

March 2019

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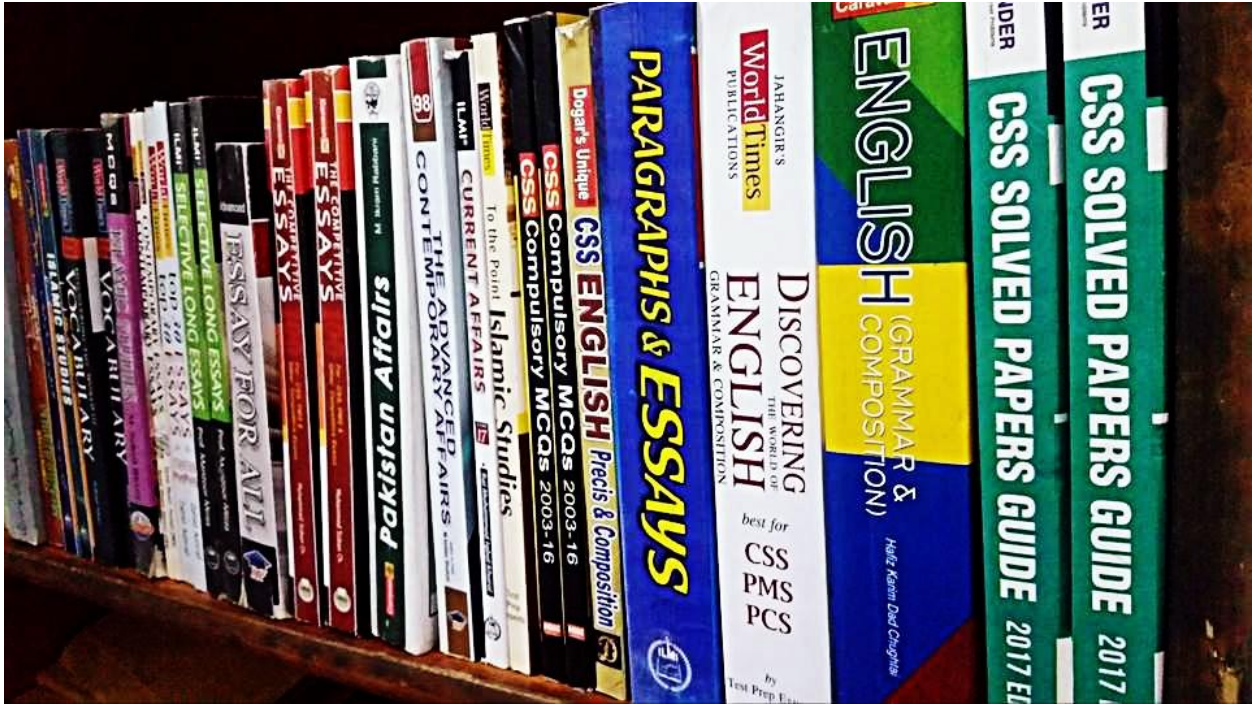
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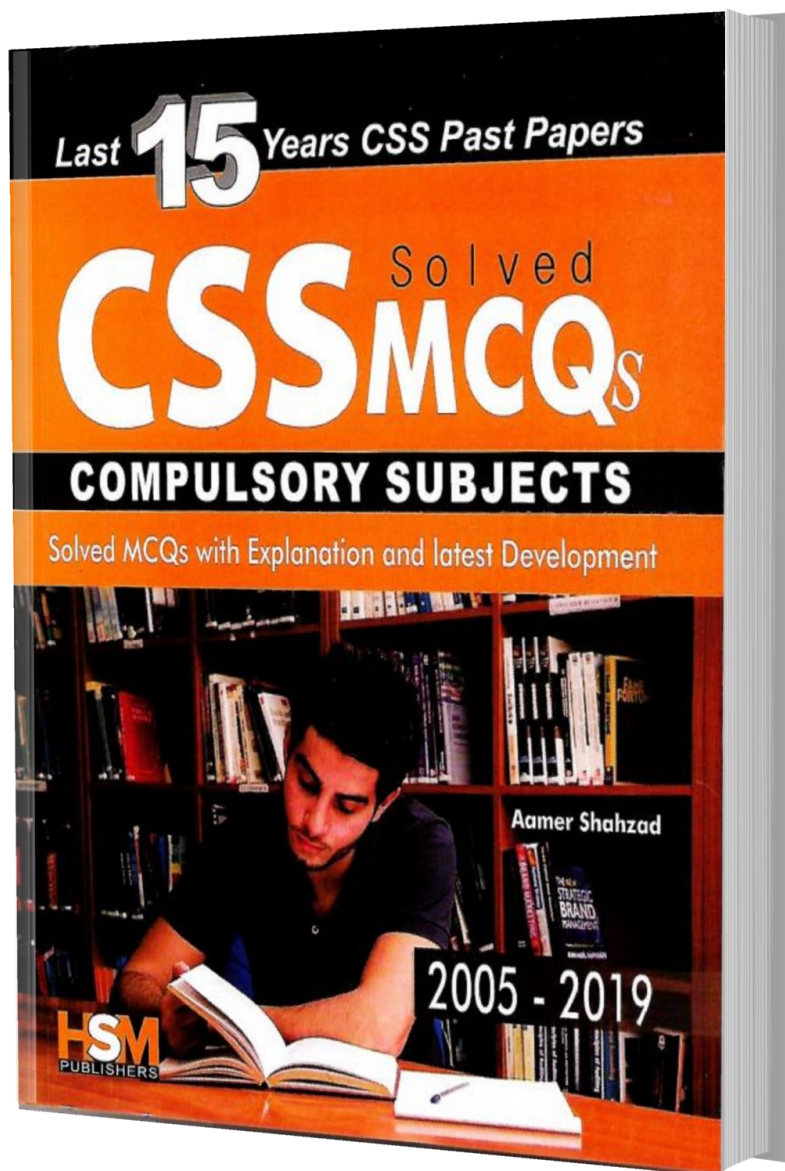
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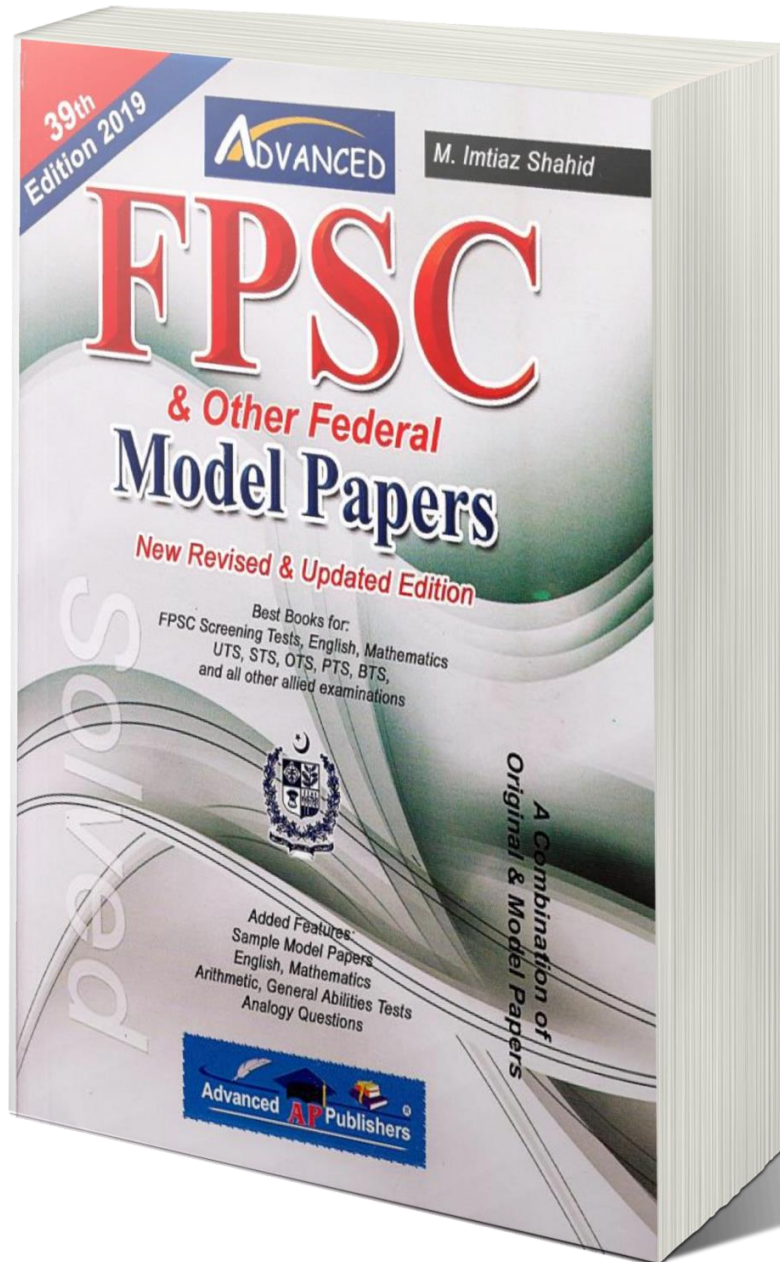
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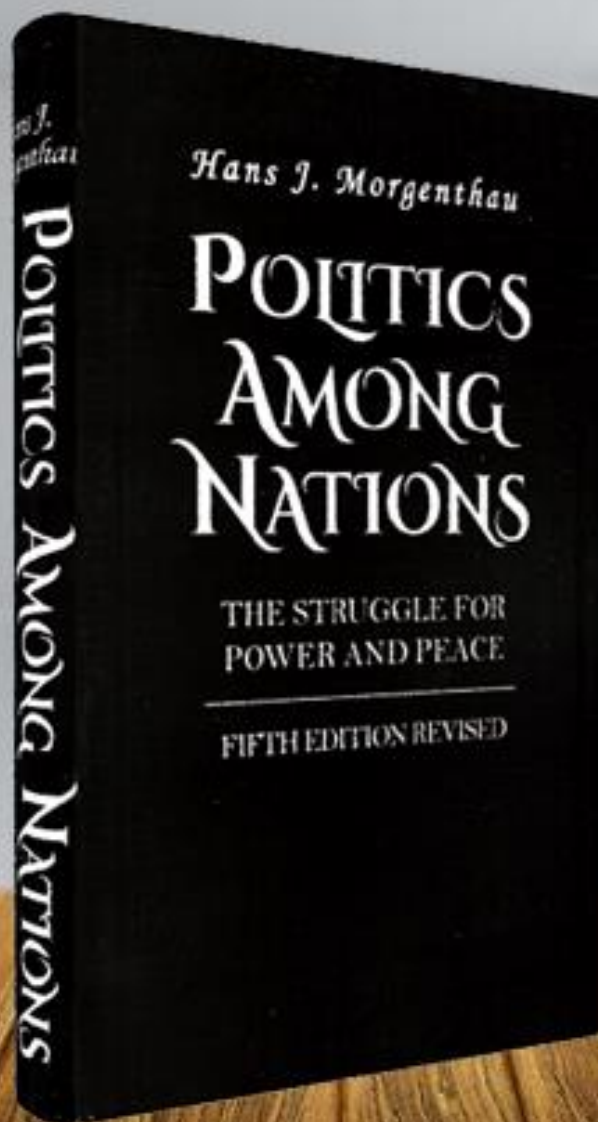


