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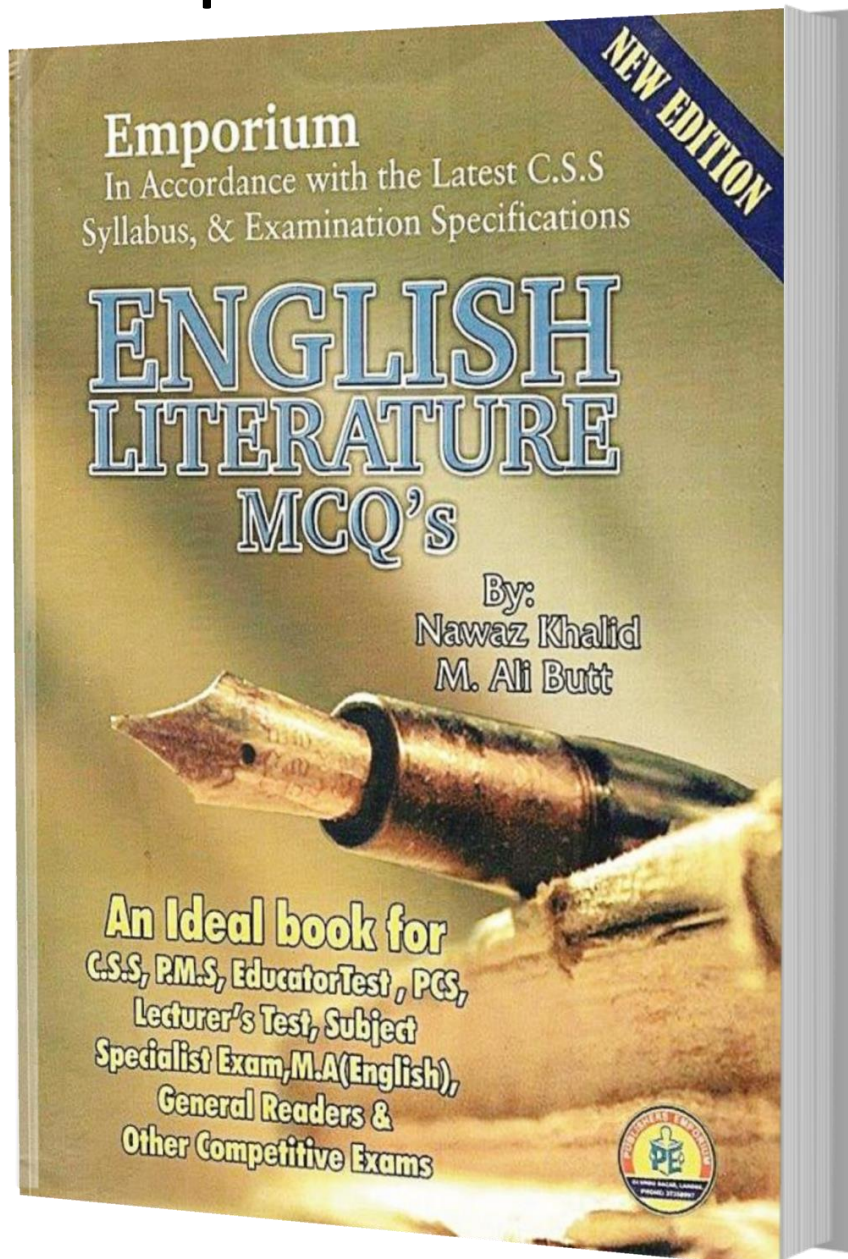
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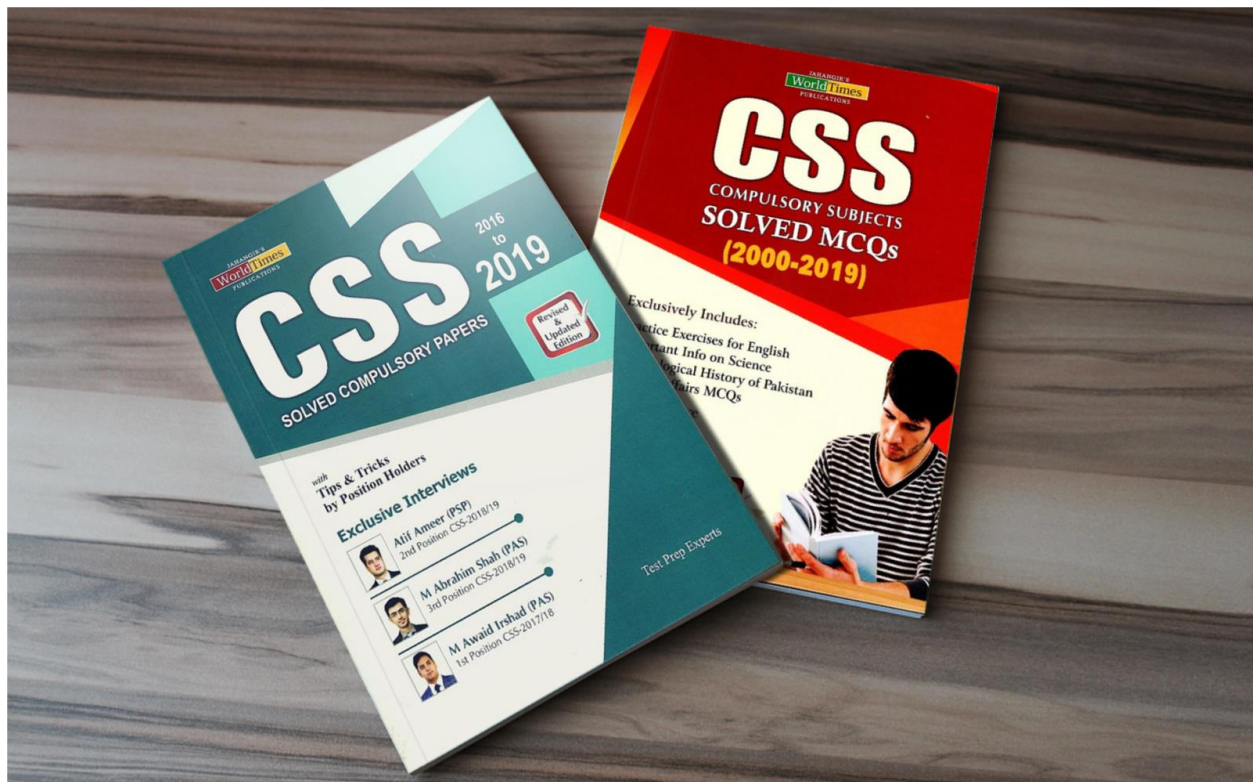
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PAKISTAN

Looking Forward to a New Chapter of China-Pakistan Friendship By Mr. Yaojing

As time flies, we are in the year of 2020. At this wonderful moment of welcoming the third decade of the 21st century, I, on behalf of the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Pakistan, would like to extend my sincere New Year greetings to all Pakistani friends.

The year 2019 is of great historic significance for China's development. Over 1.4 billion Chinese people celebrated the 70th anniversary of the founding of the PRC. Over the past 70 years, under the strong leadership of the Communist Party of China, we adhere to the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and have scored remarkable achievements. China's GDP has broken through the threshold of 90 trillion RMB (13.6 trillion USD) in 2018, a great leap forward from over 60 billion RMB (12.3 billion USD) in 1949. The GDP per capita has increased from 119 yuan (23 dollars) to 64644 yuan (9732 dollars). China now stands firmly as the world's second largest economy. Over 700 million people have been lifted out of poverty.

In 2019, China fulfilled its international responsibility and injected positive energy into the international community. With major changes undergoing in the world, China adheres to the principles of peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation, holds high the banner of multilateralism, stabilizes relations with major powers, vigorously promotes mutually beneficial cooperation with neighboring and developing countries, continues to lead the global governance process, and actively promotes regional peace and stability. China successfully hosted the second 'Belt and Road' Forum for International Cooperation, and advocated for open, green, and inclusive development with a view to achieve a high-quality and high-standard cooperation under the 'Belt and Road Initiative' with people's well-being at focus.

On the complicated international stage, China has become the mainstay for maintaining world peace and stability, and the main force for promoting global development and prosperity. 2019 is also a year of great development of China-Pakistan relations. This year, Prime Minister Imran Khan visited China twice and met with President Xi Jinping three times. The two sides exchanged experience and ideas on building a closer China-Pakistan community of shared future in the new era as well as jointly constructing the Belt and Road with high quality, and made a series of significant achievements.

Over the year of 2019, we have strengthened our mutual trust, mutual understanding and supported each other on issues related to our core interests. China firmly supports Pakistan in safeguarding its national sovereignty, territorial integrity and security, and highly commends Pakistan's efforts to combat terrorism and extremism. China and Pakistan jointly safeguard the important role of the UN Charter in international relations, oppose unilateralism and bullying, uphold international justice, and promote regional peace and stability. Over the year, we have deepened bilateral cooperation in various fields and connected the Belt and Road Initiative with the 'Naya Pakistan' vision. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has progressed smoothly. We focused on social-economic, industrial and agricultural cooperation. We have finalized 27 priority projects of social development under the CPEC, of which 17 will be launched in the first half of 2020. The second phase of the Free Trade Agreement between China and Pakistan comes into effect on January 1, 2020, and Pakistan's exporting products such as leather, cotton and garment products will enjoy zero-tariff entry into China's market. A large number of Chinese enterprises have actively invested and established branches in Pakistan, covering textile processing, tire manufacturing, motorcycle production, agricultural plantation, steel and etc. It will help Pakistan to enhance its manufacturing and exporting capacity, and bring more job opportunities.

Over the year, we have promoted people-to-people exchanges and continued to strengthen the foundation of friendship between the two countries. 2019 is the year of Sino-Pak local cooperation and we have established 16 local-to-local partnerships. We have imported Pakistani films like 'Parwaaz Hai Junoon', provided training for Pakistani table tennis team in China, invited Pakistani cricket team to visit China. At present, 5 universities in Pakistan have established Confucius Institutes, and 58 universities have joined the CPEC University

Consortium. Nearly 30,000 Pakistani students are studying in China with more than 7,000 scholarships.

2020 will be a landmark year of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. China will complete its thirteenth Five-Year Plan, eliminate absolute poverty completely, build a moderately prosperous society in all respects, 2020 will also be a historical year to usher in a new chapter of win-win cooperation between China and Pakistan. As an iron brother, Pakistan will always be the prior partner in China's external relations.

China and Pakistan will strengthen mutual support and strategic cooperation. As good neighbors, good friends, good partners and good brothers who share weal and woe, we will continue to build upon our mutual trust with the guidance of high-level exchanges, deepen coordination and cooperation on major strategic issues, promote exchanges of governance experience, support each other on issues involving our respective core interests and major concerns, firmly safeguard sovereignty, territorial integrity and national dignity. China and Pakistan will enhance cooperation to achieve common development. We continue to promote the high-quality development of the CPEC.

We will deepen cooperation in trade and investment, support the development of manufacturing industry in Pakistan, increase employment and expand exports, and help Pakistan to accelerate integration into the international industrial chain. China would like to increase technology transfer to Pakistan and expand cooperation with Pakistan in areas such as environmental protection, climate change and water resources management.

China and Pakistan will encourage more people-to-people contacts. In 2020, China will provide 1,800 training opportunities to Pakistan, help build and upgrade more than 50 schools, 50 vocational training centers and 30 hospitals in all areas of Pakistan. We will provide 20,000 scholarships for Pakistan students in the next 3 years. Both sides will hold the 2nd Forum on local-to-local Cooperation between China and Pakistan and carry out more cultural activities. China welcomes more Pakistani friends to visit China, learn more about Chinese culture and promote mutual understanding between two civilizations.

China and Pakistan will consolidate international cooperation to work for regional peace. The two countries will strengthen coordination and cooperation on major

international and regional issues, jointly safeguard the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, support multilateralism and win-win cooperation, and highlight the representation and voice of developing countries on international affairs.

Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founding father of Pakistan once observed that, only through united efforts can we turn our ideals into reality. Today, China and Pakistan both shoulder the historic mission of achieving national rejuvenation and realizing the great dream of building a prosperous country and a better society. Let's work together to seize the opportunities, overcome the challenges, pursue common development and build upon the China-Pakistan all-weather strategic cooperative partnership forwards a China-Pakistan community of shared future.

May Pakistan enjoy prosperity!

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/02-Jan-2020/looking-forward-to-a-new-chapter-of-china-pakistan-friendship>

Crown Prince Visit | Editorial

Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan's visit to Pakistan is a good opportunity for Pakistan to further cement its ties with our biggest trading partner in the Middle-East. Our friendly relationship with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is one which the government values highly, and it is positive to note that ruling Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf has rolled out the red carpet to welcome the crown prince on this day-long visit.

The Prime Minister's own diplomatic overtures in particular, are to be appreciated. Driving foreign dignitaries himself is a nice personal touch and one that sets the tone for greater one-to-one connections. PM Khan can use these for the benefit of the country in further improving partnerships in trade and security.

Establishing unity between friendly Muslim countries is an essential part of our foreign policy, and the government's role in keeping friends such as the UAE close must be appreciated. There are always boons that are both given and received for the interactions to prove fruitful; the Crown Prince last visited Pakistan only a week after the UAE offered \$3billion worth of support for our economy.

On our part, granting a limited number of hunting licenses for the endangered houbara bustard are a difficult, but necessary price to pay to keep allies in the Middle East close – as long as the government keeps conservation and protection of the species as a central concern in tandem.

Pakistan has offered its unequivocal support to both Saudi Arabia and the UAE in recent times, and it is hoped that this visit will provide the opportunity for the UAE to reciprocate. Economic support or greater trading opportunities will probably be discussed between the Crown Prince and the Prime Minister.

However, this is also an opportune moment to convince the UAE to offer up a vocal condemnation of the Indian government's brutal repression of the rights of the Kashmiris. Pakistan gave up the opportunity to bring up this issue with Malaysia and Turkey and it is hoped that our greatest concerns regarding the eastern neighbour are shared by our greatest allies.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/03-Jan-2020/crown-prince-visit>

Climate Change Deaths | Editorial

Around 128,000 people die due to climate change every year in Pakistan, an official of the ministry of climate change informed a Senate panel recently. Officials also made some other disturbing disclosures at a meeting with members of the Senate Functional Committee on Human Rights. Some of these are that average lifespan in the country could be reduced by two to five years because of environmental pollution; 43 per cent of the pollution is being caused by the imported low-grade oil used by the transport and energy sectors; and Pakistan cannot use environmentally-friendly fuel till 2021; that the country's last oil sector policy came, in 1997, 22 years ago. Since then, much technological advancement has taken place. Furthermore, climate change is also affecting children's immune system. The committee, headed by Senator Mustafa Nawaz Khokhar, took up the issue of climate change after the recent smog in Lahore. The panel invited the ministry of climate change, Punjab government representatives, the ministry of petroleum, Ogra, and representatives of oil refineries to the meeting.

The panel was informed that the five oil refineries in the country are still primitive and our oil has high magnesium and sulphur contents. This is harmful to health. In Pakistan, Euro-2 standard is applied while the world has gone to Euro-6 technology. Experts say going to Euro-4 or Euro-5 will be counter-productive if vehicles are not upgraded with regular inspections. Tail-end emissions and fuel quality need to be considered simultaneously.

Considering all this in the backdrop of the fact that Pakistan is the fifth-most vulnerable country to climate change, the sluggish approach by the authorities points to a grave failure on their part. We should not uncritically get carried away by all that writers on climate change say. One should sift chaff from the grain. However, science is not an alternative fact. It cannot be denied that ice melts when exposed to heat.

Published in The Express Tribune, January 6th, 2020.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2130975/6-climate-change-deaths/>

Roadblock For Tapi | Editorial

The multi-billion-dollar Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (Tapi) Pipeline project is facing yet another issue before it actually starts benefitting the economy. For two stakeholders, India and Pakistan, the gas prices being offered are 5 to 10 percent higher than the rate at which Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) is imported from Qatar and other countries. The entire idea behind the project was to supply gas at nominal rates with the help of Turkmenistan. If the project ends up being a financial liability due to the charges being offered, there are chances that the project will not materialise anytime soon. Prime Minister's Special Assistant on Petroleum Nadeem Babar was the first person to point out this problem at the meeting of the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet.

Both countries have separately made requests to Turkmenistan to reconsider the prices being offered to them. On Wednesday, Pakistan formally constituted a five-member price negotiation committee (PNC) to begin talks with Turkmenistan for a price cut. Turkmenistan has also agreed to reconsider the price being offered. Meetings with the relevant stakeholders will take place next month because, without this regulation, the project will not see completion. This again is one of the flaws in how megaprojects are signed up. The price points needed to be discussed in order to analyse their feasibility. Whatever project any government undertakes, the decision making should be done in a manner that is holistic and takes into account every detail that might impact the country's economy, its society, and its policies.

Collective diplomatic efforts are required on part of India and Pakistan in order to convince Turkmenistan to lower their prices. A team is being sent to Pakistan next month to address this issue. Pakistan needs to have ample data to show that we cannot afford piped gas being more expensive than the LNG we ship in. The feasibility of the project now depends on Turkmenistan, whereas, for Pakistan, there needs to be a team dedicated to understanding mega projects in the country. This will help avoid such mistakes in the future and all relevant aspects of the projects will be discussed before the project materialises in order to ensure the convenience of all the parties involved. Governments require help from experts in dealing with projects. A team dedicated to this will only make the government's job easier. S: <https://nation.com.pk/10-Jan-2020/roadblock-for-tapi>

Pakistan Kicks Off Peace Mission With Iran Visit

MASHHAD: Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi on Sunday held a meeting with Iranian President Hassan Rouhani in Tehran, wherein he asserted that Pakistan would not become part of any regional conflict in the wake of the killing of an Iranian general by the US.

The meeting between the two dignitaries came during the foreign minister's one-day visit to Iran as a part of Pakistan's diplomatic efforts to defuse tensions in the Middle East. Both sides took stock of the geopolitical situation as tensions between the US and Iran hit an all-time high, with both sides resorting to attacks.

Earlier, on his arrival in Mashhad, Governor Ali Reza Razm Hosseini warmly welcomed the foreign minister. He later visited the shrine of Imam Reza (AS) and made special prayers for Pakistan's security and the unity of the Muslim Ummah.

Speaking on the occasion, FM Qureshi said that it was an honour for him to begin his mission by visiting the holy site. He also thanked the Mashhad governor for making the best arrangements for three million Pakistani pilgrims who visit the holy site annually.

The minister also took to Twitter to share his sentiments on visiting the holy site.

"Honoured to pay my respects at the Holy Shrine of Imam Reza (AS), a descendant of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as my first stop where I prayed for Muslim unity and regional stability," he wrote.

FM Qureshi is on a diplomatic tour on the directions of Prime Minister Imran Khan to defuse tensions in the Middle East. He will meet his Iranian counterpart Javed Zarif in Tehran during his Iran visit to exchange views on the prevailing situation in the region.

He will also visit Saudi Arabia on Monday, where he will hold talks with Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan in Riyadh and consult on issues of regional peace and stability. The foreign minister will then travel to Washington

on Jan 15 where he will meet senior officials of US President's Donald Trump administration to discuss the Middle East crisis.

It is worth mentioning here that that tensions in the region escalated after US forces killed Iran's most revered military commander Major General Qassem Suleimani in a drone strike near Baghdad airport on January 3, while in revenge Tehran attacked two US military bases in Iraq with missiles five days later. Though the two countries have apparently stood down, tension is still running high in the region.

US officials frequently contacted Pakistani military brass during the crisis, but Islamabad made it abundantly clear that it would not become a party to any armed conflict in the region and instead advised all to exercise maximum restraint to avoid war.

During these visits, the foreign minister will share Pakistan's perspective on the current situation, stress the imperative of avoiding any conflict, underscore the importance of defusion of tensions, and stress the need for finding a diplomatic way forward, according to Foreign Office (FO) spokesperson Aisha Farooqui.

The foreign minister will convey Pakistan's readiness to support all efforts that facilitate the resolution of differences and disputes through political and diplomatic means, she said during a weekly press briefing.

Following the Iranian missile strike on two US military bases in Iraq, US President Donald Trump, who had earlier warned Tehran of "disproportionate" action for any attack on Americans or US assets, decided not to retaliate. And in a subsequent letter to the UN secretary-general, he offered "unconditional talks" to Tehran – the offer was, however, spurned.

The possibility of another war in the region appears to have diminished. This has raised the question if there is still a need for Pakistan's peace mission? "Yes," said Farooqui on Thursday.

"There is always room for engagement and interaction within the region and beyond. The foreign minister's visit will be aimed towards this," she added.

On Saturday, FM Quresh, in a statement, said that Iran owning up to its mistake of downing Ukrainian passenger plane would likely ease up tensions in the region.

“Iran’s confession of downing Ukrainian passenger plane should ease up tensions as the region can neither endure tension nor can it tolerate war anymore,” he said.

FM Qureshi reiterated that Pakistan would play an active role to reduce growing tensions in the region.

Iranian armed forces on Saturday admitted that they unintentionally shot down the Ukrainian airliner that crashed this week and blamed “human error” for the mistake.

The plane, which crashed earlier killing all 176 people on board, was mistaken for a “hostile plane” and was hit while enemy threats were at the highest level, according to a press statement published by the official IRNA news agency.

Source: <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2020/01/12/pakistan-kicks-off-peace-mission-with-iran-visit/>

Pursuing an Independent Foreign Policy By

Dr Muhammad Khan

Pakistan took a principled stance over the US-Iran military standoff, firmly stating that, its soil will not be used against any neighbour. The military standoff between US and Iran arose after killing of Iranian General Qaseem Sulamani, who was killed by US through a drone attack, immediately after he left Baghdad Airport in Iraq. Days after this unfortunate incident, Iran also targeted US military bases in Iraq through a missile attack, causing no human losses, as stated by US officials. Immediately after killing the Iranian General, US Secretary of State contacted General Bajwa, Chief of Army Staff and discussed the prevalent military tension between US and Iran. Later, US Defence Secretary also contacted General Bajwa, explaining the dynamics of regional security with particular reference to killing of Iranian General and subsequent developments.

General Bajwa is appreciated for his vision and farsightedness, he demonstrated while trying to defuse military tension between US and Iran. He advised US Secretary of State and Defence Secretary to cool-down and normalise the situation, since military escalation will neither be in the interest of US nor it would serve the Iranian interests. Moreover, it would further destabilise the broader Middle Eastern region, jeopardising the global trade and commerce. In way, any instability in Persian Gulf would have serious repercussions on Europe, Africa and Asia equally. The prudence and foresight of Pakistan saved the world from the disasters like, Operation Desert Storm, and 2nd Iraq War-2003.

Besides, General Bajwa clearly pre-empted the US top officials that, as a sovereign state, Pakistan will not permit usage of its soil against any of its neighbour by a third country. Indeed, he announced departure of an era, where Pakistan used to be part of super power's proxy wars. It is a clear pronouncement that, Pakistan will not be part of any foreign state nor it would allow destabilisation of its neighbourhood, especially the Muslim states. Indirectly, it presumed that, Pakistan will now pursue its own independent Foreign Policy, rather taking the dictates from any external powers like it used to do in the past.

Pursuing an independent foreign policy will lead this country towards the path of internal cohesion and harmonised society while internationally giving it a greater adequacy among the comity of nations. This would be essence of the vision of the forefathers of Pakistan and true following of the Constitution of Pakistan. The Foreign policy of Pakistan has been derived from Article-40 of the Constitution of Pakistan. The salient guidelines for the formulation of foreign policy are; strengthening the bonds with Muslim world while simultaneously promoting international peace. This is a dual responsibility, apportioned and endowed on the state functionaries to keep a balance in establishing international relations with Muslim states on one hand and work together with rest of international community for the promotion of global peace and regional stability.

