed-pakistan-policy?cid=int-fls&pgtype=hpg>

## **The degeneration of political discourse by** **Editorial**

The PML-N decided to appease the preachers of hate by making Zahid Hamid a fall guy. As if this was not enough Captain (r) Safdar launched a virulent tirade against the already persecuted Ahmadi community in the National Assembly. Party leaders vied with one another in declaring Ahmadis non-Muslim. The PML-N government in Punjab and at the center allowed the Tehik-e-Labbaik (TLYR) speakers at Faizabad sit-in to continue their vitriolic harangues against the community day after day.

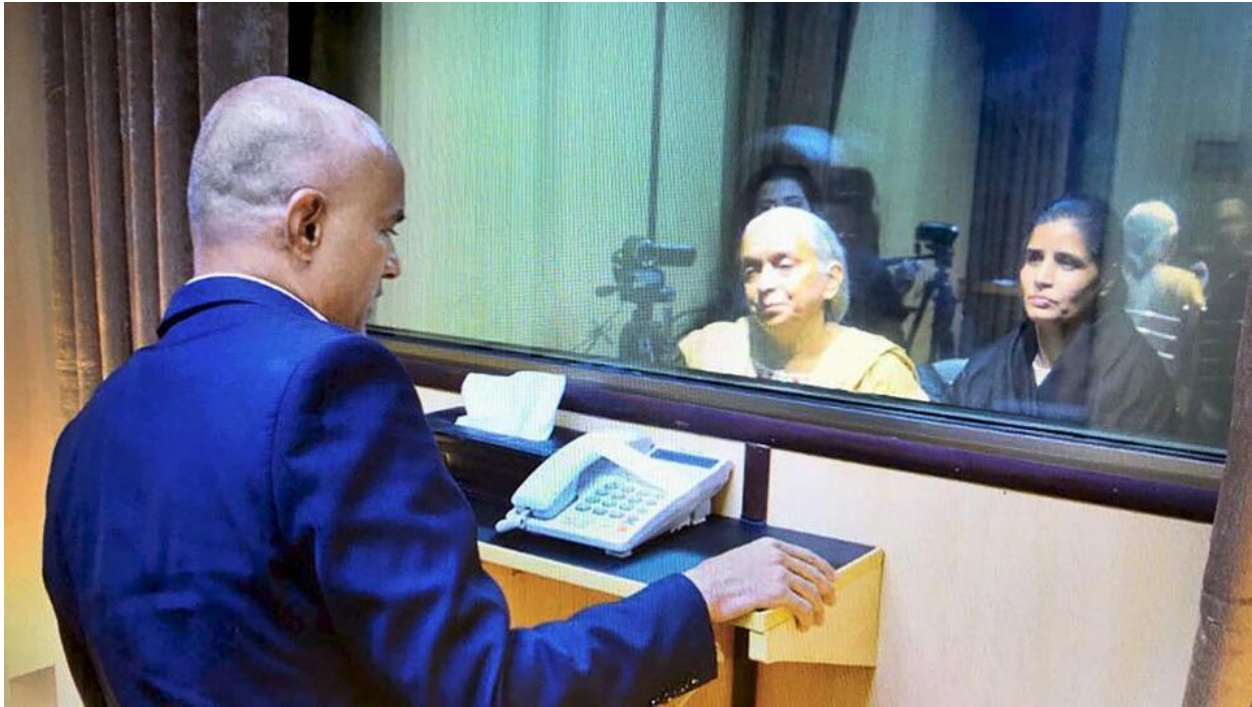
The PTI has also decided to make use of religion to advance its politics. The result is that as we approach the elections, the two parties have introduced a non-issue into the political discourse. Instead of seeking votes on the basis of their social and economic programme and performance, each one is trying to underline its religious credentials.

Recounting PTI's services at the Difa-i-Pakistan rally in Peshawar on Sunday, KP CM Pervez Khattak said he had made a chapter relating to the finality of prophethood compulsory in text books. Also recitation and translation of the Holy Quran till grade 12. Both measures he said were aimed at producing good Muslims. What is more his government had provided solar system to mosques and fixed honorarium for prominent prayer leaders. He criticised liberal forces for interfering in religious matters. PTI's ally Samiul Haq maintained that Jihad was compulsory for every Muslim in the prevailing situation, adding that the DPC was formed to counter Christian and Jewish lobbies.

The PML-N and PTI candidates fighting for a Chakwal provincial seat PP-20 have reduced the campaign to who is more opposed to the Ahmadis. The highest bidder so far is PML-N's candidate who called for expelling the Ahmadis from Pakistan. The PTI candidate on the other hand asked the voters to decide whether they stand with those who changed the Khatm-i-Nabuwat law or with the lovers of the Prophet (PBUH).

The Punjab government meanwhile convened a gathering of spiritual leaders where both Shahbaz Sharif and Rana Sanaullah reiterated their belief in the finality of prophethood. And still we wonder why the US has placed Pakistan on watch list for violations of religious freedom.

## **Indo-Pak frustration by KULDIP NAYAR**



The Jadhav affair, at least, could have been handled better

Nothing seems to work between India and Pakistan. The meeting of Kulbhushan Jadhav, an Indian prisoner in Pakistan jail, with his wife and mother could have been an opportunity to foster a better understanding between the two countries. But the bureaucracy on both sides is contaminated to the last tier of administration that it spoils any effort towards better relationship.

After 21 months' pressure by many, including international organisations, Jadhav was allowed to meet his family members. But the Pakistani bureaucracy saw to it that the meeting would not go well. It was somebody's brainwave which resulted in placing a glass between Jadhav and his family members. Even his wife's mangalsutra, which the married Hindu women wear, bangles and bindi were ordered to be removed. What purpose did this act serve is beyond anybody's understanding. After all, mangalsutra and bangles cannot be a weapon by any stretch of imagination. They are mere symbols of a married woman.

Pakistan's bureaucrats know this because till the other day they were a part and parcel of the same system. Their act was nothing but an expression of hostility towards India. Nobody told them to behave in this manner. They have developed

this habit since partition. Probably, the bureaucrats were also worked up because the International Court of Justice (CJI) at The Hague had stayed his execution.

Jhadav, according to Pakistan, was arrested in March last year for alleged espionage and terrorism while straying into Balochistan province

Jhadav, according to Pakistan, was arrested in March last year for alleged espionage and terrorism while straying into Balochistan province. Soon after, a military court sentenced him to death for alleged involvement in spying and subversive activities. India had contended he was kidnapped from the Iranian port of Chabahar and his secret trial was a “farce”.

India, appealing in ICJ, described Jadhav’s trial as a “serious miscarriage of justice” because Indian diplomats were not granted consular access to him and he wasn’t allowed to choose his own defence lawyer. New Delhi argued that the restrictions imposed by Pakistan amounted to a breach of the 1963 Vienna Convention on Consular Relations.

Pakistan, however, claimed the ICJ did not have the jurisdiction to take up Jadhav’s case as it was a “national security” issue and that the court did not need to issue an order to stay his execution because it wasn’t imminent. However, the ICJ concluded it has “prima facie jurisdiction” as Islamabad’s alleged failure to provide “requisite consular notifications with regard to the arrest and detention” of Jadhav and “the alleged failure to allow communication and provide access to him” fell within the scope of the Vienna Convention.

Ronny Abraham, president of the United Nations’ highest court in The Hague, said: “Pakistan shall take all measures at its disposal to ensure that Mr Jadhav is not executed pending the final decision in these proceedings and shall inform the court of all the measures taken in implementation of the present order.”

In its “provisional measures” that were adopted unanimously, the 12-judge tribunal said it would remain “seized of the matters” which form the subject of its order until it gives its final judgment. The order came after India and Pakistan presented their arguments in the case of Jadhav. This has further strained bilateral relations between the two countries.

Ultimately everything depends on the relationship between the two countries. In a friendly atmosphere, the two could have gone ahead hand despite the impediment of Kashmir. Had the relations been amiable, the meeting of Jadhav



and his family would have been hailed. Pakistan would not have used the pretext of security precautions and the cultural and religious sensibilities of his family members would have been respected. Even Jadhav's mother was prevented from talking in their mother tongue, Marathi, although this was clearly the natural medium of communication in a situation like this.

This would not have been disproved by Pakistan Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi who is said to be seeking normal relations with India. In fact, Pakistan's domestic politics must be coming in the way. After Pakistan's Supreme Court indictment of Nawaz Sharif on accountability, politicians there are lying low and have lost their voice.

But things are different in India. Here one person, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, is in control of the administration even though his decisions tend to be dictatorial. His government should have seen to it that the destiny of Jadhav is not left to the squabbles among the states. New Delhi needs to explore an alternative mediation, probably by the civil social institutions. But, unfortunately, Modi's priority is to bring Hindutva through backdoor and he has very little time for problems like that of Jadhav.

India has put another condition for normalising relations with Pakistan. Islamabad should give an assurance that Pakistan would not be a shelter for terrorists. This would be hard to implement because all stakeholders are not beholden to Islamabad. Balochistan is trying to secede and this is the place from where Jadhav was reportedly picked up for "espionage."

New Delhi has assured many a time that it considers the integrity of Pakistan like the integrity of India. When Hafiz Mohammad Sayeed, categorised as a terrorist by the UN, starts his own political party, it is clear that Pakistan is helpless in curbing his activities. The preamble to any good relations with India is some kind of action against the mastermind of Mumbai attacks. But Islamabad is too weak to take any firm action against him.

Bilawal Bhutto, son of Benazir Bhutto, is beginning to control Pakistan People's Party. But he has no other credentials except being the son of the late prime minister. Asif Ali Zardari still calls the shots and this is not liked by many in the PPP. In the face of such a situation, the fate of Jadhav is unpredictable.

Source: <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2018/01/08/indo-pak-frustration/>

## **Water worries By Editorial**

It has been repeated umpteen times only to fall on deaf ears that water is a basic necessity for the sustenance of life. The human body can potentially survive weeks without food but without water, it may live to only about three days. Around here, however, water is assumed to be contaminated so it is a careful consideration one must make as to whether to refrain from or drink polluted water, creating a dire situation. Centuries-old diseases still exist in enormous numbers: cholera, dysentery and typhoid. Effective action by the health department is left to be desired. The neglect shown towards illnesses borne from infected water supply demands that somebody be held culpable. Access to clean water is a luxury and this alone should launch provincial water and sanitation departments into an efficacious approach to provide clean water to all citizens of their respective provinces.

Provincial health departments need to simultaneously become more aggressive in combating such preventable diseases, starting by forming a stronger lobby for public access to potable water. Health economics should be a major convincing factor, acknowledging that annually \$5.7 billion, comprising four per cent of the GDP, are frivolously spent on dealing with the effects of water pollution such as bacterial infections. Furthermore, this same tainted water is used to grow crops and house the fish that humans consume, eventually inviting genetic mutations and affecting future generations. The irony is that even when one wants to eat a healthful diet consisting of mostly vegetables to stave off inflammation and diseases like cancer, they may already be at a predisposition due to polluted water used to grow the plant crops.

Another irony is that despite being a country with direct sea access and melting glaciers, Pakistan's water reservoirs are emptying. We require desalination plants and water filtration plants that can effectively annihilate the bacteria that thrive in hot and humid weather in much of the country almost year round. The death of 53,000 children every year due to only contaminated water being available in two-thirds of Pakistani households is criminal.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1605271/6-water-worries/>

## **NAP's yet another failure | Editorial**

Sufi Muhammad has been released on the orders of the Peshawar High Court (PHC). The development is yet another reminder of the lack of commitment on the part of the government to eradicate extremism. Sufi Muhammad's career in militancy spans three decades. On returning from his Afghan adventures in early 1990s, Muhammad had formed Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat Muhammadi (TNSM), which was later banned. The TNSM was responsible for multiple episodes of unrest and even armed rebellion against successive governments.

He is the father-in-law of Mullah Fazlullah, who ruined the peace of Swat valley and unleashed a violent reign in the area until a military operation was finally launched to re-take control of the region.

Sufi Muhammad was responsible for all the terrorist acts of Taliban. He repeatedly rejected the country's Constitution and denied the sovereignty of the Parliament, and yet he could not be convicted of any of his multiple criminal acts in all these years. This inaction certainly has to do with the ineffectiveness of Pakistan's criminal justice system and the government's non-seriousness in getting terrorists convicted, but state institutions' confusion in dealing with the matter is also problematic. When the PPP government had signed a peace deal with TNSM in 2009, Sufi Muhammad was being seen by many in the power corridors as a saviour who would help the state restore peace in the Swat valley. But that peace deal proved counterproductive and violence in the valley instead saw an increase. Sufi Muhammad could not be tried in all the cases registered against him because the state did not make up its mind as to how he should be dealt with. The fact of the matter is that Sufi Muhammad condoned, if not committed, all the horrific atrocities in Swat that were at their peak before the military operation. Therefore, he also has blood on his hands and the state's inability to convict him is our collective failure.

Furthermore, those justifying his release on the basis of his old-age must not remain tight-lipped over the manner in which 73-year-old philosophy professor Hassan Zafar Arif's body was found in the back seat of his car from Ibrahim Hyderi area of Karachi. The likes of Sufi Muhammad, Ehsanullah Ehsan and Maulvi Abdul Aziz remain untouchable while progressive activists continue to be attacked, killed or abducted. We seem to have all the mercy in the world for terror suspects but zero tolerance for progressive activists who dare to disagree with state's policies.

## **Pak-Russia ties & US strategy for SA By Baber Ali Bhatti**



US President Donald Trump, in his first address to the nation in August 2017 lambasted Pakistan for allegedly supporting and harbouring militants. In response, Pakistan's Ambassador to United States, Aizaz Ahmed reiterated Pakistan's stance that there are no safe havens of terrorists in Pakistan. In contrast to Trump's tirade against Pakistan, several significant states in the region have lauded Pakistan's efforts in the war against terror. The fact that Pakistan's all weather friend China as well as Russia came forward in defense of Pakistan reflects the credibility and respect Pakistan enjoys within the international community. Regionally Pakistan was already enjoying significant diplomatic and military support from Russia.

Russia echoed sentiments in favor of Pakistan. Russian Presidential Envoy to Afghanistan Zamir Kabulov censured Trump's Pakistan strategy and insisted that Islamabad is "a key regional player to negotiate with. Putting pressure [on Pakistan] may seriously destabilize the region-wide security situation and result in negative consequences for Afghanistan". One of the reasons behind Trump's

statement is considered as the means to counter growing Russia-Pakistan relations and Russia's influence in the region. The two former Cold War-era rivals, who have the bitter past, have already managed to put their differences aside and step up their diplomatic, military and economic cooperation in recent years. Trump's strategy provided an impetus to growing ties between Russia and Pakistan. Undoubtedly, Trump's Pakistan strategy has eclipsed US-Pakistan relations. Now, Islamabad would rigorously seek deeper ties with Moscow and recent developments imply that Russia has gravitated towards Islamabad.