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PAKISTAN

Khan's Victory Over Modi By Yasser Latif Hamdani

What an extraordinary week we have had. Whatever our criticisms of Imran Khan and the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government — of which there are plenty — let us give credit where it is due. Imran Khan proved to be the right person at the right time, a strong willed leader standing up to aggression by an unthinking and unsavoury Indian Prime Minister (PM).

The Indian narrative on the events of the past week would be hilarious if it was not tragic. They claimed an air strike and yet could not produce evidence of the damage. After their jets were shot out of the sky, they claimed that they too had shot down an F-16. Hilarious because all of these claims could be verified with footage from a front camera, which even a tenth generation Honda Civic comes factory fitted with these days. Indeed all fighter jets have the Head Up Display (HUD), which records precisely these things. Instead, Indian anchors were busy producing pictures of ribs and engines that even their own experts rightly pointed out were Mig 21 parts. If indeed Indians wanted to claim that they had shot down a Pakistani jet and use ribs from a Mig 21, they could have at least claimed to have shot down an F-7P, which is precisely the Chinese manufactured Mig 21 used by Pakistan. The reason why Indians wanted to insist that Pakistan used an F-16 was based on the mistaken notion that Americans can dictate which theatre an F-16 can or cannot be used in. This is possibly true of the Block 52 F-16 C/D versions, which were procured during the war on terrorism but is certainly not true of the F-16 A/B that Pakistan has been using since the 1980s. Nevertheless, the Pakistani position is that it did not use the F-16s in the recent combat over and around the Line Of Control (LOC).

The war against Hindutva India is a war where our tools and weapons are books, the internet, economy and the war on illiteracy and poverty