Since the Government is bound to follow the constitutional provisions, therefore, let's not deviate from the making dedicated endeavours for preserving and strengthening the fraternal relations among Muslim countries based on Islamic ideology and a wider unity. Iran being a neighbour and brotherly Islamic state cannot be allowed to be attacked militarily and destroyed by external powers. Pakistan has efficiently played its part in evading an imminent conflict in the Persian Gulf between US and Iran. After convincing the American leadership, the Foreign Minister of Pakistan has embarked on a visit of key regional countries like Saudi Arabia and Iran to meet his counterparts.

The visits aim at convincing the leadership of these countries that, their bilateral differences and enmity do not serve their long-term purposes. Rather, such rivalries would weaken them internally and the gulf of misperceptions would allow external powers to exploit them, putting them in a greater turmoil with wider implications for the Persian Gulf. Historically, Pakistan has been a great advocate of unity among Muslims. In order to undertake this gigantic task, successive Pakistani leadership have always tried to mediate, negotiate and facilitate the brother countries to adopt a path of peace and reconciliation for their common good and greater stabilisation of Middle East.

Under the changing geopolitical environment, Pakistani leadership clearly understand the emerging scenario in the Middle East especially around the Persian Gulf region. Indeed, the Middle East has become a centre of global power play; where great powers are physically war gaming their military strategies while Muslim masses are becoming prey to their power politics and rulers of some states act as their tools.

While the immediate Pakistani response has contributed a lot in averting an imminent conflict in Persian Gulf, let's pursue an independent foreign policy while keeping in view the national interests of Pakistan as supreme. In this regard, all institutions of Pakistan must act in unison towards a domestic harmony, peace and political stability. Since foreign policy is sum total of domestic policies, therefore, let's stabilise the domestic front where all political and religious forces must be united towards attainment of national interests and sovereignty of Pakistan.

— The writer is Professor of Politics and International Relations at International Islamic University, Islamabad.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/pursuing-an-independent-foreign-policy/>

Global Cooling and Pakistan | Editorial

Now questioning the reality of climate change is like asking: do donkeys exist? People can only differ on causes and the extent of freak weather events. Pakistan is one of the countries in the world most vulnerable to global warming and global cooling.

For the past several years, the country has been experiencing unusual heat in summer, excessive rainfall or scanty rains and prolonged spells of cold wave in winter. The current winter started unusually in November even in Karachi where the weather remains moderate in November and December. But this season the city has so far experienced two spells of intense cold wave. For the past one week, the entire country has been in the grip of an intense cold wave.

Over the past three days, snow-and rain-related incidents have left 75 people dead and 64 injured across the country, according to the National Disaster Management Authority. As rains and snowfall are continuing in many parts of the country, the death and injury toll is expected to increase. The worst affected are Azad Jammu and Kashmir, and Balochistan. In AJK, at least 55 people have died and 12 injured; and in Balochistan, 15 people have lost their lives and 11 injured in rain-related incidents. On Jan 14 in AJK's Neelum Valley, 19 people died in an avalanche and 10 others are reported missing. In snowfall-related incidents in Balochistan, 20 people have died. On Jan 13, avalanches, landslides and rain-related incidents left 21 people dead and scores of others injured in different parts of the country, as most parts of the country remained in the grip of a strong westerly weather system that entered Balochistan in the early hours of Jan 11.

In Punjab, 14 deaths occurred in rain-related incidents on Jan 12. Government officials say rains and heavy snowfall have blocked several arteries in high-altitude areas. On Jan 13, the lowest temperature in Quetta was minus 6 degrees Celsius. On Jan 14, the daytime temperature in Skardu was recorded at minus 2 degrees Celsius.

The 'Great Derangement' has taken place. It is all because of reckless consumption unmindful of the consequences. The chickens are coming home to roost.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2137414/6-global-cooling-pakistan/>

Reforms For Bureaucracy — Way Forward

By Mohammad Sohail Ahmed

GOVERNMENT has repeatedly highlighted the requirement of bureaucratic reforms as it has found hurdles and obstacles in implementation of government decisions for quick results. It has also mentioned that the civil servants organizational restructuring is required as per the dictates of modern times. The need to review an established system arises when it is discovered that it has become redundant and unable to deliver. Is it true that the existing system is redundant? The recent book of Irtiqah Zaidi, "Negotiating the power corridors" is an excellent example to understand about how bureaucrats are required to work in our socio-cultural environment both nationally and internationally while keeping the national interest as supreme. Therefore any individual who desires an insight to the working of bureaucracy needs to read this autobiography. Any person, who happens to go through auto-biography of a professional or renowned person, is bound to learn the salient features of personal qualities of that luminary. It also gives an insight to the dynamics of the organization in which the renowned personality spent his life making struggles to achieve its objectives using professional acumen.

What is the requirement to run the government successfully? Is it the professional competence and excellence or integrity of the individual which determines the success of a ministry? The answer is that both integrity and professional excellence are absolutely essential qualities. This book brings out that if one has to prioritize these two traits, the foremost is the honesty followed by professional excellence. The old adage, 'honesty is the best policy' has been repeatedly proven in this book. For an organization to be effective the priority trait for leader and followers is likely to raise it to heights of excellence. The reforms in the system should be directed in selecting and promoting such honest officers. Who should choose to be a public servant as career? The pre-Islamic culture of tribal origin distributed the portfolio to various tribes for example Banu Khuzaima, the tribe of Hazrat Khalid Bin Walid (RA) were into manufacturing of weapons such as swords and arrows. The second caliph Hazrat Umar (RA) belonged to Banu Adi (Quraish) who used to perform the task of ambassadorship or diplomacy.

In later time, during the rule of Banu Abbas, the focus was on acquiring ILM (learning and teaching) and most of the population was focused on Administration and learning, the Turks were required to be inducted in regular Armed Forces. However this model led to greater influence of Turks on the Caliph. Today, our Nation has a lot of emphasis on medicine and engineering as we have witnessed in the last 50 years. Therefore, we need to analyze the trend of the society to create a check and balance. Irtiq Zaidi hailed from a middle class and could not afford education beyond matriculation in a renowned institution. It was the government policy to attract talented students towards agriculture sector which paved his way towards research work for Agriculture University of Tando Jam. This being the first research work of its kind and got appreciation from President Ayyub Khan.

Despite recommendations, to send him abroad on scholarship, the system failed to do so but this did not discourage young Zaidi to perform relentlessly hard work. This brings out the importance of selflessness and devotion for a public servant to enable him continuously uninterrupted despite temporary set-backs or discouragement. Another interesting aspect of his life as senior officer draws our attention toward his vision of finding opportunities from challenges. He was diagnosed prostate cancer at initial stage and was required to go on leave for radio therapy for more than three months in USA. During this period he availed the opportunity to record salient social, political and professional episodes of his career. The common denominator during all these eventful happening was that he kept his nerves cool and sense of humour alive. This is also another important leadership quality that is required from a talented civil servant aspiring go rise in the service.

During the service, posting in remote areas is a challenge and to adopt according to the new environment is a concomitant requirement for the official to work for the government. During his stay at D I Khan he went to hire a house for his stay. However, one of his friends from that area, told him to shift to another house. When the author showed reluctance in shifting the 'friend' used some people to throw bricks into his rented house at night to scare him. Therefore he immediately vacated the house to shift to the recommended residence. Later on, the servant of his 'friend' disclosed that the bricks were thrown on the directions of his 'friend' to get immediate shifting materialized. The author continued his mission without getting into a row on this matter. It brings out that a true public servant is loyal to his cause and does not bother about his own self or ego. Such

selfless, magnanimous and open minded individuals have been the hallmark of our bureaucracy which has been running the country for the last 72 years.

The book brings out beneficial lessons for aspiring civil servants, public office bearers and citizens from private sector. Even businessmen would also get an insight to the complex conundrum of decision making which involves stakeholders having diverse interests, and benefits. It is in the end the public servant who should resolve the issues in a manner acceptable to the stakeholders and above all in the best interest of the State. If the Government decides to bring reforms in the civil bureaucracy, a Task Force should be formed and given this book in addition to find out challenges and explore responses through systematic and progressive reforms implementation committee.

—The author is a freelance writer and Retired commodore of Pakistan Navy.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/reforms-for-bureaucracy-way-forward/>

SCO Invitation | Editorial

WHERE bilateral efforts to improve relations fail in the Pakistan-India context, multilateral forums can offer a 'safe' space for dialogue to pursue peace.

In this perspective, the prospect of Pakistan's participation in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit to be held in India later this year has brought up the possibility of forward movement where the currently frozen bilateral ties between the two countries are concerned.

s reported, when asked whether the prime minister of this country would be invited to the SCO moot, an Indian external affairs ministry spokesman told the media that "all eight countries and four observers will be invited", indicating in a rather lukewarm tone that Pakistan would be asked to participate.

Pakistan and India became full members of the SCO in 2017; the grouping — under the stewardship of Russia and China — brings together the Central Asian states as well as observers such as Iran and Afghanistan.

Though no miracles should be expected (the moribund status of Saarc is before us), were the prime minister to participate and interact with his Indian counterpart, perhaps the ice between Islamabad and New Delhi could be broken.

However, there should be no illusions; unless the core issues affecting the Pakistan-India relationship are addressed, a mere photo op between the two leaders will be of little use.

The Indian lockdown of Kashmir must top the agenda, as New Delhi should realise that its siege of the held region is destroying all chances of peace in the subcontinent. Further, Pakistan has valid concerns about the Islamophobic laws India has introduced to disenfranchise millions of its Muslim citizens. And the recent bellicose, anti-Pakistan statements by Indian generals have further poisoned the atmosphere. If there is to be peace, such jingoism must be reined in.

That said, the fact is that the only viable option for Pakistan and India to pursue is constructive dialogue that paves the way for peace. Irresponsible war talk and

chest-thumping only serve shrill anti-peace lobbies; the people of the subcontinent deserve prosperity and friendship.

Let India extend a proper invitation to Pakistan with respect. Thereafter, the prime minister should take up the opportunity and try to take matters forward.

Pakistan has over the past few years taken several steps for peace, yet the response from the other side has been less than enthusiastic. The SCO summit can prove to be a chance to change things for the better.

Published in Dawn, January 18th, 2020

Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1529027/sco-invitation>

Increasing Environmental Threats | Editorial

The extreme weather conditions in recent days in Pakistan have led to the deaths of 98 people so far, with 69 casualties in Azad Jammu and Kashmir alone. This unavoidable tragedy can be chalked down to the temperature gauges slipping a little lower than usual around this time of year, and as with the bushfires in Australia, the results of such incremental change are proving to be catastrophic.

In the past, large-scale natural disasters like floods and earthquakes posed a significant danger to life and property. But now, even routine weather events such as rain or snowfall in the winter have become threatening to the lives of inhabitants, particularly in areas which see harsher weather conditions at some point in the year. Quite obviously, northern areas in Pakistan will see seismic changes in the coming years and suffer from the effect of episodes of glacial melts, avalanches, blizzards and many other potentially hazardous types of natural disasters.

The government has begun relief efforts and the Prime Minister visited AJK on Wednesday to condole with the families of victims, but there is little more the state can do on this occasion, at least immediately. There is nothing to prevent the avalanches that continue to wreak havoc in AJK. The National Disaster Management Authority undoubtedly has its hands full at the moment; but the state must ensure that all supplies set aside for relief efforts are distributed effectively and efficiently, targeting those who need it the most.

In the long run, using scientific data, adjustments must be made to vulnerable areas if they are to remain fit for human habitation. Improving infrastructure to counteract further disasters must also be prioritised. Although not perfect, there are certain preventative measures that can be put into place for natural occurrences such as avalanches in areas which are adversely affected. Across the world, using large stone embankments at strategic locations on top of mountains help, as do small, controlled avalanches, triggered by humans themselves in order to avoid too much build-up of snow.

The government and climate experts are fighting an uphill battle against nature, one that is time-intensive and requires out-of-the-box solutions to counter the

many natural calamities that will soon regularly take place because of the rapidly degrading environment and climate change. Being proactive, agile and quick to react is the only way we can hopefully avoid the many threats that we created and face as a species.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/16-Jan-2020/increasing-environmental-threats>

Post-Brexit: Pak-UK Ties Can Advance to New Level: Envoy

KARACHI: The relationship between Pakistan and the UK can be taken to the next stage by taking advantage of the forthcoming Brexit, said British Deputy High Commissioner Mike Nithavrianakis.

During a visit to the Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) on Friday, the envoy said, “Both countries have been enjoying warm and conducive partnership and we are ambitious to take this partnership to the new level as we believe that UK’s departure from the European Union, which is going to happen on January 31, gives us the opportunity to do that.”

He stated that Pakistan was an emerging frontier market that deserved greater attention, hence, the Department for International Trade (DIT) was increasing its resources for Pakistan.

The British envoy said 5,000 British companies were operating in the UAE, very few of which were doing business in Pakistan. “If they are already in the region and so close to Pakistan, then they should be exploring Pakistan’s market more seriously,” he said.

“We are encouraging these British companies to explore Pakistani market.”

Commenting on British-Pakistan relations, former KCCI president Siraj Kassam Teli said that it was heartening to see that over 60 British companies had invested in Pakistan and were successfully running their businesses.

Referring to bilateral trade and investment, the British envoy said, “Export business from Pakistan is obviously of more interest to Pakistani and British governments but we would be keen to see what we can do to support the expansion of two-way trade and investment.”

Published in The Express Tribune, January 18th, 2020.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2139504/2/?>

FM's US Visit | Editorial

THE visit of Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi to the United States was important as during interaction with the US officials, the Foreign Minister not only voiced Pakistan's genuine concerns on rising tensions in the Middle East but also highlighted India's continued persecution campaign in occupied Kashmir.

The FM deserves commendation for calling a spade a spade especially on prevailing situation in occupied Kashmir proving once again that Pakistan stands by oppressed Kashmiri people and will continue to raise voice at every bilateral and multilateral platform. The visit was also significant in the context that the Foreign Minister also reportedly raised the issue of exclusion of Pakistan from the FATF list. During a news briefing on Friday night, Mr Qureshi urged the United States to get Pakistan off the grey list. Next FATF meeting will be held in February and as pointed out by the FM, this is of immense importance for us as it leads to a plenary meeting in Paris in April where the world body will decide whether Pakistan remains on the list or is taken off, and if not removed by April, Pakistan may move to list of countries that face severe economic sanctions, such as Iran.

The fact of matter is that ever since placement on grey list, which in fact was far more a political decision taken at the behest of the US to pressurise Pakistan, the country has taken a series of steps to come into compliance with global body's requirements such as proscribing key terror groups, whose open operations were a bond of contention and seizing their assets. As Pak-US ties stand improved and Pakistan has fully facilitated the Afghan peace process, we also expect a positive response from Washington to this end. Our Foreign Office also needs to engage with other members of the FATF in order to foil an Indian design that is bent upon placing Pakistan on the blacklist.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/fms-us-visit/>

Alice's Agenda | Editorial

The top American diplomat for South Asia dropped by Islamabad with an unusually heavy agenda. Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Alice Wells flew in from New Delhi on Sunday to discuss issues ranging from a peace deal in Afghanistan, Pakistan's potential blacklisting by the FATF, and illegal migration. On Monday, Wells told Interior Minister Brig (retd) Ijaz Shah that the US appreciated Pakistan's efforts to curb illegal migration from Pakistan to the US. She also expressed American interest in further improving checks and balances to curb illegal immigration. Shah noted that Pakistan has also addressed another US concern by allowing international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) to present their arguments before they are denied permission to operate in the country.

Also under discussion, and perhaps the most critical point for Pakistan, was the FATF review meeting in Beijing. While Wells said Pakistan has made "heartening" progress on FATF concerns in a short period of time, blacklisting is still a genuine possibility if the organisation's conditions are not met. That is, of course, unless the US used its influence to get Pakistan removed from the grey list altogether. Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi also discussed related issues during his trip to Washington. Some reports suggest that Pakistan has offered to help the US in its dealings with the Taliban and Iran, although most of these reports relied on anonymous sources.

But the US does need help in Afghanistan, where even the Taliban expressed hopes of signing a ceasefire agreement by the end of January. Reuters quoted sources as saying that the Taliban were ready to agree to a 10-day truce with US forces, a reduction in violence with Afghan forces, and to open talks with Afghan officials if a deal is reached. The Afghan government has also spoken with optimism about a potential ceasefire. Pakistan could play into this equation which would be seen as the first step towards a peaceful and sustainable solution to America's longest-running war. Whether that role is of a mediator, a guarantor, a thumb on the scale, or something else, remains to be seen.

Published in The Express Tribune, January 22nd, 2020.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2141639/6-alices-agenda/>

President Trump Meets PM Imran Khan |

Editorial

This being the election year in the USA, President Donald Trump urgently needs a peace agreement in Afghanistan that he could use as a trump card to win a second tenure. For this he needs Pakistan's help to bring the Taliban on board. This explains why the President waxed effusive during his meeting with Prime Minister Imran Khan at Davos, calling him his friend and promising to speak to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi about the Kashmir issue. While keeping in mind that President Trump failed to fulfil a similar promise made six months back, one welcomes the reassurance to help resolve the Kashmir issue and end the tensions on the LoC. The Modi administration is already facing unprecedented criticism from international media, HR organisations and lawmakers on both sides of the Atlantic for keeping Indian-Occupied Kashmir under siege for nearly six months and using repressive methods to put down protests in India against the Citizenship Amendment Act and the National Register of Citizens. In case President Trump is really willing to put pressure on New Delhi, it might make a difference this time. But is he really willing to do what he says?

While President Trump was all smiles, the State Department was critical of Pakistan for being a part of the CPEC. Acting as an undiplomatic ambassador, Assistant Secretary Alice Wells said things that can be interpreted as interference in Pakistan's internal matters, an unfortunate tendency in the USA that has considerably contributed to its unpopularity in Pakistan. Defying facts and figures made public several times, she claimed Pakistan's debt burden was growing due to the Chinese financing. She accused Pakistan of giving contracts related to CPEC to companies blacklisted by the World Bank. She also questioned the immunity from prosecution for the newly formed CPEC Authority. While the USA has shown unwillingness to fulfil Pakistan's energy-cum-infrastructure needs, it is unhappy over China doing so.

Pakistan no doubt needs to have good relations with the USA. But this must not be at the expense of friendly ties with the country's time-tested ally, China. The CPEC has benefitted Pakistan a lot as it ended power shortages, created tens of thousands new jobs and brought mega-Chinese investments when no other country was willing to do so.

Source: <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2020/01/22/president-trump-meets-pm-imran-khan/>

Pak, Russia Pipeline Deal | Editorial

What could be called an important development in the energy sector, Pakistan and Russia agreed to amend an inter-governmental agreement in a bid to executing a two billion dollar gas pipeline project by avoiding US sanctions. Initially the two sides had signed a deal in October 2015 to construct the North South liquefied natural gas (LNG) pipeline, however the project could not go ahead over the past few years as the US had slapped sanctions on RT Global—the company designated by Russia for building the pipeline. Since the relations between Pakistan and Russia are on upward trajectory, it is a matter of satisfaction that the Russian side agreed to provide sanction-free structure for the realization of the strategically important project.

We expect that other matters including those related to price deal and tolling fee for gas transmission will also be sorted out at the earliest so that the construction work on the project could be started at the earliest without any further delay. The existing gas infrastructure of Pakistan lacks capacity to transport additional large volume of gas supplies from Southern to Northern regions. Keeping in view the expected additional gas supplies in near future, this gas pipeline from Karachi to Lahore is of immense importance to ensure gas supply in the country. The 1,100 kilometre pipeline with a capacity of 12.4 billion cubic metre per annum will connect Karachi's liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminals with those in Lahore. In fact this project is a win-win deal for both the sides as the construction of the pipeline will provide orders for Russian industrial enterprises and will contribute to an increase in non-oil exports. The project will open up a new market for Russian companies. We are confident that the completion of this important project will prove to be a milestone in furthering the relations between the two countries. We need to further encourage the Russian friends to invest in the energy sector of Pakistan, especially in the exploration of oil and gas, to ensure energy security.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/pak-russia-pipeline-deal/>

Corruption Misperception | Editorial

After much hoopla on media outlets and angry response from the PTI-led federal government over Transparency International's corruption perception index, the latter has come forward to set the record straight. TI, which launched its index on January 23, 2020, based on data collected in 2019, showing Pakistan had slipped three spots from last year's ranking, has clarified that lowering of Pakistan's rating did 'not reflect any increase or decrease in corruption as it is within the standard margin of error'.

The Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) is an index published annually by the Transparency International (TI) which ranks countries "by their perceived levels of public sector corruption, as determined by expert assessments and opinion surveys".

TI released the report of this index during the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos. Denmark and New Zealand topped the index as they were perceived to be the most honest countries.

TI-Pakistan on Sunday clarified that the CPI has not declared that in 2019 corruption has increased in Pakistan. The TI report had ranked Pakistan 120 out of 180 countries on the CPI 2019 in its latest report.

According to the statement, the rebuttal was issued as a 'number of politicians, TV channels and newspapers have misreported the CPI report, and given false figures trying to damage the reputation of Pakistan'. Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Information and Broadcasting Dr Firdous Ashiq Awan had termed the report 'biased' and 'planted'. In his rebuttal, TI Pakistan chief said the CPI 2019 did not declare the government of former military ruler General Pervez Musharraf as the most corrupt and the incumbent PTI government as the second most corrupt. Nor, he went on to add, did it term the governments of PML-N and PPP as cleanest and second cleanest respectively. This appears to address concerns of one and all.

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Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2144725/6-corruption-misperception/>

Was Imran Khan's Davos Trip a Success or a Failure? By Saba Mahmood

Nestled in the snowy Alps of Switzerland lies a quaint town that plays host to the World Economic Forum's (WEF) annual meeting. For fifty years, Davos has provided a platform for the world's political leaders, economists, academics, journalists and corporations to come together to accomplish an impossible task: "improving the state of the world". From the outside, Davos seems like yet another stomping ground for the global elite. Their onerous mission entails a discussion on the eternal conundrums of economic inequality, political instability and social development. Members of civil society mingle with the heads of powerful organisations to shape policy, while politicians tout their country's credentials in the hopes of building new partnerships. For less economically developed countries (LEDCs) like Pakistan, however, Davos presents a unique opportunity.

Khan's pitch

Travelling amongst the procession of jets and limousines to the alpine town last week was Imran Khan. Over four days, the prime minister delivered a key address, was interviewed by several media platforms, and engaged in a bilateral discussion with his United States (US) counterpart, Donald Trump. Khan sought to present his vision for Pakistan – and Davos seemed the perfect place to do just that. Beyond its reputation as a dangerous country in an unstable region, Pakistan remains relatively unknown to the rest of the world. But the last few years have seen a marked shift in a number of areas: domestic terrorism has considerably declined, the tourism industry has received a decent boost, and since coming to power Khan has enhanced the country's diplomacy by highlighting its strategic role in regional conflict mediation. So how did the prime minister fare in front of one of the largest congregations of leading businesses?

A good innings?

Khan's unscripted yet articulate speaking style was praised by commentators. The earnestness with which he spoke about Pakistan conveyed pride for what has so far been achieved, but also an awareness for the obstacles that prevent it

from becoming an Islamic welfare state. Indeed, after an International Monetary Fund (IMF) bailout and foreign loan packages, Pakistan's economy has somewhat stabilised. But as the rupee continues to suffer, revenue streams dry out, and debt and inflation rates rise, the road to economic growth remains long and arduous.