Russia is likely to have greater influence in South Asia. Since the Indo-Russia relations have been eclipsed with the larger US weapon export to India, Russia may need to look for prospective markets for the sale of its military hardware and its gas. Thus, in the wake of Trump's strategy, Pakistan is the best option for Russia to enhance its influence in South Asia. Now, Pakistan is likely to extend its relationship with Russia for military and economic cooperation, especially in the energy sector. Apart from economic opportunities, Russia views Pakistan as an important country in its backyard and very crucial in the Afghan settlement process. Trump administration has paved the way for these developments.

Some other factors can also be not over looked that are closing the distance between Russia and Pakistan. Renewed sanctions on Russia after the invasion of Ukraine, undoubtedly, have made Russia more pro-active in engaging with Pakistan. Ukraine episode has pushed Russia to explore new defence and energy markets. In such case, Pakistan might be lucrative market for Russia in these sectors. A greater shift in international relations can also be predicted owing to the undesirable recent events between the US and Pakistan. India's close defense ties with the US may further push Russia towards Pakistan.

Besides improving relations on the diplomatic front, Russia and Pakistan have already started to strengthen economic relations and trade because there has always been immense room for improvement in these sectors. In this regard, during the visit of the then President of Pakistan (Asif Ali Zardari) in 2011, it was decided that the capacity of the Pakistan Steel Mills would be expanded and an MOU on expansion and modernization of the Pakistan Steel Mills was signed by the two sides in February, 2013. It is quite clear that Pakistan and Russia both find it mutually beneficial to develop economic and military ties at greater level. Axiomatically, there is great potential in fields of trade, energy and infrastructure development. It is to Pakistan's utmost advantage to have good relations with all major powers in the region including Russia, especially after the changing

dynamics of relations with the US and limited policy options with new administration in Washington which is acting idiosyncratically towards Pakistan.

Moreover, Pakistani and Russian security interests are increasingly intertwined, so Moscow is not likely to afford ignoring the emergence of threats from different terrorist groups in Afghanistan. Trump's Afghan strategy has revealed the failures of US military in Afghanistan. In this regard, Pakistan may play a significant role in Afghanistan which can also be helpful for Russia to counter the emerging threats. Pakistan must pursue its new relationship with Russia vigorously and should keep it independent of its relationships with other countries.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/pak-russia-ties-us-strategy-sa/>

## **US and Pakistan clash at UN over Afghanistan**

**By Edith M. Lederer**

UNITED NATIONS — The United States urged Pakistan on Friday not to give sanctuary to “terrorist organizations” — and Pakistan demanded that the Trump administration address safe havens inside Afghanistan and its income from the narcotics trade.

The exchange took place Friday at a Security Council meeting on the issue of Afghanistan’s relations with its Central Asia neighbors and the link between peace and security.

U.S. Deputy Secretary of State John Sullivan said the United States can’t work with Pakistan if it continues to give sanctuary to terrorist organizations and need to stop this and join efforts to resolve the Afghan conflict.

Pakistan’s U.N. Ambassador Maleeha Lodi countered that Afghanistan and its partners, especially the U.S., need to address “challenges inside Afghanistan rather than shift the onus for ending the conflict onto others.”

“Those who imagine sanctuaries outside need a reality check,” she stressed.

The exchange followed the Trump administration’s announcement this month that it was suspending military aid to Pakistan until it takes decisive action against militants.

In August, the U.S. infuriated Pakistan by accusing it of providing a haven for extremist groups that carry out attacks in neighboring Afghanistan. Pakistan repeatedly has said it is acting against Taliban insurgents and members of the Haqqani militant group.

Armed clashes in Afghanistan in the past year were the highest in a decade and civilian casualties remained at near-record levels. More than 2 million people were directly affected by the conflict in 2017, with some 448,000 having to abandon their homes to save their lives.

Sullivan told the council that an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned approach to peace, with firm international support for Afghan security forces, “will make clear to the Taliban that victory cannot be won on the battlefield — a solution is and must be political.”

But he said: “We must recognize the reality that while the Afghan government has been adamant about its interests in initiating peace talks with the Taliban, there has been no reciprocal interest on the part of the Taliban.”

He urged international efforts to isolate the Taliban, eliminate its sources of income and equipment.

Sullivan also criticized unnamed countries for supporting the Taliban in the name of fighting the Islamic State extremist group, also known as ISIS.

“This approach is misguided or worse pernicious,” he said. “The United States believes that the two are not linked. We can and must fight ISIS in Afghanistan while ensuring the Taliban come to the negotiating table.”

Pakistan’s Lodhi said that after 17 years of war it’s “more than evident” that neither the Afghan government nor the Taliban can win militarily.

“The continuing resort to military force and escalation of the conflict without an accompanying political and diplomatic strategy ... will produce more violence, not a political solution,” she said. “It is not enough to pay lip service to a negotiated settlement and then do little other than exercise a strategy of force and coercion.”

Sullivan, Lodhi and Afghanistan’s Deputy Foreign Minister Hekmat Khalil Karzai did not mention the U.S. suspension of aid to Pakistan.

But Karzai said: “We are pleased to note that the imperative of addressing the problem of regional terrorist sanctuaries and safe havens is now recognized more than ever before.”

He said there is an opportunity to shift regional threats from terrorism, instability and other criminal activities to peace, security and development — and that is Afghanistan’s goal.

Source:[https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia\\_pacific/us-and-pakistan-clash-at-un-over-afghanistan/2018/01/19/e1e4a7b2-fd7a-11e7-9b5d-bbf0da31214d\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.98a5453947ce](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/us-and-pakistan-clash-at-un-over-afghanistan/2018/01/19/e1e4a7b2-fd7a-11e7-9b5d-bbf0da31214d_story.html?utm_term=.98a5453947ce)



## **Foreign policy dilemmas|Editorial**

The PML-N led government is nearing the end of its five-year term, but it still comes across as unclear on its foreign policy. Fears of an alliance between the US, Israel and India are unnecessary taking the time and energy of the Foreign Office and parliamentarians.

In the recent 13th session of the Parliamentary Union of Islamic Countries (PUIC) held in Tehran, Senate Chairman Mian Raza Rabbani warned the Muslim world of a potential nexus between the three countries. Speaker of the National Assembly Ayaz Sadiq also emphasised a volatile regional environment and stressed the need for strengthening relations between Muslim nations to deal with it.

Without clear-headed action on the regional front, these concerns of our statesmen won't count for much. When addressing Muslim nations at such summits, Pakistani leaders remain all too ready to stand united with the Muslim world, but somehow their enthusiasm diminishes when it comes to making concrete economic and trade plans involving Muslim countries in our region. The Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline is illustrative of this. It has often been on the verge of being mothballed due to pressure from the US and Saudi Arabia. The latter has frequently offered lucrative oil deals and financial assistance to prevent progress on the pipeline, whilst the US has often threatened Pakistan with economic sanctions if it does not abandon the project.

Our leaders lack of interest in standing up to such interventions in our affairs has prevented us from pursuing projects that are in the interest of the nation and affected our ties with the western neighbours. So rather than obsessing with the US-Israel-India nexus, we must prioritise our interest and pursue policies that enable us to achieve those interest as well as strengthen our ties with all states in the region, including India.

Source: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/186182/foreign-policy-dilemmas/>

## **'India's foreign policy does not revolve around Pakistan,**



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said that India is not working to isolate any nation, nor is the country's foreign policy formulated around Pakistan, Times of India reported.

In an interview with Times Now, the Indian premier said that the suggestion that the country's foreign policy revolves around Pakistan is a "grave injustice".

Instead, he clarified, the policy is "based in the context of India and its relations with the world", Times of India quoted the PM. "It is issue-based. Our foreign policy is not based around [any] one nation and it shouldn't be."

Noting that the world was uniting against terrorism, Modi said he would "welcome and praise" those who take steps against terrorism.

He likened the fight against terror to a fight to save humanity.

In the recent days, US and India have increased pressure on Pakistan to take action against terrorists. Amid talks of an emerging US-India-Israel nexus, Washington has accused Islamabad of offering safe havens to terrorists.

Last week, India and US urged Pakistan to prosecute Hafiz Saeed, as Washington endorsed New Delhi's stance on the Jamaatud Dawa chief.

"If somebody is designated [a] global terrorist, it's done based on [a] lot of evidence available in public domain," Indian Ministry of External Affairs had said.

"You can close your eyes, pretend nothing happened but they (Pakistan) have to realise what's in front of them and take action against such people," the ministry's spokesperson had added.

During the interview on Sunday, Modi invited Pakistan to join hands with India in the fight against poverty and disease.

"If we fight together, we will win faster," the Indian premier was quoted as saying.

During the interview, Modi was asked about "terror" in India-held Kashmir and the appointment of an interlocutor to initiate dialogue with all stakeholders in the region.

The Indian premier said: "Dialogue does take place with every citizen of India, and it will continue to take place."

The premier added that his government would continue to support "those who believe in the constitution of India and for those who live and die for the nation".

Last year, in a bid to reboot its Kashmir policy, Modi's government had decided to appoint an interlocutor in IHK. Ex-intelligence chief Dineshwar Sharma had been appointed to the post and granted "complete freedom" to initiate "interaction and dialogue to understand legitimate aspirations of people in J&K".

Pakistan had rejected the move, saying that the measure did not appear to be "sincere and realistic". Islamabad has condemned the use of force by Indian troops against freedom fighters in IHK, supporting the Kashmiris' right to self-determination.

## **Ownership of war? Political or military By Muhammad Ali Ehsan**

.We have won many battles but the war is still not won. The military method of winning the war is to nail things down, to wrap and close options unlike politics and those who conduct it. They try to juggle with conflicting concerns, keep options open, unwrap and unfold all options for political discussions and strive in all directions yet seek a politically rewarding near-term solution.

Sadly, the problem with the irregular war that this country is fighting for a long time is that over the years it has ceased to remain an extension of politics. Military operations have been driving the policy instead of serving it and thus the war has been creating a military momentum of its own. There was no North Waziristan operation until General Raheel Sharif decided to initiate it in June 2014. There was no visible coherent, consistent and direct translation of civil-military preferences into military plans and action — until the Army Public School Peshawar incident of December 2014 forced the political conscience of a polarised political system to succumb to the possibility of a joint sitting to draft and approve a national action plan. Still, regardless of the current political chaos and the ‘attention diverting political activities’ the military is doing everything possible not to allow internal as well as external circumstances and pressures to undermine the very purpose for which this war is being fought.

As a student of art and science of war it is not difficult to deduce that the irregular war that our military fights today is not a servant of politics. Not because it cannot be and it will not be, but only because it has been fought and mastered for a long time now by the generals unhindered and uninterrupted by politicians who every time they come to power are most adapt to securing and enlarging their political positions, political space and political power rather than reaching out to the military to introduce and devise a joint strategic framework to secure the nation-state, its citizens, its economy and even its institutions.

If intrusion means ‘putting oneself deliberately into a place or situation where one is unwelcome and uninvited’, then the question that we must ask today is who has intruded whom? — Politics upon war or war upon politics? The civilian control over military is idealised but if war is understood in the language of the famous military theorist Carl Von Clausewitz ‘as a political act’, then it’s not the civilian but the political control over the military that terminates war into a political

act. Not the 'civilian' but the all-encompassing 'democratic political control' that should be responsible for a country's strategic decision-making — including the decisions on the political objectives of the war. If democracy suffers in this country so does the irregular war that the nation fights. Castigated and reprimanded recently by a strong candidate (Imran Khan) for the position of prime minister in 2018, the Pakistan parliament will only be able to exercise 'democratic political control' over the military if its members serve their individual conscience as much as they serve the dictates of their political parties.

In the day of instant media, the civil-military leadership seems more inclined to use media's services to push forward or backwards each other's concerns — this is being done through selective leaks and the most prominent of them in the civil-military context in the recent past has been the Dawn Leaks. Fashioned to draw favourable civilian or military response these leaks are mere manipulations designed to do the bidding of either of the two stakeholders. The political motive is the public disclosure and revelation of any military attempts to insert itself in politics. Military motive for any leaks would be to reluctantly highlight as a last resort any civilian decision that is regarded and judged as 'dangerous' for national security. Although from the military perspective and its Pakistan Military Academy's Ingall Hall inscribed motto of 'honour, duty and country' the choice before any military leader should be simple — either live with the civilian decision and carry it out (not a popular choice) or if the decision is bad (dangerous) for our national security, publicly resign and state the reasons in the resignation letter. Working the system by utilising leaks to build political pressure to force the civilians to change the decision is not the military way, that teaches its officers right at the outset in the military academy not only to keep their uniforms but their honour and their institution's honour wrinkle-free.

Interestingly, today armies trained to fight conventional warfare are shifting to execute more and more counterinsurgency, counterterrorism and nation-building operations. This shift leaves little room for generals to make themselves legends like Patton and McArthur. As a consequence of this shift the theatre of war is reduced and limited to internal boundaries and thus it's not the massive military operations at grand scale but small tactical battles put together that will determine the outcome of this war. Under this military scenario the visible physical space that the military occupies has its importance but it is the greater political space that the political leadership must occupy through its political

control, politics and exercise of executive power. For politicians to achieve this military operations cart must not be tied ahead of the political horse.

Unfortunately, a country that is fighting an existential war has too lessen a political patronage on the battlefield to guide the course of war. War preferences are to be debated on the negotiating table before they are translated into military actions on the battlefield. Without the presence of politics (policy) that oversees military plans the military will continue winning us the military battles but would not be able to estimate the culminating point of victory or know how to get out of this war by determining an exit strategy — in this irregular war that we fight this remains the domain of politics.

Lastly, comparing the permanent presence of political leadership compared to the three years' tenure of the military commander our former president Asif Zardari had famously said, "We are here to stay, you are here only for three years." Now that one looks at the current political environment in the country from the military's perspective it seems that the military is more than glad that the Constitution of Pakistan ensures that the political leadership is possibly turned over every five years at the executive level through the process of elections. The military as an institution that stays in place so does parliament — what is likely to change is the occupiers of the parliamentary seats. Maybe with it will change the ownership of war — more political than military.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1615337/6-ownership-war-political-military/>

## **Window to the West By Munir Akram**



WHEN in 1960 Mao Zedong sent off General Gengbiao, his second ambassador to Pakistan, he reportedly advised him: “Look after Pakistan; it is China’s window to the West”.

Mao’s depiction may have been as much metaphorical as geographical. During the 1960s, Pakistan was China’s diplomatic window to the West, eventually brokering the normalisation of China-US relations in 1971. Today, the physical facet of Mao’s depiction is becoming a reality in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

Gen Gengbiao, who went on to become China’s defence minister and deputy prime minister, played a vital role in building the China-Pakistan strategic relationship. So did Pakistan’s prime minister Bogra and foreign minister, and later prime minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

Unfortunately, large swathes of the Pakistani public, especially the youth, are not fully aware of the history, intensity and rationale of the Pakistan-China relationship. Some Western-oriented Pakistanis even question China’s desire for a strong Pakistan.

Pakistan and China must undertake serious efforts to preserve, diversify and intensify their relationship.

The Pakistan-China relationship has survived the twists and turns of global politics and domestic changes in both countries because it is based on a strong and lasting alignment of their national interests.

Over the last five decades, Pakistan has boldly defended China's unity and territorial integrity; worked assiduously to secure China's legitimate seat in the United Nations; resisted attempts to censure China on human rights and to denigrate its socioeconomic achievements.