The Indian narrative gets even more hilarious when it comes to the claim that Pakistan violated the Third Geneva Convention by releasing a video of Wing Commander Abhinandan of the Indian Air Force. The Indians are citing a violation of Article 13 of the 1949 Geneva Convention. It should be produced in full: "Prisoners of war must at all times be humanely treated. Any unlawful act or omission by the Detaining Power causing death or seriously endangering the health of a prisoner of war in its custody is prohibited and will be regarded as a serious breach of the present Convention. In particular, no prisoner of war may be subjected to physical mutilation or to medical or scientific experiments of any kind which are not justified by the medical, dental or hospital treatment of the prisoner concerned and carried out in his interest. Likewise, prisoners of war must at all times be protected, particularly against acts of violence or intimidation and against insults and public curiosity. Measures of reprisal against prisoners of war are prohibited." In particular, they rely on "public curiosity" as being deployed with the release of the video. Some little known military justice expert from a little known university is being quoted again and again as the basis for this claim. Wing Commander Abhinandan was not only rescued from a mob but was then given the necessary care. The video produced of him did not open him up to public ridicule or curiosity but led to widespread calls from Pakistanis for fair and just treatment under the law. Unlike the Indians who are baying for every Pakistani's blood, no Pakistani has called for the hanging or ill-treatment of the Indian air warrior. By opening itself up to media scrutiny, Pakistan not only acknowledged an Indian POW (and he would fall under this category for obvious reasons) but also pledged to its own people and the world community fair and just treatment to the Indian POW. Taken aback by such forthright display by the Pakistani military authorities, Indian agent provocateurs, who would have rather the Pakistan Army tortured Wing Commander Abhinandan instead, proceeded with this new line of propaganda. Joining in the chorus were self-styled experts on the law of war and armed conflict. These are generally people with legal training who have never quite practised law inside a courtroom. To them, therefore, the practice of law is limited to hair-splitting and misapplication of international conventions. They can care less about the well being of an air warrior like Wing Commander Abhinandan and are more concerned about one-upmanship. PM Imran Khan's decision to send Abhinandan back to India, when we could have under law kept him till cessation of hostilities, is a landmark in South Asia's bitter history. History will remember Imran Khan as a great statesman for his decisions in wake of naked aggression by India.

Yet we have to decide – as Imran Khan said — where we go from here. Indians for all their sabre rattling are ultimately joined with us through ties of a common past, blood and even wars. For one thing, PM Imran Khan can start by doing away with the little Modis in his own cabinet like Ali Muhammad Khan. While the PM was making his extraordinary gesture of peace, this minister was seen on TV announcing Ghazwa-e-Hind. Secondly, we should have a clear policy vis a vis Hafiz Saeed and Masood Azhar. There is no question of surrendering them to India or any foreign power but they must be brought to face the full face of justice for all that they are accused of. Pakistani soil should never be used to mount terror attacks in any of our neighbouring countries. Finally, we must realize that India ultimately relies on clever marketing and packaging. Despite having a far-right hatemonger as its PM, India packages itself as a secular democracy. Despite the fact that a hatemonger of that kind will never win any popular election in Pakistan, we automatically lose points because of the inherent contradictions in our Constitution and laws. Even if we do not go completely secular, we should make every effort to dismantle all discriminatory laws that have made our country an object of ridicule the world over. Now more than ever, Pakistan needs to implement Jinnah's August 11 speech in letter and spirit, because when push comes to shove, every Pakistani – no matter what his or her religion — stands shoulder to shoulder. There can never be an occasion to discriminate against Non-Muslims in Pakistan or against those who have been forced into exclusion such as the Ahmadis. Pakistan must stand by everyone of its children just like they stand by Pakistan. That way the final victory will be ours. Ghazwa-e-Hind should not be about nuclear weapons and inflicting deaths on each other. It is really about an economic war and a media war. It is a war where our tools and weapons are books, the internet, economy and the war on illiteracy and poverty. We can win this war, but for that we will have to follow an inclusive and progressive ethos which can truly make Pakistan the second Medina PM Imran Khan always talks about.

The writer is a practicing lawyer and was a visiting fellow at Harvard Law School in Cambridge MA, USA

Published in Daily Times, March 4th 2019.

Source: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/360960/khans-victory-over-modi/>

Urban Planning: PM's Realistic Vision |

Editorial

AT a time when the country's population is expanding at a rapid pace and housing societies are cropping up in all the major cities to cope with increased demands for houses, it is really important that proper planning is done to meet the residential demand in such a manner that it has least impact on our environment and also sufficient land remains available for agriculture purposes in order to ensure food security.

Without any exaggeration, the country is lucky to have a Prime Minister who has a vision with futuristic approach as ever since assumption of power he has given an unprecedented focus to greener landscape and development of agriculture sector on modern lines. 'Green and Clean Pakistan' programme is just one example of it. Also in a tweet on Saturday, PM Imran Khan shared his ideas as how future cities in Pakistan would look like. Alluding to environmental challenges faced by the country, he said building structures should rise vertically as this will ensure that we have ample space for agriculture purposes as well as greenery around us by planting more trees. He said avoiding large sprawling built-up areas would also allow easier provision of amenities to the urban dwellers. To achieve the objective, he said the government is in the process of making laws to ensure that buildings are not only constructed as per international safety standards but also go as high as in other cities across the world.

Indeed in big populated countries, high-rise buildings have been built for residential and commercial purposes. And given our population size, it is important that we also emulate similar models and that will also help the PTI government to fulfil the promise of providing five million houses to the people. While we expect that the government will complete the process of legislation to this effect at the earliest, it is also important that building codes and regulations in the whole country are implemented in letter and in spirit in order to ensure safety and security of the dwellers. In some fire incidents especially that occurred in high-rise buildings in Karachi, one saw how the building laws were clearly flouted that put people's life at great risk. It is also important that seismic safety codes are also fully implemented besides proper system is put in place that ensures

proper upkeep and maintenance of buildings so that people could live or work there with ensured safety.

The people will also have to bring a change in their mindset and attitude by preferring apartments over big palatial houses. This can be done by providing them apartments that are designed by reputed architects at reasonable rates as currently purchasing a plot and then constructing a house on it is going beyond the reach of common man. Though many people laughed over chicken and egg policy, yet it is really important that such economic activity is generated in rural areas and small towns that stop migration of people to big urban centres. Undoubtedly, a holistic and scientific approach is required to build and remodel our cities and other infrastructure so that our eco system becomes human friendly.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/urban-planning-pms-realistic-vision/>

Pakistan's Proactive Foreign Policy and India By Muhammad Hanif

For the last six months, Pakistan's Foreign Policy has been proactive and it has not only brought economic and strategic dividends to the country, it has also greatly helped Pakistan in managing the current tension with India. During this period, while the Prime Minister, Imran Khan visited Saudi Arabia, China, Turkey, Malaysia, Qatar and the UAE, the Crown Princes of Saudi Arabia and the UAE have visited Pakistan. Moreover, whereas the Foreign Minister of Pakistan visited Saudi Arabia, Qatar, UAE and China, the Foreign Ministers of China and a few Muslim countries also visited Pakistan.

During the above mentioned visits and interactions many MoUs and agreements were signed, and Pakistan has got some major economic benefits, including a sufficient quantity of loans provided on easy terms by its friendly countries like Saudi Arabia, UAE and China, to ease out its financial difficulties. Besides, Pakistan has also signed some major investment agreements with Saudi Arabia like the construction of a major oil refinery at Gwadar and purchase of a few energy producing plants from Pakistan.

Apart from the above stated economic advantages, Pakistan has also strengthened its political and diplomatic relations with the above stated countries. Apart from above, the Prime Minister Imran had taken a major peace initiative of offering holding of a dialogue with India and opening the Kartarpur Corridor to facilitate Indian Sikhs' visit to the Shrine of Baba Guru Nanak in Pakistan at Kartarpur, although these friendly gestures had not received an open hearted welcome from the Modi Government.