Macroeconomic instability and years of mismanagement have dominated Pakistan's recent history, made infinitely worse by an inherently weak national tax collection system and corruption that has permeated across all strata of the state. Piecemeal reforms, such as 2018's populist-driven austerity programme have failed to deliver substantial results, not least because the military retains huge chunks of non-development expenditure and maintains its influence over the government's fiscal policies. It is no wonder that potential investors are dubious.

When asked whether the country is in the throes of debt entrapment with China, the prime minister dismissed any notion that the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has exacerbated Pakistan's debt crisis, instead attributing the doubling of foreign direct investment (FDI) within a year to the Chinese. However, CPEC has generated concerns among the international community, in large part due to its lack of transparency and the prospect of China's increased territorial control in Pakistan. The case of Sri Lanka's Hambantota port confirmed that China does not do anything for free and ultimately comes out winning even if the debtor state defaults on its loans. As the trade deficit grows and local economies get dismantled under projects like Gwadar's 'Port-Park-City', it is likely that Pakistan will become yet another victim of China's debt trap diplomacy.

The sad state of Pakistan's economy simply reveals its age-old problem of deeply entrenched reliance on neighbours and powerful allies for support. This was evident at Davos in Khan's unwillingness to criticise China's brutal treatment of the Uighurs, instead suggesting that Muslims in Kashmir and Myanmar are facing worse. Khan's admission that he cannot publicly go against China since it helped Pakistan when it was at "rock bottom", was helpfully candid – but it also undermines his call to unify the Muslim Ummah at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) meeting last year. So, throughout his performance at Davos, one could not help but wonder: did Khan's charisma belie the bleakness of Pakistan's trajectory, and does Pakistan wield any real influence in regional politics?

The highlight

If one thing stood out from Khan's trip, it was showcasing Pakistan's ability to remain friendly with an array of actors (such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, the United States and China). Trump's apparent enthusiasm to help mediate in the Kashmir crisis shows a distinct improvement in Pakistan-US relations over the last year. However, India's repeated rejection of any such proposal means that Trump's words don't mean much, and if anything, look more like lip service in return for Pakistan's assistance in the Afghan peace talks. Similarly, Khan's adamant refusal to get involved in any possible conflict between the US and Iran is unlikely to deter either party from escalating the conflict. Whether Pakistan's recent popularity is merely a smokescreen for darker underlying trends, or a forecast for positive change, will be subject to continuous debate. At this rate, the prime minister's vision for Pakistan is looking more like a list of red flags.

Source: <https://blogs.tribune.com.pk/story/93422/was-imran-khans-davos-trip-a-success-or-a-failure/>

Balancing Relations With China and US By

Talat Masood

Assistant Deputy Under Secretary Alice Wells on her recent visit to Islamabad alleged that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project lacked transparency and will increase Pakistan's debt burden. It invited a strong rebuff from the Chinese ambassador and a guarded response by our government. This is not the first time that Ms Wells has made these remarks. What is then the motivation and merit in these statements?

Is America worried that the Pakistan-China strategic, political and economic ties are a very effective counter to the US-Indian strategic alignment and cuts against Washington's interest? Or is it genuinely concerned that CPEC will bleed Pakistan to an extent that it will have a problem paying back the IMF and fulfilling its other international obligations?

What alternative did Ms Wells have in mind as a substitute to CPEC that Washington could offer Pakistan? Do we have to remind her that US military and civil assistance to Pakistan is on hold? The only letup recently has been the partial lifting of the ban on the training of military and civilian personnel in the US.

There could be certain military equipment and technologies that Pakistan may be interested in procuring from the US, financial conditions permitting. One could only surmise that these could be recent versions of F-16 fighter aircraft, upgradation kits for the existing F-16s, helicopters, military vehicles, electronic and optical systems, etc.

The problem is that the US has been clamping sanctions too frequently on Pakistan and this has led it to diversify and rely heavily on China as its primary source of supply of military hard and software.

The benefits of CPEC for Pakistan are expected to be multiple. Its elaborate infrastructure would be highly beneficial for the province of Balochistan and Pakistan as a whole. It would open up news avenues for trade and commerce. Development of the Gwadar port would link it to the Xinjiang province and give a major boost to the economy of Western China.

The apprehension is that it would take time for the port of Gwadar and other major projects to reach their full potential. Meanwhile, Pakistan would be required to start returning the Chinese loan and this would certainly overburden an already fragile economy. It is this situation that Ms Wells is referring too. But the type and quality of relationship that exist between Pakistan and China, and ours being the flagship project, Beijing in all probability would extend the loan period as has happened on a few earlier occasions. The stakes for both China and Pakistan are too high in CPEC and they cannot afford to fail.

The expanse of China-Pakistan relations can be judged from the fact that it was China that was in the forefront of defending Pakistan at the FATF. This is not to minimise the role of Pakistan's other allies Turkey, Malaysia and Saudi Arabia for a similar support.

In state relations, the quality of engagement matters. The US has been very opposed to Pakistan's nuclear programme. In sharp contrast with Chinese assistance it has built four nuclear power plants. It has provided conventional weapons and equipment when the US and the Western countries had imposed embargoes and sanctions on the sale of military equipment to Pakistan.

There was a time when Pakistan was the recipient of fairly-current vintage of weapons from the US. But these are different times when several areas of national interests of the two countries do not converge.

So when President Trump showed interest in raising the Kashmir issue, it was music to the Pakistani leadership's ears. India's intransigence that it would only deal bilaterally on this subject clearly puts brakes on third-party intervention.

China too has vastly benefited from its relations with Pakistan. In the early period of its relationship when China was facing isolation, Pakistan was a major ally and its window to the world. The development and management of the Gwadar port has benefited China as the port gives it access to the Arabian Sea considerably shortening the existing long route to South East Asia through the Malaca Straits.

The US has wanted that India and Pakistan settle their differences on Kashmir and develop a functional relationship so that India could focus on China. But India remains entangled with Pakistan and that suits China as it keeps India's

security and diplomatic focus at the regional rather than global level. By intensifying the pressure on the LoC and falsely accusing Pakistan of supporting the insurgency in Kashmir, it hopes to bleed Pakistan financially as much as it can. We have to ensure that we guard ourselves from falling in this trap.

Pakistan's leadership is fully aware of the global power and influence of the US. Despite serious vicissitudes in relations, it has worked toward building bridges even during difficult times. The US ability to harm a country by virtue of its global power is another aspect that is well known.

Relations between the two countries, however, have lately considerably improved. The US acknowledges Pakistan's support in Afghanistan. General Bajwa has been persistent in his endeavours for the Afghan peace agreement to be finalised. Pakistan is the second most populous Muslim country wielding considerable clout. Moreover, when Pakistan's economy recovers and there is a modicum of political stability, it has the potential of being a significant market for US goods.

Washington's adverse relations with Iran and unpredictability of monarchial Muslim regimes plus Pakistan's strategic location give it an edge that the US cannot ignore.

Interestingly, President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Imran Khan have clicked at the personal level and this could be a good harbinger for Pakistan-US relations. President Trump's recent impromptu remarks that Pakistan-US relations have never been as good, even if considered inflated, does reflect a major change.

In many ways it affords a unique opportunity for Pakistan that there is a mutuality of interest with two most powerful nations. We have a Prime Minister who has international recognition, an experienced foreign minister and world-class diplomats and it is time they directed their energies to maximise benefits for the nation.

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Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2146019/6-balancing-relations-china-us/>

Modi's War-mongering | Editorial

PAKISTAN'S apprehensions that India might embark upon some misadventure, which were not without reason, are further strengthened by latest threats hurled by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who has boasted that in case of war it will take more than a week to ten days for his troops to defeat Pakistan. In a strongly worded rejoinder, Pakistan Foreign Office has promptly condemned war-mongering by Modi telling him not to forget the lesson his forces got after their aggression in Balakot.

India is grossly mistaken in under-estimating the will and resolve of people of Pakistan and their defence forces to defend every inch of their motherland. They proved this during over seven decades of their independent history and are willing to make every sacrifice to thwart aggressive designs of the enemy. Foreign Office spokesperson has rightly pointed out that Pakistan's immediate and effective response to India's Balakot misadventure, including the downing of Indian fighter aircraft and capture of Indian pilot last year, should suffice to underscore the will, capacity and preparedness of our armed forces. However, despite all this India is continuing with its belligerent statements despite restraints by Pakistan to such provocations. Pakistan has all along been trying not to raise the ante but it doesn't mean it cannot and should not go for all out measures to safeguard its independence and sovereignty. Indian Prime Minister's jingoistic remarks cannot be ignored as these were not uttered during an election rally for domestic consumption but during an address to a military ceremony where every word is supposed to have been chosen with care. The statement was the latest in a series of hostile comments against Pakistan by the Indian leadership. Earlier this month, Indian army chief Gen Manoj Mukund Narvane while addressing his first press conference in Delhi after assuming charge claimed that Indian troops could also occupy Azad Kashmir if the Indian Parliament mandated their army to do so. It was because of India's aggressive posture and hurling of repeated threats that Pakistan has drawn attention of the international community, time and again, about possibility of any misadventure by India. Such fears have also been expressed by some Indian politicians and political parties and, therefore, need to be taken seriously. The threat of such a misadventure has increased because of aggravating India's domestic situation as protests against the controversial Indian citizenship law and National Register of Citizens have spread across the country and there is wider international condemnation. On the

other hand, Occupied Kashmir has been under worst type of curfew and lockdown since 05 August when Modi Government scrapped special status of the territory and annexed it illegally. Kashmiris have not reconciled with Indian designs and are determined to go to any extent to realize their birth right of self-determination. Indian attempts to present all “OK” scenario in Occupied Kashmir to the outside world have miserably failed as was evident from its unproductive initiative of conducting arranged visits of the diplomats to the region and the situation has deteriorated to such an extent that foreign parliaments are now debating the plight of Kashmiris and condemning human rights violations. Therefore, in a bid to get the pressure relieved, India may initiate a conflict to divert the world attention from its internal crisis over Citizenship Law and worst type of security situation in Occupied Kashmir. Strategists say in the backdrop of wide and sharp reaction to anti-Muslim citizenship law, a slowing economy and the prospect of losing the latest in a string of state elections in New Delhi next month, Indian Government might go for aggression against Pakistan. However, such a misadventure would surely evoke a befitting response from Pakistan shattering dream of Modi to conquer Pakistan in one week to ten days. It was because of such mindset of Indian leaders and planners in New Delhi that Pakistan was forced to go for nuclear option to ensure effective deterrence against any threat to its security and defence. It is quite understood that Pakistan is in no position to match every Indian move aimed at sharpening its conventional capabilities but it has every right to exercise every option to defend itself. Pakistan should once again approach influential members of the international community as well as UN sensitizing them about designs of India and at the same time remain vigilant to respond in kind in case of any aggression.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/modis-war-mongering/>

Our Afghan policy By Najmuddin A. Shaikh

“BOTH [the US and Pakistan] are on the same page that there’s no military solution in Afghanistan and we are working hard to bring peace to the country,” said Prime Minister Imran Khan in an interview with CNBC last week. Clearly, the PM’s reference was to efforts Pakistan is making in tandem with the Khalilzad-Taliban talks in Doha for a ceasefire or at least “reduction in violence” as a prelude to dialogue between the Taliban and Kabul government. So far there is no sign the Taliban are willing to do this, or go beyond reaching an agreement for US troop withdrawal in exchange for their pledge not to allow Afghanistan to be used to plan terrorist attacks against the US and to abjure ties with Al Qaeda, Daesh or other terrorist groups.

Is this enough to bring peace to an Afghanistan in which government forces would have lost control of a number of provincial capitals were it not for US air support operations and cash support for its largely ineffective local forces? The Kabul government is fragmented and there’s little chance that it will become more united or self-sustaining. Now President Ghani says he is “totally ready” for a withdrawal of 4,000 of the 12,000 US troops, but the Taliban want a complete withdrawal though they may be open to making this phased.

The Taliban have said that they do not want to monopolise power but would want to revise the Afghan constitution to make it conform to their interpretation of Sharia, and would include others in the power structure on terms they deem appropriate. In their view, Trump is intent on withdrawing and no further concessions are necessary. This could set the stage for another civil war.

Pakistan must sadly come to the conclusion that while we wish to promote peace, the dire situation in Afghanistan will leave us no choice but to insulate ourselves even while taking every step possible to help with reconciliation. This means:

Pakistan must prepare for the uncertainty that will follow US troop withdrawal. We must ask the Taliban on our soil to move back to Afghanistan and carry on negotiations with the US from their bases in Helmand and Kandahar. Make it clear that we recognise the Kabul government and support an Afghan-led and -owned peace process. This negotiation, if it materialises, will be long and complex; if asked we will try to help.

Pakistan should ensure our refugees commissioner exercises complete control over all camps, and prohibits clandestine addition to the refugee population or use of the camps as Taliban recuperation centres. While continuing to treat Afghan patients in our hospitals, we would carefully vet anyone with battlefield wounds. Complete the fencing of the border and, with UNODC, strengthen our surveillance on smuggler movements. Deal with local influentials on the Afghan side of the border to maintain peace, offering financial inducements if necessary. We can facilitate Pak-Afghan trade and make suitable concessions to ensure Afghan goods are marketed here and beyond our borders. The truck monitoring system the PM has authorised would be an essential tool to check smuggling. With Chinese cooperation, allow Afghanistan to use CPEC and to the extent possible to facilitate the use of CPEC by Central Asian states. Make prompt royalty and transit payments to the Afghan government.

Pakistan ought to prevail on the Americans, who eschew nation-building even under a non-Trump administration, to continue to provide material support for the salaries of 320,000 Afghan National Defence forces as well as budgetary support, while seeking to curb corruption, which would allow at least some maintenance of education and health services. The plea should be based on the fact that an Afghan collapse would adversely affect the entire region, and may prove a repeat of the power vacuum left after the collapse of the Soviet Union — which left us to cope with the detritus of the war, and led to Al Qaeda's preponderant influence in Afghanistan, and then 9/11.

We should also be prepared in the future to help Afghanistan exploit its mineral deposits (estimated to be worth anywhere between \$1-3 trillion) and explore the possibility of matching Pakistan's mineral resources with those of Afghanistan's (bringing copper ore from Afghanistan's Aynak Copper mine to Reko Diq and thus having enough ore to justify the setting up of a refinery unit within our borders instead of exporting raw ore).

The more important and urgent of the many points I have listed are obviously (i) to persuade the Americans and their allies to continue their financial assistance to Afghanistan, and (ii) to make improvements in our governance structures which alone will allow us to take all these recommended steps. Afghan leaders of all stripes will continue to hold us responsible for their unfortunate plight. But this is something we can afford to live with as long as the border remains unaffected.

The writer is a former foreign secretary, and currently head of IoBM's Global and Regional Studies Centre.

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Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1531345/our-afghan-policy>

ECONOMY

Global Economic Outlook For 2020 By Rashid A Mughal

A year ago, the global economy seemed poised for smooth sailing. However, as 2019 progressed, trade tensions dragged down corporate confidence and capital spending and ultimately slowed progress by nearly 60 basic points. Heading into 2020, however, the winds could shift, setting up the global economy for a third “mini-cycle recovery” in this decade-long expansion. “While this global cycle has lasted more than a decade, constant interruptions have thus far averted an exuberant stage that would threaten overheating. Those disruptions included the European debt crisis in 2011, China’s slowdown in 2014 and most recently, trade tensions. Now, with trade tensions and monetary policy easing concurrently, we think the macro-economy can continue to make forward progress”, says Morgan Stanley’s chief economist. According to Morgan Stanley’s 2020 Global Economic Outlook forecast, a recovery in global GDP growth from 2.9% in 4Q19 to 3.4% in 4Q20 (averaging 3.2% GDP growth in 2020) is expected. They also forecast 3.5% growth in 2021, up from an estimated 3% in 2019. This growth will come predominantly from emerging markets and to a lesser degree, an improving outlook in Europe. The U.S. economy continues to sit on stable ground, but its pace of growth may slow down.

In USA and Russia, growth will be around 1.8 and 1.9. Euro Area growth will be a subdued 0.9%. Japan growth will be 0% and U.K will grow 1.4%. But it will be in Asia where China will lead the growth to 6.0%.The growth in Emerging Markets will be at impressive 4.4%. Meanwhile, 20 central banks have eased monetary policy over the past 12 months with the global weighted average policy rate likely reaching a seven-year low by March 2020. Beyond this convergence, consumption improvement could also propel a mini-recovery. Today the consumer in aggregate is in relatively good shape, with healthy household balance sheets, low unemployment in developed markets and moderate wage growth. Among other positives, the corporate sector has responded to tariff

threats by trimming hours rather than laying off employees, avoiding a “spillover effect” from tariffs thus far.

Less uncertainty around trade tensions is particularly key for emerging markets. In China, the combination of reduced tariff uncertainty and stable policy support could lead to improved corporate confidence and a steady expansion of the consumer class, adding up to a more optimistic outlook. “We expect growth to bottom in the fourth quarter of 2019 and recover modestly from there,” says Chief China Economist Robin Xing, whose team is forecasting GDP growth of 6% for China in 2020. Chinese industrial output increased in Q4-2019 which is a positive sign. This is also good news for Korea which has been affected by US-China trade tensions. There are other bright spots. Notably, the Brazilian economy is poised to accelerate in 2020 as historically low interest rates spur consumption and in turn investment activity. Morgan Stanley raised its GDP growth estimate for Brazil to 2.2% for 2020 and 3.1% for 2021.

Growth in Europe continues to be sluggish, but economists see flickers of life as less uncertainty about trade, policy and Brexit unleash pent-up demand. Although real GDP growth in the Euro area is likely to dip below 1% in 2020, economists expect it to pick up again by 2021. The UK may follow a similar trajectory, assuming an orderly resolution of Brexit. Uncertainty over the UK’s exit from the European Union has played no small role in dampening growth. With a resolution on the horizon, the economy could soon accelerate above trend. Economists are calling for a 1.4% bump in GDP growth for 2020 followed by 2% in 2021. Goldman Sachs Research economists, forecast 3.4% global GDP growth in 2020. The modest increase from 2019’s expected growth of 3.1% will be driven by easier financial conditions, a US-China trade détente, and reduced Brexit uncertainty. US, the number one economy of world, lowered its interest rates-3rd time in a year on 30 December 2019, to further spur the economy. The results are expected to be positive and politically in favour of Trump for the 2020 election.

According to International Monetary Fund, rising trade and geopolitical tensions have increased uncertainty about the future of the global trading system and international cooperation more generally, taking a toll on business confidence, investment decisions and global trade. A notable shift toward increased monetary policy accommodation — through both action and communication — has cushioned the impact of these tensions on financial market sentiment and

activity, while a generally resilient service sector has supported employment growth.

World Bank also shares the same perception. According to them, though global growth has continued to soften this year, subdued investment in emerging market and developing economies (EMDEs) is dampening potential growth prospects. Risks to the outlook remain firmly on the downside, including the possibility of escalating trade tensions. Another concern is rising debt, which may make it difficult for EMDEs to respond to adverse developments and to finance growth-enhancing investments. Reforms to boost private investment and productivity growth are needed, particularly in low-income countries, which face more significant challenges today than they did in the early 2000s.

South East Asian outlook is solid, with growth picking up to 7% in 2020 and 7.1% in 2021. China will lead the global growth at an impressive 6-7%. Domestic demand growth is expected to remain robust with support from monetary and fiscal policy. However, Pakistan's growth is expected to slow further to 2.7% in FY-2019/20 which began in July 2019. In Middle East and North Africa, regional growth is projected to rise to 3.2% in 2020, largely driven by rebound in growth among oil exporters. Growth among oil exporters is anticipated to pick up to 2.9% in 2020, supported by capital investment in the GCC and higher growth in Iraq. Among oil importing economies, increasing growth is predicated on policy reform progress and healthy tourism prospects.

In Central Asia, regional growth is expected to firm to 2.7% in 2020 from a four-year low of 1.6% this year as Turkey recovers from an acute slowdown. Excluding Turkey, regional growth is expected to grow 2.6% in 2020, slightly up from 2.4% this year, with modest growth in domestic demand and a small drag from net exports. In Central Europe, fiscal stimulus and the resulting boost to private consumption will begin to fade in some of the sub-region's largest economies next year, while growth is expected to modest recovery to 2.7% in Eastern Europe and moderate to 4% in Central Asia. Growth in the Western Balkans is anticipated to rise to 3.8% in 2020. The outlook for the year 2020 is, therefore, expected to be the positive as the global growth will stay on course. The negative factors, like trade wars and Brexit are most likely to be over soon. Increased corporate and consumer confidence will also contribute towards better economic environment in 2020.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/global-economic-outlook-for-2020/>

Getting Out of FATF Trap By Iqbal Khan

YES! We were pushed into Financial Action Task Force (FATF) trap through an Indo-US conspiracy by circumventing the then in-vogue procedures. Even then, wailing about it is not likely to come to our rescue. There is need for a multidisciplinary professional approach to unshackle out of FATF trap. Before every key meeting of FATF or its affiliates, a hype is created at domestic level that during upcoming session Pakistan would tear apart FATF straightjacket due to its performance. The result has so far been to the contrary. The government must understand that task in this context is not fooling the domestic audience, but to outsmart the FATF experts. Same orchestra is in play now in anticipation to upcoming FATF plenary in February.

Government hopes to win a “largely-compliant” rating from the FATF on the implementation of its 27 action points, which might help the government get more time for full compliance. For the February plenary meeting of the FATF “our target is to be largely compliant on most of the action points”, Director General of Financial Monitoring Unit (FMU) Mansoor Siddiqui told a parliamentary panel during a meeting of the Senate Standing Committee on Finance, which was convened to approve amendments to the Anti-Money Laundering (AML) Act and the Foreign Exchange Regulations Act. This statement came two days before the submission of Pakistan’s last progress report on the implementation of the FATF Action Plan to the Joint Group of the FATF. Pakistan and the Joint Group will meet in Beijing on Jan 21 and 22, followed by an FATF plenary next month.

“In the past six months, we have won the support of a number of countries and also made significant progress in implementing the Action Plan,” Siddiqui added. In January last year, Siddiqui said, “we were largely compliant only on one action item” but by October “we were largely compliant on five action points”. In the Feb 2020 report, Pakistan will still be “partially” compliant on some of the points but most action points will be largely addressed. Let’s hope so. For exiting the grey list, Pakistan needs to show full compliance on all the action points by Feb 2020, according to the FATF statement issued in October last year. According to government officials they were hopeful because Pakistan had made “major progress” by completing national risk assessment report, developing an effective interagency coordination framework and conducting a review of the risk-based supervisory policies by the regulators and the law-enforcement agencies. He said

decisive actions had been taken against the entities concerned and mapping and supervision of non-profit organisations had been completed.

Pakistan continues to be included in the FATF's list of jurisdictions with serious AML/CFT deficiencies. The Asia Pacific Group on money laundering also discussed Pakistan's Mutual Evaluation Report, noting that existing efforts were "inconsistent with the level of risks and greater effectiveness needs to be demonstrated". DG FATF's Action Plan focuses on curbing terror financing through terror financing risk assessment and supervisory actions, terror financing risk in cash couriers and countering actions, terror financing inquiry and investigations and application of targeted financial sanctions.

In 2018 and 2019 the UN Security Council had passed resolutions that made implementation of the

FATF recommendations binding and in case of deficiencies, sanctions could be imposed that may carry economic cost. Five laws are being amended, which are at various stages of approval at present. The Anti-Money Laundering Act 2010 and Foreign Exchange Regulations Act 1947 are before the Senate Committee for approval after being endorsed by the National Assembly Standing Committee. The Mutual Legal Assistance Act has been introduced before the National Assembly while the amendments are being proposed to comply with the United Nations Security Council Act 1948 and Anti-Terrorism Act 1997. Nine amendments are proposed to the AML Act to make it consistent with the FATF standards and enhance punishments to make them effective.