For its part, China has and continues to manifest its support for Pakistan in multiple ways.

— In 1965, China moved its troops to its disputed border with India, preventing India from redeploying additional forces to the battlefield against Pakistan;

— In 1971, as India invaded East Pakistan, China defended Pakistan's territorial integrity and was prepared to respond to Pakistan's call to intervene militarily but was prevented from doing so by an explicit Soviet nuclear threat;

— In 1972, at Pakistan's request, China vetoed the admission of Bangladesh into the United Nations until Dhaka and Delhi agreed to release the 90,000 Pakistani prisoners of war;

— China built Pakistan's heavy industrial complex at Taxila and other manufacturing capabilities virtually on a grant basis;

— Despite US pressure and sanctions, China supplied Pakistan with its first ballistic missiles and enabled it to develop its now formidable missile capabilities;

— China remains the only country willing to sell civilian nuclear reactors to Pakistan and has blocked India's single entry into the Nuclear Suppliers' Group;

— For over three decades, new Chinese military equipment was made available to Pakistan almost simultaneously with its induction in the PLA;

— China was the only country to agree to the co-production of advanced military aircraft and other weapons systems with Pakistan;



- As China's economic fortunes improved, it quietly and repeatedly extended financial support (loans, bank deposits, grants) to enable Pakistan to meet economic emergencies and bolster its failing finances;
- China decided to finance the CPEC projects in Pakistan as the first leg of its ambitious Belt and Road Initiative. No other country's companies were prepared to invest or work in Pakistan;
- Finally, as India pursues a global media and diplomatic campaign to 'isolate' Pakistan and threatens 'surgical strikes' and a 'limited war', and as the US exerts pressure on Pakistan to support its failed strategy in Afghanistan and succumb to Indian diktat, it is China, with its veto in the Security Council and influence in major capitals, that stands in the way of negative international decisions and actions against Pakistan.

In the currently unfolding Asian drama, the power relationships in South Asia and adjacent areas will depend on the structure and content of Sino-US, Sino-India and Pakistan-India relations.

The US has designated China as a 'competitor' in its recent national security document. President Trump is reportedly 'frustrated' by China's 'failure' to persuade or punish North Korea or to reduce the US trade deficit with China. Trade action against China appears to be in the offing. There is revived rhetoric from the Pentagon regarding 'freedom of navigation' in the South China Sea. The US endeavours to build alliances around China's periphery are active.

To dampen the US campaign, China appears to have softened its stance towards the states with which it has maritime disputes in the South China Sea as well as with its main Asian rivals: Japan and India. For instance, in the Donglan (Doklam) stand-off, China allowed New Delhi to save face by not publicising India's troop withdrawal and it accepted a mention of UN-listed 'terrorist' organisations in the BRICS Summit communiqué.

Obviously, Beijing does not want India to enter into an alliance with the US against China. Its tactical diplomacy may serve to defer critical strategic choices. Yet, it is evident that Trump and his generals are on a path towards an open military and strategic confrontation with China. India will, if it has not done so already, embrace a military alliance with the US. India sees itself as China's 'natural' rival; it hungers for China's great power status; the 1962 defeat still rankles; the border disputes with China have not been resolved. A powerful, anti-

Muslim, anti-Chinese, 'democratic' America is viewed in Modi's Delhi as a 'natural ally'.

In this configuration, Pakistan has no choice but to preserve and intensify its strategic partnership with China. The alternative is submission to a Pax Indo-Americana.

Despite their long and close partnership, Pakistan and China need to undertake urgent and serious efforts to preserve, diversify and intensify their relationship. These efforts include: suppression of terrorist groups, like the ETIM, which threaten China's security; prevention of externally sponsored disruption of CPEC, especially in Gilgit-Baltistan (CPEC's 'chicken neck') and Balochistan; efficient execution of CPEC projects; focused and generous Chinese support for Pakistan's economic and industrial modernisation; promotion of peace in Afghanistan to end the US presence there; a joint stance against India's anti-Pakistan threats; and the rapid modernisation of Pakistan's armed forces and their strategic and tactical integration with the PLA.

Naturally, both China and Pakistan will continue to hope that America's present omni-directional belligerence will give way, perhaps in a post-Trump era, to more astute, responsible policies. To that day, Pakistan and China should keep open their window to the West.

The writer is a former Pakistan ambassador to the UN.

Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1384310>

# EDUCATION

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## **Pakistan is home to the most frenetic education reforms in the world**

Reformers are trying to make up for generations of neglect

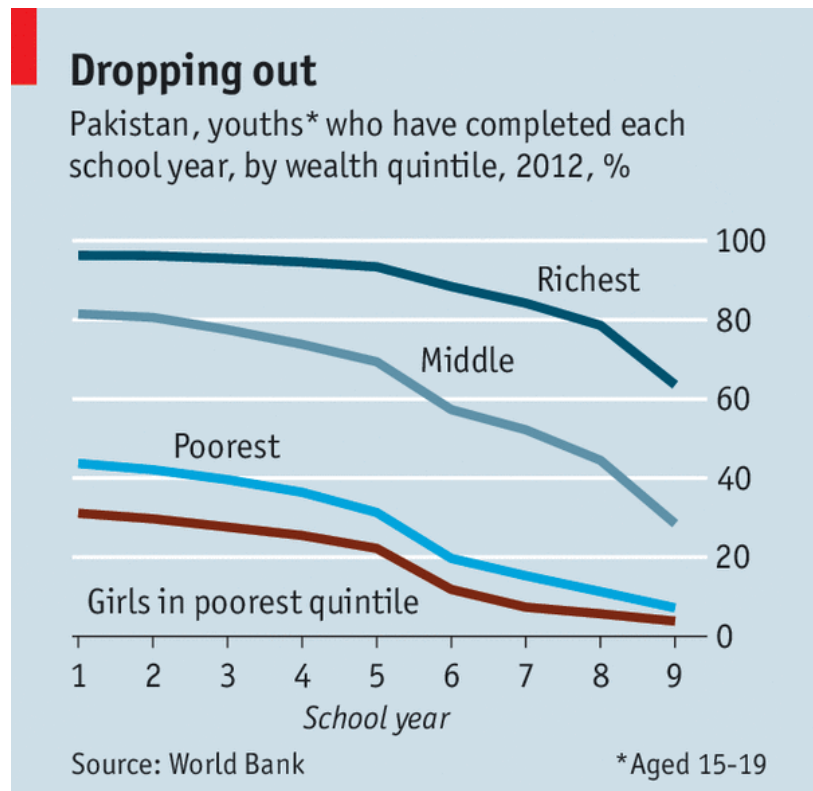


EVERY three months, Shahbaz Sharif, the chief minister of Punjab, gathers education officials around a large rectangular table. The biggest of Pakistan's four provinces, larger in terms of population (110m) than all but 11 countries, Punjab is reforming its schools at a pace rarely seen anywhere in the world. In April 2016, as part of its latest scheme, private providers took over the running of 1,000 of the government's primary schools. Today the number is 4,300. By the end of this year, Mr Sharif has decreed, it will be 10,000. The quarterly "stocktakes" are his chance to hear what progress is being made towards this and other targets—and whether the radical overhaul is having any effect.

For officials it can be a tough ride. Leaders of struggling districts are called to Lahore for what Allah Bakhsh Malik, Punjab's education secretary, calls a "pep talk". Asked what that entails, he responds: "Four words: F-I-R-E. It is survival of

the fittest.” About 30% of district heads have been sacked for poor results in the past nine months, says Mr Malik. “We are working at Punjabi speed.”

Pakistani education has long been atrocious. A government-run school on the outskirts of Karachi, in the province of Sindh, is perhaps the bleakest your correspondent has ever seen. A little more than a dozen children aged six or seven sit behind desks in a cobwebbed classroom. Not one is wearing a uniform; most have no schoolbags; some have no shoes. There is not a teacher in sight.



Economist.com

Most Pakistani children who start school drop out by the age of nine; just 3% of those starting public school graduate from 12th grade, the final year. Girls from poor families are least likely to attend (see chart); Pakistan’s gap between girls’ and boys’ enrolment is, after Afghanistan’s, the widest in South Asia. Those in school learn little. Only about half of Pakistanis who complete five years of primary school are literate. In rural Pakistan just over two-fifths of third-grade students, typically aged 8 or 9, have enough grasp of arithmetic to subtract 25 from 54. Unsurprisingly, many parents have turned away from the system. There are roughly 68,000 private schools in Pakistan (about one-third of all schools), up from 49,000 in 2007. Private money currently pays for more of Pakistan’s education than the government does.

It is in part the spread of private options that has spurred politicians like Mr Sharif into action. The outsourcing of schools to entrepreneurs and charities is on the rise across the country. It is too early to judge the results of this massive shake up, but it seems better than the lamentable status quo. If this wholesale reform makes real inroads into the problems of enrolment, quality and discrimination against girls that bedevil Pakistan, it may prove a template for other countries similarly afflicted.

There are many reasons for the old system's failure. From 2007-15 there were 867 attacks by Islamist terrorists on educational institutions, according to the Global Terrorism Database run by the University of Maryland. When it controlled the Swat river valley in the north of the country, the Pakistani Taliban closed hundreds of girls' schools. When the army retook the area it occupied dozens of them itself.



Economist.com

Poverty also holds children back. Faced with a choice between having a child help in the fields or learn nothing at school, many parents rationally pick the former. The difference in enrolment between children of the richest and poorest fifth of households is greater in Pakistan than in all but two of the 96 developing countries recently analysed by the World Bank.

Yet poverty is not the decisive factor. Teaching is. Research by Jishnu Das of the World Bank and colleagues has found that the school a child in rural Pakistan attends is many times more important in explaining test scores than either the parents' income or their level of literacy. In a paper published in 2016, Mr Das and Natalie Bau of the University of Toronto studied the performance of teachers in Punjab between 2003 and 2007 who were hired on temporary contracts. It turned out that their pupils did no worse than those taught by regular ones, despite the temporary teachers often being comparatively inexperienced and paid 35% less.

Teachers' salaries account for at least 87% of the education budget in Pakistan's provinces. A lot of that money is completely wasted. Pakistan's political parties hand out teaching jobs as a way of recruiting election workers and rewarding allies. Some teachers pay for the job: 500,000 rupees (\$4,500) was once the going rate in Sindh. At the peak of the problem a few years ago, an estimated 40% of teachers in the province were "ghosts", pocketing a salary and not turning up.

"Pupils' learning outcomes are not politically important in Pakistan," says the leader of a large education organisation. Graft is not the only problem. Politicians have treated schools with a mix of neglect and capriciousness. Private schools have been nationalised (1972) and denationalised (1979); Islam has been inserted and removed as the main part of the curriculum. The language of instruction has varied, too; Punjab changed from Urdu to English, only to revert to Urdu. Sindh, where teachers who are often Sindhi speakers may struggle to teach Urdu, announced in 2011 that Mandarin would be compulsory in secondary schools.

### Getting schooled

It is against this background that organisations like The Citizens Foundation (TCF) have developed. The charity runs perhaps the largest network of independently run schools in the world, educating 204,000 pupils at not-for-profit schools. It is also Pakistan's largest single employer of women outside the public sector; in an effort to make girls feel safer in class, all of TCF's 12,000 teachers are female. At its Shirin Sultan Dossa branch near a slum on the outskirts of Karachi, one girl is more than holding her own. At break-time on the makeshift cricket pitch she is knocking boys' spin-bowling out of the playground.

In 2016 TCF opened its first “college” for 17- and 18-year-olds at this campus in an attempt to keep smart poor pupils in school longer. Every day it buses 400 college pupils in from around the city. It builds schools using a standard template, typically raising about \$250,000 for each of them from donors; it recruits and trains teachers; and it writes its own curriculums.

Since 2015 TCF has taken over the running of more than 250 government schools in Punjab, Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It gets a subsidy of around 715 rupees per month per child, which it tops up with donations. So far it has increased average enrolment at schools from 47 to 101 pupils, and test results have improved.

The outsourcing of state schools to TCF is just one part of the Sindh government’s recent reforms. “Three years ago we hit rock bottom,” says a senior bureaucrat, noting that 14,000 teaching jobs had been doled out in one year to supporters of the ruling Pakistan Peoples Party. Since then it has used a biometric attendance register to cut 6,000 ghost teachers from the payrolls, and merged 4,000 sparsely attended schools into 1,350. Through the Sindh Education Foundation, an arms-length government body, it is funding “public-private partnerships” covering 2,414 schools and 653,265 pupils. As well as the outsourcing programme, schemes subsidise poor children to attend cheap private schools and pay entrepreneurs to set up new ones in underserved areas. This policy was evaluated in a paper by Felipe Barrera-Osorio of Harvard University and colleagues published last August. The researchers found that in villages assigned to the scheme, enrolment increased by 30% and test scores improved. Parents raised their aspirations—they started wanting daughters to become teachers, rather than housewives. These results were achieved at a per-pupil cost comparable to that of government schools. “Pakistan’s education challenge is not underspending. It is misspending,” says Nadia Naviwala of the Wilson Centre, a think-tank.

While Sindh has pioneered many policies, Punjab has taken them furthest. The Punjab Education Foundation (PEF), another quasi-independent body, oversees some of the largest school-privatisation and school-voucher programmes in the world. It has a seat with the ministers and administrators at Mr Sharif’s quarterly meetings. The Punjab government no longer opens new schools; all growth is via these privately operated schools. Schools overseen by PEF now teach more than 3m children (an additional 11m or so remain in ordinary government-run schools).

This use of the private sector is coupled with the command-and-control of Mr Sharif, who is backed by Britain's Department for International Development, which helps pay for support from McKinsey, a consultancy, and Sir Michael Barber, who ran British prime minister Tony Blair's "Delivery unit". The latest stocktake claimed an "unprecedented" 10% increase in primary-school enrolment since September 2016, an extra 68,000 teachers selected "on merit", and a steady increase in the share of correct answers on a biannual test of literacy and numeracy. Some are concerned about the stress on meeting targets in this "deliverology" model. For one thing, independent assessment of the system's claimed success is hard. Mr Das argues that there is no evidence from public sources that support Punjab's claims of improved enrolment since 2010. Nor is the fear provoked by Mr Sharif always conducive to frank self-appraisal: some officials may fudge the numbers. Ms Naviwala points out that two of the worst-performing districts in spring 2015 somehow became the highest performers a few months later. She suggests that similar data-driven reforms in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa may have a better chance of success, since they are less dependent on the whims of a single minister. For their part Punjab and its international backers insist that the data are accurate, and that the other publicly available data are out of date.

No one thinks that everything is fixed. Around the corner from that parlous primary school on the outskirts of Karachi is another, privately run school hand-picked for your correspondent's visit by civil servants. In maths classes pupils' workbooks have no entries for the past fortnight. What sums there are show no working; answers were simply copied. The head teacher seems to care most about his new audiovisual room, the screen in which is not for pupils, but for him: a bootleg Panopticon, with six CCTV feeds displayed on a wall-mounted screen. This is an effective way of dealing with ghosts. But as the head explains how great his teachers are, one of them strolls up to a boy in the front of her class and smacks him over the head. Even if there is bluster aplenty and a long way to go, though, the fact that politicians are burnishing their reputations through public services, rather than patronage alone, is a step forward. And if there is a little Punjabi hype to go with the Punjabi speed, then that may be a price worth paying. For too long Pakistani children have suffered because politicians have treated schools as political tools. They deserve much better.