Also, Pakistan had taken a major peace initiative pertaining to Afghanistan by facilitating the US-Taliban talks. Now the second round of these talks is continuing in Doha and it is expected that these discussions will result in a concrete agreement on achieving peace in Afghanistan. In this context, apart from contributing towards peace in Afghanistan, by facilitating the US-Taliban talks Pakistan has also improved its relations with the US. In this regard, President Trump's recent statement that within a short time Pakistan-US relations have greatly improved is significant.

The above-mentioned economic and diplomatic gains in the economic and diplomatic fields have been greatly helpful to Pakistan in managing the current political and military tension created by India in the context of the Pulwama attack in the Indian occupied Kashmir. Even without conducting an investigation, India's PM, Modi had blamed Pakistan for the Pulwama attack. And, in this context, while Modi cancelled the Most Favoured Nation Status of Pakistan and stopped trading with it, he had also warned Pakistan for teaching it a lesson. Contrary to Modi's these actions, while Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan had offered to cooperate with India in the investigation of the Pulwama attack, he had also offered to India to hold a bilateral dialogue to resolve the bilateral issues.

Despite Imran Khan's above stated offers, on the night of 25/26 February 2019, four aircraft of the Indian air force violated Pakistan's sovereignty by crossing the Line of Control (LoC), and when they were challenged by the Pakistan Air Force aircraft, they offloaded their ammunition/bombs on a bare ground and fled back to India without hitting their assigned targets, although India had falsely claimed that its aircraft had destroyed a terrorist camp in Pakistan.

Then in the morning of 27 February 2019, when Pakistani aircraft had shot the Indian military-related targets across the LoC from a standoff distance from own side of the LoC to avenge the violation of its sovereignty a day before, two Indian aircraft again crossed the LoC and those were hit by the Pakistani aircraft. As one Indian aircraft fell on the Pakistani side of the LoC, its pilot was arrested by the Pakistan Army.

To face the tension created by India, the provision of the economic assistance to Pakistan in the shape of easy loans by its friendly countries has given it an added confidence. Also, Pakistan's recently reset and renewed strong diplomatic relations with its friendly countries is greatly helping it in dealing with the military tension with India. In this regard, Pakistan Government's active diplomacy with the friendly countries is praise worthy.

The US is trying to diffuse the tension. Turkey has announced all types of support to Pakistan. Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister is visiting Pakistan in this context. The Crown Prince of the UAE is trying to mediate. China, Russia and the EU have asked for a reduction in the tension and favoured the Pakistan's stance

of resolving the issues by holding bilateral talks. Thus, virtually, in relation to the current tense situation with India, Pakistan's proactive foreign policy has outperformed India's so called superior diplomacy by mustering sufficient diplomatic support in favour of its stance.

—The writer is an ex-Army Colonel and Senior Research Fellow, Strategic Vision Institute, Islamabad.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/pakistans-proactive-foreign-policy-and-india/>

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

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

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

killing and secondly, of course the political gains in terms of winning polls using the Pakistan card.

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

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

Secondly, the Pakistani military leadership exercised maximum restraint by not indulging in carrying out destruction-based responsive conventional strike and instead opted for firing warning shots next to the intended six targets which if destroyed would have pained the Indians most thus could result into spiralling up the escalation ladder. The approach demonstrated the Pakistani military's confidence in their capacities besides making friends and foes to believe that the armed forces have both brightest brains as well as toughest fighters. Moreover,

the treatment extended to the Indian captured pilots is being appreciated not only domestically but on the other side of the border too, duly demonstrating restraint.

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

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

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

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

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

OIC Favours Kashmir | Editorial

The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has reiterated its support for the cause of the people of Kashmir and has condemned the wave of state-sponsored extremism in Indian Occupied Kashmir (IOK) in a resolution adopted by the 46th session of Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM). The Kashmir Dispute has been the longest withstanding debate between India and Pakistan ever since the independence of both countries.

The recent tragic terrorist attack in Pulwama reaffirms the need to find a diplomatic solution to the problem because without resolution of the Kashmir issue, peace in South Asia will remain a distant dream. For the longest time, India has conveniently masked the human rights violations in the Kashmir Valley by a stronghold on the media and by maintaining ties with the Western world. However, the Pulwama attack, and the Indian response to it, has shown the world how India needs to be pushed to the dialogue table.

The recent aggression between Pakistan and India has given this debate a global audience, with India pushing for the narrative of war and Pakistan offering a peace dialogue. It is evident that Pakistan has faced its share of extremism in the country and cannot afford to engage in war jingoism, whereas, Indian media and politicians supported ruling party Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)'s announcement of war before the elections to manipulate the voters. With an international audience to the controversy, Pakistan has a platform to showcase its fair stance in front of the global community in the Kashmir debate.

The people of Kashmir have suffered endlessly due to the Indian government's lack of interest in resolving the issue. The global political regime, realising the importance of both India and Pakistan and the upcoming economic development in the region, must engage the two countries to develop bilateral ties and help end the human rights violations in Kashmir. With the intelligent diplomatic footing of Pakistan, we have already seen an improvement in the response of the international community. This time neither India's violation of the Line of Control (LOC) nor the challenging of Pakistan's sovereignty went unnoticed. Building on the same narrative, Pakistani diplomats now need to assert Pakistan's willingness to resolve matters and unveil India's aggressive foreign policy

towards Pakistan. The region of Kashmir has not witnessed development and growth in over 70 years. They are being denied the most basic of rights with the political institutions failing to overcome the challenge.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/04-Mar-2019/oic-favours-kashmir>

NAP in Action | Editorial

Pakistan is against terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. Well, this has been our official policy line for very many years, but unfortunately, we have failed to prove it to the world, and not too many in the comity of nations are ready to acknowledge the countless sacrifices — loss of 70,000 precious lives of civilians and security personnel and more than hundred billion dollars in terms of squandered economic opportunities and damaged infrastructure — that Pakistan rendered in the US-led war on terror.

The FATF review is now coming up — in roughly two months from now — and the task is to avoid the black list by proving that Pakistan is truly against terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

Even if Pulwama is another factor in Pakistan moving to act against terrorism and extremism on its soil, it's indeed a blessing in disguise: the state is serious in putting its house in order.

Days after announcing a three-phase policy — featuring political, economic and administrative measures — to curb the menace of terrorism, a number of steps have been taken against terrorists and terror outfits in the country in line with the decisions taken at a recent meeting of the National Security Committee.

As many as 44 members affiliated with proscribed organisations — including Jaish-e-Mohammad chief Masood Azhar's brother Mufti Abdul Rauf and son Hammad Azhar — into 'preventive custody' under the National Action Plan. Besides, two seminaries and property belonging to proscribed Jamaat-ud-Dawa and Falah-e-Insaniyat have been taken over by the government.

While the commitment and resolve on the part of the state is there, fighting gun-wielding terrorists as well as extremists, many of whom are educated too, is a complex task that is unlikely to finish any time soon. The challenging battle requires coordinated action across all levels of state institutions.

The 20-point National Action Plan — that was devised with national consensus in the wake of the December 2014 Army Public School massacre — provides a

comprehensive strategy to deal with the long-haunting menace. The plan needs to be implemented in letter and spirit, and this war on terror must continue till achievement of its objectives.