Pakistan is also undergoing a separate scrutiny process by the Asia Pacific Group that has found Islamabad's compliance to only 10 recommendations out of 40. Similarly, out of 11 effectiveness indicators, Pakistan is found at moderate effective level only against one indicator. Pakistan has also made a national strategy to avoid blacklisting by the AGP and it will submit the first implementation report in February. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Pakistan remains at risk of being placed on FATF "blacklist" that could have implications for capital inflows to the country." A potential blacklisting by FATF could result in a freeze of capital flows and lower investment to Pakistan," stated the recent staff-level report that was finalised during the visit of the IMF team to Pakistan. The IMF programme continues to face significant risks, both from domestic and external factors, the report added. Potential external risks include blacklisting by FATF that could result in a freeze of capital flows to

Pakistan. “[The] failure to meet programme objectives could jeopardise the availability of external financing,” cautioned the IMF.

Pakistan has to show a substantial level of effectiveness to the IMF by end-March 2020 that should be consistent with FATF Immediate Outcome 9 on terrorism financing investigations and Immediate Outcome 10 on targeted financial sanctions. Risks related to grey listing of Pakistan include enhanced due diligence of financial transactions; difficulty in opening of accounts in foreign jurisdictions; hitches in banking relationships; and higher compliance cost for financial institutions. The resistance to reform from vested interest groups could undermine the programme’s fiscal consolidation strategy and put debt sustainability at risk. It’s time for the national leadership to shield the FATF issue from petty politics.

—The writer is a freelance columnist based in Islamabad.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/getting-out-of-fatf-trap/>

The US- China Trade War By Naeem Khan

Qaisrani

The USA and China have a decades-old trade relationship when in 1979 both nations established diplomatic relations and signed a bilateral trade agreement. In 1984, the USA was the third largest trade partner of China while China was the 14th largest trade of partner of the USA. They started from \$4 billion trade and the volume was about \$600 billion in 2018. It is necessary to mention here that due to the US-China Relation Act of 2000, China was allowed to join WTO (World Trade Organization) in 2001, when the US Congress approved the US-China trade agreement and China's accession to the WTO. That time the US government was of the view that China's joining the WTO would enhance and advance the USA's economic interests but after this joining, the USA has continuously been accusing China of failing to comply with the international trade laws, rules and regulations and not addressing the grievances of Washington. The current US Administration is fully convinced that due to China's manipulating their currency and trade, US companies cannot compete with Chinese companies without imposing a heavy tariff on Chinese exports, because in 2017 the USA had a \$336 billion trade deficit with china of an overall \$556 billion deficit. In view of this deficit, President Trump imposed a 10 percent tariff of almost \$300 billion on Chinese imports. China, in response, announced plans to implement its own tariffs on 128 US products. Of those products, 120, such as fruit and wine, will be taxed at a 15 percent duty and the remaining eight, including pork, at 25 percent.

In the first half of FY2019, US companies invested almost \$6.8 billion in China, and the major part belonging to greenfield projects, electric vehicle maker Tesla's factory in Shanghai and other significant investments in manufacturing sectors. Due to ongoing trade conflict between the two countries, now American companies are doing business with enormous risks because not only trade war but the other major reason of pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong is also there. Though there has been a truce in the trade war, the protests continue. Experts are agreed China's economic slowdown and trade conflict with the USA have already created huge risks for business. The tariff imposed by the China was also having significant impact on US business in China; specially small business have been slammed by the China tariffs and it has been observed that the China

tariffs have enhanced the cost of business for 37 percent or more than one-third of the small businesses across the USA. Meanwhile China has offered tax incentives to motivate US companies to sustain and stay in China and it has announced the exemptions of foreign companies from paying income taxes are under consideration so that the foreign companies, especially US companies, can continue their businesses in China. Some experts are saying that China's exemption from certain taxes are a way to boost business as well as to counter the US incentives.

US companies say that they are not playing on same level field and they are also criticizing that China is not fair with them but they are not going anywhere and they will compete with the domestic companies, even though they get heavy government subsidies. Tesla CEO Elon Musk says that "China is a future"

Tesla was just one automotive and energy company, but during the current trade dispute it has gained the confidence of China, and has been given status as one of China's own companies, even though it is not in fact owned by the Chinese. China thinks that the success of Tesla is not only success of Tesla but also the success of China, as it can lower the level of pollution in the country. Meanwhile Tesla also slammed the tariffs imposed by China and has stated its cars cost 60% more than its competitors. Tesla Inc built a factory in China in less than a year near to Shanghai. In view of its successful business, the company has manufactured Model 3 ahead of schedule, and it was expected that this development would help in reduction of tariff and transport cost. The Tesla Gigafactory in Shanghai is one its most precious assets and is being a main source of its expansion. Now the company is claiming the Model Y production will start almost half year before schedule in China.

Even before the trade truce was agreed, recent developments and negotiations had motivated investors that there was a trend towards de-escalation between the two nations and they had been optimistic for at least a couple of months as J. P Morgan was already hopeful that the things will move forward smoothly and without any further trouble. JP Morgan has offered investment products, which may include bank managed investment to show trust and fiduciary services. In its annual report of Cross-Border Consumer Research and marketplace progress with a snapshot of the where, why and how of international commerce, Paypal has also said that in the start of the New Year Chinese shoppers will enjoy new things from abroad. It is necessary to mention here that despite the trade tension

China's central bank permitted the US companies to take and make payments by Chinese payment group Gopay. But the Paypal has licences to provide domestic and cross-border web and mobile payment services in China.

As per People's Bank of China, almost Rmb277 trillion (\$39 trillion) of mobile payments made in last year. There is no doubt that PayPal has already successfully challenged the dominance of national players in China and in future it will also play a vital role in payments of business transactions, especially in cross-border payments.

Before discussing the future of US businesses in China it most pertinent to mention here that the US-China Business Council (USCBC) survey concluded that 80 percent of US companies have been badly affected by the recent trade tensions between the two nations and only 20 percent are optimistic about their future prospects in China in the next five years. Some indications show it may take more than a decade to re-establish confidence among US companies. Some experts said the trade war had entered Phase 2 and it has been observed by economic analysts that the tariffs imposed by the US President and his counterpart have hit in their own countries.

A US journal Foreign Policy has said that Washington needs longer term plan to deal with the Beijing. US companies say that they are not playing on same level field and they are also criticizing that China is not fair with them but they are not going anywhere and they will compete with the domestic companies, even though they get heavy government subsidies. Tesla CEO Elon Musk says that "China is a future."

The writer can be reached at: khanlawyer@hotmail.com and at <https://twitter.com/Naeemkqaisrani>

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Increase In FDI | Editorial

According to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), Pakistan has made a significant improvement in attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) during the first half of the current fiscal year (FY). The FDI inflows in the first half of the current FY jumps 68.3 per cent in comparison to the figures in the same period last year. The increase in FDI means that the government is succeeding in making Pakistan an attractive place of investment for foreign businesses. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) rightly deserves appreciation for this. The government's focused efforts, to bring about reforms and positive impacts in the ease of doing business area, are bearing fruits in the form of an increase in FDI. Hopefully, the government policies will see further improvements, and, as a result, more FDI inflows will come to the national kitty in the future.

That much said it is, however, essential for the government to make more and more sectors attractive for foreign investments. Since, the significant chunk of this year investments was concentrated in two major sectors, i.e., telecommunication and power and electrical machinery sectors. Many untouched sectors can be attractive areas for FDI, chemicals, pharmaceutical and fertilizer; oil and gas; and banking and finance, to name a few.

It is correct that significant improvements in the country's overall macroeconomic environment and sound policies have helped attract relatively large inflows of FDI in Pakistan in the first half of the current FY. However, the government has to travel a long distance, especially in going up further on ease of doing business index. Perhaps, this government is well aware of the fact that a conducive investment climate is a must for attracting foreign investment by providing a more facilitative institutional, policy and regulatory environment for businesses to operate. Expectantly, the increase in FDI will boost the government's morale, and it will enhance its efforts to attract more foreign capital inflows in the country.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/18-Jan-2020/increase-in-fdi>

US on CPEC | Editorial

HIGH-level engagements between the US and Pakistan on Tuesday resulted in some interesting outcomes. Meeting Prime Minister Imran Khan in Davos, President Donald Trump, who called Mr Khan his “friend”, said that Pakistan and the US had never been as close as they were now.

But though this camaraderie is welcome, speaking in Islamabad, Alice Wells, the State Department’s senior official looking after the South Asia file, delivered yet another critique of CPEC. Ms Wells made some very serious allegations, claiming that firms blacklisted by the World Bank had got CPEC contracts, adding that Pakistan was walking into a debt trap laid by China.

She also urged the government to be more “transparent” about the flagship scheme, described as a game changer by the state.

On Wednesday, the Chinese embassy in Pakistan released a rejoinder to the American official’s criticism. While observing that Beijing would be “more than glad” to see the deepening of Pakistan-US ties, it dismissed the American criticism as “negative propaganda”. It also pointedly asked what Washington had done for Pakistan.

Some background is necessary here. During the Trump administration, ties between China and the US have been especially frosty, and Ms Wells’s critique of CPEC must be seen in this geopolitical perspective.

However, while good advice from our foreign friends is always welcome, they should avoid giving Pakistan lectures on how to conduct its foreign policy. True, there are some concerns regarding CPEC, and this paper has always called for all projects under the scheme to be made more transparent, and to benefit Pakistan in the long run. But for the Americans to wholly dismiss this giant collaborative effort between Pakistan and China is unacceptable.

Also, the relationship between Islamabad and Beijing is decades old and has a strategic dimension, and Pakistan can ill afford to ditch an ally simply to please another foreign friend. This country values its relationship with the US, but as the

Chinese have rightly pointed out, what has Washington done of recent to help uplift Pakistan economically, and stand by it in international forums?

Concerning Mr Trump's comments, while the US president is prone to making hyperbolic statements, his newfound fondness for Pakistan should be appreciated. As for ties between the states being at an all-time high, this claim is debatable.

After all, the US and Pakistan were quite close when it came to dislodging the Soviets from Afghanistan under Gen Zia's watch — though history will judge whether that endeavour was the wisest move to make for this country. Moreover, in the aftermath of 9/11, Gen Musharraf was walking in lockstep with Washington in the 'war on terror'.

If Mr Trump really wants to take the bilateral relationship to new heights, then let the US offer this country trade, investment and assistance. Moreover, if Washington values Pakistan's friendship, let it publicly back this country's stance on India-held Kashmir, FATF and other critical matters.

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US & China Driving Global Economy to New Heights By Rashid A Mughal

GLOBAL economy in 2019 might just be the best year investors have ever had. The numbers are staggering. Global stocks have piled on more than \$10 trillion, bonds have been on fire, oil has surged almost 25 per cent, former crisis spots Greece and Ukraine have top performed, and even gold has sparkled. Wall Street and other 50 country world index have both stormed to record highs after 30pc and 24pc leaps. Europe, Japan, China and Brazil are all up at least 20pc in dollar terms too. Remarkable and promising! This was quite in contrast to 2018 when almost everything fell. But there have been a couple of important drivers. One was China's commitment. It was serious about stimulus for its \$14 trillion economy. The other was the screeching change of direction by the world's top central banks led by the Federal Reserve which cut US interest rates for the first time since the financial crisis more than a decade earlier. The last cut was in end of December 2019 which sent the New York and other stock markets skyrocketing.

"Whereas a year ago the Fed was reigning rates and earnings were rolling over, this year you have felt the Fed has been on your side", said James Cluny who manages asset firm "Jupiter's Absolute Return Fund". "They are willing to do QE-4 at a stock market (record) high, which is extra ordinary" he added, referring to Fed efforts to bring down a spike in money market rates that some suggest could presage a fourth round of quantitative easing asset purchase. That Fed shift and the worldwide blizzards of rate cuts that have come since have fired bond markets up like a rocket. US Treasuries, the world's benchmark government IOU have made a whopping 9.4pc after yields. That followed a near 40 basis point fall the last quarter of 2018, after five quarters in which they had consistently risen. German Bunds-Europe's safest asset have had their best year in five years, making roughly 5.5pc in Euro terms as the European Central Bank has reversed course too. The yield on 10 year debt had dropped below zero per cent for the first time since 2016 in March and dived as deep as 0.74pc in September. In commodities, oil has raced up almost 25pc following its best first quarter since 2009. That, plus key dividend rule changes has also made Russia's stock market the best in the world with a 40pc rise and also made the Ruble as one of the top three currencies.

Statistics likely to make most jaws drop is that Greek banks-remember all that Euro debt crisis and capital controls stuff a few years back?- have been some of the world's best performing stocks this year. The country's biggest lender Piraeus Bank is up 250pc as is smaller Attica Bank, helping make Athens Europe's strongest bourse this year. Tech has remained on top more broadly. Apple may just have lost its crown to world's most valuable firm, Saudi Aramco, but it can console itself with its 77pc leap this year. Facebook has surged 57pc, Microsoft 53pc Google 30pc, Netflix 24pc and Amazon 19pc. China's tech sector is right in mix too with a 64pc rally and online Alibaba up 53pc.

Despite almost daily Brexit chaos, the loss of two prime ministers and a general election, UK gilts have returned 4.5pc and a near 6pc rise could land sterling its best quarter since 2009. As usual the big swings have been in emerging markets. Argentina's Peso and Turkey's Lira, 2018's punch bags have taken another beating. Argentina's woes have worsened such that it is restructuring its debt again while Turkey's worries have not really gone away. At the other end of the spectrum a new president and a new reform agenda have seen Ukraine's Hryvnia rocket 19pc. Russia's Ruble is up 11pc and Egypt's Pound is sandwiched in between with an 11.7pc gain. As stability became the key word at China's annual Central Economic Work Conference, head of the UK Investment Office at UBS Wealth Management noted that the realization of China's objectives for 2020 can help reduce uncertainty for the world economy.

I am struck by the breadth and scope of China's engagement with the world. There is now no matter of global importance in which China does not participate, said Robert Lawrence Kuhn Chairman of the Kuhn Foundation. China has been a major growth engine for the world economy and its economics health bears global significance, said International Monetary Fund (IMF) Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva. There is a clear commitment of the Chinese government to continue its "integration with global economy", said Director General of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Roberto Azevedo. "Connecting more to others, importing more, exporting more, all those connectives are fundamental if we are looking at the long term sustainable process of development. I think the role and performance of Chinese economy reflects China's global importance precisely as a precursor of international trade", said Jose Luis de la Cruz, Director of Mexico's Institute of Industrial Development and Economic Growth.

In recent years especially the past decade, China has been open to trade with the entire world and that benefits not only China's development, but also the world's. Secretary General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) said, "At a time when we are seeing major players "look inward" or look for protectionism, which excludes others, China advocates that we embrace international solidarity, we open up opportunity in our economies for greater and deeper engagement. Maintaining steady and consistent exports plays a vital role in boosting economic growth for all member states, especially for the poor countries. If China keeps its market wide open to all, it will dramatically help boost related countries economic growth," said Former Vice Chairman of the United Nations (UN) Business Council, John W. Allen. The trade war between the US and China which held the global economy hostage for almost two years finally signalled an end on the 15 January 2020 when both sign phase one of the agreement for trade regulation. The decision will not only benefit both countries but also benefit other countries whose economies are dependent on these two economic juggernauts.

— The writer is former DG (Emigration) and consultant ILO, IOM.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/us-china-driving-global-economy-to-new-heights/>

Monetary Policy: State Bank of Pakistan's

Consistency By Dr Pervez Tahir

The recent monetary statement kept the policy rate unchanged at 13.25%. If anything, the State Bank should get full marks for consistency. In its domain – external and internal value of money – there have been no U-turns. Since the present Governor took over, the monetary stance has been loud and clear: money will be no cheaper than other things. A drastic devaluation and the subsequent containment of intervention has signalled the market to find its own value of the rupee externally. Conditions in the foreign exchange market are stable and the current account deficit continues to shrink. That it is due more to import contraction than export expansion is recognised. For selected value-added items, there are signs of life in quantum terms. Internally, the end of the practice to print rupees to satisfy government's lust for spending has defueled a major source of inflation. The core inflation has been declining since August 2019. The main concern of the ordinary folks – the food inflation – lies beyond its control. It has moved in the opposite direction, reflecting climatic factors, federal policy ineptitude and provincial misgovernance of the supply chain. Non-food inflation has been somewhat stable. On the whole, the State Bank expects continued stability in its own domain but has not been able to change the current year's projection of inflation rate of 11-12 per cent due mainly to the continuing food price pressures and the likely increases in utility prices by the federal government. To keep ahead of the game, the policy rate has not been changed.

What of businesspersons' concern about the higher cost of borrowing, discouraging new investment and the access to working capital? In the State Bank's reckoning, what matters is the real interest rate or the difference between the nominal interest rate and the inflation rate, which is within tolerable limits. Enterprising businesses would savvy what to do. The IBA-SBP survey of business confidence shows as much for the third time round. Although there is many a slip between the cup and the lip, the release of development funds of Rs300 billion in the first six months compared to Rs187 billion in the corresponding period last year, is expected to boost business activity. Where concessions matter, as in the case of exports, incentive credit schemes are being enhanced.

The build-up of foreign exchange reserves, another key function of the State Bank, is proceeding satisfactorily. In the past, the policy was to borrow from friends and the market to maintain the desired level, rather than earn from exports. While the objective to earn from exports is now clearly laid out, the innovation in the short run is the unprecedented inflow of hot money. The critics find these inflows more destabilising than Ishaq Dar's reliance on friends and bonds. At the presser for the monetary policy statement, the Governor vehemently denied that these flows were the result of some hot pursuit. Instead, these inflows reflected the rising confidence of the global market players in the way the economy of Pakistan was being managed. As a component of portfolio investment, the investment in Treasury Bills was no different than the investment in stock exchange. At any rate, the amount was a small proportion of the total. There is a tacit admission by the Governor that hot money flows are like a fair weather friend. Let's hope that the economic fair weather he is contributing to is not blown away by the winds of clueless governance at federal as well as provincial levels, leaving no other options than Dr Mahathir Muhammad's capital controls.

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Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2147287/6-monetary-policy-state-bank-pakistans-consistency/>

EDUCATION

Education Reform By Saad Rasool

In matters of State and politics, the ‘urgent’ has an uncanny ability to crowd out the ‘important’. Stuck in the urgency of a 24-hour news cycle, based primarily on the sensationalism of partisan bickering, we often tend to lose sight of the important national and policy issues. Issues such as the plight and reform of our public education system.

Unsurprisingly, ‘education reform’ finds a notable mention in all manifestos of major political parties, in most political sloganeering, and is central to the proclaimed governance model of the incumbent PTI government. Yet, for some inexplicable reason, there is no national dialogue (of any meaningful nature) about reform of the education sector. In fact, the issue is made exponentially worse by the fact that people like Akbar Ayub (who admittedly has a Matric degree to his name) have been appointed as the Education Minister of KPK.

As a result, it must be asked: what should be the purpose of education in our national paradigm, and how should we start to imagine the contours of its reform?

Professor Roberto Mangabeira Unger, of Harvard Law School, once famously commented, “the purpose of education is to recognize a tongue-tied philosopher in every child.” Professor Unger’s statement embraces the collective idealism of every society, and puts forth a hope that every single individual, if educated in the ‘correct’ way, has the potential – even destiny – to change the fate of humanity.

This naturally begs the question: are we living up to the promise of public education in our society? Do our (public) schools encourage students to ‘untie’ their tongues, and unshackle their brains, in order to reach their fullest potential? Are our curriculums conducive to higher learning? Will our children grow up to imbibe the ideals of a perfect society? Will our project of public education open their minds to pluralistic thought? To tolerance and equality? Will they grow up to

further the frontier of thought? Will they be citadels of intellect, and bastions of moral courage?

The short answer, at least presently, is: No.

The problem, in this regard, exists at two distinct levels. First, the curriculum of public educational institutions across Pakistan disseminates an intolerant, narrow-minded and biased (even bigoted) idea of history, politics, religion and even sciences. And second, the 'culture' in most of our leading public educational institutions stuns debate, discourages political speech, deters the dissemination of avante gard ideas, and prohibits questioning beyond the prescribed circumference of faith.

The first of these two issues – curriculum review – is legal in nature, and thus easier to resolve. Under our now (amended) Constitutional scheme (after the 18th Constitutional Amendment), each Province has the power to review the curricula being taught in public schools within its territorial jurisdiction, and prescribe the subject-matter for classroom study. In this regard, while a centralized (Federal) curriculum is determined, for homogenous education across Pakistan, but the Provinces have the constitutional authority to prepare and publish the manuscripts/textbooks (in accordance with the curriculum) for each class. In exercise of this power, the Province of Punjab, for example, had earlier passed a Punjab Curriculum Authority Act, 2012, (for review and selection of textbook manuscripts) and the Punjab Textbook Board Ordinance, 1962 (for printing of the textbooks). In 2015, however, these two statutory authorities were merged into one, through the Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board Act, 2015. And since the curriculum as well as the development of textbooks is governed through this legal instrument, the process of review and overhauling is simply a question of political will. In this regard, to guard against an ideology of bias and bigotry amidst our students, a clear break from the past is needed; an embracing of a curriculum that promotes pluralism, does not vilify other religions or nationalities, does not portray the militants as heroes, does not preach hatred against people of other nationalities and races, and instead encourages the questioning of the age-old ideals of societal restraints.

All this can be done with the stroke of a pen – a singular incident of legislative will, coupled with a concerted exercise of executive authority.

The second issue – discouraging the freedom of thought and expression – is cultural in nature, and thus perhaps harder to ‘fix’. Institutions of public education, all across Pakistan, seem to be pursuing a policy of chilling political speech and participation of students in our national discourse. Student petitions to hold vigils, to organize rallies, to endorse causes, and support movements is discouraged on public school campuses. The administration and faculty of even the most liberal educational institutions are afraid to scratch controversial issues. Teaching comparative religions is forbidden. Saadat Hasan Manto and D.H. Lawrence are perverts. And questioning the policies of an entrenched status quo is heresy.

Some years back, especially after the shooting in Stoneman Douglas High School, students across the United States have taken to streets to protest against a government that is weak on gun laws. And these protests were meaningful enough for the government to consider legislative measures for curbing the gun-lobby.

When was the last time something like that happened in Pakistan?

Under the chilling pretext of taboo issues, our educational institutions have lost sight of the fact that the endeavor of education necessarily entails a conscious effort to engage with and participate in the ongoing national discourse; that student bodies, all through world history, have been the engine of social progress and political development. And that without such participation by students in our socio-political debate, we will be producing a generation of doctors, engineers and lawyers, all of whom are disconnected with the pulse of modernism, and inert as to the growing and grave trends in our society. This impotence of moral and social conscience, will also spell the death of political evolution and institutional progress, without which no country or generation can ever hope to achieve its fullest potential.

For the longest time, we have been told – by politicians, social-workers, and intellectuals – that education is the silver bullet against militancy, intolerance and extremism. That with education, we will be able to overcome the menacing problems that confront our nation today, and will graduate to a life in the promised sunlit uplands of democracy. But if Al-Qaeda members were arrested from the graduate schools of Punjab University and NUST, if political science students from Karachi University were suspects in ethnic target killings, and a group of graduate students ganged up to lynch Mashal Khan in Abdul Wali Khan

University, then we must concede that our educational curriculum and institutions are failing in eradicating the evils of our society. The silver bullet, in the circumstances, is just a myth. And those of us who still have faith in the future of this country, are simply deluding ourselves as to the promise of an educated society.