Source: <https://www.economist.com/news/briefing/21733978-reformers-are-trying-make-up-generations-neglect-pakistan-home-most-frenetic>



## **Plight of Higher Education in Pakistan By Dr. Shehzad Ashraf Chaudhry**

Despite many tall claims, the higher education sector in 2017 could not even maintain its state that it achieved in the preceding years. The higher education confronted significant problems including meagre funding, lack of academic freedom, the skimpy infrastructure and most importantly the undemocratic governing structure, which discourages teachers' empowerment. Instead of policy making to bring positive changes in overall higher education, the HEC remained ambushed with petty glitches. According to QS ranking, only 3 universities are listed in top 800 universities of the world as compared to what we had 2 years back when our 6 universities marked in top 800 universities of the world. HEC also failed to bring any change in the education system. Still, a number of universities are working with incomplete acts/ordinances. The universities established during martial-law are still lacking senates and are being governed in an undemocratic fashion. Working without its 18 members governing board, the decisions are made in bureaucratic and ad-hoc fashions in the corridors of supreme academic body of the country. HEC has not published its progress report since 2014, the failures persist since the time current leadership assumed the charge.

Higher education budget was increased in financial year 2017-18. However, the budgetary allocation for education is still less than many south Asian countries. This year, most of the new development projects in the higher education sector have failed to get approval while universities remain devoid of critical infrastructures. Unlike the developed countries, the lack of involvement of the stakeholder specially the elected faculty has significantly marred the quality of higher education, rather shifted the focus to quantity only. The government is indulged in the rhetoric and the Higher Education Commission is involved in amplifying the government message of point scoring through establishment of new universities and laptop distribution schemes. Many universities are facing financial crunch causing delay in salaries as well, while HEC has spent millions on needless foreign tours along with two Vice-Chancellors conferences and a convention titled vision 2025. Such useless exercises without active participation of faculty and students - which were not even invited - are merely the wastage of time, resources and tax payers' money. Country wide protests of more than 300 local and foreign PhD holders have been reported. On the contrary, HEC

scholarships are being announced unabatedly without any need assessment. The commission has not conducted any impact assessment of already distributed scholarships where huge public funds have been exhausted. The public exchequer is being exuberantly spilled without any feasibility.

Furthermore, the universities should be a hub of critical thinking, and should be producing critical mass for the society they serve. Where not only teachers and students can express their ideas freely, but it should also engage civil society to debate on critical issues for their resolves. Perhaps, the freedom of expression is the most influential factor for emergence of academia as a driving force of the nation. Still freedom of expression is almost non-existent in many Pakistani universities. Repeated dictatorships and compromised democracies kept our society deprived of freedom of speech for long. Critical thinking and free speech is confronted by the leadership at universities and higher education . To arrange talks, one has to stride through many channels. Often, then discussions are circumscribed to boring and discouraging issues limiting the attendance of outsiders. It may not be expected from the university graduates to have critical thinking and presentation in such suffocating environment in the universities and institutes of higher education . Without provision of free speech, universities are merely a degree awarding factory rather than a repository of knowledge, and a seat for knowledge creation.

The most important factor affecting overall higher education environment is the governance model being executed at seats of higher learning. Huge irregularities have been observed during recent appointments of Vice-Chancellors (VCs) in the universities across Pakistan . Apparently, either the government is ignorant or deliberately appointing VCs who do not fulfill the criteria. The statutory bodies in the universities having democratic traditions are being sidelined by these VCs. The role of VC has become more of a subordinate to HEC or Chief Minister's Secretariat rather than an academic and administrative leader of the seat for higher learning. Moreover, some universities are functioning without proper statutory bodies such as Quaid-e-Azam University, International Islamic University, COMSATS etc. The extension and ad hocism in the appointments of leadership at HEC and VCs have adversely affected progress of higher education in Pakistan .

Due to politically fixed term appointment, they are not the real stake holders but the teachers and students of the varsities. The Vice-Chancellors are holding high powers, the faculty complains lack of motivation due to irregular appointments/promotions, waning academic freedom and poor resources for teaching and research. The ratio of contractual appointments at administrative positions is at rampant in HEC as well as universities. Critical and policy decisions are being made through these contractual employees who don't have any stakes at all, such contractual appointments are also violation of the verdicts of the Supreme Court of Pakistan .

Now it's time to think over the root cause of the existing problems in higher education , which primarily is the lack of democratic norms in varsities. Reinventing the wheel is not a viable solution, the system being executed at top universities of world may be studied and adopted after taking the stakeholders into confidence. Political leadership is not willing to surrender their undemocratic authority grabbed by dictators to the lower level. Participatory democracy ensures meaningful contributions to decision-making by all the stakeholders as well as transparency.

The Higher Education governance model is based on dictatorial mindsets, the democracy should be restored in higher education as per 1973 constitution. The acts of old and well-established universities like Karachi University, Punjab University and Peshawar University are splendid and formed on the democratic norms. The act of each university should be revised according to the acts of these well-established universities with some university specific amendments. While formulating policies concerning higher education , the stake holders especially elected faculty should be taken on board. Existent closed door unilateral polices should be revisited, the role and scope of all higher education bodies should be redefined. All the authorities should work within their prescribed limits and as per their mandate prescribed in constitution of Pakistan .

The ad hocism and extension culture should be discouraged. Year 2018 is very important for higher education; the top leadership in higher education are going to complete their terms, including the chairman HEC and tens of vice-chancellors. It is high time to advertise all those positions and induct suitable persons on merit. The political appointments have already ruined higher education system in Pakistan . The HEC leadership as well as the Vice-Chancellors should present their progress to faculty and students each year. Such practice will bring transparency in the affairs of universities and is vital for

the uplift of higher education. Prime Minister and President of Pakistan should take out some time to rescue the higher education; and at least appoint all higher education leadership on merit.

The establishment of the office of Higher Education Ombudsman may be an excellent step for maintaining the good governance in universities efficiently and effectively. The ombudsman office is essential for redressing the issues of teachers, students and other employees, which can save time and resources of stakeholders as well as making them accountable.

The writer is the elected President FAPUASA-Islamabad and works as an Assistant Professor of Computer Science at International Islamic University Islamabad, Pakistan

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/25-Jan-2018/plight-of-higher-education-in-pakistan>

# **The Classification of Pakistan's Education System Should be Eradicated Once and for All**

## **By Muhammad Asif Shahzad**

Pakistan has been in existence for 70 years, but unfortunately we cannot have a single system of education in the country.

All political leaders mention the importance and benefits of education and that the nation cannot prosper without education. They also claim that education will be their primary priority when their party gains power and that they will ensure that a single system of education is available to the masses regardless of their status in society. Unfortunately, the governments end up finishing their term and reforms to the education system remain forgotten.

Looking at the leaders of the past, the British rulers set the law of classical education in the region – the methods which we cannot free ourselves from today as the same system continues.

Perhaps the intentions and thoughts of our rulers are not good.

They do not want poor children to study in the same institution where their own and other elite class children study. This intention and thought has been advocating, rather than ending, the class system education for seventy years.

There are three types of systems of education in Pakistan at present. One is the education system that we inherited from the British rulers, where only the British children were educated and in which a convicted nation's child could not even imagine getting education. Even today our governors and investors have continued to maintain the same, in which elite class children are educated.

The other is the one that is owned by the same elite class. In this education system, the middle class children are educated in institutions owned by the elite class that is simply looking to make money rather than having their primary focus on imparting knowledge to the younger generation of the country.

Remember that in the previous government, ANP and PPP legislated to control the welfare of private educational institutions, but it had to kneel in front of capitalism. The third system is known as “government schools”. How strange is it that the the children of government employees do not study in these schools!

The poor performance of the system and the quality of the standard can be gauged by the fact that children of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa school teachers, principals, directors, director’s education and secretary education are all educated in private educational institutions. There are millions of staff in these schools who are taking billions of rupees in monthly salaries and privileges, but these schools have failed to restore public trust.

Last year, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly took steps to withdraw private educational institutions despite the concerns and reservations of the Regulatory Authority Bill 2017 private educational institutions.

According to the Bill, the chairman of the regulatory authority will be the provincial education minister and with this other members will be Secretary Education, Secretary Stabilization, Secretary of Finance, and Director of education department, four representatives from private schools, three parent representatives and two education specialists apart from the MD. The authority will monitor registration, curriculum and policies of private schools. Apart from this, fees will be set up based on classification of class (classroom system), teachers’ training and liability to fee authority.No school will be allowed to increase more than ten percent annually. Committees will be set up to monitor all the processes.

If the contents of the bill are viewed in detail, it will lead to further promotion rather than bringing an end to the class system. This means that classification of schools will be considered as a star, four and five star hotels. This is a kind sporting game with education. If the government really wants to eliminate class-based education, then private and public schools should implement the similar curriculum.

Source: <http://blogs.dunyanews.tv/19346/>

## ECONOMY

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### **Economic growth to pick up pace in Pakistan, says World Bank report** **Bank report By Samina Ahmed**



ISLAMABAD: The World Bank says that economic growth in Pakistan is forecast to increase to 5.5 per cent in the fiscal year 2017-18, and reach an average of 5.9 per cent over the medium term on the back of continued robust domestic consumption, rising investment and a recovery in exports.

However, the main risks to the outlook are domestic, including fiscal slippages, increasing liabilities related to infrastructure projects, slippages relating to upcoming general elections and weak tax revenues that can derail fiscal consolidation efforts, warns the Global Economic Prospects report published by the bank on Wednesday.

The report says that in Pakistan growth accelerated in fiscal year 2016-17 to 5.3 per cent, somewhat below the government's target of 5.7 per cent, as industrial sector's growth was slower than expected. Activity was strong in the areas of construction and services and there was a recovery in agriculture production with a return of normal monsoon rains.

In the first half of fiscal year 2017-18, the activity continued to grow, driven by robust domestic demand and supported by strong credit growth and projects related to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

Meanwhile, the current account deficit widened to 4.1 per cent of GDP compared to 1.7 per cent in the previous year, amid weak exports and increasing imports.

In South Asia, economic growth slowed to an estimated 6.5 per cent in 2017, marginally below the June 2017 forecast owing to temporary disruptions from adverse weather conditions across the region. The region's growth prospects appear robust, with household consumption expected to remain strong, exports expected to recover, and investment projected to revive with the support of policy reforms and infrastructure improvements, according to the report.

Growth in the region is expected to pick up to 6.9 per cent in 2018, and stabilise to around 7.2 per cent over the medium term, but would remain slightly below June projections due to the weaker-than-expected recovery in domestic demand.

The forecast assumes strengthening of external demand as the recovery firms up in advanced economies amid supportive global financing conditions. Monetary policy is assumed to remain accommodative as modest fiscal consolidation continues in some countries.

Corporate debt overhangs and high levels of nonperforming loans have been longstanding concerns in some countries of the region. Setbacks in efforts to resolve these domestic bottlenecks will continue to weigh on investment, and more broadly on medium-term growth prospects in the region.

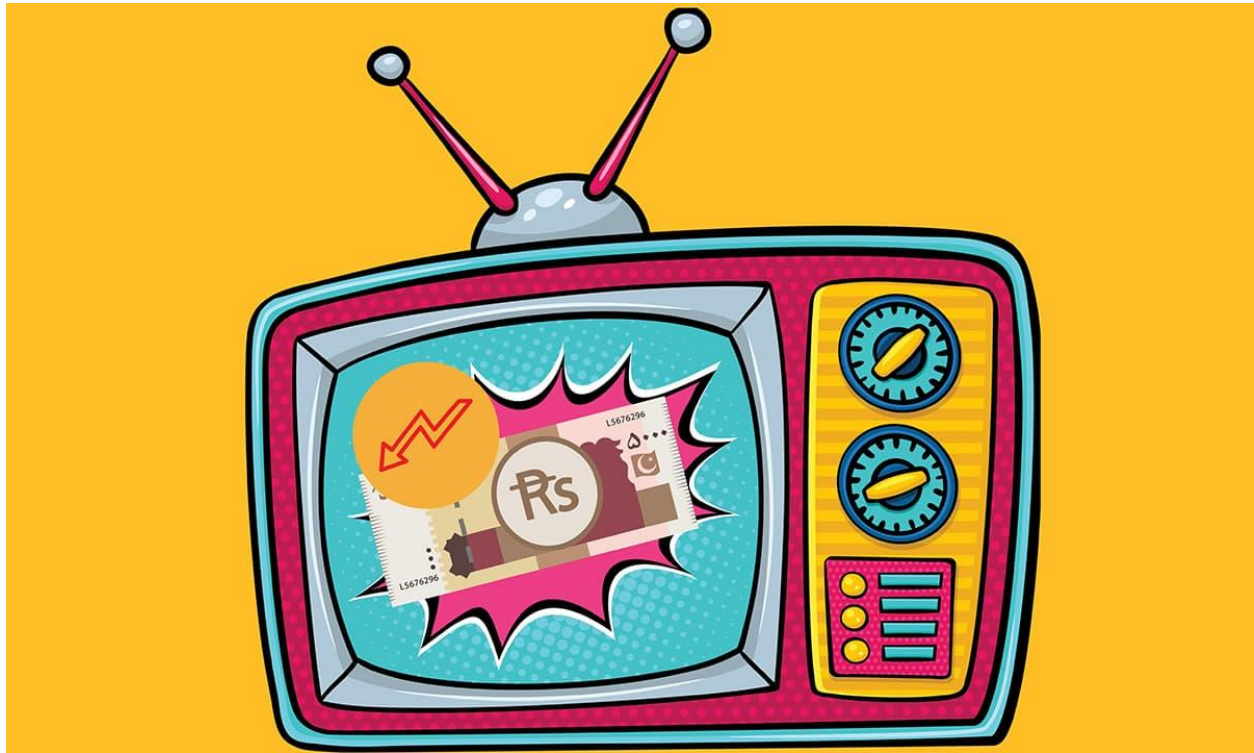
Recent adverse weather conditions have reduced agriculture output in some cases. Such developments continue to pose risks to regional growth. Recently, remittance inflows have been subdued due to fiscal consolidation and growth slowdowns in the Middle East, which constitutes roughly half of remittances to South Asia.



Outside India, fiscal consolidation slowed in 2017 as a result of revenue shortfalls and increased government spending in the Maldives and Pakistan. Current account deficits gradually widened across the region particularly in India, Bangladesh and Pakistan. In particular, non-performing loan ratios remained high, around 10 per cent, despite progress in some countries like Pakistan, Afghanistan and the Maldives, the report says

Source:[www.dawn.com/news/1382184/economic-growth-to-pick-up-pace-in-pakistan-says-world-bank-report](http://www.dawn.com/news/1382184/economic-growth-to-pick-up-pace-in-pakistan-says-world-bank-report)

## How important is the exchange rate of the rupee By Ijaz Nabi



There are four aspects of the exchange rate that all Herald readers should understand.\*

First, the exchange rate is a price and not a flag. A flag needs to be defended at all cost. Not the exchange rate, which simply tells you how many Pakistani goods foreigners can buy and how many imported goods Pakistanis can purchase for their US dollars and rupees. If the rupee falls, foreigners buy more Pakistani goods as do Pakistanis because imported goods become more expensive. Both create employment in Pakistan and, given the high population growth, employment is our number one challenge.