Published in The Express Tribune, March 7th, 2019.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1924247/6-nap-in-action/>

TAPI Agreement | Editorial

Pakistan and Turkmenistan have signed the final agreement for the initiation of the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline network. According to this plan, Turkmenistan will provide gas to India and Pakistan via Afghanistan. Before this setup, the export of gas in Turkmenistan was limited to China but now they want to expand their export base. Initially, the fear of pursuing this initiative was the instability in Afghanistan but the recent talks between the United States of America (USA) and the Taliban, facilitated by Pakistan, have shown a great deal of improvement and an inclination towards ending the war.

READ MORE: US plans to test missiles banned by INF Treaty in 2019: Report
With that set in motion, the government of Turkmenistan can count upon the stability in the region to ensure that the smooth supply of gas is not disrupted. Both, Pakistan and Afghanistan, have also ensured that there would be no security lapses, especially with Pakistan working rigorously to push extremist elements out of the country after years of loss. The good aspect of this project is that it relies on the gas supplying companies already working in the four countries. Pakistan faces a dire shortage of gas and even more so each passing year. This project, expected to be completed in a duration of two years, can drastically improve the living conditions in the country which is already facing an energy crisis.

Turkmenistan Foreign Minister Meredov was on a visit to Islamabad. On this trip, he led his delegation at the second round of the Pakistan-Turkmenistan Bilateral Political Consultations (BPC). Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi was also present at the meeting and it was discussed to actively pursue better bilateral ties. For this purpose, several projects will be taken up which will target agriculture, textile, livestock, and IT sectors. During the visit, memoranda of understanding (MoUs) were signed to increase cooperation between the foreign ministries of the two nations as well as their diplomatic institutions. An MoU was also signed for the establishment of the Pak-Turkmen Joint Business Council.

This will drastically improve the ties between the two countries. In order to remain as a key player in the politics of the region, Pakistan must not only engage in

bilateral agreements but also maintain good diplomatic relations with the countries of the region. The establishment of this agreement along with several others shows a shift in Pakistan's ideology and how it is growing to be more towards economic development.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/14-Mar-2019/tapi-agreement>

Pakistan: The Heart of Asia | Editorial

Soft power is the manifestation of a state's perception in the international arena since it defines its stature on a global scale. While it's true that Pakistan's track record in this regard has remained abysmal to a large extent since the days of the Soviet-Afghan War, there have been concerted efforts in reshaping it as a viable destination for tourism and investment in recent times. Especially when considering how the civil-military leadership has tackled militancy and managed to contain terrorism through a systematic manner.

Tourism opportunities have immense potential in projecting the state's soft power. Coincidentally, ever since security risks have decreased, a number of international celebrities in the form of footballers and singers have either visited Pakistan or shown their interest. Lius Figo and Ricardo Kaka's brief yet memorable visit was considered unimaginable not long ago. Whereas, documentary makers, travel enthusiasts and youth ambassadors from other countries such as Brandon Stanton, Marion Pfennigs and Mark Wiens have proven that Pakistan has the potential to become the heart of Asia for not only tourism but economic activities as well.

Hosting some of the previous and current year's Pakistan Super League (PSL) matches in the country define how safe it has become for playing international sports given how the March 2009 Sri Lankan team attack deprived the state of its rightful place in the world of cricket.

Other sporting activities such as mountaineering, skiing and desert safaris have witnessed an exponential increase all thanks to an improved security scenario. Not mentioning that Portugal was the first European country to lift travel advisory in years. Some other countries have also followed suit and downgraded, if not lifted, their advisories.

What does it all show? The military has done an impressive work in reducing the risk factors and has played a pivotal role in bringing a number of celebrities from abroad.

As for the Foreign Office, diplomatic missions abroad have done a tremendously applauding job in promoting soft power through concerts, fashion shows and exhibitions. Whether it's the performance of Sachal Orchestra at the UN's General Assembly hall under the watch of Pakistan's envoy to the UN Dr Maleeha Lodhi or the extravagant fashion shows organised in Berlin by Pakistan's Ambassador to Germany Jauhar Saleem, the state's diplomacy still has what it takes to present the best possible image of Pakistan.

Nevertheless, there's still much to be done in light of a complex regional scenario. Placing the house in order, through the implementation of National Action Plan (NAP), should be a topmost priority which can open doors to much needed foreign investments on an exponential scale. More importantly, if tourism is to be sustained for years, groundwork is required to promote the country via PR campaigns on international media-just like India, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Malaysia have done in the past.

Source: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/364846/pakistan-the-heart-of-asia>

Kartarpur Corridor | Editorial

India has not been able to maintain its pro-war narrative for long because of mounting pressure from the West and excessive media coverage of the blunder it made in the name of killing terrorists. Pakistan and India, as per Pakistan's wishes to pursue a dialogue, have joined forces for the Kartarpur corridor. India has a significant Sikh population which visits Pakistan every year to mark their holy days. Pakistan has worked rigorously to accommodate them and to ensure that they are safe and can practice their religion freely. This is precisely why the Kartarpur Corridor is being pursued because the Sikh population is also interested in establishing this relationship with Pakistan.

The first official meeting for the Kartarpur Corridor took place on Thursday and both sides have described it as cordial. The fact that both countries gave a joint press statement post the meeting is being witnessed as a great development by many. Such a feat was last achieved in 2015 and more appearances like these must be pursued because the narrative of war is not only damaging but also pushes the average voter to put aside their basic needs to focus on a war driven agenda. Such a narrative is not feasible in this day and age anymore.

The next meeting is scheduled for April where experts will meet to discuss the alignment of the corridor. It is expected to be functional this year in commemoration of the 550th birth anniversary of Baba Guru Nanak. Pakistan will establish a long-lasting relationship with the Sikh population of India which will provide a visa-free regime via this corridor. India now needs to realise and acknowledge the leap of faith which Pakistan is undertaking and keeping in mind the future of the region, must reciprocate proportionately.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/15-Mar-2019/kartarpur-corridor>

Pakistan Opens to World | Editorial

IN a landmark development, Prime Minister Imran Khan, on Thursday, launched the online visa regime with the aim to promote tourism and investment. The new e-visa scheme will facilitate visitors from 175 countries as they would be able to secure Pakistani visa from their homes without having to visit a Pakistani embassy or consulate.