To stem the rot, and cure an already cancerous malady, our educational curriculum and culture must change. The primary obligation to effect this change rests with the PTI government; and people like Akbar Ayub are part of the problem, not its solution!

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/05-Jan-2020/education-reform>

‘Hunarmand Pakistan’ and Skills Education

By Professor Dr. Muhammad Mukhtar

Hunarmand Pakistan’ is a significant component of the Prime Minister’s Kamyab Jawan National Youth Development Program. The recent launching of this initiative is a definite proof of concept highlighting the importance of skills education (hunarmandi) in the country. Importantly, Pakistan being the only country on the Earth whose creation is tied with the tenets of Islam – the religion supporting peace, prosperity, and the importance of skills through a very famous Prophet saying, “one who earns by struggle is a friend of Allah (Al-Kasib Habibullah).” Skills enhance the earning potentials of people and, as such, bring them closer to Almighty ALLAH. According to another Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) saying, “Seeking halal earning is the (next) Fardh (duty) after the Fardh (Salah).” Youth across the country have an opportunity to enhance their skills for their better earnings through the ‘Hunarmand Pakistan’ the program itself not only corroborates with Islamic values; instead, it brings us closer to the rest of the world.

It is also important to mention here that the promotion of skills education is a global phenomenon, and it crosses religious and geographical contexts. A careful look at the countries having the best gross domestic product (GDP), like the United States, China, Japan, and Germany, is due to the popularization of unique and high-value skills. The emergence of China and India having superiority in their GDP is due to targeted training of their workforce, youth in skills and massive industrialization. Neighboring India has gone a step forward through establishing Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship dedicatedly tasked with “co-ordination of all skill development efforts across the country, removal of disconnect between demand and supply of skilled manpower, building the vocational and technical training framework, skill up-gradation, building of new skills, and innovative thinking not only for existing jobs but also jobs that are to be created.” In the implementation of ‘Hunarmand Pakistan,’ the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training has a crucial role that was generously appreciated by the Prime Minister of Pakistan during the launch ceremony of this initiative.

The 'Hunarmand Pakistan' is no doubt a blessing in disguise for the youth across the country. However, initially, it will be able to cater to the interests of 170,000 youth according to an official statement by the Executive Director, National, Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTTC), an apex federal body serving the cause of skills education in the country since 2005. Besides NAVTTTC, there are several other bodies in the country, promoting skills education. A pertinent question yet to be answered is; do all federal and provincial skills education institutions have similar standards and syllabi aligning with contemporary global demands? Curricular reforms and uniformity of skills education aligning with international standards should be evaluated and implemented for result-oriented skills education. According to the Vice Chancellor, National Skills University, Islamabad, there is an urgent need to establish "Pakistan's Skills Framework" precisely at the model of Singapore. We have to identify priority areas in skills education, reforming curricula starting from basic training to advanced at the graduate levels, and regular evaluation of skilled workforce assimilation in the national and international job markets.

For the success of the Government of Pakistan's 'Skills for All Strategy,' there is an urgent need to establish and define Pakistan's Skills Framework elaborately. Several developed nations have established their skills framework based on indigenous as well as contemporary global demands of the workforce. The Australian Government, Department of Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business identified fifteen skills domains under the umbrella of 'myskills' program. Prominent among these are agriculture & food processing, construction and mining, defense industry, manufacturing & engineering, science & technology, tourism and hospitality, and so on. The Singapore Skills Framework is more elaborate, having built-in flexibility and worth following for a country like Pakistan. This framework takes into consideration the sector-specific skills information, career pathways for students, relevant occupations/job roles associated with skills as the learners' progress in a skill domain. It also provides a complete trajectory of related training programs, even for working professionals to enhance their skills and job-specific training. Currently, the skills framework in Singapore has 33 domains having elaborate information about each one. Importantly, the country has developed an editable HR templates based on newly emerging jobs to get them classified in preexisting fields or being the new one. In comparing the Australian and Singaporean skills framework, the agriculture and food processing is further divided into food manufacturing, food services, landscape in Singapore skills domains. Importantly, Singapore Skills Framework

comprehensively defines vertical as well as lateral progression in the respective field of skills, including opportunities for skilled people. For example, in Singapore, for people adopting the food manufacturing track, there are four major types of jobs in production; quality assurance & quality control; research & development followed by business development. Importantly, based on the skills of workers, 22 job roles are also defined.

Pakistani youth is fortunate to have an impressive jumpstart through 'Hunarmand Pakistan'. However, to move it forward, concrete and sustainable planning will be required. A newly established, first public sector university in the country, the National Skills University, Islamabad despite its infrastructural and governance challenges could be the most suitable higher education institute to host experts entrusted with the task of evaluating and establishing standards for skills education in the country through a collaborative effort with the NAVTTC, National Technology Council and several provincial organizations. This university, as a seat of higher learning in skills education, could be the most trustworthy partner with international organizations and academia having their focus on skills education. Moreover, every skill program should provide passage to progress further, culminating in the bachelor's degree program a terminal qualification for most graduates as being envisaged by the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan.

The writer is currently serving as Vice Chancellor, National Skills University Islamabad, and previously served as Vice Chancellor of four universities in Pakistan. E-mail: mukhtar.muhammad@gmail.com

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/29-Jan-2020/hunarmand-pakistan-and-skills-education>

WORLD

US-Europe Relations Turning Sour By **Rashid A Mughal**

RELATIONS between US and Europe are heading for another chilly path. The chill started when Trump imposed tariffs on European steel and aluminium products two years ago. The bitterness never settled down but in fact has been escalating. Germany last week accused the United States of interfering in its internal affairs in an increasingly angry spat over Washington's decision to impose sanctions on companies involved with a major project to supply Western Europe with Russian gas. Moscow and the European Union also issued statements criticizing the sanctions a day after President Donald Trump signed on asset freezing and visa restrictions on those involved in the Nord Stream 2 project.

US lawmakers are seeking to stymie what they regard as an increasing reliance on Russian energy in Western Europe by targeting the project, which aims to double the amount of Russian natural gas reaching Germany via a pipeline under the Baltic Sea. The sanctions target contractors working to lay pipes for Nord Stream 2- a 10 billion-euro (\$11-billion) project expected to be completed in early 2020...and another Russian gas project, TurkStream. So far full details of the sanctions have not yet been released and US officials have 60 days to disclose the names of the companies and individuals concerned. In the first sign that the sanctions are beginning to bite, Swiss contractor – “Allseas”, executing the project, suspended its Nord Stream 2 activities while it awaited clarification from the US authorities. However, Nord Stream 2 spokesman said, in reaction to the statement from Allseas, that it would continue to work until the pipeline was finished. Although US Congress overwhelmingly backed the sanctions, there was criticism from some lawmakers of a move that in effect punishes Nato allies such as Germany. The move brought angry reactions from Berlin, Moscow and Brussels. An EU spokesman said the Bloc was opposed “as a matter of principle to the imposition of sanctions against European companies engaged in legal activities. The German government reacted most forcefully with Chancellor Angle

Merkel's spokesperson, Ulrike Demmer saying Berlin rejected "these sorts of extra territorial sanctions .They will hit German and European companies and constitute interference in our internal affairs". Vice Chancellor and Finance Minister, Olaf Scholz said the sanctions were an infringement of sovereignty. However, he said, "There would not be a tit-for-tat reaction. It is up to the companies involved in the construction of the pipeline to take the next decision." Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Maria Zakharova accused the United States of pushing an ideology that hindered global trade, adding on her Facebook page: "Soon they will demand that we stop breathing". But the United States is not the only nation to question the project-Ukraine, Poland and some Baltic nations have also expressed doubts.

"Despite the involvement in the Nord Stream 2 project of companies from some EU countries, this pipeline has never been a European or EU project" said Polish Deputy Foreign Minister Pawel Jablonski. "Instead, it remains an instrument for the realization of Russian economic and potentially, military policy". Ukraine worries that the new pipeline would cut it out of the gas supply business and allow Russia to ratchet up pressure. The US-German ties are an important link in its European relations. But during the first year under Trump, Washington-Berlin ties have been changing from a state of democratic alliance to one of fierce rivalry, which is actually a new normal in the Western camp. A slew of Trump's foreign policies, including his withdrawal from the Paris climate accord, stress on trade protection and opposition to globalization, have gradually coalesced into an important force of the unfolding trend of anti-globalization. For many European leaders including German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Trump's policies and ideas lack political correctness, which are just unacceptable. In addition, the two heads of state failed to reach consensus on trade, security and rule-making cooperation several times which signals an impending breakup between Washington and Berlin as well as a wider Europe. Merkel and Macron aim at supporting a multilateral framework, deepening global and bilateral cooperation and projecting Europe's role in global governance. If they can successfully spread their ideas and methods of governance, Trump's influence will further weaken and is likely to put pressure on the US leader to change his policies. However, it seems the American President will not change his concepts and policies, which will further sour relations between the US and Europe and weaken the West-led international order. The US is flowing against the tide of globalization by advocating protectionism to seek its own profits and that will leave itself less room for development.

Recently the US government has been threatening to increase tariffs on imported goods, as an act of trade protectionisms and imposing its unreasonable will on other countries. US President Donald Trump holds that though his country is the world's largest economy yet is a "victim of free trade" and has been treated unfairly in the global trade system. US has inappropriately adopted trade protectionism as the only way to solve trade frictions but this move is supported by nobody, even its own allies. At the last meeting of the WTO Council for Trade, the EU, Japan, South Korea and Australia warned that the trade barriers set up by the US will threaten the rules based on multilateral trade system. British International Trade Secretary, Lian Fox told the BBC, "The UK is a firm supporter of the WTO and his country will abide by international trade rules. Obviously the "national security" excuse raised by US, is invalid. The purpose of the US is to nakedly protect its industry through increasing tariffs, which is sabotaging the rules for fair trade". All these clear responses are undoubtedly a strong blow to the US. Without rules, there will be no order. As one of the major makers of international trade rules, the US has become an obvious breaker of them judging from what it is doing, presently. "International trade should be established upon rules not strength or power, said former WTO Director-General Pascal Lamy, pointing out that the rules based multilateral trade system might need some adjustments, but prerequisite is to first consolidate it.

— The writer is former DG (Emigration) and consultant ILO, IOM.

Russian Foreign Policy: Balance Sheet 2019 – Analysis By Chris Cheang

As a new decade dawns, Russian foreign policy can boast some successes, mainly in Europe, the Middle East and Africa. However, apart from China, Moscow's ties with the Asia-Pacific region are below par even though there is considerable potential for a stronger relationship.

More than five years after the annexation of the Crimea and separatism in eastern Ukraine, some European countries appear to have become anxious about the state of the European Union's relations with Russia. This has been epitomised by the efforts of French President Emmanuel Macron to reach out to Russia. He has accepted President Vladimir Putin's invitation to Moscow to attend the 75th anniversary celebrations of victory in the Second World War on 9 May 2020.

President Donald Trump has also been invited. It remains to be seen whether he will take it up. Victory Day, as this annual celebration is described in Russia, is a very important day in the history of post-Soviet Russia. Attendance by any major Western leader would be a significant symbolic boost to President Putin's standing with his people and to Russia's prestige – it would be seen as the end of Western diplomatic isolation of Russia.

Back to G-8 After Europe Thaw?

President Macron also supported President Trump's stand that Russia should be readmitted into the G-7, which was known as the G-8 before Russia was expelled following the annexation of the Crimea. President Trump will host the G-7 in 2020.

President Macron has also been active in reviving the Normandy Four Format–Russia, France, Germany, Ukraine–to resolve the separatist conflict. The leaders of these countries met in Paris on 9 December 2019, after a three-year pause.

This meeting was preceded by a Russo-Ukrainian exchange of prisoners in early September. Both sides agreed to a full and comprehensive ceasefire before the

end of 2019. They also agreed to work towards local elections over the next four months.

President Putin has long been aware that the current state of Russo-Ukrainian relations is a major obstacle to normalising Russia's relations with the EU.

Stronger Ties with Turkey

A NATO member, Turkey's decision to purchase Russia's S-400 missile system and receipt of its delivery in summer 2019 created dissension within NATO. The United States has threatened to impose sanctions against Ankara. On the other hand, Moscow sees the Turkish move as a foreign policy success for Russia.

If Turkish threat to close strategic US bases in the country should sanctions be imposed on it is carried out, the Russians are likely to celebrate. Since NATO is considered a security threat by Russia, any issue which weakens its unity is certainly to Moscow's benefit.

Significant Role in Syria

Russian military intervention on behalf of President Bashir Assad in 2015 undoubtedly averted his fall from power and ensured that the conflict would not contribute further to instability in the Middle East. In their rivalry, Iran and Israel cannot act independently of each other in Syria, without Russian agreement or support.

Iran supported President Assad in the civil war and has mobilised resources to assist the Syrian president. Israel considers this a security threat. In any case, enduring peace and stability in Syria cannot be achieved without Russian participation. In that regard, Russia's prestige and status as a reliable ally in the region have risen as a consequence.

Return to Africa

President Putin spent quite some time at the Russia-Africa summit in Sochi in October 2019, the first of its kind in Moscow's external relations. Putin reportedly attended 16 bilateral meetings over two days. After the then USSR's collapse, Moscow's interaction with Africa decreased. This summit represented a concerted effort to revive links with the continent.

Economic ties are weak, with Russian exports to Africa totalling about US\$100 billion in 2009–2018, most of that with Algeria and Egypt. Nevertheless, the

summit saw the attendance of 43 heads of state, along with delegations from all 54 African nations. Russia can be expected to step up its engagement with Africa, which might not want to become overly dependent on China, the US or the EU for its development.

Gains in Asia-Pacific

Russia and ASEAN do not have any contentious issues and hence, the potential to raise their relationship has always been there. Russia-ASEAN relations received a boost from the rise in trade volume in 2018, growing by 18.4% and amounting to \$19.8 billion. Nevertheless, compared to ASEAN's trade with some of its major dialogue partners, Russia's position remains one of potential yet to be fully realised, let alone exploited.

ASEAN's largest trading partner is China (\$483 billion) followed by the EU (\$288 billion), the US (\$262.4 billion), Japan (\$230 billion), South Korea (US\$160.8 billion) and India (\$81 billion).

Russo-India relations, already traditionally close, were enhanced with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's September 2019 visit to Vladivostok, during which he extended a \$1 billion credit line to develop the Russian Far East, the first time India had undertaken such a step.

This move, along with other agreements to strengthen bilateral links, testified to the resilience of Russia's ties with India. At the same time, Indian conversations with the policy strategists in the US are becoming more frequent and purposeful, which clearly indicated New Delhi is not putting all its eggs in one basket.

It is however with Japan that Russia's relations still have to be normalised. Without Japanese trade, technology and assistance to develop the Russian Far East, Russia must logically look to China. The official opening of the Power of Siberia gas pipeline in early December 2019 to serve China's energy needs only accentuates Russia's growing dependence on China.

The seemingly intractable Kurile Islands' issue stands in the way of a normalisation of relations between Russia and Japan. Both sides have been working hard to move forward; Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi met his Russian counterpart on 19 December 2019 in Moscow, their third meeting in four months.

Blow to Russian Prestige

The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) decided in early December 2019 to impose a four-year ban on Russian teams competing under their flag at the Olympic and Paralympic Games of 2020 and 2022 and the football World Cup in 2022, among other global sporting events, for doping non-compliance.

WADA's decision is a major blow to Russian prestige and indirectly to its foreign policy. Russia, like its predecessor USSR, is a major global sporting nation. Not surprisingly, President Putin argued during his annual year-end press conference that the ban was not justified. In his opinion, bans should be handed out on an individual, not collective, basis, adding that the decision was political and unfair.

Prospects for 2020

Although the trajectory of Russia's relations with China seems positive and the two countries are expanding their economic and political cooperation, Moscow is not maximising its potential in the Asia-Pacific region. The stalemate in the Kurile Islands' issue and the lack of a strong and broad-based relationship with ASEAN are not helping Russia to increase its presence and role in Northeast and Southeast Asia.

In the wake of the uncertainty worldwide emanating from President Donald Trump's unconventional foreign policy, Russia can capitalise on the opportunities to project more responsibility and a wider stake in a peaceful international community. At the same time, the Russian economy's performance is below par and can continue to pose a challenge to even a strong leader like Vladimir Putin.

*Chris Cheang is a Senior Fellow with the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Nanyang Technological University (NTU), Singapore where his research domain covers Russia and Eurasia.

Source: <https://www.eurasiareview.com/01012020-russian-foreign-policy-balance-sheet-2019-analysis/>

Climate 2020 | Editorial

THE decade past had begun with predictions of an impending climate change catastrophe, and it has ended with the reality of not paying closer attention to those warnings. Apocalyptic scenarios had been imagined by evidence-backed scientists — and not doomsday merchants — who foretold that the extreme weather patterns would only worsen in the coming years, as global temperatures kept increasing and sea levels continued to rise. Ten years ago, extreme heatwaves were documented in parts of Africa, the Middle East and Russia; a drought gripped the Amazon River basin; and heavy snowstorms swept across North America. In Pakistan, powerful floods caused by heavy rainfall led to over 2,000 deaths, while millions of others were displaced. They were forced into becoming climate change refugees, as their homes and livelihoods were swept away by the waters. Now, as we enter the new decade, rising global temperatures have broken all previous records, with many countries recording extreme weather patterns. In 2019, hurricanes struck the island of Puerto Rico; Europe suffered two deadly heatwaves; and cyclones devastated the Bahamas and Japan. Meanwhile, thousands of fires gripped the Amazon rainforest in Brazil and bordering Bolivia in August. And ferocious bush fires first sparked in November continue to rage in Australia.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that climate change has been the burning issue of the previous decade, at a time of other great social and political upheaval. In September 2019, millions of people from 150 countries participated in the Climate Strike. But despite all the talk and the meetings, and despite increasing awareness and activism around the issue, it does not seem like the change we need is here yet. It is time to reimagine our global economies, because the current systems for creating wealth are simply not sustainable. Right now, as wildfires sweep through some parts of the world, other areas are suffering from extreme cold. In just a few days, Bangladesh has witnessed over 50 deaths this winter. In Pakistan, a cold wave is sweeping through the country, particularly hitting hard the northern areas, with the prime minister directing his party's governments in KP and Punjab to provide temporary shelter to the homeless. As we welcome the new year, the world's leaders and decision-makers must put climate at the forefront of their agendas. May 2020 be the year of decisive action, and not merely words.

Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1525815/climate-2020>

Another US Adventurism | Editorial

The assassination of Iranian general Qassem Soleimani, Tehran's top security and intelligence commander, is an act of war by Donald Trump. The action was carried out in Baghdad, violating all agreements with the Iraqi government. Both Iran and Iraq will retaliate. Trump has been heading for war since tearing up the nuclear deal with Iran, and if he succeeds will create a bigger war than we have seen in the Middle East. It will draw in major players across the region including Israel, Saudi Arabia and possibly Russia.

It's hard not to see the recent attacks and now the assassination of Iran's top general Soleimani as a way for Trump to distract from impeachment but if that's the case, he and the Pentagon may have just made the biggest mistake since the Gulf of Tonkin in Vietnam.

And Iran has already made it clear that the assassination will not go unaccounted for. Soleimani had been the head of the Quds Force for more than two decades. He was one of the men most responsible for defeating the Islamic State (IS) in Iraq and Syria. And Tehran's anger is understandable as the assassinated leader was the second most powerful figure.

The echoes of threat revenge from the Iranian President Hassan Rouhani mean that the situation in the region will escalate dramatically. Unfortunately, most Americans won't understand the gravity of the drone attack. After this high profile killing, the political, security and military red lines of the region will be transformed.

Instead of condemning the attack, the American media, in general, is fanning the flames. The recent article in one of the leading newspaper, i.e., The New York Times by Michael Crowley, Falih Hassan and Eric Schmitt is a textbook case study of war propaganda. Sadly, the cheerleader of the liberal media, the paper will question Donald Trump on everything. However, when it comes to war with Iran that could inflame the entire region, it broadcast the Pentagon's statement almost word for word without questioning of it.

For Trump, the gamble makes perfect sense because he is sure of the role media will play should any war or conflict surfaces. He can go to dangerous

limits, thanks to the war hysteria successfully created by the American media and the incompetence of a Democratic party that has done nothing to oppose it. The regrettable and misplaced sense of petty revenge that drove the attack will have far-reaching consequences for the region.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/04-Jan-2020/another-us-adventurism>

The World in 2020 By Shahid Javed Burki

It was inevitable that the end of one decade and the beginning of another would produce a great deal of commentary on the state of the world: its past, present and future. There is no particular reason to treat a decade differently than any 10-year period. What makes it different is that it affords an opportunity to reflect on the state affairs in the country of residence or the world at large by analysts of different persuasion. Let us begin with the world. There is near-consensus among most analysts that the state of the world was precarious at the time the new decade began. However, there were differences in the way the future was looked at by the several commentators who offered their views. I will first review what experts see as the 21st century's second decade drew to a close and the third began, and then discuss how the future looks to me at this time.

Any full examination of the state of affairs must cover a lot of ground. It should look at the composite picture or separately at different aspects. These could and should include the state of politics, economics, society, and international relations. The last means looking at the way a particular place or a country deals with the outside world, focusing on the places that matter for it. For Pakistan, development of its relations with its immediate neighbours — Afghanistan, China, India and Iran — would be consequential. Also of importance would be the country's dealings with the Middle East, in particular with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. What happens in the United States as that country heads towards another presidential election will impact Pakistan both directly and indirectly. Up until recently, the United States was the major source of external finance for Pakistan. Pakistan had high rates of economic growth when large capital flows became available from America. Upon taking office in January 2017, President Donald Trump dramatically reduced the amount his government was providing. That may not change even if he loses the November 2020 election. However, Pakistan, like most countries and regions around the world would be influenced by the direction the United States takes.

In looking outside its borders, Pakistan must not forget that some 10 million of its citizens or those who are of Pakistani-origin but live abroad, also influence the way the country to which they once belonged, functions. The most important impact is the remittances they send the families they left behind. Remittances helped millions of households climb out of poverty and enter the lower middle

class. They also became politically more active; their economic and political rise was instrumental in the electoral success of Imran Khan.

Most of this flow comes from the oil exporting countries in the Middle East. Millions of Pakistanis have gone over the years to these places, filling the wide worker-gaps as they began to develop as the incomes from the sale of oil began to be invested in building what were once relatively backward economies. Most of these countries limited the time the imported workers could spend in their place of work. There was fear that long stays would lead to the migrants to demand citizenship rights. As a recent book by three sociologists put it, the countries built “nations with non-nationals.” That was the title of their book.

With that as the background, I will turn to a discussion of the way the world looks, as 2019 gives way to 2020. “Apocalypse is not yet upon our world as the 2010s draw to an end, but there are portents of disorder,” wrote Michiko Kakutani in an essay contributed to a special issue of The New York Times’ Sunday Review of December 29. She once was the book editor at the newspaper. She titled her essay, “The End of Normal”. She continued: “The hopes that nourished during the opening years of the decade — hopes that America was on a progressive path toward growing equality and freedom, hopes that technology held answers to some of our pressing problems — have given way, with what feels like head-swiveling speed, to a dark and divisive era. Fear and distrust are ascendant now. At home, hate crime violence reached a 16-year high in 2018, the FBI reported. Abroad there were big geopolitical shifts. There was the rise of nationalist movements and a backlash against globalization on both sides of the Atlantic. The liberal post-World War II order — based on economic integration and international institutions — began to unravel, and since 2017, the United States has not only abdicated its role as a stabilizing leader on the global stage, but is also sowing unpredictability and chaos abroad.”