Second, an overvalued exchange rate makes the economy sick. It is called the Dutch disease. In the late 1950s, the Netherlands discovered natural gas. This raised the value of the guilder (the Dutch currency before the euro) and Dutch manufacturing became uncompetitive and thus declined. In all of South Asia, including Pakistan, the Dutch disease is caused by remittances that prop up the

value of currency even though South Asians run large trade deficits (we import more than we export). Thus, manufacturing and exports all over South Asia are weak.

In Saudi Arabia and Iran, both with weak manufacturing exports, the Dutch disease is caused by large oil and gas surpluses. They would be much better off if they managed their energy surpluses to avoid the Dutch disease, and created productive employment in manufacturing rather than fueling sectarian battles.

Third, an undervalued currency (a weak rupee) can be a good thing. By making imports expensive, it discourages consumption and encourages saving and investment. China's initial growth at the start of this millennium was spurred by a highly undervalued yuan. China was merely emulating East Asian economies that had undervalued their currencies a couple of decades earlier to capture foreign markets. Undervalued currencies reflect that investors/exporters dominate the economy. On the other hand, overvalued exchange rates in South Asia imply that consumers, fed by remittances and politically motivated foreign aid, are king.

One creates factories, the other spawns premature shopping malls. Readers can judge for themselves whether the rupee is over or undervalued based on the relative proliferation of factories and shopping malls in Pakistan. Peshawar is a good example. The appreciating exchange rate policy has further exacerbated problems associated with deteriorating security and distorted taxes. Manufacturing has virtually disappeared while spending on consumption, transport and real estate has gone through the roof.

Fourth, what matters far more for the economy is the real exchange rate than the observed market rate. If the rupee/yuan market rate is unchanged but our inflation is higher than China's, the real value of the rupee has appreciated. This is a strong indication that our trade deficit with China will rise and the market value of the rupee will come under pressure. In short, the stability of the real exchange rate is more important than the stability of the market rate. Large appreciation of the latter is the main cause of our ballooning trade deficit and depleting foreign reserves because it continues to encourage imports.

To conclude, the real exchange rate has appreciated by about 20 per cent in recent years. This has fueled a huge consumption boom and a large deficit in how much money comes into Pakistan and how much of it leaves the country

every year. It is more profitable to invest in shopping malls than in factories and exports. The result is that we are not progressing well towards our number one challenge: creating well-paying, quality jobs for the two million or so young men and women who enter the labour force every year. The recent devaluation of the rupee will correct the real appreciation of our currency's value and is a step in the right direction.

Source: [herald.dawn.com/news/1153979/how-important-is-the-exchange-rate-of-the-rupee](http://herald.dawn.com/news/1153979/how-important-is-the-exchange-rate-of-the-rupee)

## **E-commerce on rise in Pakistan, Rs 9.8bn payments accepted through banks: SBP | Editorial**



ISLAMABAD: Business to consumer E-Commerce (e-B2C) is on the rise in Pakistan as 571 local e-commerce merchants were already accepting payments through banking channels as of the end of June 2017, with a cumulative annual domestic sales worth Rs 9.8 billion.

In addition to that, transactions worth Rs 20.7 billion was carried out by consumers on international e-commerce websites, stated State Bank of Pakistan in its quarterly report while quoting latest e-commerce data.

According to the report, growing incomes, coupled with advancement in communication technology and expansion of internet access and branchless banking, had been propelling the sector forward.

Various benefits such as the comfort of shopping from the home, wider selection variety, ubiquity of 24x7 service, and interaction possibilities like reviews to make an informed decision were the main sources of attraction to the consumers.

Businesses, meanwhile, are venturing into digital platforms to increase their reach, the report added.

“Additional benefit comes from low operating costs and flexibility in inventory management (based on feedback, recommendation, and just-in-time mechanisms) which results in increasing margins,” the report said.

Thus, a range of businesses has shifted to this medium to cater to the growing demand and to remain competitive in the changing market environment, it added.

This is an encouraging trend as it provides a potential to document transactions that would otherwise not become part of the formal retail segment.

However, a significant volume of transactions is carried via Cash on Delivery (COD). Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) in its annual report for FY17 highlighted that more than ninety percent of online orders were fulfilled using COD during the past fiscal year.

Businesses are also hesitant to offer online payments options given considerable upfront development costs, as this involves expenses on reliable and secured infrastructure, negotiating contracts with payment gateway providers. In this situation, COD allows a cheaper alternate, it added.

From the consumer perspective, a preference for cash and low financial literacy accentuates the need for COD.

Even those customers who are financially literate feel hesitant to share their personal information online due to security concerns.

A second major issue that keeps consumers from adopting towards advance payment mechanisms is the fear that their products might not be delivered or they might be different in nature or quality from the items mentioned online.

The report says, payment on delivery covers their risks in this regard, adding that furthermore, absence of a common payment platform that could integrate mobile wallet, debit/credit card, and bank accounts leads to consumers facing inconvenience and higher charges.

Source: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/187399/e-commerce-rise-pakistan-rs-9-8bn-payments-accepted-banks-sbp/>

## **Monetary policy | Editorial**

SLOWLY but surely, recent steps taken by the State Bank of Pakistan indicate that its balancing act between the high real-sector growth rates and the growing external-sector deficits and dwindling reserves is proving to be unsustainable. Since July of last year, we have seen two downward revisions of the exchange rate, and now a hike, albeit a small one, in the key discount rate. The quantum of the rate hike may be small at 0.25pc, but the somewhat convoluted story that is presented in the accompanying monetary policy statement to justify the decision speaks louder. By now, there is enough build-up of evidence that the growth story being touted by the government since 2013 is running on fumes, and the past six months is when matters began to falter.

The statement begins by touting the real-sector growth rates and ends with a list of the challenges that lie ahead. These include the growing pressures on the exchange rate, the rise in oil prices, upward movement in global interest rates and “a build-up of demand pressures” on the economy. The risk of “overheating” is now real. What the State Bank does not tell us, however, is how exactly a small rise in the discount rate is supposed to address these challenges without compromising the real-sector growth rates. For now, all hopes are pinned on an expected increase in exports and remittances that the bank hopes will help reduce the current account deficit. But then the statement adds a powerful caveat by saying that “managing overall balance of payments in near term depends on the realisation of official financial flows”.

Actions speak louder than words, and the State Bank’s actions on the exchange rate front, followed by the interest rate hike, clearly say that things are not as rosy as we are being told. Yet, if we go by its words, the bank appears to be making strong efforts to fan optimism and hope, eventually leaving us with the thought that everything now depends on our wishes coming true to narrow the current account deficit which has grown by 160pc since last year. There is little that the State Bank can do to address the problem at this stage except offer the right advice for short-term adjustments. But it can be a little more coherent when it comes to presenting the state of affairs shaping up in the economy. The monetary policy statement is trying to say too many things at the same time, and avoiding any real focus on the growing imbalances that are pushing the bank to take more decisive steps in managing the exchange rate and interest rates. Real-

sector growth by itself is not enough if it is accompanied by “demand pressures” and growing external deficits. The question the bank should now address is: why are things becoming so wobbly in the economy?

Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1385681/monetary-policy>



## WORLD

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### **Discontent in Iran | Editorial**



THE protests in Iran may not have reached critical proportions as yet, but they are an alarming indication of the gap that exists between the priorities of the state and the demands of the people, especially the young. While much of the outside world views Iran through a prism of security and geopolitical challenges, the people of Iran themselves are demonstrating for a second time in less than a decade that their interests are similar to people everywhere: jobs, inflation and social freedoms. The brave protesters are putting the Iranian state on notice that the legitimate demands and aspirations of the Iranian people must come first. Whether the state has the capacity to address the protesters' grievances and pivot away from an increasingly damaging regional competition with Saudi Arabia remains to be seen. But if it does not respond adequately to the demands of its

citizens, the discontent and disillusionment apparent among the people can only grow.

Unhappily, though perhaps predictably, the initial response of the Iranian state has been to dismiss the protests as foreign sponsored and an attempt to weaken the country. Certainly, regional rivals and perhaps particularly the current US and Israeli administrations have an incentive to interfere in Iran and sustain or widen the protests if they can, but that is hardly the point. It is an old trick of authoritarian regimes to dismiss legitimate protest and dissent as externally influenced in order to justify a crackdown. The protesting Iranian people should not be regarded as saboteurs against their own state and society. Saudi Arabia, Israel and the US may well try and foment trouble inside Iran, but it is the legitimate grievances of the Iranian people that creates the space for outside interference. Food inflation, a rollback of subsidies, stubbornly high unemployment, corruption and spending overseas are problems for Iran to address and have not solely been created by the outside world.

Nevertheless, if the protests continue and the state crackdown intensifies, the repercussions for the region could be severe. The inter-generational transfer of power that is being attempted in Saudi Arabia has consolidated power in the hands of a seemingly impulsive crown prince drawn to military action. Israel is ruled by a right-wing government that is obsessive about perceived threats from Iran. The Trump administration has been drawn deeper into Afghanistan while seemingly determined to return to an overtly hostile relationship with Iran. The militant Islamic State group is active in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Pakistan is struggling with an extremism problem and a stubborn militancy challenge. Surely, the sensible thing for the Iranian state to do is address the legitimate demands of the protesters and bring a peaceful end to the protests. Iran's population, like much of the region, is young. They must be treated fairly and with understanding or Iran risks its youth becoming ungovernable.

Published in Dawn, January 4th, 2018

Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1380645/discontent-in-iran>

## **Looking back in anger, forever**



THE year has not started well for India. Dangerous new flashpoints have emerged in a country suppurating along old fault lines and smarting from the relentless blows to its enterprise of building a modern republic after the Hindu supremacist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) took power in 2014 with Narendra Modi at the helm. India emerges as a country at odds with itself — violent and backward-looking while seeking economic superpower status. History hangs like a toxic cloud over the nation that was once a beacon of modernity for newly independent states.

Old memories of caste exploitation aggravated by new assertions of Hindu nationalism by the oppressors have resulted in a near civil war-like situation in Maharashtra which is among the more developed and prosperous Indian states. In Assam, millions of Muslims woke up to 2018 with a sense of panic as they found themselves excluded from a newly formed National Register of Citizens. Around 13m people, including members of the legislative assembly and of parliament, do not figure in the citizenship list. Hopefully, they will not be disenfranchised since the state, run by BJP, says it's only a draft. Maybe. But it is reflective of the way the party keeps minorities in a perpetual sense of anxiety.

Saffronisation, the term for pushing the Hinduisation agenda of the BJP and the hydra-headed organisations of its mother ship, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), can take ludicrous turns as it attempts to rile and provoke. In Uttar Pradesh, Muslims got a different kind of New Year gift: the walls of the Haj Committee Office in Lucknow were painted saffron. One can, perhaps, laugh off the saffron wall — and the saffron buses of UP. But the convulsions in different regions signal a deeper turmoil which could leave the country even more divided than it is. The violence in Maharashtra, involving a melange of different communities and castes, is so unwarranted that it puts an end to any lingering hope that Modi will fulfil his grand electoral promise of bringing 'vikas' or development. Or end corruption.

Does an economy in decline matter, or the widespread unemployment that is stoking a million anxieties? Or the desperate straits in which farmers find themselves? Not at all. The priority for the ruling party is to push its communal agenda, and to uphold the Brahminised view of culture and history that it espouses. Take Maharashtra, which is aboil with Dalit anger after upper caste Hindus flying the saffron flag attacked them at a rally which has been held from time immemorial.

Every January 1, Dalits — they are beyond the pale of the Hindu caste structure — gather at Bhima Koregaon to commemorate their victory over the Peshwa rulers two centuries ago. In 1818, a few hundred Mahars in a regiment of the East India Company had defeated the Peshwas, extremely orthodox Brahmins given to ill treating the lower castes, specially the Mahars. For Dalits, the victory is important because it is a treasured memory of their triumph against dehumanising caste oppression. Other communities have not interfered with their celebration.

This time, however, the rallies were attacked by upper caste Hindus on a variety of pretexts. One alleged cause of anger was that the Mahar victory had only helped the British consolidate power. That should hardly upset the RSS and its followers who have no pedigree in the independence struggle, having supported the British colonial power tacitly and openly. Another spark for the violence was the abstruse question of who defied Mughal emperor Aurangzeb to perform the last rites of a Maratha ruler of the time. Was it a lowly Dalit or a Maratha courtier? The memorial to the Dalit was astutely destroyed a couple of days before the rally, by whom no one knows.

This is all of piece with the new India where historical animosities are reheated for long-term political gain or immediate electoral benefit. It matters little that Rani Padmini of Chittor never existed, according to historians. But for the ruling establishment a popular film on the mythical figure comes in handy to whip up fresh hatred against Muslim rulers of the past. It exemplifies in no small measure the establishment's misplaced priorities. At the time the official machinery was convening meetings with obscure saffron organisations who had been offended by the film, important bills such as the one criminalising triple talaq were being rushed through parliament without any consultations. And all the while, India's GDP was slipping. The official figures, just released, put growth at 6.5 per cent for 2017-18, a four-year low as a result of muddled economic policies.

The loss in economic growth is at the end of the day — or the financial year — something Indians can and have to live with even if it impacts livelihoods and the well-being of the country's poorest. The more grievous loss is the sense of self that Indians once had. What do we stand for? Is the nation to be defined by events in a distant past that have no current relevance? Is our global image to be etched as a brutal people given to acts of violence that compare with the worst atrocities of nations founded on religion?

For the post-independence generation that grew up in the Nehru era, when industrial progress coupled with development of arts and culture was a matter of faith, today's India appears to be a throwback to a barbaric past. The decades when the country established its prowess in diverse areas of manufacture and space technology and set about building an inclusive society — an experiment that did not succeed fully — appear a receding memory.

The dominant image at home and abroad is of a violent, mediaeval society, of a people who take to the sword at every opportunity. You see them everywhere. Angry young men with saffron flags, their faces frozen in a rictus of hate. Girls, some as young as five, as members of the Durga Vahini whose only creed is minority hatred. Lynch mobs using whips and guns on unsuspecting people. Women and little girls in their festival finery taking to the streets in West Bengal with swords held aloft in defiance of court orders. There is after all, a secular government to be unseated in the state.

The French Revolution was marked by the Great Fear, a brief period of panic and rioting before *liberté, égalité, fraternité* were embedded as enduring values. Here, the fear shows no sign of a let-up. For the goals are entirely different.

# **The Myth of the Limited Strike on North Korea** **By Abraham M. Denmark**

Any U.S. Attack Would Risk a War



Capabilities, Americans have begun to debate the possibility of a limited, preventive U.S. strike against North Korea—one that could deter the regime from further testing while avoiding a full-blown war. One possibility is a so-called bloody nose strike, which would involve destroying a North Korean missile launch site (bloodying the regime’s nose, as it were) in order to demonstrate the United States’ resolve. Some have gone even further, calling for “air and missile strike[s] against all known DPRK nuclear test facilities and missile launching and support facilities” in the event of a North Korean atmospheric nuclear test over the Pacific Ocean.