This is, indeed, a bold step in the right direction, which, apart from promoting tourism and investment, might help transform the overall image of Pakistan in the comity of nations. This is because a message has gone to the outside world that security situation has drastically improved in Pakistan and the country was safe for tourists and visitors. The very fact that no country of the world has issued travel warnings to its citizens is also manifestation of the confidence of the world in the improved security environment in the country. Credit for this surely goes to the armed forces and the law enforcing agencies as they worked hard and rendered tremendous sacrifices in addressing the menace of terrorism and extremism. There were times when the world media talked about the possibility of extremists approaching Islamabad but beginning from Swat operation, the armed forces moved firmly to eliminate the threat from different regions and succeeded in the unconventional war against terrorism. The country is now poised to reap the benefits of measures taken to address the internal security challenge but still we would have to remain on the vigil to foil designs of the enemy that is bent upon doing mischief to undermine Pakistan's march on the road to progress and prosperity. Federal and provincial governments, armed forces and security agencies will have to increase their coordination to ensure that there is no threat to tourists as any such incident could spoil prospects for promotion of tourism. Similarly, all provincial governments, Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan should undertake an aggressive programme for provision of necessary facilities for tourists at all places of tourist attraction. Presently, even reliable roads, electricity, water and accommodation are non-existent at a number of spots that are visited by local and foreign tourists. The Government should also offer incentives to private sector to help develop places of tourist attractions on modern lines including establishment of international quality transport companies and quality hotels and motels besides provision of IT and telecom related facilities that are a must in the present-day world.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/2019/03/15/pakistan-opens-to-world/>

Utilising Thar Coal | Editorial

The much-talked-about Thar coal has finally started producing electricity. It's a good news indeed for a country that has been struggling, for quite a while, to meet the electricity demand of its domestic and industrial consumers, causing a host of harms and hitches in social and economic terms. Lack of proper power supply to homes means whole of households will not be able to study, work and rest properly, and kept disturbed and underperformed as a result. There is a huge economic cost of lack of power supply to factories and industries, coming in the form of lost production, eluding export orders, declining employment, etc.

The good news of the Thar coal power plant — having two units of 330 megawatts each — becoming operational has come coinciding with the looming summer season, which makes it even more welcome. While the first unit has started pumping power, produced by indigenous coal, into the national grid from Monday, the second one will be functional next month. So in about a month's time, the country's power generation will rise by 660 megawatts. Work on the construction of the country's first power plant, an early harvest of CPEC, had commenced in April 2016.

The power plant — set up by Engro Powergen Thar Limited in Thar Block II of Sindh — is understood to save the country a huge amount of valuable foreign exchange as coal from Thar is a cheaper, indigenous and abundant resource. However, the use of coal for power generation will have an obvious toll on the country's environment — already an area of serious concern. Herein too, China shows you the way out. The country — which generates 65% of its total electricity through coal — has upgraded its coal-fired power plants to make a significant cut in carbon dioxide emissions.

Published in The Express Tribune, March 20th, 2019.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1932922/6-utilising-thar-coal/>

US Ties With Pakistan Are Now Very Good: Trump

After months of strained relations between Islamabad and Washington, United States President Donald Trump on Friday said ties with Pakistan were “very good” at the moment.

The president made the remarks before boarding Marine One from the White House’s South Lawn.

When asked about Washington’s relationship with Islamabad, the US president said the administration will be meeting with the leadership in Pakistan. “Pakistan – we will be meeting with Pakistan,” he told reporters.

“I think our relationship right now is very good with Pakistan”, he added.

US-Taliban talks in Pakistan cancelled

Relations between the two countries were tense, however, recent efforts have reset the troubled ties. At the heart of their stalemate was the US insistence on Pakistan to ‘do more’ to bring the Afghan Taliban to the negotiating table.

US Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad, on a mission to expedite the Afghan peace process as the war in the war-torn country enters its 19th year, has made several trips to Pakistan and held meetings with top leadership as part of Washington’s renewed push to bring the Afghan Taliban to the negotiating table.

Earlier this year, a three-day parley was attended by representatives of the Afghan Taliban, the US as well as officials from Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. The talks were facilitated by Islamabad.

It was the first time that the Taliban’s military and political leaders attended a negotiation – something that has renewed hopes of a possible peace deal. Previously, the Taliban were only represented by their political office in Qatar.

The presence of the Taliban leaders like Mullah Amir Mutaqi, Qari Yahya, Mullah Mohibullah Hamas and Mullah Abbas Akhund at the UAE talks suggests the seriousness of the insurgent group towards the latest round of discussions.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1934816/1/>

Changing Foreign Policy Dimensions By

Asad Hussain

The world seems to be on a roller coaster, changing its dimensions abruptly. If history is any guide, states conquered vast swathes of territories to maintain their upper hand in the comity of nations. However, this trend was transformed into establishing large standing armies and strengthening military warfare to increase national power. This contour for maintaining supremacy over international affairs also short-lived and ideological combat started holding the vanguard position. The emergence of communism and liberal democracy in the late 1940s is the clear manifestation that defensive strategies were given ideological colour. Notwithstanding, in the ongoing globalised era, effective diplomacy and efficient foreign policy channels are ruling the roast to bring power and prestige to the country.

Since the emergence of Pakistan on the face of the earth, she severely lacked a mature and detailed foreign policy due to which she lost her desired and deserved international standing and stature. The diplomatic corridors of Pakistan failed to take a clear and practical stance on various issues involving our interests and survival. The setback in the diplomatic field where Pakistan could not manage to achieve its national interests was primarily due to inept decision makers and visionless political elite. For most of Pakistan's history, the foreign office lacked a clear and farsighted vision. Instead, the geo-strategic compulsions and challenges forced the earlier leadership of the country to rely on shortcuts. As a result, the state failed to devise a sustainable foreign policy.

Nevertheless, on a positive note, under the incumbent government, the foreign policy of Pakistan took a turn for the better and improved multifold. A clear foreign policy remained the principal objective of Imran Khan and the foreign office, presently, is slowly and gradually regaining the position that Pakistan deserves in international society.

On the eastern front, Pakistan was facing the brunt of severe warmongering techniques by an extremist and militant India. This militant drive spearheaded by the Modi administration brought the two regional and nuclear powers on the verge of catastrophe. However, these all-out war plans were averted by the

mature diplomacy and foreign policy of Pakistan. The Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan was extremely vocal about the peace and cooperation between the inseparable neighbours. He invited India, time again, to exterminate the ancient rivalry and start working on regional prosperity and human development through cooperation and trade linkages. He did not rely on the verbal statements regarding maintaining sustainable peace in the region and proved his stance by extending an olive branch by releasing the war captive of Indian pilot.

This mature handling of the grave issue of war with India by the Pakistani administration is the reflection of streamlined foreign policy objectives of Pakistan based on peaceful co-existence and development-oriented plans. Not only this, but Pakistan also approached international bodies and organisations and reported the brutality of India and asked them to use their good offices to resolve this war-like situation in the South Asian region to safeguard the world from witnessing bloodshed and financial loss. These efforts and mature handling of the issue was praised worldwide and projected the image of Pakistan as a responsible nuclear state.

Moreover, Pakistan has further flexed its muscles by increasing its interest-based relations with the emerging power- China. China is keen to build CPEC on a priority basis, and Pakistan is reaping its fruit by using the forum of Beijing to streamline its worsening relations with India and the European powers. Pakistan is using China as a strategic card to balance the power structure as the US is aligning its interests towards militant India. This foreign policy of Pakistan based on counter-balancing approach has sponsored Pakistan's security and development structure to operate in a desired manner.