This is by and large a correct diagnosis of the state of the world at the close of 2019 but leaves open the question as to how this was caused. Should the blame be put at the door of President Donald Trump who moved in the White House in January 2017 after an election, the legitimacy of which remains in doubt? Was the unexpected triumph of Trump the result of massive interference by the Russian state or was it the consequence of the President’s correct reading of the fear that had taken hold among a large segment of the population about their economic future? If the latter reading was correct, was it the result of the

relentless working of the forces unleashed by the process of globalisation? Or were the turn of events in the late 2010s caused by what economists call “cycles” to which all economies are subject?

It is important to find the right set of answers to these questions. That would help in reading how the future is likely to unfold in the 2020s.

Globalisation and its consequences was by far the most important reason for the turmoil in the Western part of the world. While these countries have strong institutions of governance, they did not have the institutional infrastructure to deal with the pressures a progressively closely-knit world brought. Three of these were important. Restructuring of the global production system meant factory-closures and loss of jobs. New technologies meant low wage growth among manual workers. Easing of controls on the movement of people brought people of colour, speaking different languages and following different faiths to the countries that were essentially white and Christian.

It is virtually impossible to reverse the trends unleashed by globalisation. The “Brexit” move is an attempt to accomplish this but it would seriously damage the British economy and possibly compromise its political structure. However, the perceived adverse consequences of globalisation can be accommodated with better informed public policy.

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Trump's Strategic Distraction By Hussain Nadim

In his seemingly unpredictable foreign policy, President Trump is rather becoming predictable. Over his tenure, and especially in the current escalation with Iran, he has opted for “Strategic Distraction” as a strategy to turn the metal hot before hammering it. It works especially well when it comes to decades old unresolved issues that need to be greased.

For instance, Trump raised the ante with North Korea, only to later bargain from a position of strength. He also came out hard on Pakistan initially, but later developed very close working relations with Prime Minister Imran Khan on Afghanistan. On Iran, it appears that President Trump is following the same script to raise the stakes so high that negotiations become the only option. This is because even the war as Clausewitz puts it is the “continuation of politics by other means”.

For policy analysts around the world that are scrambling to make sense of Trump's radical move, the important thing is not to get bogged down into the “core” of the crisis. Instead, the key is to try to find answers at the event horizon or at the periphery. Because if it is indeed the strategic distraction policy that is underplay, the real politics is being conducted elsewhere than the epicentre of the US-Iran escalation.

Another way to understand President Trump's escalation is through game theory. This is because, in the past few decades, the US academia and policy community has quantified national security research and policy. This essentially means that most of the US foreign policy strategy is driven through a set of “payoff matrix” under different game theory scenarios. As useful as game theory is when it comes to policy making, its structured approach also makes it vulnerable to being cracked by opposing policy strategists.

For instance, it is not hard to examine Trump's escalation on Iran as a classic example of Hawk and Dove game where the US tried to change the status quo by altering the payoff matrix through the targeted assassination of General Qasem in Baghdad. In such a game, the timing and location are all important

variables to ensure that Iran has limited ability to directly respond with a full-out war. For Iran, it is a “damned if you do, damned if you don’t” like scenario. It cannot afford a full-out war, but it cannot afford to do nothing either. A gradual and asymmetrical response targeting US soldiers in Iraq and Syria including damaging US interests in Afghanistan and elsewhere could be on the cards. Iran may also opt for a very mellow response and instead build discursive power as the global narrative is overwhelmingly in favour of Iran after the US aggression.

Similarly, for the rest of the world and the regional countries, Trump’s radical move has caught them off-balance changing the policy and threat matrix. In the case of Pakistan and Afghanistan, for instance, Trump’s move on Iran has a direct consequence on Afghanistan’s peace process. NATO also finds itself in a strange place as it may be forced to be part of the escalation with Iran.

Essentially, through putting the entire international community off-balance, President Trump has created a fluid situation whereby the time the international community finds its footing, the status-quo on the issue will already be changed.

The situation in the Middle East is going to remain in a flux for the next few weeks with chances of escalation. Eventually, however, the escalation will have to lead to a political solution that breaks the status quo on the prolonged tensions between the US and Iran. The entire situation will, however, require a serious brinkmanship from President Trump and support from the international community to push for a dialogue.

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Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2132427/6-trumps-strategic-distraction/>

Iran-US Climbdown | Editorial

AFTER several days in the Middle East following America's assassination of Iranian Gen Qasem Soleimani in Baghdad last week, where at one point it seemed the region was poised on the brink of another disastrous war, the temperature came down several notches on Wednesday.

The day had started with a bang, quite literally, as news broke of Iranian missile strikes targeting two American bases in Iraq. It seemed the moment many had feared was here.

However, later in the day Donald Trump — whose rash decision had ignited this latest episode — spoke to the cameras, declaring that “all is well”. It may have been an anticlimax, but a welcome one, and the international community heaved a sigh of relief.

Read: Trump tones down war rhetoric, announces more ‘punishing sanctions’ on Iran

Iranian media reported “80 American terrorists” had been killed in the strikes; Trump claimed “all of our soldiers are safe”.

Regardless of the true picture on the ground, it was clear that both sides had made their public statements and backed down, for now.

The Trump administration has, till date, been big on bravado and light on solid strategic policy, with the US president's Twitter statesmanship confounding allies and foes alike.

However, in this case perhaps wiser members of the administration have prevailed on their boss that a full-blown war with Iran is not in America's interest.

Though there is no match where technological advantage and firepower between the American and Iranian militaries are concerned, with the former having a clear edge, Trump's generals know that Tehran can cause major havoc to US interests in the Mideast.

The Iranians have said previously that American bases in the region are within their reach, and a brief preview of this was witnessed in the Iraq strikes. Moreover, there are also signs that America's Gulf Arab allies are genuinely panicked that if the situation escalates, Tehran's missiles could rain down on US bases on their territory.

On the other hand, the Iranian establishment must also have realised that while it needed to take public action to avenge Soleimani's death, total war against America would be inadvisable considering Tehran's feeble economic position and relative weakness compared to the US military machine. Therefore, both sides have managed to save face and avert a bloody showdown.

From here on, the international community will need to play a greater role to de-escalate the situation between Washington and Tehran. If the US continues to advocate for regime change in Iran and tighten an already suffocating sanctions regime against the country, it is highly unlikely the Islamic Republic will soften its tone. Moreover, Tehran should reconsider leaving the nuclear accord; and it should keep the doors of dialogue open, as in the arena of international relations situations can and do change very quickly. The danger of conflict has receded, but by no means is the situation in the Mideast back to normal.

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Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1527444/iran-us-climbdown>

An Impending Crisis in South Asia By Sehar Kamran

The difference between patriotism and nationalism is that the patriot is proud of his country for what it does, and the nationalist is proud of his country no matter what it does; the first attitude creates a feeling of responsibility, but the second a feeling of blind arrogance that leads to war.”

Last month (December 2019), the Indian Parliament passed a controversial Citizen Amendment Act (CAA), dubbed as the “anti-Muslim law” as it grants citizenship to “persecuted” minorities – except Muslims – who have flown from neighbouring countries including Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan to India.

This move hasn’t taken place in isolation and is hardly a surprise. In fact, it comes at the heels of publication of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) list in the Northeastern state of Assam which declared 1.9 million people as “illegal” migrants. It is speculated that the NRC will be enforced nationwide against anyone who doesn’t have the documents to prove that their ancestors lived in India, and States across the country have been asked to prepare detention centres to house these “illegals”. The law is controversial because it provides protection to Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians, but renders only Muslims stateless, who can face deportation or indefinite period of internment. In addition, India is also planning to conduct a National Population Registration survey from 1st April to 30th September that will make it easier to create the NRC, apart from the national census scheduled to be held next year.

Ever-since coming into power, the hyper-nationalist regime of Narendra Modi has been working towards a systematic extermination of Muslims from ‘Hindu’ India. Whether it is the state-sponsored cow vigilantism or mob lynching, the fascist Indian government is rendering Muslim citizens stateless under the garb of the NRC, terming them as “termites” and “foreign infiltrators” as stated by Home Minister Amit Shah. In fact, the recent steps such as revocation of Article 370 of the Muslim-majority state of Jammu and Kashmir, and plans to build a Hindu temple at the site of the Babri Masjid, which was demolished in 1992 by a mob of Hindu nationalists, are all in line with RSS-led BJP’s commitment to build a “Hindu” nation.

Currently, new detention camps along the lines of Nazi camps are being set up across India. In July last year, Nityanand Rai, Minister of State for Home Affairs, stated that all the states had been asked to establish detention centres in accordance with the Model Detention Centre Manual prepared by the government.

The tactics adopted by the Nazi regime and today's RSS-led BJP leadership in New Delhi are eerily familiar. Dehumanizing a large section of a minority community of Muslims, disseminating black propaganda through mass and social media, inciting communal violence, and increasing tensions at the border to promote Hindutva for enlisting public support and win elections have been some of the tactics of the Indian government since assuming power in 2014. So much so that recently, a German student was deported from the country after he participated in the anti-CAA protests as he was carrying a placard referring to the events which took place in his homeland stating "1933-1945. We have been there."

Declaring Muslims as "illegals" in their own country will only lead to creation of a refugee crisis, in this already troubled region. This humanitarian crisis will result in anarchy and chaos, which can even be used by non-state actors to spread their own agenda, and plunge the entire region into new conflicts, and can even provoke threats of a nuclear war.

As a result of these government measures, there have been widespread protests in the country which have been clamped down by the regime using brute force and communication blockade. Internet has been shut down in various parts of India more than it has been done anywhere in the world. Even after over five months, internet remains largely suspended across the Kashmir valley. On 31st December, broadband services were partially restored for government-run hospitals and SMS facilities on all mobile phones were reestablished. These authoritative measures by the current regime only expose the façade of its claim of being the biggest secular democracy. The racism, bigotry and ignorance demonstrated by the government are indeed astounding.

What is dangerous is the relative silence of the world community regarding Indian racism and fascism. Organization of the Islamic Cooperation is the only international forum that has "expressed its concern over the recent developments

pertaining to both the issue of citizenship rights and the Babri Masjid case.” Though the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom raised its concerns over the proposed legislation even before it was endorsed by the Rajya Sabha, but nothing more or substantial has been done. Similarly, the European Union has so far maintained silence on this impending humanitarian crisis.

The silence of the United Nations and other humanitarian organizations raises questions: Are Muslims the children of a lesser God? Are Muslims’ rights not human rights? Why Muslims are being persecuted globally? Why Muslims’ blood is considered cheaper than water? Is being Muslim one’s biggest crime?

The responsibility lies upon the international community, especially the UN, which was created while the world still reeled from the after-effects of the holocaust and the systematic dehumanization of a religious group. History is once again repeating itself, now in India. It needs to be seen whether the world community is able to stop an impending humanitarian disaster in the form of a refugee crisis, which will negatively impact millions of lives, and wreak havoc on the peace and security of the region, or it will continue to act as mute spectator until it is too late.

The writer is the President of Centre for Pakistan and Gulf Studies (CPGS) and member of the Senate Forum for Policy Research (SFPR) from 2018-2021. She has also served as a member Senate of Pakistan for the term 2012-2018.

Senator

Sehar Kamran

Ever-since coming into power, the hyper-nationalist regime of Narendra Modi has been working towards a systematic extermination of Muslims from ‘Hindu’ India.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/11-Jan-2020/an-impending-crisis-in-south-asia>

Towards De-Escalation? | Editorial

AFTER acting in a berserk manner, President Trump now appears to be softening his approach as far as handling of the Gulf crisis is concerned. In a televised address on Wednesday in response to Iran's missile attacks, he announced more "punishing" economic sanctions but also extended an olive branch to the "people and leaders" of Iran to work together for "shared priorities". Iran launched strikes on two US military bases in Iraq in response to the killing of top Iranian General Qasem Soleimani in a US drone strike last week.

Though Trump defended his action claiming that Americans should be extremely grateful and happy with the outcome (drone attack killing Iranian general) but there are clear indications that universal disapproval and condemnation of the move has forced the US leader to review his policy that was fast pushing the region to a full-fledged war. The killing was criticized by the UN, European leaders and even closest allies of Washington like Israel adopted a policy of distancing from the act after gauging the massive reaction and mood in Iran and also reaction of the global community. A response from Tehran was due as Iranian leadership cannot afford to sit calmly over killing of a commander seen by majority of Iranians as their hero. However, experts have viewed Iran's move as a measured response, saying that it had deliberately avoided US military casualties to prevent the crisis from escalating out of control while still signalling Iranian resolve. In an apparent attempt to pacify growing anger of his people over US killing of the general, Iranian leader Ayatollah Khamenei described the missile strikes on military bases in Iraq as a slap in the face of the US amidst claims that these killed 80 Americans.

Trump confirmed no Americans were harmed in the Iranian attacks and suggested Washington might not carry out immediate retaliation. It is understood that notwithstanding the public mood and sentiments of the Iranian leadership, Tehran cannot afford a direct confrontation with the United States in conventional terms but strategists say it can definitely harm the US interests in the region in a variety of manner. Iran has proxies and also built the largest stockpile of ballistic missiles in the Middle East and its Revolutionary Guards fields a fleet of missile-armed speedboats and midget submarines it can deploy against US military ships or commercial tankers to disrupt the flow of oil in Gulf waters, where Washington says Tehran attacked six tankers last year. However, despite all this,

US Vice President Mike Pence claimed in a television interview that “intelligence” indicated that Iran had asked its allied militias not to attack US targets. This policy of restraint at a time of rising domestic anger is appreciable as it would help calm down tension and avoid its transformation into a direct conflict that could have consequences for the entire region and the world beyond. Markets have also responded positively to the lowering of rhetoric with stock markets around the world recovering their previous losses and prices of both oil and gold going down. As for more sanctions on Iran, these are unlikely to serve any additional purpose as Tehran is already under heavy sanctions. These have so far failed to help materialize their stated objectives and instead antagonized Iran further and a situation has reached where the country has scrapped its nuclear accord with world powers.

Trump is calling for negotiations for a new accord but the possibility is remote if Washington does not change its hard stance of giving almost nothing to Iran and demanding too much. Despite indications of some relaxation of tension, the danger is still there due to complexity of the situation and vested interests of some powers. Therefore, it is responsibility of the influential members of the international community and especially neighbouring countries to make coordinated efforts for peaceful resolution of the conflict. Prime Minister Imran Khan has done well by directing the Foreign Minister to visit Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United States to contribute towards efforts for easing of the tension. Pakistan would be one of the most affected countries in case a war breaks out and therefore, mere declaration of the intent not to use the territory would not serve our cause. Contacts should also be established with countries like China, Turkey and Russia for consultation on ways and means to avoid escalation of the conflict.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/towards-de-escalation/>

Sultan Qaboos | Editorial

Sultan Qaboos, a towering figure who transformed the Persian Gulf nation of Oman into a modern state in five decades of unbroken rule, has left for his heavenly abode. His passing leaves a huge vacuum in a nation of 4.6 million, which his successor will find hard to fill. The elderly patriarch, during half a century that he stayed on at the helm, introduced massive developments in his country and played a vital part in maintaining stability in a neighbourhood riven by conflicts.

Sultan Qaboos will forever be known for being the great moderniser of Oman and a key arbitrator between feuding neighbours, both in times of war and peace. When he took charge in 1970, Oman was mostly underdeveloped. But within a short span, he embarked upon a massive drive to change the country's fortunes by ploughing oil money back into building vital infrastructure, educational institutions, hospitals, banks, and air and seaports.

The National, an Abu Dhabi-based English-language newspaper, made an apt comment: 'Sultan Qaboos was famously a foreign policy pragmatist under whose leadership Oman maintained friendly ties with every country in the neighbourhood, refusing to take sides even during times of duress. He believed that such a positive approach was beneficial not just to Oman but to everyone in the Middle East. What makes his pragmatism even more laudable is that despite being a friend of the West and a military man – he was an alumnus of the Sandhurst Military Academy in Britain – he worked strenuously on the principle of pacifism even with awkward neighbours.'

Sultan Qaboos' greatest legacy, perhaps, will be the peaceful and stable Oman he has left behind. Now it's up to Haitham bin Tariq Al Said, a cousin of the late sultan, who has stepped into the deceased leader's shoes, to promote the peace agenda of his predecessor.

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Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2135863/6-sultan-qaboos/>

US on IHK | Editorial

WHILE New Delhi is quick to brush off Pakistani criticism of its human rights violations in India-held Kashmir, the fact is that when the US censures New Delhi for the same reason, such critiques sting. And when such censure is made public ahead of an official US visit, Indian feathers are likely to be ruffled more than usual.

Tweeting a few days before her visit, Alice Wells, the State Department's top diplomat for South and Central Asia, who is due in New Delhi today, said that the US remains "concerned by detention of political leaders and residents, and internet restrictions" that the Indian government has put in place in the occupied region. Moreover, Ms Wells hoped for "a return to normalcy" in IHK.

For the BJP mandarins who insist 'all is well' there, this rather mild criticism from the world's sole superpower is unlikely to go down well, and it will be interesting to see if the issue is brought up during Ms Wells' visit.

India is desperately trying to show the world that things are running normally in IHK, when clearly this is not the case. The internet blockade has been in force for over 160 days, crippling daily life in the region. However, New Delhi recently organised a 'guided tour' of occupied Kashmir for foreign diplomats, an exercise that was boycotted by envoys of the EU, even though the US ambassador participated.

The EU diplomats apparently turned down the invitation because they were not allowed to meet detained Kashmiri politicians. If India has nothing to hide, why is it not allowing European officials to freely tour IHK and interact with people?

Moreover, last year a group of far-right members of the European Parliament were invited to visit IHK by Indian NGOs; the trip was little more than a farce as some of the most xenophobic and Islamophobic parties of Europe were invited to tell the world that everything was wonderful in IHK. It is hoped that the US presses the Modi regime to end the siege of Kashmir.

The communications blockade has destroyed the region's economy and made the lives of ordinary Kashmiris even more miserable as they remain mostly cut off

from the world. The brutal treatment of Kashmiris, as well as the Islamophobic citizenship law and national register, have exposed the BJP for what it is: a band of bigots masquerading in democratic garb.

Published in Dawn, January 15th, 2020

Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1528395/us-on-ihk>

Dealing With Global Security Challenges By

Talat Masood

Most leaders of major countries remain preoccupied in dealing with immediate security issues that are more visible. But they tend to generally ignore the ones that would have a more lasting and serious impact on their countries and the world at large. Foremost among these is the looming threat of climate change, which if not tackled collectively by all nations on an emergency basis, could spell disaster for the world. According to a recent UN report, glaciers of the Hindu Kush Himalayan region that feed the main rivers of Asia are fast vanishing. These are ominous signs that will directly affect the lives of people of several South Asian countries including Pakistan in a big way. As the report warns if action is not taken now collectively and in a coordinated manner the lives of millions are at stake. This is not the first time that we have been apprised of this lurking catastrophe.

The Kyoto Protocol that is linked to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change commits its signatories to abide by the international binding emissions reduction targets. The responsibility of abiding by it rests on individual countries. Pakistan too is lagging behind in fulfilling its obligations of reducing emissions. It is already feeling the adverse consequences of it in the form of erratic weather, shortage of water resources and shrinking deltas. The very able Adviser to the Prime Minister, Malik Amin Aslam, and the eminent Ambassador, Shafqat Kakakhel, have been raising the issue with facts and figures but their urgings have been lost in the lopsided priorities that the government and opposition pursue.

Moreover, relations with India are so inimical to expect any cooperation on climate change for the common good of the people of South Asia seems to be a non-starter. This should, however, not prevent us for taking measures within the country on an emergency basis. As the UN report warns, "Tens of millions rely on agriculture, hydropower, and industries the rivers fuel." The adverse effects are already manifesting reaffirming the dangers that the report identifies.

Another major security threat is the rapidly increasing global population especially in developing countries. Lack of education and ignorance have contributed towards accelerated population growth. Where the governments in

other countries have prioritised broad-based education as in China and South Korea and brought women in the workforce as in Bangladesh, population growth has stabilised. China had to retract from its initial one child policy as it was creating a major imbalance as parents preferred sons to daughters assuming that they would provide better security in old age.

Pakistan is one of the top countries where population is growing at 2.4 % that is unsustainable considering its resources. Sane voices are being ignored. The federal and provincial governments or the parliament takes the matter seriously. Poverty has been one of the motivating factors for the poor to have large families as they consider children breadwinners and insurance in old age.

Successive governments' neglect of addressing population growth has resulted in overcrowding of schools, hospitals and slums for the poor are increasing several-fold. It has put immense pressure on the country's water resources and infrastructure. Pakistan ranks fifth in the world in population and the current birth rate projections show it will be home to over 400 million people by 2050. Although governments have sought the support of the clergy in educating the masses on the benefits of a small family, the message is generally ignored or confined to a few pockets mostly in the cities. A broad-based campaign spread over several years has to be launched if population has to be brought down to manageable limits. Increasingly, it is becoming clear that these mega problems cannot be addressed in isolation and demand a more holistic approach that no government has so far undertaken. When the young receive proper education, chances are they become more health conscious and aspire to have a small family that is financially manageable.

Cyberspace is another medium of serious conflict between nations. The United States and Russia are currently leading in this race with China and major European powers trying to catch up. The US Democratic party has been accusing Russia of interfering in American elections to favour President Trump. Iran and North Korea are the primary targets of the US. Several countries including Pakistan are frequently targeted. Pakistan is mostly beset by India spreading confusion. India, under the belligerent Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, presents a major threat to the very integrity of Pakistan for which it has to take preventive measures. It has to stay in a state of alert and remain on guard to counter fake news emanating from India. In the future, cyber warfare will be one of the major weapons to spread confusion and destabilise potential enemies.

The al Qaeda, Islamic State, Taliban and several militant offshoots of these operating independently are likely to remain active in war-torn Muslim countries especially in Syria, Yemen, Lebanon and Afghanistan. In Pakistan, the presence of the IS cannot be ruled out especially in K-P and Balochistan. In Balochistan, the Baloch Liberation Front and Daesh have become active and Pakistan will have to further strengthen its security on the Pakistan-Afghan Western border.

The spillover effect of the Saudi-Iran conflict on Pakistan must also be countered. This balancing act poses both a diplomatic and security challenge for Pakistan. The potential of Iran facing prolonged political and economic unrest with its spillover effect on Pakistan is a possibility. With Afghanistan's future so uncertain, the Iranian scene adds to a complex and dangerous mix for the region and us.

PM Imran Khan's policy of staying away from regional and global conflicts is prudent. But this would only be possible provided we develop a self-sustaining economy, political stability and standing in the comity of nations. This reality was so apparent when PM Khan had to retract from his agreed trip to Malaysia, as we could not afford to displease our financial benefactors, the Saudis.

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Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2137940/6-dealing-global-security-challenges/>

Kashmir Remains International Issue By

Malik Ashraf

ON 15 January the UNSC for the second time discussed situation in the loK on Pakistan's request supported by China. Though like the previous occasion no formal statement was issued after the discussion but what transpired during the meeting was revealed to the media by the Chinese Ambassador to the UN, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Pakistan's permanent representative to the UN Muneer Akram. According to the revealed details the UN Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs and the head of the military operations briefed the members on the political and human rights situation in Kashmir and the current situation at the Line of Control. They briefed the Council about the measures the Indian government has taken and how tension has increased. Both the observers quoted the UN's reports on human rights violations to highlight the situation in the valley. The observers revealed that Pakistan was cooperating while India had not cooperated at all.