The goal of a limited strike would be fairly straightforward: demonstrate to Pyongyang that it cannot continue conducting tests without risking a U.S. response. Crucially, proponents of such a strike assume that the United States’ own massive conventional and nuclear capabilities could deter North Korean Supreme Leader Kim Jong Un from retaliating, as such an escalation would risk

his own destruction. Advocates for a limited strike also tend to argue that, by assuring Pyongyang that the United States does not seek regime change but will never accept a nuclear North Korea, Washington can convince Kim that negotiations are the only viable way forward.

It is unlikely, however, that a strike would work as planned. It would have no guarantee of successfully destroying North Korean capabilities, and Kim may well feel compelled to respond to even a limited attack. Any strike would thus risk igniting a full-blown war on the Korean Peninsula that would endanger millions of lives and ultimately diminish U.S. power and influence in the Asia-Pacific.

A successful preventive strike would likely require surprise. If Pyongyang became convinced that a U.S. strike was imminent, it might see itself in a “use or lose” situation and attack before the United States has a chance to take out its weapons—in effect preempting the prevention. Any strike would risk igniting a full-blown war on the Korean Peninsula that would endanger millions of lives.

Yet achieving surprise will be difficult. Washington would likely seek to work with Seoul and Tokyo to prepare their militaries for a potential North Korean response, which would involve moving troops and other resources into the region. South Korea and Japan would also want to ready their citizens to give them a better chance at survival in the event of a war. Finally, the United States might wish to evacuate the dependents of U.S. military personnel (of whom there are over 10,000) out of South Korea prior to a strike. These are very large operations that would be all but impossible for North Korea to miss.

Washington could forgo these preparations in order to preserve the element of surprise. Yet considering that there are between 100,000 and 500,000 U.S. citizens in South Korea (and several hundred thousand more in Japan) at any given time, this would put a very large number of American lives in danger. Moreover, conducting a surprise attack without providing South Korea and Japan adequate time to prepare could be deeply damaging to these critical U.S. alliances.

Another key aspect of any limited strike strategy would be to limit North Korean retaliation. Washington would have to convince Kim that, despite attacking his nuclear and missile infrastructure, it does not seek regime change. Yet North Korea is unlikely to take the United States at its word. For decades, a core element of North Korean state ideology has been that the United States is

determined to invade and that nuclear weapons are necessary to prevent it. In fact, Kim said as much during his 2018 New Year's address: "Even though the United States is wielding the nuclear stick and going wild for another war, it will not dare to invade us because we currently have a powerful nuclear deterrent."

To avoid retaliation, Washington would have to convince Pyongyang that U.S. objectives are limited and that it does not seek regime change or intend to invade. This despite the fact that, in the event of a preventive strike, the United States would have just killed hundreds if not thousands of North Koreans in an attempt to remove what Pyongyang sees as its only guarantee against an invasion. Consider, too, how closely the nuclear program is tied to the legitimacy of Kim and his regime. Nuclear weapons are not only strategically important but fundamental to how the regime justifies its rule. From Pyongyang's perspective, attacking North Korea's nuclear weapons and missiles but sparing its leadership may be a distinction without a difference.

Even if Pyongyang accepts U.S. assurances, it may choose to retaliate anyway. Kim may believe that retaliation would be necessary to preserve deterrence in the future, out of fear that failing to respond to a major strike would tell Washington that it can attack North Korea at will. In fact, research suggests that weaker states often feel the need to attack stronger states in order to demonstrate strength and resolve and to deter possible future attacks.

From Pyongyang's perspective, attacking North Korea's nuclear weapons and missiles but sparing its leadership may be a distinction without a difference.

Even if the United States was able to carry out the strikes and prevent a massive North Korean response, however, it might not be able to successfully destroy all of Kim's nuclear weapons and missiles. Indeed, the Pentagon recently told Congress that eliminating all of North Korea's nuclear weapons would require a ground invasion, probably owing to Pyongyang's penchant for building military facilities underground, limiting the effectiveness of airstrikes. If the United States decides to attack North Korea without attempting to eliminate its ballistic missile and WMD capabilities, it would leave itself and its allies at Kim's mercy. If, on the other hand, the United States is determined to keep going until North Korea has been completely denuclearized, it must consider the potential consequences of a full-scale invasion.



A general war with North Korea would be devastating. A recent report by the Congressional Research Service estimated that between 30,000 and 300,000 people could die in the first days of fighting, even if Pyongyang refrained from using any weapons of mass destruction—an unlikely scenario. According to recently declassified U.S. government documents, moreover, in 1994 the Pentagon estimated that a war on the Korean Peninsula would kill or injure 52,000 American servicepeople and over 490,000 South Korean troops in just three months of fighting. Those numbers have almost certainly gotten far worse in the intervening 24 years, given North Korea's tremendous progress in developing weapons of mass destruction. Today, millions of lives could be threatened.

To provide some perspective, over 6,900 U.S. military personnel have been killed and over 52,000 have been injured in Iraq and the surrounding area since 2003. Although no one knows how many civilians have been killed in that war, academics estimated that 461,000 people died in Iraq as a result of war-related causes between 2003 and 2011, and thousands more have died in the years since. And according to research conducted at Brown University, as of 2015, at least 970,000 veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan have some degree of officially recognized disability as a result of the wars; when considering the costs of war, these count as well. A war with North Korea would likely be more devastating than any conflict the United States has experienced since World War II, if ever.

Beyond the human cost, a war on the Korean Peninsula would be catastrophic for the global economy. China, Japan, and South Korea are some of the largest economies of the world, representing 20 percent of global GDP. They are the first-, fourth-, and sixth- largest trade partners of the United States, representing over \$880 billion in trade in 2016 alone. A war would decimate trade and investment in the region and would be an economic disaster for the United States.

A war would not only risk lives and treasure—it would risk U.S. power, too. If the United States starts a conflict with North Korea or fails to achieve its objectives in a limited strike, it is likely to witness a significant diminution of its geopolitical power across the Asia-Pacific.

The United States' key allies in the region, South Korea and Japan, are unlikely to support a preventive U.S. strike on North Korea. In fact, South Korean President Moon Jae-in has already claimed the right to veto any U.S. military action on the peninsula. This is unsurprising, as a conflict would put the lives of millions of Japanese and South Korean civilians at risk. Although both countries support pressuring North Korea and fully expect the Washington to come to their defense if attacked, neither has voiced any support for the United States precipitating a conflict. In fact, scholars and officials privately express the opposite: fear that the United States will start a war and they will pay the price.

If Washington initiates a conflict and Pyongyang escalates, Seoul and Tokyo may consider significantly curtailing (or even ending) their alliances with the United States, ejecting U.S. armed forces from their territory, and developing their own nuclear weapons. This would effectively end U.S. geopolitical dominance in the Asia-Pacific, creating a region riven with division and instability, with diminished U.S. power and influence and China poised to fill the void.

As the Hoover Institution's Kori Schake has noted, much of the rhetoric on North Korea coming out of the Trump administration mirrors that of the George W. Bush administration in the run-up to the invasion of Iraq. Yet one important difference remains: the Trump administration, unlike the Bush administration, has yet to make the case for war to the American people or the international community. If the United States and North Korea are indeed coming closer to war every day, U.S. leaders have yet to explain why a war may be necessary, how military action will achieve U.S. goals, how they plan to limit casualties, why such incredible risks and sacrifices are necessary, and how they envision the conflict to end.

U.S. service members, allies, and the American people deserve more. Considering the tremendous uncertainty and potentially devastating effects of a conflict on the Korean Peninsula, the American, Japanese, and South Korean people deserve a debate on the merits of this decision. Before it sends American service members to potentially be killed and injured by the thousands, the Trump administration should have the confidence to make a public case for war, its risks, and its consequences.

Source: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/north-korea/2018-01-09/myth-limited-strike-north-korea?cid=int-now&pgtype=hpg&region=br1>

## **Iranians Try Yet Again to Change Their Government by Jamsheed K. Choksy and Carol E. B. Choksy**



In the closing days of 2017 and the early ones of 2018, Iranians began taking to the streets of cities, towns, and villages across their long-historied nation to demand economic reform, social liberalization, and enhanced personal freedom while hoping at the same time that they might finally succeed in removing the theocratic regime of the past thirty-nine years. Their protests mirror Iran's recent history in issues, demands, and responses. Most strikingly, as in their previous struggles against the theocratic government, Iranians will have to persevere in their quest without counting on tangible assistance from others.

“Death to the dictator!” chanted protestors in late 1978 and early 1979 as Iranians successfully mobilized to oust Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi despite the monarch’s violent resistance. Thirty years later the phrase “Death to Khamenei” was commonplace when Iranians tried unsuccessfully to undo a presidential election rigged by Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and his cronies in 2009. That revolution was brutally squashed by the mollahs and their hardline supporters while the free world alternated between pleas and empty threats. Khamenei prevailed because other nations did nothing to aid those seeking reform—quite a difference in action and outcome from December 1978 when the United States pushed the last Shah into capitulating to popular demands that he step down.

Yet the underlying political, economic, and social conditions that have fueled these popular uprisings have not changed. Citizens’ have long resented that they have been denied meaningful participation in a farcical “democratic” political process. For starters, only regime vetted and approved “opposition candidates” may challenge the status quo in an election. Fiscal mismanagement and rampant corruption by and within state bureaucracies and quasi-official foundations has rewarded elites allied with the regime, while ordinary citizens watch their standard of living stagnate or decline. Unemployment, underemployment, and lack of appropriate job opportunities are a depressing fact of life, especially for young men and women. Restrictions on social and individual liberties, including detention of activists and constant public harassment of individuals viewed as transgressing state-mandated norms, may wax and wane somewhat with changes in presidential administrations but are always maintained within fundamentalist parameters by unelected members of the Guardian Council, Judiciary, and Office of the Supreme Leader.

So, not surprisingly, the current protests resemble those of the earlier revolts. Now as then, hardline elements within the regime sought gains by provoking and exploiting societal tensions. Now as then, initial pro-regime words were quickly overwhelmed by the cries of many who experienced decades of inequity. Now as then, the protests began without a centralized or coordinated internal organization or external influences. Now as then, the protests have become widespread with protestors from diverse economic, demographic, and social backgrounds with one major exception in that few mollahs are involved because the protests threaten the clergy’s control over Iran. Additionally, these current protests began at the time when the regime commemorates its suppression of

the 2009 uprising. Now as then, demonstrators are declared enemies of the state and threatened with draconian measures including penalties of incarceration or death. Now as then, the state's official and semiofficial security apparatuses have begun clamping down by violently dispersing demonstrators, and arresting or shooting those who do not obey the enforcers.

Yet, make no mistake about it—Iran's population of 82 million is undergoing massive transformations, and the rate of change has picked up since the failed uprising of 2009. More than half of Iranians have grown up knowing only the Islamic Republic as the source of totalitarian government. Citizens are highly literate, 85 percent overall and around 97 percent for persons under 50 years. Primary and secondary education reaches over 80 percent of children. More than 5 million Iranians attend universities within the country. But GDP per capita still is less than the equivalent of US \$21,000, and the unemployment rate is over 12 percent officially and over 26 percent among those under 25 years. Corruption among the political elites costs the country the equivalent of billions of dollars annually; indeed Iran ranks as a highly corrupt 131st out of 176 countries.

Constant social oversight, rigid codes of dress and behavior, enforced by the regime are regarded as out of sync with personal and communal desires, the modernity of upper and middle classes, and especially by citizens under the age of 40. Regular edicts and chastisement by the mollahs add to the mounting frustration of the population. Iranians are tired as well of their leaders' confrontations with the West, the country's foreign adventurism in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Bahrain, Yemen, and Afghanistan and the cost of those activities in Iranian lives, revenues, and international engagement. The protests echo Iranians' demand that their national leaders be more positively engaged with the rest of the world rather than confrontational.

Additionally, the flow of information inside Iran today is very different from the late 1970s and even 2009. More than 56 million Iranians, nearly 70 percent of the overall population, have internet access. There are 20 million new mobile internet users since 2014, with total users now exceeding 28 million. Over 40 million smartphones provide nearly 100 percent connectivity in the most populace provinces and cities. Social media is widespread too—Facebook reaches 45 percent of Iranians, Instagram 33 percent, Telegram has 40 million plus users. As the current demonstrations spread, has tried to cut off access to Instagram, Telegram, and WhatsApp. Despite the regime's efforts to regulate information sharing and to censor dissident sentiments, its citizens remain connected with

each other and foreigners by utilizing VPNs. Moreover, the state alienated small business owners who rely on those apps to communicate with customers.

Due to e-connectivity, these protests appear to be largely decentralized and spontaneous, making them more difficult to anticipate or control by the authorities given that there is no organizing or coordinating body within the protest movement, as well as fewer identifiable leaders who can be imprisoned in order to deflate the movement. Today's protests have an organic and self-perpetuating component that makes it different from past revolts.

The question is, will the rebellion's outcome be different this time around? On the one hand, the Islamic regime may step up the violence against the protestors and then seek political cover from its totalitarian, fundamentalist, isolationist base as it did after suppressing the 2009 protests. Indeed, the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) and the Basij paramilitary are being deployed to assist the police in beating up and arresting protestors. But with each set of uprisings, whether successful or unsuccessful, the Iranian people are learning and adapting, and, as the past indicates, will return to their struggle until one day they succeed.

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Source: <http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/article/iranians-try-yet-again-change-their-government>

## **Israel's Netanyahu pushes for India free trade deal during rare visit**



NEW DELHI: India and Israel will begin work on a free trade pact that Israel has been pushing for, officials said on Monday, as Benjamin Netanyahu began a first visit by an Israeli prime minister in 15 years.

India and Israel have built close ties over the years, largely centered on arms purchases, away from the public eye. But under Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, whose nationalist party has long admired Israel for its tough approach to 'terrorism', ties have flowered across the economy.

“We have had diplomatic relations for 25 years, but something different is happening now,” Netanyahu said soon after the two sides signed nine agreements covering cooperation in cyber security, space and oil and gas exploration.

Israel has given initial approval for Indian energy companies to explore oil and gas in the eastern Mediterranean, in the first such move by Indian firms in that region.

Netanyahu, who said he saw a “kindred spirit” in Modi in terms of getting things done, pushed for a free trade pact with Asia’s third largest economy during the talks on Monday.

Modi agreed to open trade discussions, Indian foreign ministry secretary in charge of economic relations Vijay Gokhale told reporters. “A delegation from the commerce ministry will actually go next month for discussions on trade,” he said. Bilateral trade has jumped from US\$200 million in 1992, when the two countries opened diplomatic relations, to US\$4.16 billion in 2016, largely in favour of Israel.

Netanyahu, accompanied by a 130-member delegation, wants to increase exports to India by 25 per cent over the three years. Israel has emerged as one of India’s biggest suppliers of weapons alongside the United States and long-term partner Russia. But the two sides were tight-lipped over the fate of a US\$500 million deal to buy anti-tank missiles from Israel’s state-owned defense contractor Rafael that India called off just weeks before Netanyahu’s first.