Pursuing this further, Pakistan has established its diplomatic and developmental relations involving a large amount of foreign direct investment (FDI) from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). The recent visit of Muhammad Bin Salman (MBS) to Pakistan in the time when KSA is a leading partner of the USA, India and Israel- opponent block of Pakistan- was made possible due to strong diplomatic channels and foreign policy experts in Pakistan. Pakistan will use KSA as a Muslim card to normalise its hostile relations with the block above. This is no doubt an achievement on the part of Pakistan if it could yield a peaceful atmosphere to invite international dignitaries to visit Pakistan being the strategic and nuclear power of the world.

In the same manner, the great Mahathir Bin Mohamad, the Prime Minister of Malaysia is visiting Pakistan which is the success of the rightly guided foreign policy of Pakistan under our visionary Prime Minister Imran Khan. The frequent visits by the international leaders are strengthening Pakistan's credibility of being a stable, credible, responsible and peaceful country. Hence, all such expeditions are possible due to a reliable and timely foreign policy of this government.

Moreover, Pakistan is playing its effectual and consequential role in the Afghan peace process which would surely streamline its interests with its neighbour and to a greater extent serve its interests in the American political corridors. Not only this, but a friendly foreign policy of Pakistan towards bleeding Afghanistan will also impede the international terrorists to establish their stronghold on the Afghan soil. This would in-turn save Pakistan from the vicious evils of extremism and extremist tendencies from flexing their muscles in Pakistan. Furthermore, Pakistan's access to the energy-rich markets of Central Asian Republics (CARs) and increasing trade relations are also possible once our relationship is cordial with Afghanistan. The current government is arranging diplomatic channels to achieve afore-stated objects.

Pakistan is also increasing its clout in the international arena. Pakistan is the member of Shingai Cooperation Organization (SCO), Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and remained two times of non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Under the current drive, Pakistan is pursuing its primary and secondary national interests through diplomatic means and by involving the United Nations (UN) in that process. The example of this can be seen in that Pakistan has spoken on the matter of Kashmir issue on the forum of the UN and told the world regarding the reign of terror and violent brutalities of the Indian government. Moreover, Pakistan demanded to resolve the Kashmir issue under the resolutions of the UN, which would surely enhance Pakistan's credibility on the international scene.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/23-Mar-2019/changing-foreign-policy-dimensions>

True Spirit of Pakistan Resolution By **Muhammad Asif**

THE creation of Pakistan is viewed differently by different historians and analysts. In Pakistan political circles attribute it to the “Two-Nation Theory, which maintains that Indian Muslims and Hindus are two distinct nations. Majority of the Indians believe that the British policy of “divide and rule” was responsible for the partition of India. Many people think that misconception about the rationale behind the creation of Pakistan has been a cause of religious intolerance and violence in India and Pakistan. In his book, “Jinnah: India-Partition-Independence” by Mr. Jaswant Singh, former External Affairs Minister of India, claims; “Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru’s “Centralized Policy” was equally responsible for partition, and that Jinnah is unjustly portrayed and considered as a “demon” solely responsible for the partition of India, by Indian thinkers and politicians”. — It is in this, a false ‘minority syndrome’ that the dry rot of partition first set in, and then unstoppably it afflicted the entire structure, the magnificent edifice of a United India. The answer (cure?), Jinnah asserted, lay only in parting, and Nehru and Patel and others of the Congress also finally agreed. Thus was born Pakistan”.

The policies of the British rulers along with the rise of Hindu nationalist movements from early 20th century onwards convinced the Muslims that they would not be able to protect their religious, political and economic interests after the departure of the British, because of Hindus’ hegemonic designs. A turning point came in 1900, when the British administration in the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh acceding to Hindu demands, made Hindi the official language. Shuddhi Karan or purification of the followers of other faiths by converting them to Hinduism initiated by Arya Samaj (a Hindu fundamentalist movement) also stirred Muslim’s concerns about their faith. The All India Muslim League was founded on December 30, 1906, in the aftermath of the partition of Bengal, on December 30, 1906 in Dhaka. A resolution, moved by Nawab Salimullah and seconded by Hakim Ajmal Khan, declared: “The Musalmans are only a fifth in number as compared to the total population of the country, and it is manifest that if at any remote period the British government ceases to exist in India, then the rule of India would pass into the hands of that community which is nearly four times as large as ourselves ... our life, our property, our honour, and our faith will

all be in great danger, when even now that a powerful British administration is protecting its subjects, we the Musalmans have to face most serious difficulties in safeguarding our interests from the grasping hands of our neighbours”.

The goal of Muslim League at this stage was protecting Muslim liberties and rights, promoting understanding between the Muslim community and other Indians, educating the Muslims and discouraging violence. However, several developments over the next thirty years, including Hindu-Muslim riots, led to a re-evaluation of the League’s aims. The League gradually became the representative body of Indian Muslims. Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah became its President in 1916. He negotiated the Lucknow Pact with the Congress leaders. Congress conceded to the principle of separate electorates and weighted representation for the Muslim community. However, Jinnah left Congress in 1920, when he became convinced that the Congress would renounce its support for separate electorates for Muslims.

Meanwhile, Muslims’ belief about their nationhood was vindicated by V D Savarkar at the 19th Session of the Hindu Mahasabha in 1937. The father of the Hindu fundamentalist ideology propounded the ground-breaking idea of the Two-Nation Theory or ethnic exclusivism, which profoundly influenced the top Muslim League leadership. In 1940, Quaid-e-Azam called a general session of the Muslim League in Lahore. In his speech, he advocated the Two-Nation Theory, and the reasons for demanding a separate homeland for Muslims. The resolution that had been drafted by a committee appointed by the Quaid rejected concept of a united India, because of the increasing Hindu-Muslim violence. The resolution, moved in the general session by AK Fazal-e-Haq, the Chief Minister of Bengal, and supported by Chaudhry Khaliqzaman, was adopted on 23 March 1940. The Resolution read as follows:

“No constitutional plan would be workable or acceptable to the Muslims unless geographically contiguous units are demarcated into regions which should be so constituted with such territorial readjustments as may be necessary. That the areas in which the Muslims are in majority as in the North-Western and Eastern zones of India should be grouped to constitute independent states in which the constituent units shall be autonomous and sovereign ... That adequate, effective and mandatory safeguards shall be specifically provided in the constitution for minorities in units and in the regions for the protection of their religious, cultural,

economic, political, administrative and other rights. Arrangements thus should be made for the security of Muslims where they were in minority”.

The political developments that led to the adoption of Pakistan Resolution, and its text itself unambiguously point to Muslims’ apprehensions about the protection their “life, property, honour and faith”, in the united India dominated by the Hindu majority as the reason for the creation of Pakistan. Any efforts made to transform Pakistan into an exclusively Muslim state, besides contradicting the spirit of Pakistan Resolution; “That adequate, effective and mandatory safeguards shall be specifically provided in the constitution for the protection of religious, cultural, economic, political, administrative and other rights of the minorities”, provides justification to Hindu fundamentalists to transform India into a Hindu state. It is provided in the constitution of Pakistan that no law, contrary to the teachings of Islam, can be implemented in Pakistan. To implement the true spirit of Pakistan Resolution, it is mandatory to provide constitutional safeguards to the religious minorities that no law, contrary to the teachings of their religions, can be enacted in Pakistan, and to gain moral grounds to voice concerns about the suppression of rights and freedom of Muslims by the BJP government in India.