China like always supporting Pakistan's principled position on the India-occupied Kashmir (loK), reiterating that Kashmir was a dispute left from history and it should be properly resolved through relevant United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions and bilateral treaties and in a peaceful way. All members expressed concern over the current situation and called for restraint and de-escalation Russia was in agreement with China while USA and Germany were of the view that the issue should be resolved bilaterally. However on the question of human rights situation in loK all the Council members including those who termed Kashmir as a bilateral issue admitted that situation regarding human rights in the territory was grave. The foregoing developments represent success of the diplomatic blitz launched by Pakistan since 5th August which has not only internationalized the Kashmir issue but also effectively countered the Indian position that Kashmir was its internal affair, notwithstanding the fact the US and her allies due to their strategic partnership with India remain indifferent to the resolution of the issue in the light of the UN resolutions and the UN also remains incapacitated to implement its own resolutions. Regrettably the right of self-determination promised to the people of Kashmir by UN has become a casualty of the global politics.

Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi was also on a diplomatic mission to USA following mounting tension between Iran and the US. He was in Tehran and Riyadh before heading to Washington. He had meetings with US officials including US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and discussed bilateral ties, trade, tension in the Middle East, human rights situation in India-occupied Kashmir and peace process in Afghanistan. Later in an interview with Fox News, the Foreign Minister said Pakistan was asking the US for a responsible withdrawal from Afghanistan unlike the '80s which created a vacuum for the destructive forces to take over. Qureshi said Pakistan facilitated a US dialogue with Taliban on the request of US President Donald Trump in the hope for peace and stability in the region and it was due to Pakistan's efforts that the Taliban were talking to the US today and there was a possibility of an agreement. Qureshi rightly observed, "The convergence between Pakistan and US stands as a unique opportunity for peace in Afghanistan, ultimately a shared responsibility. Pakistan will continue playing part for peace in the entire region," Reportedly he also conveyed to Pompeo that Pakistan had lived up to all US expectations during a difficult time and now was the time for the latter to reciprocate.

It is an undeniable fact that Pakistan has given unparalleled sacrifices in the fight against terrorism besides making relentless sincere efforts at the bilateral and multilateral forums to promote process of reconciliation in Afghanistan and facilitating US-Taliban dialogue. But the US blinded by its strategic partnership with India has not only invariably looked askance at the contribution made by Pakistan in this regard but also has shown criminal indifference to the resolution of the Kashmir dispute which is the root-cause of the current situation stemming from the Indian action of ending special status of the loK, in blatant violation of the UN resolutions. Mr Qureshi was right and justified in observing that it was now time for the US to reciprocate. The demanded reciprocity is a reminder to the US to support the right cause of the people of Kashmir and also sincerely acknowledging the role played by Pakistan in facilitating the US-Taliban dialogue and to keep in view Pakistan's strategic interests while reaching an agreement to end the Afghan conflict.

Kashmir dispute is a test of the much hyped credentials of US and its allies as champions of human causes and the universally recognized principle of self-determination. The people of loK are fighting for their right of self-determination and as per UN resolutions they are also entitled to adopt any means to win their freedom. They have launched the freedom struggle since 1989 which was initially

recognized as such by the world community but come 9/11 the whole scenario changed. The US and its allies forged strategic alliance with India and started equating the freedom struggle in loK with terrorism. It has encouraged India to persist with her ruthless oppression to subdue the freedom struggle in loK as well to adopt a belligerent posture towards Pakistan. The extremist action taken by Modi government to end special status of loK, bifurcation of the territory into tow and its amalgamation with the Indian Union is also a sequel to the same disposition. India has imperilled security of the region and any escalation could have very serious repercussion for all the stakeholders. The US and her allies need to revisit their strategy before it is too late.

— The writer is freelance columnist based in Islamabad.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/kashmir-remains-international-issue/>

Way Out of Poverty By M Ziauddin

Between 1980 and 2016, the average income of the bottom 50 percent of earners world-wide nearly doubled, as this group captured 12 percent of the growth in global GDP. The number of those living on less than \$1.90 a day—the World Bank’s threshold for “extreme poverty”—has dropped by more than half since 1990, from nearly two billion to around 700 million. According to Abhijit V. Banerjee and Esther Duflo (How Poverty Ends— The Many Paths to Progress— and Why They Might Not Continue; published in Foreign Affairs Jan/Feb 2020 edition) never before in human history have so many people been lifted out of poverty so quickly.

“There have also been massive improvements in quality of life, even for those who remain poor. Since 1990, the global maternal mortality rate has been cut in half. So has the infant mortality rate, saving the lives of more than 100 million children. Today, except in those places experiencing major social disruption, nearly all children, boys and girls alike, have access to primary education. Even deaths from HIV/AIDS, an epidemic that once seemed hopeless, peaked soon after the turn of the millennium and have been declining ever since.” In the opinion of Banerjee and Duflo a great deal of the credit for these gains can go to economic growth. In addition to increasing people’s income, steadily expanding GDPs have allowed governments (and others) to spend more on schools, hospitals, medicines, and income transfers to the poor.

Much of the decline in poverty happened in two large economies that have grown particularly fast, China and India.

So, what most developing countries want to know is not whether they should nationalise all private industry overnight but whether they should emulate China’s economic model. Although China is very much a market economy, the country’s approach to capitalism differs greatly from the classic Anglo-Saxon model, characterised by low taxes and few regulations, and even from its European variant, with a greater role for the state. In China, the state, at both the national and local levels, plays an outsize role in the allocation of land, capital, and even labor. Other economies in East Asia have also deviated from the traditional capitalist model and experienced decades of high growth; consider Japan, South

Korea, and Taiwan, all places where the government initially pursued an active industrial policy.

All these economies achieved spectacular success after pursuing unconventional policies. The question is whether they did so because of their choices or in spite of them. Misallocation, in the opinion of Banerjee and Duflo, saps growth, which means that reallocation can improve it. In recent years, economists have tried to quantify just how much growth could come from moving resources to their best uses. Chang-Tai Hsieh and Peter Klenow, for example, found that merely reallocating factors within certain industries, while holding capital and labor constant, could increase productivity in China by 30–50 percent and in India by 40–60 percent. If reallocation took place across a broader swath of the economy, the payoff would be even larger.

In other words, it is possible to spur growth just by reallocating existing resources to more appropriate uses. If a country starts off with its resources very poorly used, as did China before Deng or India in its days of extreme dirigisme, then the first benefits of reform may come from simply harnessing so many poorly used resources. There are many ways to improve allocation, from the moves away from collectivised agriculture that China made under Deng to the efforts India made in the 1990s to speed the resolution of debt disputes and thus make credit markets more efficient.

In the opinion of the authors, one very real danger is that in trying to hold on to fast growth, countries facing sharply slowing growth will veer toward policies that hurt the poor now in the name of future growth. In a bid to preserve growth, many countries have interpreted the prescription to be business friendly as a license to enact all kinds of anti-poor, pro-rich policies, such as tax cuts for the rich and bailouts for corporations.

Such was the thinking in the United States under President Ronald Reagan and in the United Kingdom under Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. If the experience of those two countries is any guide, however, asking the poor to tighten their belts in the hope that giveaways to the rich will eventually trickle down does nothing for growth and even less for the poor: in both, growth hardly picked up at all, but inequality skyrocketed. Globally, the one group that did even better than the poorest 50 percent between 1980 and 2016 was the top one percent—the rich in the already rich countries, plus an increasing number of superrich in the

developing world—who captured an astounding 27 percent of total growth during that time. The 49 percent of people below them, which includes almost everybody in the United States and Europe, lost out, and their incomes stagnated throughout that period.

“The bottom line is that the true ingredients of persistent economic growth remain mysterious. But there is much that can be done to get rid of the most egregious sources of waste in poor countries’ economies and of suffering among their people. Children who die of preventable diseases, schools where teachers do not show up, court systems that take forever to adjudicate cases—all no doubt undercut productivity and make life miserable. Fixes to such problems may not propel countries to permanently faster growth, but they could dramatically improve the welfare of their citizens.

“Moreover, although no one knows when the growth locomotive will start in a given country, if and when it does, the poor will be more likely to hop on the train if they are in decent health, can read and write, and can think beyond their immediate circumstances. It may not be an accident that many of the winners of globalisation have been communist countries that invested heavily in the human capital of their populations for ideological reasons (such as China and Vietnam) or places that pursued similar policies because they were threatened by communism (such as South Korea and Taiwan).” In rich and poor countries pursuing free market economy, elites promised that neoliberal policies would lead to faster economic growth, and that the benefits would trickle down so that everyone, including the poorest, would be better off. To get there, though, workers would have to accept lower wages, and all citizens would have to accept cutbacks in important government programs.

The elites claimed that their promises were based on scientific economic models and “evidence-based research.” Well, after 40 years, the numbers are in: growth has slowed, and the fruits of that growth went overwhelmingly to a very few at the top. As wages stagnated and the stock market soared, income and wealth flowed up, rather than trickling down. The best bet, therefore, for a developing country such as Pakistan is to attempt to raise living standards with the resources it already has: investing in education and health care, improving the functioning of the courts and banks, and building better roads and more livable cities. The same logic holds for policymakers in rich countries, who should invest directly in raising living standards in poorer countries. In the absence of a magic potion for

development, the best way to profoundly transform millions of lives is not to try in vain to boost growth. It is to focus squarely on the thing that growth is supposed to improve: the well-being of the poor.

— The writer is veteran journalist and a former editor based in Islamabad.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/way-out-of-poverty/>

US-Iran Conflict: Past and Present By Abdur Rahman Malik

The US-Iran conflict had become critical after the US drone strike that assassinated Iranian top general Qassem Suleimani who the USA considered an imminent threat to the USA, but for which the Trump Administration was heavily criticized.

Foreign policy experts felt that Trump had committed an extrajudicial killing and deliberately escalated the situation with Iran to escape impeachment which has already begun.

The USA has always meddled in Iran. The seeds of the 45 years of hostility were sowed when US and UK agencies orchestrated a plan to overthrow a democratically elected secular Prime Minister, Mohammad Mossadeq, when he nationalized Iran's oil industry. The oil industry has always attracted the USA cost him his Premiership in 1953. Analysts call it a historic blunder to meddle in Iran's affairs.

Later, the USA the dictatorial Shah of Iran despite being aware that his regime was incompetent and the autocratic governance model was weakening. The streets started flooding with protesters against the Shah's regime and he was forcibly ousted by secular and religious forces in the 1979 Islamic Revolution. This turmoil paved the way for the return of the exiled Ayatollah Khomeini. Iran was formally proclaimed as the Islamic Republic of Iran on 1 April 1981. US backing for the Shah resulted in growing hatred of the USA. Protesters ransacked its Embassy in Tehran and took the staff hostage in 1979. The 52 hostages were released after 444 days in 1981.

US-Iran relations witnessed another setback when the USA secretly shipped arms in exchange for Iran's help in the release of US hostages held by the Hezbollah in Lebanon. This Iran-contra scandal hit the USA hard when the benefit such as arms supply to Nicaraguan rebels caused a severe political crisis for US President Ronald Reagan. Similarly, just as Iran mistakenly downed Ukrainian passenger jetliner, a US warship had also shot down an Iranian passenger plane. Most of the 290 victims were Iranian pilgrims bound for

Makkah. Unlike Iran, the USA had said that the Airbus A300 was downed by mistake for a fighter Jet. This incident had also increased hatred of the USA in Iran.

The UN and the European Union must play their role to engage both parties in negotiation so that World War-III may be averted. Negotiations will also help lift the tough economic sanctions against Iran that have crippled its fragile economy. Moreover, a US-Iran conflict may jeopardize US-Taliban talks for which Pakistan has played a key role, as Afghan peace will benefit the whole region including Pakistan. Terrorism from Afghanistan has affected Pakistan very badly

In the aftermath of the 9/11 incident, in 2001, the US carried out strikes against Taliban in Afghanistan. Meanwhile, an Iranian opposition group revealed that Iran was engaged in a nuclear programme, having set up a uranium enrichment plant. However, the Iranian Government denied the charges.

US President George W Bush during a State of the Union address denounced Iran as part of an “Axis of Evil” along with Iraq and North Korea. UN Watchdog IAEA inspected Iran’s nuclear programme. Consequently, tough sanctions were imposed on Iran by the USA, EU and UN that crippled its economy during the tenure of President Mehmoed Ahmedinejad.

US-Iran relations grew closer as the moderate Hassan Rouhani took office as President and after decades of stiff relations, the ice started melting when US president Barak Obama phoned President Rouhani after three decades. Following this gesture, the diplomatic channels worked leading to Iran signing a nuclear deal in 2015 with the great power group of the USA, UK, France, China, Russia and Germany. Iran agreed to limit its nuclear programme, allowing international inspectors. In return, the crippling economic sanctions were lifted, especially on its oil exports.

The Trump Administration became a headache for Iran since Iran’s nuclear deal was abandoned by President Donald Trump who imposed economic sanctions on Iran and those who bought its oil. Such a hard attitude exacerbated the conflict. Trump re-imposed economic sanctions on Iranian Oil last May while Iran started a pressure campaign against the USA.

A series of Incidents happened thereafter, such as missiles hitting tankers in the Gulf of Oman and Iran's shooting down a US drone hovering over the Strait of Hormuz. The US claimed the drone was over International waters whereas Iran said that it was over its territory.

Given the US sanctions and blame game, Iran started rolling back from its commitments as reflected in the nuclear deal, and started uranium enrichment. Finally, when the US drone strike assassinated top Iranian general Qassem Suleimani in Iraq, the Iranian people became united. Millions of people attended his funeral prayers and protested against the USA in Iraq and Iran. Analysts said that it was the biggest protest after the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran.

Iran pledged to take revenge. Under-pressure Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei approved targeting US military bases in Iraq, firing a dozen missiles, but causing no casualties. Since then, Trump has been criticized for the killing. The Middle East crisis worsened following an Iraqi Parliament resolution demanding US Troops and Allies leave Iraq. The Iranian proxies may attack US military bases.

Will there be a World War III? No, since after strikes, both countries have shown restraint Iranian Revolutionary Guards took responsibility for mistakenly downing a passenger Jet carrying 174 passengers. Iran first denied responsibility, but after international pressure accepted it.

Iran has publicly apologized for the mistake and announced compensation for the bereaved families but the Ukrainian and Canadian Governments have demanded a thorough investigation and apology.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has also sought help from Pakistan for de-escalation as both countries do not want war. All the world powers have urged both the USA and Iran to de-escalate tensions and resolve the conflict through negotiations. The European Union, UK, Russia, China and other NATO members have started diplomatic efforts to prevent both countries going to all-out war which would bring misery for humanity since both nations are nuclear capable though Iran has not announced its capability.

The UN and the European Union must play their role to engage both parties in negotiation so that World War-III may be averted. Negotiations will also help lift

the tough economic sanctions against Iran that have crippled its fragile economy. Moreover, a US-Iran conflict may jeopardize US-Taliban talks for which Pakistan has played a key role, as Afghan peace will benefit the whole region including Pakistan. Terrorism from Afghanistan has affected Pakistan very badly.

Source: <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2020/01/21/us-iran-conflict-past-and-present/>

Middle East Policy Implications By Abdul Rahman Malik

The Trump administration has been playing with fire in the Middle East as the flawed Middle East policy has wreaked havoc in Syria, Libya, Iraq and bloodshed in Palestine ever since Trump announced Jerusalem as capital of Israel igniting fiery protests in Palestine and other Muslim countries.

Given this flawed, impractical, erratic and arrogant policy, Middle East is bracing for the serious crisis due to ill-advice of influential elements in US foreign policy that are aimed at establishing US hegemony in Iraq, Syria, Libya and supporting Israel in their bid to grab more territory from Palestine.

The Ill-advisors, especially supported by Israel lobby, have deliberately pushed Trump to escalate relations with Iran since they wanted to make the most of US-Iran conflict since Iran has been a strong supporter of Palestine and her proxies are actively working in the Palestine freedom movement. Diplomatic relations have escalated with Iran over the recent tragic assassination of a top general and the second most influential person in Iran – General Qassem Suleimani in a drone strike within the limits of Baghdad International Airport.

Sulemani was in charge of Al Qudus in Iraq and had been involved in Iraq for long heading Qudus forces in Iraq. Mournings began flooding streets both in Iraq and Iran as angry protesters started chanting slogans against Donald Trump and the United States. There were thousands of mourners in the funeral prayers both in Iraq and Iran.

The Protests and anger compelled the interim Iraqi government to pass a resolution against the expulsion of US and Allied Forces since their services were not required anymore in Iraq as the US Drone strike had infringed upon the sovereignty of Iraq and it was also the sheer violation of International law. The recent protests confirm in Iraq that the assassination of Qassem Suleimani was a historical blunder committed by Trump administration in the Middle East that has risked US interests in Iraq.

The decisions that cost him heavy include Trumps' unilateral withdrawal from the Paris Agreement 2015 on climate change that was signed when Syria was battered due to civil war. Ever since, Syria has been witnessing a serious humanitarian crisis that includes food security, devastation, destruction of infrastructure, devastation of public and private properties.

Like a relay race, the US forwarded the rod to Turkey to carry out the blood-stained job of continuing the offensive against ISIS. Syria will take years to rebuild after the Arab Spring that devastated the very fabric of Arab countries.

Security and foreign policy experts are of the view that the crisis has been caused by some lucrative oil reserves in the Middle East such as Saudi Arab, Iraq, Kuwait and Iran.

The situation has been worsened thereafter when ISIS entered Iraq and other countries of the Middle East making the already fragile states in a serious security crisis.

America's announcement to provide security to Saudi Arabia was compromised when Yemen attacked the oil reserves of Saudi Arab. Donald Trump abruptly blamed Iran behind the incident but sensible Iranian leadership rejected US claims.

Even Saudi Arab and Iran relations are much escalated as both countries have differences over sectarian issues since Saudi Arab is a Sunni majority whereas Iran has a Shiite majority.

The elements are using this sectarian divide to engage them in confrontation but the efforts of some pro-peace states have prevented a possible War between these two Muslim countries.

Furthermore, President Donald Trump's sudden surprising decision to abandon the arms treaties with Iran and Russia has been counterproductive as Iran has restarted its uranium enrichment plants and Russia is resetting its footprint in the Middle East and Africa as US forces leave Syria leaving a vacuum that was filled by Russia and Turkey.

Iran and other countries are waiting for this year's Presidential Election outcome to decide the future course of action for the terms of engagement with the US with Democrats Leader if Trump loses second term Election or impeachment ends Trump's tragic journey.

There is another illogical step taken by Trump that is declaring Jerusalem as the capital of Israel as well as the Golan Heights as Israeli territory. It has stirred serious consequences as Palestinians have started protesting against such statement and criticizing Trump Administration for making the illogical and irresponsible arrogant statements that are beyond understanding.

Most of the Foreign policy Experts are of the view the flawed Middle East policy of Trump Administration is whimsical or elusive. Trump is playing with fire that may become holocaust for the region as there is no clear vision that may reflect the possible solution for the Middle East and the efforts aimed at bringing peace in the Middle East .

Everybody is aware that Jerusalem is the holy city for Christians, Muslims and Jews at the same time. It cannot be controlled or dominated under the Two-State Solution. Moreover, East Jerusalem was to become the Capital of the Palestinian Territory.

During UNGA, Turkish President Recep Tayyab Erdogan had displayed the maps of ancient Palestine and how Israel gradually acquired the land expanding its boundaries illegally.

Furthermore, the UN body has also affirmed that Israel has no legitimate right to control Golan Heights which were annexed from Syria in 1967 and the West Bank but Israel has been violating the Internal Law blatantly.

Trump has been under pressure from AIPAC (American Israel Public Affairs Committee) and Christian Fundamentalists influencing Trumps' Middle East Policy that has supported Israel's unilateral move to occupy Jerusalem.

These policy failures are causing too much damage to US foreign Policy and tarnishing the image of US in Middle East where protests have begun. Demands have started echoing for the US to end their tumultuous siege of Middle East and expel its forces from the Middle East especially from Iraq, Syria and Libya since

US Military and Allies went for regime change and defeating ISIS but instead of stabilizing these States have further destabilized them. Though it was able to contain ISIS and retrieval areas in ISIS control as a result of the death of Baghdadi.

Currently, there is no Governance system existing in these states. There are frequent incidents of the Civil War, Proxy wars and the whole system has collapsed. Donald Trump has been ranked most dangerous and quick-tempered President of United States who waged Trade War with China and EU, though Trump has recently signed a trade agreement with China.

Trump has alienated the whole African countries. Even he did not play any role in resolving Kashmir Dispute -The Nuclear Flashpoint between the two Nuclear Power neighbours i.e. India and Pakistan. Despite a lockdown of 170 days, Kashmir Still awaits Global response to exert pressure on India to lift over four months long Curfew in Jammu and Kashmir.

Despite offering Mediation, he has done nothing so far that might have de-escalated the tension between two hostile nation since their Independence in 1947. Pakistan has been frequently asked by the US “to do more” but US has done enough for Pakistan especially in resolving Kashmir Dispute and removal of Pakistan from the FATF’s grey list despite promises made by Donald Trump during the meetings with Pakistan’s Premier in Washington.

Even in the recent World Economic Forum, PM Imran reminded Donald Trump to support Pakistan for removing Pakistan from FATF’s Greylist. Though Trump instructed the concerned authorities for compliance yet that was not enough for the issue.

On the other hand, Pakistan has done a lot for the US by bringing the Taliban to the negotiating table and signing the peace deal. Even recent efforts of Pakistan for a de-escalation between US-Iran Stand-off are also prominent. Even Trump’s much-echoed Meeting with North Korean Military dictator Kim Jong-Un has also ended in smoke since there was no breakthrough or headway after three rounds of talks.

In short, Trump may be ranked as the worst President in the History of the United States yet his aggressive foreign relations Still matter a lot. This year 2020 will

play a decisive role as Trump is facing Impeachment Trial and the challenging Presidential Elections Taking Place this year that will carve the future of Donald Trump whether he survives the Impeachment Trial or not or he gets re-elected for yet another term despite his perilous foreign policy paralysis.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/27-Jan-2020/middle-east-policy-implications>

The Fate of the China-Russia Alliance By

Lyle J. Goldstein

Even as Democrats bash the Republicans for being too soft on the Kremlin, the Republicans are inclined to point out that the Obama administration was far too accommodating of China. After all, President Barack Obama prioritized the climate change issue that necessitated a high degree of cooperation with Beijing. Yet in today's toxic partisan warfare, a winning electoral strategy will be to declare the political opponent as insufficiently xenophobic and thus lacking "true" patriotism.

These days, many people in the Washington foreign policy establishment seem to agree that most of the world's problems can be put down to either Beijing's purported insistence on building a new, nefarious world order comprising "all under heaven," or Moscow's wily attempts to spread its tentacles everywhere from Madagascar to Libya and possibly even America. Thus, Russian "stooges" and Chinese "useful idiots" are lingering around every corner, so it seems. Even those arguing against a conflict with Iran may find the great-power competition concept useful to the extent that yet another war in the Middle East could dangerously distract the United States from the "main event" in either East Asia or in Eastern Europe.

The RAND Corporation tried to settle the acrimonious debate over whether Moscow or Beijing represents the greater threat by inventing the clever formulation that "Russia is a rogue, not a peer. China is a peer, not a rogue." This concise statement has some value, no doubt, but critics will argue that Russia's new ICBM Sarmat looks a lot like the BMD-evading bludgeon of a full-up "peer" and China's activities in both Xinjiang and also the South China Sea tend toward rather rogue behavior. Indeed, many defense analysts are inclined to remain agnostic and focus efforts against the unifying (if anodyne) theme of "the axis of authoritarianism." The most stressing challenge, it is said, to U.S. national security is if Russia and China actively combine efforts to thwart and even vanquish American global leadership.