The Indian government wanted to support a local programme to build the missile but Israel has since pushed hard to revive the order. It has offered to transfer technology and eventually build the missile with a local partner in a boost for Modi’s signature Make-in-India drive for a domestic defense base.

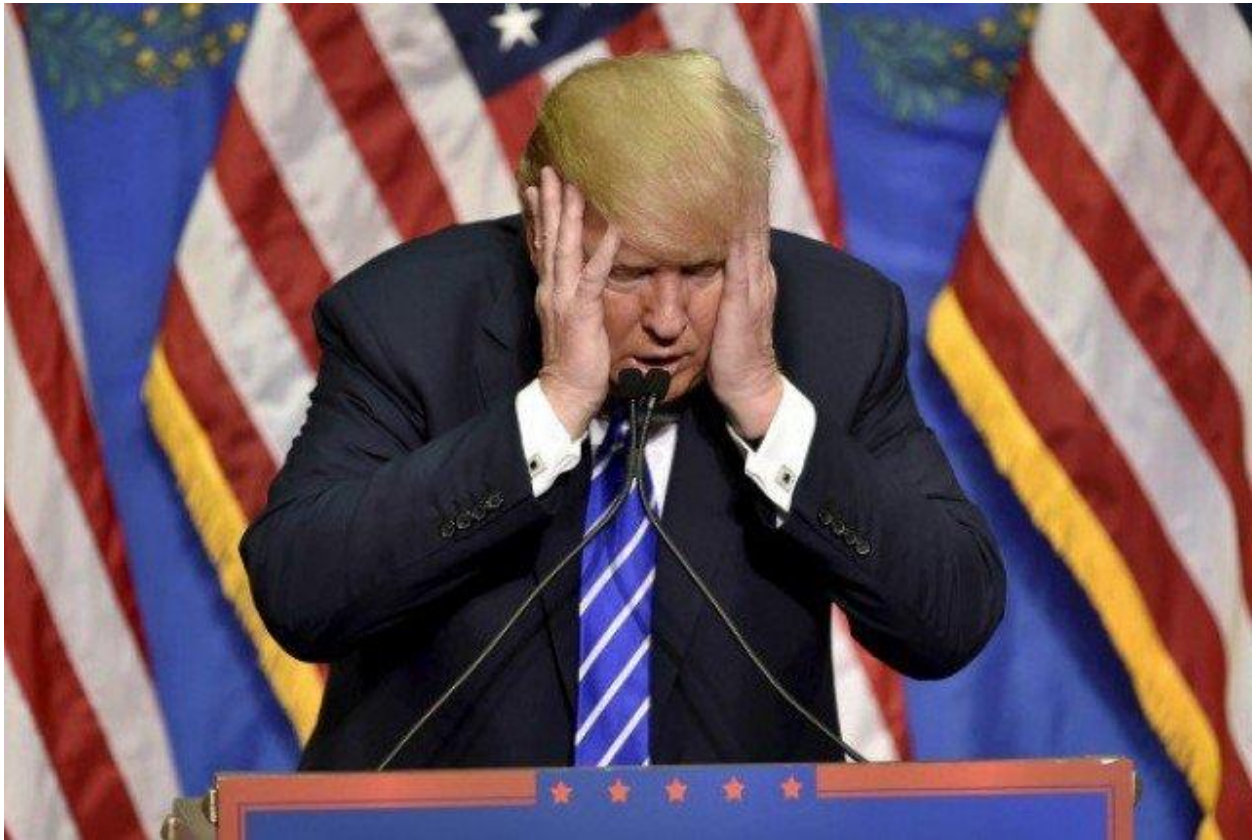
Without referring to the anti-tank missile deal, Modi said he had invited Israeli companies to take advantage of India’s liberalised rules in the defense sector to “make more in India with our companies.”

Last year, Modi made a first trip to Israel by an Indian prime minister ever.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1610023/3-israels-netanyahu-pushes-india-free-trade-deal-rare-visit/>



## **Trump would make 'big mistake' by leaving Iran deal: Moscow**



MOSCOW: Russia on Saturday said Washington would be making a grave mistake by pulling out of the Iran nuclear deal, adding that Moscow would work hard to keep the landmark agreement alive.

Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov criticised remarks by US President Donald Trump, who on Friday said the US will not reimpose nuclear sanctions on Iran for the moment, but would withdraw later this year unless the terms of the deal are changed.

“We are gradually coming to the conclusion that an internal decision by the US to leave the (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) has already been made or is close to being made,” Ryabkov said in an interview with Interfax news agency.

“This could be one of Washington’s big foreign policy mistakes, a big miscalculation in American policy,” he said.

Under the hard-won 2015 deal with Russia, the US, China, France, Britain, Germany and the EU, Iran agreed to curb its nuclear programme in exchange for lifting of a raft of international sanctions.

Trump on Friday gave an ultimatum to “either fix the deal’s disastrous flaws, or the United States will withdraw.”

Pakistan-US relations depend on revision of Trump’s do-more policy: sources

America’s allies see the accord as the best way to thwart Iran’s nuclear ambitions and a victory for multilateral diplomacy. Tehran categorically denies it is seeking to develop atomic weapons.

But Trump argues that his predecessor Barack Obama gave away too much to Iran in sanctions relief, without forcing the Islamic republic to end its ballistic missile program and support for militant groups.

Ryabkov said Moscow must unite with Europe and China and undertake “intense work” to keep the existing plan intact and decried what he said was a US attempt to strongarm the situation.

“In what we heard yesterday, I don’t see any invitation for Iran to enter dialogue,” he said. “This defies the logic of the agreement.”

“Russia will do everything in its power to save the agreement,” he said.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1607986/3-trump-make-big-mistake-leaving-iran-deal-moscow/>

## **Russia's Afghanistan Strategy By Julia Gurganus**



For the last decade and a half, Russia and the United States have had largely similar aims in Afghanistan: preventing chaos and the reemergence of a safe haven for terrorists. That convergence has allowed the two countries to work together. But beneath the surface, there are important differences. Although both want stability, they define it in very different ways. The U.S. approach is founded on creating a strong central government in Kabul and a well-equipped and well-trained national security force; Russia, meanwhile, works with a wide range of actors, some of which compete directly with the government in Kabul. Moscow has even reached out to the Taliban, legitimizing a group that continues to threaten the security of both the Afghan government and U.S. and NATO forces.

Over the last couple of years, the gap between the Russian and U.S. strategies has grown. Russia increasingly believes that the United States' approach isn't working and that political will in Washington for continued engagement will run

out before long. It is convinced that it must be prepared to deal with an unstable Afghanistan on its own. For Russia, this presents a serious challenge. But it also offers an opportunity to undermine the United States—by playing kingmaker while Washington flounders.

When the United States invaded Afghanistan in 2001, U.S. and Russian interests there were largely aligned. Both countries wanted to rout al Qaeda and its affiliated terrorist groups and prevent Afghanistan from once again becoming a haven for terrorists. Ever since Soviet forces withdrew at the end of the Soviet-Afghan war in 1989, Moscow had feared that a political vacuum would emerge, allowing extremism to flourish and terrorist threats to fester. Moscow was wary of the prospect of a long-term U.S. military presence, but it tolerated U.S. and NATO operations in the hope that they would help bring stability to South and Central Asia. Cooperation between Russia and the United States in Afghanistan reached its height during the Obama administration, when Moscow allowed U.S. and NATO forces to transport equipment and supplies through Russian territory, sold Russian Mi-17 helicopters to U.S.-supported Afghan forces, and worked with the United States to curb opium production and stem the wider drug trade.

Moscow has established a relationship with the Taliban's leadership.

But as time went on, Russia began to lose confidence in the United States' commitment to—and ability to accomplish—its mission in Afghanistan. Moscow started developing its own strategy to defend its interests and weather a potential collapse of the government in Kabul. Souring U.S.-Russian relations in the wake of Russia's illegal annexation of Ukraine in 2014 further dampened Russia's willingness to support the United States. Still, Moscow has made it clear to Washington that it does not want an abrupt U.S. withdrawal. In January 2017, Zamir Kabulov, the Special Representative to the Russian President for Afghanistan, said that if Trump “decides to withdraw the contingent, then everything will collapse.”

Despite its support for a continued U.S. presence, Moscow was underwhelmed by the new U.S. strategy for Afghanistan, announced by the Trump administration last August. In Moscow's eyes, the strategy, which includes a modest increase in troop numbers, a renewed focus on counterterrorism, and an open-ended timeline, was just more of the same. Sergey Lavrov, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, called the focus on the use of force a “dead end” and his spokesperson suggested that the strategy was in line with the Obama

administration's approach, which had "failed to improve the security situation." Russian officials have also criticized the Pentagon's decision to end the purchase of Mi-17 helicopters for Afghanistan's military and replace them with U.S.-made Black Hawks, claiming that the decision was more political than practical, a result of U.S. sanctions on Russia.

An Afghan soldier in front of a Mi-17 transport helicopter of the Afghan air force in Mazar-i-Sharif, Afghanistan, March 2017.

SABINE SIEBOLD / REUTERS

An Afghan soldier in front of a Mi-17 transport helicopter of the Afghan air force in Mazar-i-Sharif, Afghanistan, March 2017.

In recent years, Russia has carried out a string of foreign policy maneuvers in the Middle East designed to bring political and economic gains and to position Russia as a key player in future conflict resolutions. These moves have included Russia's military intervention in Syria; its support for General Khalifa Haftar, the head of the Libyan National Army, in the Libyan civil war; and its outreach to the Egyptian government, which has yielded a preliminary agreement allowing Russian forces to use Egyptian air bases. Moscow's involvement in Afghanistan is an extension of this strategy and now goes beyond ensuring stability on the ground. Russia is developing its own network of contacts and capabilities to defend Russian interests in the event of a collapse of the central government. It is also looking to consolidate its position as a regional player and to further its reputation internationally as an indispensable participant in any global crisis.

Russia's increased involvement in Afghanistan includes business investment proposals, diplomatic outreach, cultural programs, and financial and military support for the central government, power brokers in the north, and the Taliban. In 2014, it reopened a cultural center in Kabul. Since 2016, it has provided tens of thousands of Kalashnikov rifles and millions of rounds of ammunition to the Afghan government. Russia has several advantages in pursuing these policies. Many Russian military officers, security service personnel, and diplomats have experience in Afghanistan dating back to the Soviet-Afghan War. A significant proportion of Afghan officials and military officers were educated or trained in Russia. And the Russian government, unbound by particular values or ideology, is free to align with whichever group it determines is the most influential.

That flexibility has allowed Russia to work with the Taliban. The Kremlin believes that the group is focused on gaining power over territory within Afghanistan, and is therefore a threat to Afghanistan's government but not a danger beyond the country's borders. This is in contrast to its view of the Islamic State (also known as ISIS), elements of which operate in Afghanistan and Pakistan, which Moscow sees as a transnational group that is a risk to Central Asia and Russia. In 2015, Kabulov explained that Russian and Taliban interests "coincide" when it comes to defeating ISIS. The extent of Russian support for the Taliban remains unclear, including whether Moscow is arming the group. But the key point is that Moscow has established a relationship with the Taliban's leadership that it will use to boost its influence and enable peace talks. In November, Mohammad Atmar, the Afghan national security adviser, touted Moscow's "significant role" in working to bring the Taliban to the negotiating table.

Russia's approach in Afghanistan replicates some of the elements of its successful Syria strategy.

Moscow has already launched several efforts at diplomacy. Between December 2016 and April 2017, Russia hosted three rounds of talks involving China, Iran, and Pakistan. In the third round, it included Afghanistan, as well. In October, Russia hosted the revived Shanghai Cooperation Organisation contact group on Afghanistan, a meeting of members—which now include India and Pakistan—as well as participants from the Afghan government. Although these discussions have yielded no concrete results, Russia has succeeded in its primary aim: positioning itself as a key player in future talks.

Moscow has also worked to strengthen its bilateral ties with other countries in the region. In 2016, Russia and Pakistan held their first joint military exercises and signed a deal for Pakistan to buy Russian Mi-35 attack helicopters. Moscow is working with Iran, its partner on the battlefield in Syria, to strengthen its contacts within Afghanistan and its relations with the Taliban. Russia's visibility as a key player in Afghanistan will strengthen confidence among the country's Central Asian allies in Russia's ability to safeguard their security at a time when Chinese influence—through trade, investment, and Beijing's vast One Belt One Road infrastructure initiative—is growing in the region.

Russia's approach in Afghanistan replicates some of the elements of its successful Syria strategy. In both countries, Russia has taken advantage of perceptions of a weakened and faltering United States. By hosting talks in

Afghanistan, as it has with participants in the Syrian conflict, it has made sure that it will be part of any future settlement. And by directly shaping the situation on the ground, Moscow will both ensure that its influence continues over the long term and force the United States to recognize its role in the country. In Syria, Russia did this with military force, but in Afghanistan it is using its relationships with key political players, as well as its business and cultural influence.

Afghanistan is in such a bad way that there is much on which Russia and the United States could cooperate. There are terrorist groups to defeat, a national military to train and equip, an economy and infrastructure to rebuild, and humanitarian aid to deliver. Both Russia and the United States seek to counter the threat posed by ISIS, which has a growing presence in northern and eastern Afghanistan. Russia wants to stem the country's opium production; according to a 2014 Congressional Research Service study, about 25 percent of Afghan heroin moves through Central Asia to Russia and Europe, and drug sales provide an important source of income for terrorist groups in Afghanistan. But the gap between the Russian and U.S. approaches is growing; now, only the most compelling issues—counterterrorism and counternarcotics—provide realistic prospects for working together. And even here, results will likely be limited. Some tactical cooperation, such as sharing terrorists' locations and other targeting information, will be possible. But the experience of the Syrian conflict, where Moscow has violated even straightforward airspace deconfliction protocols in recent weeks, warns against expecting too much.

Worse still, Russia's involvement in Afghanistan will often cut directly against U.S. interests. Moscow's increasingly active role has opened up opportunities for Afghan groups to play off outside powers against each other. This will reinforce domestic rivalries at a time when the country's stability depends on strengthening central authority. Russia's engagement with the Taliban has emboldened the group that has done the most to prevent the central government from consolidating power. In this way Moscow hopes to achieve two aims at once: keep Afghanistan largely free of terrorists that can threaten Russia or its neighbors and take advantage of the United States' retreat to set itself up as a major global power.

Source: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/afghanistan/2018-01-02/russias-afghanistan-strategy?cid=int-now&pgtype=hpg&region=br1>

## **US plans open-ended military presence in Syria**



The US will maintain an open-ended military presence in Syria to ensure the enduring defeat of the jihadist group Islamic State, counter Iranian influence, and help end the civil war.

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said President Donald Trump did not want to “make the same mistakes” that were made in 2011, when US forces left Iraq.

The US has about 2,000 troops in Syria.

Mr Tillerson denied the US was training a Kurdish-led border force, but Turkey accused it of sending mixed signals.

“US officials have made statements that refute one another,” said Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim, whose country fiercely opposes such a move.

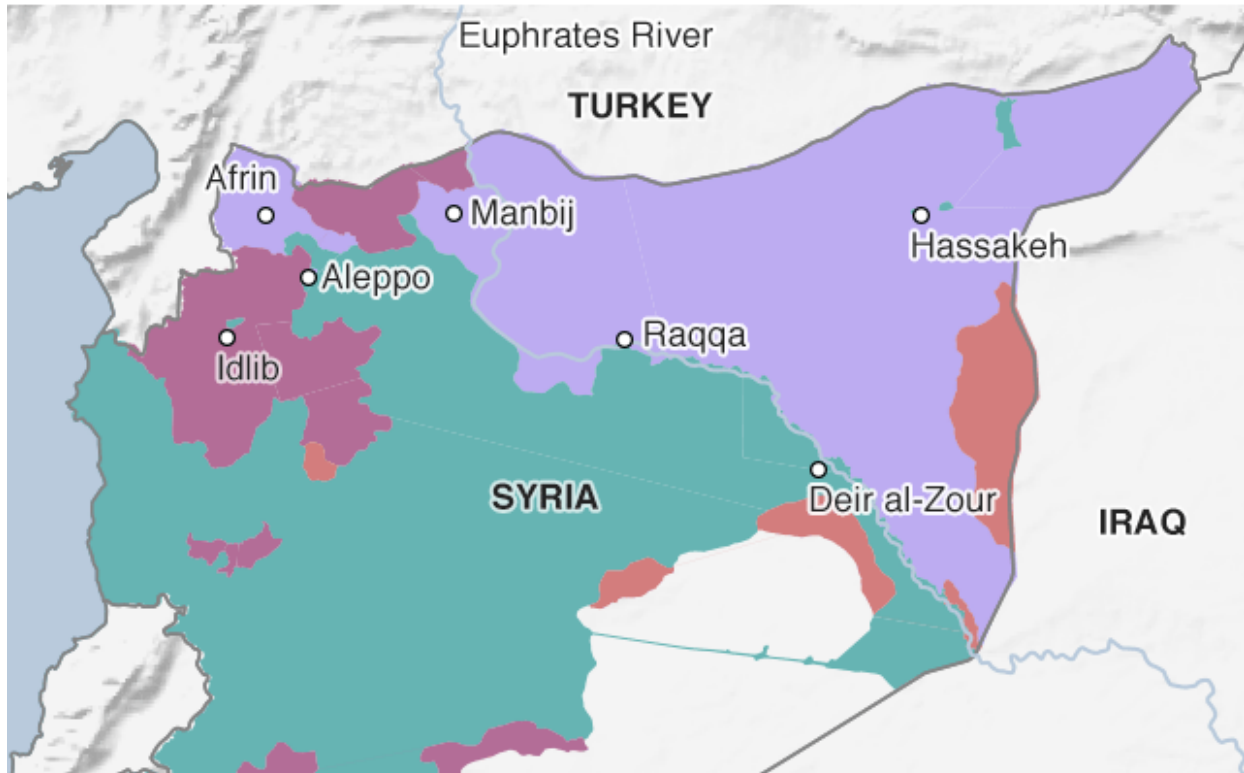
“One day it was said that a new border force had been set up, another day they said they are setting up a unit with local forces in order to maintain security in the region after eliminating Daesh [Islamic State group, or IS] in the region. These are all confusing statements.”



The US secretary of state said officials had “misspoke[n]” when they said [the US was planning to set up a 30,000 strong “border security force” in northern Syria](#) underpinned by the allied Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) militia.



■ Syrian Kurdish forces ■ Islamic State group  
■ Syrian government ■ Syrian rebel forces



Source: IHS Conflict Monitor, Jan 2018



Mr Tillerson said the US was not creating a new force, but rather trying to ensure that local fighters were able to protect liberated areas from attacks by IS remnants.

Turkey’s president branded it a “terror army” and warned of imminent assaults on the Kurdish-controlled border areas of Afrin and Manbij.

The Turkish army opened gaps in the border fence west of Afrin on Thursday, as the state-run Anadolu news agency reported that troops had been put on high alert.

### **Why does the US want to stay in Syria?**

In a speech at Stanford University on Wednesday, Mr Tillerson said decisive action taken by President Trump had accelerated the progress made against IS.

But he noted that IS was “not completely defeated” and that the government of President Bashar al-Assad – who the US opposes and has said should step down from power – controlled about half of Syria’s territory and population.



Mr Tillerson added that the US also faced “continued strategic threats” not just from IS and al-Qaeda, but also from Iran, a key ally of Mr Assad which he said had strengthened its presence by deploying troops and “importing proxy forces”.

He also said the unresolved plight of the millions of displaced Syrians remained a humanitarian crisis that only a political solution to the civil war could end.

The Syrian government said the continued US military presence represented “a blatant breach of international law and an aggression against national sovereignty”.

### **What would make the US withdraw?**

Mr Tillerson said the Trump administration desired “five key end states for Syria”.

- IS and al-Qaeda in Syria “suffer an enduring defeat, do not present a threat to the homeland, and do not resurface in a new form”
- The conflict is resolved through a UN-led process, and “a stable, unified, independent Syria, under post-Assad leadership, is functioning as a state”
- Iranian influence in Syria is diminished and Syria’s neighbours are secure
- Conditions are created so displaced people can begin to return to their homes
- Syria is free of weapons of mass destruction



Image copyrightREUTERSImage captionIn October, US-backed SDF fighters took full control of the IS stronghold of Raqqa

The Trump administration was implementing a new strategy to achieve those goals, which would largely entail increased diplomatic action, Mr Tillerson said.

“But let us be clear: The United States will maintain a military presence in Syria focused on ensuring [IS] cannot re-emerge,” he added. “We cannot make the same mistakes that were made in 2011 when a premature departure from Iraq allowed al-Qaeda in Iraq to survive and eventually morph into [IS].”

He warned a US withdrawal would also allow al-Qaeda to expand its presence in north-western Syria; restore Mr Assad and “continue his brutal treatment against his own people”; and provide Iran with the opportunity to strengthen its position.

### **How could the US help bring peace to Syria?**

Mr Tillerson promised to carry out “stabilisation initiatives” in areas “liberated” by the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), a force dominated by a Kurdish militia that Turkey considers a terrorist group.

The initiatives would include clearing land mines, re-opening hospitals, restoring key services and getting children back to school.

“We must be clear: ‘stabilisation’ is not a synonym for open-ended nation-building or a synonym for reconstruction. But it is essential,” he added.



The US will also seek to “de-escalate” the conflict by negotiating local ceasefires and vigorously support UN efforts to negotiate a political settlement.

Mr Tillerson said the US believed free and transparent elections that included displaced people would “result in the permanent departure of Assad and his family from power”. “This process will take time, and we urge patience,” he added.

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Containing Iran

**By Jonathan Marcus, BBC diplomatic correspondent**

The Assad government, with its Russian and Iranian backers, may have largely won the war but it does not control all of Syrian territory.

An autonomous, largely Kurdish, zone has been established in the north with US-backing and now Washington is planning its next moves.

The Trump administration is signalling that it intends to maintain a military presence in Syria. It wants to continue to support its Kurdish allies and to prevent the re-emergence of IS as a serious force.

It is well aware that Russia is not vacating its bases in Syria any time soon. But US policy towards the region is now overwhelmingly focussed through a single lens – the effort to contain Iran.

In the longer term though, keeping Syria divided and isolating the government may only serve to delay reconstruction and store up new problems for the future.

Source: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-42731222>

# **How ISIS' Strategy Is Evolving By Michael P. Dempsey**

What the U.S. Can Do to Counter the Group's Shifting Tactics



Over the course of 2017, the Islamic State (or ISIS) suffered defeat after devastating defeat at the hands of the United States and its allies, culminating in the seizure last October of the group's declared capital of Raqqa, Syria. As of today, the group controls no major population center in either Iraq or Syria. Yet this does not mean that ISIS no longer poses a significant danger. With the end of the physical caliphate, ISIS' tactics are evolving. It is more and more likely to avoid major battlefield engagements and instead resort to terrorist attacks in the Middle East, other conflict zones, and the West. U.S. policy needs to change quickly to meet the evolving threat, both in terms of its operations in the region and of its counterterrorism priorities at home.

In order to remain militarily relevant, ISIS increasingly prefers to conduct isolated suicide attacks and hit-and-run operations. In early January, the group's official media wing published a list celebrating nearly 800 such attacks in 2017, including ones against the Iraqi military (nearly 500), Kurdish forces in Syria (136), and the

Assad regime and its allies (120), as well as a few dozen against moderate opposition groups in Syria. Although many of these attacks occurred during operations to liberate Mosul and Raqqa, it's clear that ISIS leaders view this type of strike as the group's best battlefield option for the foreseeable future. Indeed, the early January ISIS drone attack on Russian military facilities in Syria is another concrete example of the group's desire to inflict as much pain as possible on its enemies while avoiding large-scale direct military engagement. Even ISIS itself recognizes that the days of seizing and holding cities are behind it.

ISIS increasingly prefers to conduct isolated suicide attacks and hit-and-run operations.

Overseas, ISIS' eight global branches are embracing similar tactics. In Afghanistan—particularly in Kabul—ISIS fighters have recently launched several devastating suicide attacks. In Egypt last month, a small group of two dozen militants waving ISIS flags conducted a hit-and-run-style attack against a Sufi mosque on the Sinai Peninsula. It's believed to be the single deadliest such attack in modern Egyptian history, claiming the lives of more than 300 people. In these types of assaults, the group's overarching objectives have been constant—to highlight ISIS' continuing operational prowess and to target other religious groups while positioning itself as the true defender of the faith.

With these changes in tactics has also come a notable shift in ISIS' public messaging strategy. For most of the past three years, the group has shaped its public narrative around the historical significance of the physical caliphate and the religious obligation of Muslims to support it. Since the fall of Raqqa and Mosul late last year, however, its propaganda campaign has struggled mightily to generate content and its message has adopted a decidedly darker tone. As Charlie Winter wrote last month in *Wired UK*, almost three-quarters of the group's nearly 40 media outlets have been silenced in recent months, and “92 percent of the group's propaganda revolves around war, and war alone.” In other words, the Islamic State's loss of its territorial safe haven has crippled its media arm, and the group is now less focused on recruiting followers for a new life in Iraq and Syria than it is on lashing out at perceived enemies. Although this shrinking online presence is a positive development, the current focus on the encouragement of indiscriminate violence globally is worrisome.

There are several creative policies that the United States and its allies could pursue to meet the evolving threat. First, Washington might redouble its efforts to enhance partner nations' military and intelligence capabilities, especially in countries that ISIS is targeting for expansion, such as Egypt and Libya. U.S. support could, depending on the host government's willingness to grant sufficient human rights guarantees, include enhanced counterterrorism training, the provision of critical communication and collection equipment, potentially including access to overhead imagery of known ISIS locations, and expanded information sharing, including information gleaned from U.S. or partner nation security services.

Without its operating base in Raqqa from which to plot overseas operations, ISIS is less likely to launch centrally directed and coordinated attacks (as was the case in Brussels in 2016 and Paris in 2015), and instead will likely focus on encouraging and claiming credit for a series of "inspired" attacks similar to the ones in New York City late last year. Given this shift, the United States might want to alter its counter-radicalization efforts to fully embrace the growing importance of online radicalization and significantly increase cooperation in this area between local communities and federal authorities. It could especially focus on online training for how best to spot the early warning signs of radicalization. Some private sector organizations are already doing excellent work in this field. Google's Jigsaw unit, for example, is trying to identify individuals who, based on their online profile, appear to be supportive but not yet sold on extremism—and then redirecting them to counter-jihadist content. U.S. policymakers could potentially leverage these efforts while ensuring that the alternative content effectively highlights the work of moderate Islamic leaders and skillfully debunks ISIS' violent narrative and alleged grievances.

Another policy option is to step up U.S. humanitarian assistance to ease the glaring education deficit that is plaguing at-risk youth populations in refugee camps across the Middle East. The latest data indicates that the average refugee displacement is now ten years, and the access to education in these camps is quite limited. Any progress Washington can make in tackling this issue now will help prevent the creation of a lost generation of children in the Middle East, many of whom when faced with little education and poor job prospects may eventually prove susceptible to terrorist recruitment. And rather than try to tackle this challenge unilaterally, the United States might consider expanding support to UN-led efforts in this area. Indeed, the UN is already working aggressively to



partner with other governments and international organizations to ensure quality education for the millions of refugee children globally who are between five and 17 years old.

Finally, it would be wise for Washington to tread carefully in publicly espousing messages that are tailor made for exploitation by extremists. In recent weeks, for example, ISIS spokespeople have sharply criticized other Muslims for not following ISIS' lead in strongly defending Palestinian rights. ISIS' claim that these rights are currently under assault from the West is an emotional component of its recruiting pitch.

As we enter 2018, there is much to celebrate in what Washington and its coalition partners have achieved against ISIS. In many ways, the threat posed by the group has been so effectively countered that it now has to compete for attention on a crowded national security docket. But as the history of the past decade has shown, ISIS is a resilient and adaptive enemy capable of inflicting grievous harm on U.S. interests if given the chance. Therefore, it's in Washington's and its allies' interests for U.S. policymakers to recognize the next stage in the group's evolution, exploit the window of opportunity that recent battlefield gains have provided, and formulate creative policy responses that will further constrict the group's physical and online operations, erode its ability to threaten moderate governments in the Middle East and the West, and undermine its already tainted ideological appeal

Source: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/syria/2018-01-18/how-isis-strategy-evolving?cid=int-fls&pgtype=hpg>

## **Trump on Palestine | Editorial**



DONALD Trump's debut at the World Economic Forum in Davos last week was — as most things associated with the US president are — quite colourful. While Mr Trump tried to woo the world's movers and shakers that meet annually in the rarefied environs of the Swiss Alps, he could hardly contain his anger at the media, which he addressed using a bevy of vivid adjectives. However, it was his earlier comments on Palestine — delivered in an almost imperial tenor — that showed once again how far Mr Trump's Washington has come from playing any constructive role in the Arab-Israeli issue. Speaking with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu sitting dutifully — and almost gleefully — by his side, Donald Trump tore into the Palestinians in a patronising tone, threatening to cut off all funding for the Arabs unless they came to the negotiating table. His anger was precipitated by the recent Palestinian snub of US Vice President Mike Pence, whom the Arab side refused to meet during his recent visit to Israel. Mr Trump complained the Palestinians had “disrespected ... our great vice president. ...” However, the US leader conveniently forgot that it was he — with his unilateral move to declare Jerusalem Israel's capital — who had offended the Palestinians and disregarded decades of global consensus on the disputed

status of the holy city. Trump added that either the Palestinians make peace, “or we’re going to have nothing to do with them”.

Perhaps due to the US president’s unflinching commitment to Israel, he failed to realise that it is Tel Aviv which has, over the decades, obstructed all efforts at a lasting peace. By progressively devouring Arab land, increasing illegal settlement activity, and pulverising the Palestinian people after brief intervals, Israel has proved it thinks little of international law or the human rights of the Palestinian people. Before Mr Trump gives lectures on peacemaking to the Arabs, he should read history, specifically regarding the brutal treatment the Zionist state has meted out to Palestinians on their own land for seven long decades.

Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1385834/trump-on-palestine>