True, prospects for a genuine, formal China-Russia alliance still seem quite remote, but occasionally it is useful to take stock of the concrete manifestations

of this most crucial dyadic relationship in the strategic realm, especially now that the partnership has continued to blossom uninterrupted for more than three decades now. Such a comprehensive appraisal is made from a naval perspective in a mid-2019 edition of the Chinese scholarly journal *Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia Studies* [俄罗斯, 东欧, 中亚研究]. The authors, researchers at China's Naval Research Center [海军研究院], published a comprehensive review under the title "A Historical Review and Assessment of 70 Years of China-Russia

Naval Cooperation [中俄海军七十年合作的历史回顾与思考]."

The first alteration in the global balance of power enabled by Russia-China cooperation took place during the 1950s, of course. In that period, the PRC went from being a military "basket case," with no defense industry to speak of, to possessing a reasonably modern force within a span of just a decade. That super-energized process was inspired by the hard school of war against a vastly better-armed opponent in the bloody Korean conflict, as is well known. But the massive progress in Chinese military capabilities also could not have taken place without enormous Soviet assistance. With respect to naval-related arms transfers, Moscow had already given ten torpedo boats and eighty-three aircraft by the beginning of 1953, according to the scholarly journal. The process accelerated during 1953–55 with a total of eight-one additional vessels transferred (amounting to 27,234 tons) and 148 aircraft. Among these ships were four destroyers, four frigates, and thirteen submarines.

Additionally, the Russians provided the Chinese with more than five hundred torpedoes and over fifteen hundred sea mines, as well as coastal artillery pieces, radar and communications equipment. A third batch of naval transfers was comprised of sixty-three vessels and seventy-eight aircraft. Added to these very substantial allocations, five Chinese shipyards apparently produced another 116 naval vessels, relying heavily on advisors, designs and technology purchased from the USSR, during the period up until 1957. Finally, several transfers agreed to in early 1959 "caused China's Navy to enter into the missile age." Notably, these transfers included the R-11, a primitive submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM), and also the P-15, one of the earliest anti-ship cruise missiles (ASCM). Yes, these are the earliest progenitors of today's JL-3 and YJ-12 missiles that now present quite credible threats.

In keeping with the presently jovial mood surrounding current Russia-China relations, very little is said in this Chinese article regarding the Sino-Soviet conflict that brought the two Eurasian giants to the brink of war in the late 1960s. The authors imply that the break was really between the two respective Communist parties, rather than between the two navies, but it is noted that the Kremlin's stated objective to form a "joint fleet" was viewed in China as an encroachment on Chinese sovereignty. Nevertheless, this substantial military cooperation between Moscow and Beijing during the 1950s is evaluated in this Chinese appraisal to have had "major historical impact [重要历史作用]." These authors contend that it "effectively decreased the threat of American imperialism [有效抵制美帝国主义的军事威胁]. They additionally conclude regarding this period: "The achievements of building up the Chinese Navy cannot be separated from the assistance of Soviet experts [中国海军建设的业绩是与苏联专家的帮助分不开的]."

For a long time, "Soviet revisionists" were not given such favorable treatment by Chinese scholars, but now evidently the "east wind" is blowing once more. If the USSR very substantially helped boost PRC military prospects during the 1950s, this paper by two Chinese naval analysts argues cogently that a similarly ambitious and fateful program of Russia-China military cooperation has had an analogous effect, starting in 1991. When seen in aggregate, the numbers are indeed quite impressive. Russia has sold China, according to this Chinese accounting, more than five hundred military aircraft, including Su-27, Su-30, Su-35, and Il-76 variants. Almost as significant, Russia provided China with more than two hundred Mi-171 helicopters. Just as these pivotal purchases launched China's air and land forces into a new era, so the Chinese acquisition of four Sovremeny destroyers, along with twelve Kilo-class submarines helped to provide the PLA Navy with the technological wherewithal to enter the twenty-first century on a robust footing. That shortlist here, moreover, does not even catalog other vital systems transferred, such as advanced air defense systems, which have formed a bedrock of Chinese purchases from Russia.

Citing a Russian source, these Chinese authors claim that China spent \$13 billion on Russian weapons between 2000–05. That amounts to a decently hefty sum of cash, especially by rather penurious post-Soviet standards. In fact, this raft of deals was not only intended to rescue the PLA from obsolescence but

simultaneously aimed to “resolve . . . the survival and development problems [解决 . . . 生存和发展问题]” of the post-Soviet Russian military-industrial complex too. Just as important as these technical transfers, however, have been the human capital investments in cooperation. Here, this study points out that two thousand intermediate and high-level Chinese officers have already graduated from Russian military academies. The upper ranks of the PLA Navy, in particular, are said to be full of these graduates, as reported in this study. Perhaps most critically for the future of the Chinese armed forces, cooperation with Russia has entailed “in particular, promoting the development of domestic weapons development levels and concepts. [尤其带动了国内武器研制水平和理念的提升].” Take, for example, the YJ-18 ASCM, which seems to be superior to any U.S. variants, is a derivative of the Russian SSN-27 missile and is now becoming pervasive throughout the Chinese fleet, with both surface and sub-launched variants.

For all the major results on the regional balance of power wrought by these two major periods of Russian-Chinese security collaboration, however, there are very real reasons to doubt that such a partnership will truly alter global politics. After all, the Chinese analysis points out that arms sales from Russia to China have declined substantially from the peak in 2005. Joint military exercises, moreover, are now quite regular, but they actually do not seem to exhibit a bellicose trend toward larger and larger demonstrations of military might. These tendencies may reflect new confidence in Beijing regarding its own abilities to produce advanced weapons, of course, but also might reflect a certain degree of restraint—a realization that too close a Russia-China military alignment could provide ample fuel for a new Cold War that might be in the offing.

Still, American defense analysts must evaluate the possible results of a significantly closer Russia-China security relationship, whether it is formalized into an actual “alliance” or not. China and Russia currently have numerous joint development projects underway, including both a large commercial airliner, as well as a heavy-lift helicopter. In the future, will cooperative endeavors encompass frigates and VSTOL fighters, or nuclear submarines and stealth bombers, or even aircraft carriers? Will Moscow and Beijing begin to launch joint exercises of a large scale that have major strategic implications in highly sensitive areas? Are third countries, such as Iran, set for “junior associate” status in the so-called “quasi-alliance? And will China and Russia strive to coordinate

strategic initiatives to bring about common favorable strategic circumstances in the coming decades?

Such a future is certainly not beyond the realm of possibility. The combination of Russian weapons design genius with Chinese organizational and production prowess could be formidable, indeed. That will be another reason for states comprising the West to now exercise restraint, embrace multi-polarity, and seek to avoid a return to the 1950s “with Chinese characteristics.”

Source: <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/fate-china-russia-alliance-117231>

The U.S. Military Is Now Occupying Iraq. Its Time To Leave By Paul R. Pillar

Remember how the George W. Bush administration sold its offensive war in Iraq, begun seventeen years ago?

It wasn't just about weapons of mass destruction and mythical alliances with terrorist groups. The war was also supposed to bring the blessings of freedom and democracy to the people of Iraq, who would be grateful to the United States for overthrowing their dictator. The war was to be not just a pursuit of American objectives in opposition to Iraqi ones but an altruistic action for the benefit of Iraqis.

Whatever gratitude Iraqis felt, however, was soon overshadowed by more negative sentiments. American forces were met less with flowers and sweets than with a multi-faceted insurgency. That insurgency encompassed a sectarian civil war that the U.S. invasion unleashed as well as armed opposition to what many Iraqis regarded as a foreign military occupation.

Today, two U.S. administrations later, it is clearer than ever that the U.S. military presence in Iraq is, in fact, an occupation. Although the Trump administration still uses rhetoric about helping the Iraqi people, it is actively opposing what has become the dominant Iraqi sentiment, as expressed by the Iraqi government and parliament, that U.S. troops should leave. President Trump has gone so far as to threaten Iraq with sanctions if it does not acquiesce in the continued presence of U.S. troops on its soil. The administration has moved to make good on that threat by warning Iraq that it will shut down the Iraqi central bank's access to its account with the Federal Reserve if Baghdad continues calling for the departure of U.S. forces.

Foreign military occupations are mostly bad, and it is generally bad for the United States to be an occupier. There are, at a minimum, the direct costs of maintaining such a presence in a foreign land. U.S. troops also can become targets of unfriendly foreign powers—a vulnerability that last week's Iranian missile attacks against U.S.-inhabited military bases in Iraq underscored. At least as likely is violent opposition from indigenous elements opposed to foreign occupation. Finally, such arrangements send an unhelpful message to other

nations about how the United States runs roughshod over the wishes and interests of countries it claims to be helping.

U.S. troops ostensibly are still in Iraq to help combat ISIS. But since the recent escalation of the U.S. confrontation with Iran, such help has not been happening. Anti-ISIS operations have been suspended and U.S. troops have been hunkering down to protect themselves.

To impose an anti-ISIS U.S. troop presence against the will of a reluctant Iraqi government ignores how any re-emergence of an ISIS mini-state would be more of a threat to Iraq than to the United States. This is not a situation in which dangers specific to the United States must override the sentiments and interests of a local partner. For ISIS, building and maintaining a so-called caliphate in the Middle East has been more of an alternative to overseas terrorist operations than a complement to such operations.

The biggest impediment to any resurgence of ISIS in Iraq would be good governance and stability in Iraqi politics. U.S. troops are not contributing to those goals. Instead, by making Iraq into an arena for battling Iran, the U.S. presence fuels the sorts of instability and sectarian tensions that make Iraq a more favorable playing field for ISIS. Moreover, resistance to foreign occupation has traditionally been one of the chief motivations for terrorism.

The administration's current stubborn insistence on keeping American troops in Iraq exhibits several damaging patterns of thought.

It shows that much of the mindset that led to the Iraq War—probably the most misguided and damaging U.S. foray in the Middle East ever—has not yet dissipated, despite the enormous costs and failures of that war.

It exhibits arrogance of power, with apparent blindness to how resentful reactions to some exercises of that power redound to the disadvantage of the United States.

It mistakenly equates U.S. influence with a U.S. military presence.

It entails misunderstanding of the sources of terrorist threats and what is required to diminish those threats.

It is another example of how the administration's obsession with promoting conflict with Iran leads it to ignore or misunderstand many realities of importance to U.S. interests. In this case, what is most ignored is the complex nature of Iraqi-Iranian relations. Both sides want a stable and even cordial relationship because neither side wants a repeat of their very destructive war in the 1980s. But Iraqis don't want Iranian domination any more than they want American domination.

Iraqi nationalism is the most effective check on Iranian influence on Iraq—if only the United States does not mess up this dynamic with actions that turn that nationalist sentiment against itself. The Bush administration messed up with its invasion in 2003, and the Trump administration has messed up with its lethal attacks on Iraqi militias and its assassination in Iraq of Qasem Soleimani and a senior Iraqi security figure.

For all these reasons, the U.S. occupation of Iraq should end, and the American troops there should come home.

Paul R. Pillar is Nonresident Senior Fellow at the Center for Security Studies at Georgetown University and Nonresident Senior Fellow in Foreign Policy at the Brookings Institution. He is a contributing editor to *The National Interest*.

Source: <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/paul-pillar/us-military-now-occupying-iraq-its-time-leave-113741>

What's In Trump's Peace Plan For Israel And Palestine – Analysis

he proposal for peace in the Middle East unveiled by US President Donald Trump envisions the conditions under which a Palestinian state might be recognized. RT delves into the 180-page 'deal of the century' to see what's inside.

The "Vision for Peace, Prosperity and a Brighter Future" bills itself as "the best, most realistic and most achievable outcome for the parties" right from the start. It says that the 700 or so UN General Assembly resolutions and 100-plus Security Council resolutions have failed to bring peace, while the 1993 Oslo Accords left too many key issues unresolved, "including, among other items, borders, security, refugees and Jerusalem." Trump's vision addresses all those issues – mostly by siding with Israel.

Security

"A realistic solution would give the Palestinians all the power to govern themselves but not the powers to threaten Israel," says the Vision at the very beginning. Therefore, any Palestinian state would have to be fully demilitarized.

Palestine would not have any right to "develop military or paramilitary capabilities" without Israel's approval. It would also be barred from any sort of security or diplomatic arrangements with other countries without Israeli consent.

Israel would retain the right to "dismantle and destroy any facility in the State of Palestine that is used for the production of prohibited weapons or for other hostile purposes," and maintain control over "all international crossings into the State of Palestine."

Also, as a precondition for recognition, the Palestinian Authority would have to drop all pending or planned legal action against Israel, the US and their citizens before the International Criminal Court, the International Court of Justice, and all other tribunals.

Borders

On page 45, the Vision introduces a “Conceptual Map,” a basis for negotiations that is designed to address the “spirit” of UN Security Council Resolution 242, dealing with the Palestinian territories previously held by Egypt and Jordan but taken by Israel in the 1967 war – namely, West Bank and Gaza.

Vision for Peace conceptual map

The map reflects the US view that Israel is not legally bound to provide Palestinians with 100 percent of the pre-1967 territory, but something “reasonably comparable in size.” It shows a Palestinian state almost entirely enclosed by Israel to address “security requirements.” As noted above, Israel gets to maintain control over Palestinian borders.

This is what a future State of Palestine can look like, with a capital in parts of East Jerusalem.

As drawn, the map “avoids forced population transfers of either Arab or Jews,” often by creating enclaves within enclaves, connected to the rest by access roads, tunnels or overpasses. It envisions “high-speed transportation links” for Palestinians, but it is unclear what this might mean, as no such infrastructure presently exists in the US.

Israel has already said it would basically annex the strip along the Jordanian border and other areas assigned to it by the map right away, while pausing all settlement activity in the Palestinian-designated areas for four years, to give the Palestinians time to make their choice.

Jerusalem

Partitioned by the 1949 armistice between Israel and Jordan, Jerusalem has been fully under Israeli control since 1967. Israel has officially annexed the entire city – a claim recognized by Trump in December 2017, but not the UN.

The Vision treats Jerusalem as the Israeli capital – albeit with freedom of access to its holy sites to all religious communities – and proposes the Palestinian capital to be “in the section of East Jerusalem located in all areas east and north of the existing security barrier, including Kafr Aqab, the eastern part of Shuafat

and Abu Dis, and could be named Al Quds” or however else the Palestinian state wishes (page 21).

Refugees

One of the most intractable issues has been the question of Palestinian refugees, displaced since 1948. The Trump plan asserts that “nearly the same number of Jews and Arabs were displaced by the Arab-Israeli conflict,” but while the Jews were given citizenship and absorbed by Israel, the Palestinians were “cruelly and cynically held in limbo to keep the conflict alive” by the neighboring Arab states.

“There shall be no right of return by, or absorption of, any Palestinian refugee into the State of Israel.”

Palestinians will be given a choice to seek citizenship in the Palestinian state, integrate into the countries where they currently live, or resettle in a third country. A “generous trust” will be established to pay for this.

The carrot and the stick

Much of the document is in fact about economic incentives for Palestinians, including the 95-page second half that lays out the proposal masterminded by Trump’s son-in-law and adviser Jared Kushner and presented last year in Bahrain. The detailed presentation envisions how Palestinians should structure their government, society, economy, education, healthcare, etc.

In sum, Palestinians are promised a million new jobs, billions of dollars in investments to bring them out of poverty, and a state they can call their own – if they agree to a peculiar form of restricted sovereignty that is subordinated to Israeli security interests; recognize Israel as the Jewish state and abandon all claims to the land it holds; and reorganize their entire society along the lines of a western liberal democracy.

While Trump and Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu have praised the proposal as the “deal of the century,” all Palestinian factions have already denounced it as dead on arrival.

Source: <https://www.eurasiareview.com/29012020-whats-tn-trumps-peace-plan-for-israel-and-palestine-analysis/>

Ending America's Endless War By Bernie Sanders

The United States has been at war for too long. Even today, we seem to be preparing for a new war with Iran, which would be the worst yet. Earlier this month, President Donald Trump ordered thousands of additional U.S. troops to the Middle East to confront Tehran and its proxies. And we recently learned that the Pentagon had presented the White House with plans to send tens of thousands more.

I am very concerned that, whether intentionally or unintentionally, the Trump administration's moves against Iran, and Iran's moves in response, could put us in direct conflict.

We should all understand that a war with Iran would be many times worse than the Iraq war. U.S. military leaders and security experts have repeatedly told us that. If the United States were to attack Iran, Tehran could use its proxies to retaliate against U.S. troops and partners in Iraq, Syria, Israel, and the Persian Gulf area. The result would be the further, unimaginable destabilization of the Middle East, with wars that go on year after year and likely cost trillions of dollars. We need to take a step back and rethink what we are doing, both in Iran and in the broader Middle East. In the nearly two decades since the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the United States has made a series of costly blunders that have not only weakened our democracy but also undermined our leadership. We need a foreign policy that focuses on core U.S. interests, clarifies our commitment to democratic values both at home and abroad, and privileges diplomacy and working collectively with allies to address shared security concerns.

BEYOND THE WAR ON TERROR

The United States invaded Afghanistan in response to the worst terrorist attack in our country's history, and with a specific purpose: to bring justice to those who planned the 9/11 attacks and those who supported them, and to make sure that such an attack would never happen again. Our military has now been in Afghanistan for nearly 18 years.

Instead of staying focused on those who attacked us, President George W. Bush's administration chose to declare a global "war on terror" in order to justify its 2003 invasion of Iraq, a country that had nothing to do with the 9/11 attacks. The war on terror has turned into an endless war. We will soon have troops fighting in Afghanistan who were not even born on September 11, 2001. We have fathers who completed tours of duty there, only to be followed by their sons and daughters. Withdrawing from Afghanistan is something we must do. My administration will not make critical foreign-policy decisions like this one via tweet, as our current president does. We will work closely with our partners and allies to design a serious diplomatic and political strategy to stabilize the region, promote more effective and accountable governance, and ensure that threats do not re-emerge after we leave.

Orienting U.S. national-security strategy around terrorism essentially allowed a few thousand violent extremists to dictate the foreign policy of the most powerful nation on earth.

But just to end our military interventions in these places is not enough. We need to rethink the militaristic approach that has undermined the United States' moral authority, caused allies to question our ability to lead, drained our tax coffers, and corroded our own democracy. We must never again engage in torture or indefinite detention, and we must limit the use of drone strikes that too often result in high numbers of civilian casualties, boosting the very terrorist organizations that we aim to defeat. And we must seriously reinvest in diplomacy and development aid, both of which have been allowed to atrophy under the current administration. Addressing issues like civil and religious tension, corruption, and lack of opportunity before these conditions give rise to conflict can eliminate the need to address them militarily in the future.

Terrorism is a very real threat, which requires robust diplomatic efforts, intelligence cooperation with allies and partners, and yes, sometimes military action. But as an organizing framework, the global war on terror has been a disaster for our country. Orienting U.S. national-security strategy around terrorism essentially allowed a few thousand violent extremists to dictate the foreign policy of the most powerful nation on earth. We responded to terrorists by giving them exactly what they wanted.

The war on terror has also been staggeringly wasteful. According to the most recent study by the Costs of War Project at Brown University, it will have cost American taxpayers more than \$4.9 trillion through the end of this fiscal year. Factoring in the future health-care costs of veterans injured in post-9/11 wars, the bill will be closer to \$6 trillion. And even after this enormous expense, the world has more terrorists now, not fewer. According to the Center for Strategic and International Studies, there were nearly four times as many Sunni Islamic militants operating around the world in November 2018 as on September 11, 2001. That is no coincidence: the way the United States and its partners have prosecuted this war has caused widespread resentment and anger, which helps those terrorists recruit.

The war on terror has come with huge opportunity costs as well—things we haven't been able to do because we were mired in costly overseas conflicts. Competitors like China and Russia have exploited our forever wars to expand their economic and political influence around the world. In China, an inner circle led by President Xi Jinping has steadily consolidated power, clamping down on domestic political freedom while aggressively promoting its version of authoritarian capitalism abroad. Russia's President Vladimir Putin has a grandiose vision of restoring the power that Moscow commanded in the Soviet era, something he knows he cannot achieve. But what he can do, what he is trying to do, is to destroy the alliance of liberal democracies in Europe and North America that stand in the way of Russian resurgence.

A COSTLY DISTRACTION

Endless wars help the powerful to draw attention away from economic corruption. In today's globalized economy, wealth and income inequality are vast and growing. The world's top one percent possess more wealth than the bottom 99 percent, and a small number of huge financial institutions wield enormous power over the lives of billions of people. Multinational corporations and rich people have stashed more than \$21 trillion in offshore bank accounts in order to avoid paying their fair share in taxes. Then they turn around and demand that their governments impose austerity agendas on working families. In industrialized countries, many have begun to question whether democracy can actually deliver for them. They work longer hours for lower wages than they used to. At the same time, they see big money buying elections, and the political and economic elite growing wealthier, even as the their own children's future dims.

Too often, political leaders exploit these fears, stoking resentment and fanning ethnic and racial hatred among those who are struggling. We see this very clearly in our own country, coming from the highest level of our government. When our elected leaders, pundits, and cable news personalities promote relentless fear-mongering about Muslim terrorists, they inevitably create a climate of fear and suspicion around Muslim American citizens—a climate in which demagogues like Trump can thrive. By turning our immigration debate into a debate about Americans' personal security, we have conflated one policy conundrum with another and subjected all those who seek a better life in the United States to xenophobia and defamation. There is a straight line from the decision to reorient U.S. national-security strategy around terrorism after 9/11 to placing migrant children in cages on our southern border.

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All the while, truly severe looming threats like climate change have failed to capture much-needed attention and commitment. The scientific community is virtually unanimous in telling us that climate change is real, that it is caused by human activity, and that it is already doing devastating harm throughout the world. If we don't act boldly to address the climate crisis, we are all but certain to see more drought, more floods, more extreme weather disturbances, more acidification of oceans whose levels are rising, and, because of resultant mass migration, more threats to global stability and security. According to the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, we only have about 12 years to take action before a rise in the planet's temperature will cause irreversible damage.

Climate change is a clear example of an issue on which American leadership can make a difference—and from which our endless entanglements in the Middle East have diverted crucial resources and attention. Europe cannot address this problem alone. Nor can China. Nor can the United States. This crisis calls out for strong international cooperation if we are to leave our children and grandchildren a planet that is healthy and habitable. American leadership—and the economic and scientific advantages that only America can offer—can and must facilitate this effort.

TO END AN ENDLESS WAR

Enough is enough. In March, we had a historic vote in both houses of Congress to end U.S. military involvement in Yemen's civil war. This vote demonstrated strong bipartisan concern over unconstitutional and unauthorized wars, and it served as an important reminder that Congress must reassert its constitutional authority over the use of military force. I was one of those who opposed the Iraq war. Trump claims he opposed it too, but, in truth, he only did so after the fact. Trump campaigned on getting the United States out of "endless war," but his administration is taking us down a path that makes another war more likely. We can and we must pursue a different option.

The American people don't want endless war. Neither do we want a foreign policy that is based on the logic that led to those wars and corroded our democracy: a logic that privileges military tools over diplomatic ones, aggressive unilateralism over multilateral engagement, and acquiescence to our undemocratic partners over the pursuit of core interests alongside democratic allies who truly share our values. We have to view the terrorism threat through the proper scope, rather than allowing it to dominate our view of the world. The time has come to envision a new form of American engagement: one in which the United States leads not in war-making but in bringing people together to find shared solutions to our shared concerns. American power should be measured not by our ability to blow things up, but by our ability to build on our common humanity, harnessing our technology and enormous wealth to create a better life for all people.

Source: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2019-06-24/ending-americas-endless-war>