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

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/2019/03/23/true-spirit-of-pakistan-resolution/>

Fixing Pakistan's Water Shortage Issues |

Editorial

Yesterday was the United Nations (UN) World Water Day, and Pakistan remains on the precipice of becoming a chronically water-scarce country. According to the World Bank's recently launched Pakistan@100 report, only 36 percent of the country's population has access to safe drinking water. Limited supply, high leakage levels, rapid unplanned urbanisation and insufficient power generation were found to be the cause. This issue has also become tied to the growing levels of inequality, because although 96.9 percent of the urban population had access to potable water, only 59.7 of the urban population was this lucky. This is a level of water of inequality that was higher than in other countries in the region. However, the most alarming revelations were that a whopping 25 percent of Pakistanis were vulnerable to arsenic contamination and since 2006, 20 to 40 percent of the country's hospital beds were occupied by patients suffering from water-related diseases such as cholera, typhoid and hepatitis.

It should be pointed out that the country's last significant attempt to fix this problem — former Chief Justice Saqib Nisar's Diامر-Bhasha dam fund — has been an abject failure. Launched in July 2018, the fund could only collect Rs 9.8 billion of the required Rs 1.5 trillion by January 2019. However, this was probably for the best. Recent studies have revealed that mega-dams come at a considerable environmental cost, and usually fail to provide any benefits to the populations that have to be displaced for their construction. Furthermore, Pakistan has one of the most inefficient water transmission systems in the world. A report prepared by the Burki Institute of Public Policy Netsol has revealed that around 60 percent of the water in our canal systems is lost during conveyance from the canal head to the farm gate. Much of this water is also used to irrigate crops that are very water intensive but contribute next to nothing to the national GDP. Therefore, any supply-side solution will fail as long as our flawed economic model and irrigation systems are not fixed.

It is hoped that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf government will learn from previous mistakes, and work towards resolving Pakistan's water woes. After all, access to potable drinking water is a constitutional right in this country. *

Source: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/368432/fixing-pakistans-water-shortage-issues/>

Pak, EU Getting Closer | Editorial

AS a result of active diplomacy of our Foreign Office led by Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, Pakistan is close to writing a new page in relationship with the European Union. At the fourth round of strategic dialogue held in the federal capital on Monday, the two sides agreed to a new strategic engagement plan to be signed in Brussels which indeed will open new vistas of cooperation and opportunities between the two important trading partners.

The credit of this major development definitely goes to the leadership of Shah Mahmood Qureshi who through his presence in the Foreign Office has made it unambiguously clear as to why a full time, active and dynamic foreign minister is important to successfully engage with the world and implement the basic contours of the foreign policy. As regards the EU bloc, it is very important for Pakistan as we export about a quarter of our total exports in their markets and the tariff concessions under the GSP Plus are very crucial for our exporters. Whilst addressing a joint news conference along with the EU Foreign Policy Chief, FM Qureshi stated that Pakistan's exports to the EU countries have doubled ever since the grant of GSP Plus status by the Bloc in 2013. In this backdrop, reaching an agreement on long term strategic plan will help the two sides promote understanding of each other's issues and exploit potential of cooperation in diverse fields. Currently, our exports mostly textile and textile-related products followed by food and beverages are generally concentrated in six countries, the UK, Germany, Spain, Italy, Netherlands and Belgium. These countries have accounted for around eighty percent of the total trade to the EU over the last ten years. This shows that Pakistan was unable to diversify its exports to other countries. The product mix of exports also remained the same. It is now opportune time for Pakistan to find export markets in other EU countries and diversify the product base through value addition to give a major impetus to exports to the EU countries. To take full advantage of duty free access to their markets, we need to invest more in latest technologies and manpower training in order to bring efficiency in production and ensuring reliability of the supply chain. This will also help us create job opportunities for youth and create wealth. From here, we also need move forward from a GSP Plus beneficiary to a free trade agreement partner.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/2019/03/27/pak-eu-getting-closer/>

Pakistan Retains Regional Relevance By

Salaar Khan

The Pulwama incident brought the two South Asian nuclear armed neighbours to the brink of war that could have transitioned to a nuclear holocaust. Alarming as it was, global powers jumped into the fray for de-escalation.

India has a history of perpetual belligerence; it has imposed wars, started numerous skirmishes and instigated several escalations during the last 71 years. The disputes over Kashmir, Siachen, Sir Creek and water issues keep the two giants in the whirlwind of bellicosity. It is time that the world at large and both countries in particular glean a few lessons from the recent standoff, which is yet not over, to avoid the future spectre of nuclear holocaust, resulting from a potential Pakistan-India war. The irritants between these two countries need to be identified and addressed through statesmanship by both countries' leadership.

Post-Pulwama: Prime Minister Imran Khan offered to India to discuss terrorism, asserting that Pakistan itself is the victim of this scourge and it is continuing its fight against the menace including the crackdown on banned organizations. He considers that such non state actors can retard the positive trajectory which Pakistan has embarked upon; besides, such elements cast shadows on otherwise commendable progress that its security forces have made against Pakistan-specific terrorist outfits. India on its part needs to stop atrocities against the innocent Kashmiris, which are increasingly resulting in disillusionment among the Kashmiri people– an obvious outcome of Indian repression. The international community has to realize the gravity of the situation and must not ignore this simmering dispute.

War is a dangerous business; it is far more dangerous when countries have nuclear weapons

Another international concern should be the instant pace with which a terrorist incident in India can spiral into a threat of war, and its likely fallout on the region and beyond. Fanning it out of proportion, so as to bring two countries to the precipice of war, is irresponsible on the part of Indian media and its political leadership. As Khan alluded that India was contemplating a missile attack on

night February 27, the upper notches of escalation ladder may precede the lower ones in hostilities. Such are the perils of conflict between these two nations, which can only be precluded through a sense of restraint and willingness to engage for solution of the bilateral grievances. Ironically, the leadership of India became victim of its own bravado, such as “ghus kay maarain gay” (we will intrude and hit).

The Indian refusal to engage in any meaningful dialogue with Pakistan has only added to the complexities between the two countries. Even the regional forum of SAARC could not be tapped to engage, due to the attempts to sabotage the conduit made by India on different pretexts. Considering that continued tensions between the two countries have ominous security implications for the region and the world, global powers should encourage a rapprochement between them, addressing each other's concerns and resuming severed dialogue regime.

Indian political leadership's public pronouncements to isolate Pakistan diplomatically are a far-fetched dream. Recent regional developments bring out that Pakistan retains its regional relevance, due to its geostrategic location, significant role in wooing Taliban to negotiate with the USA for bringing an end to Afghan war, leaning of China vis-à-vis CPEC and courtship with Gulf countries. Such objectives set by India for itself, will only serve to further vitiate already tense Pakistan-India relations.

War is a dangerous business; it is far more dangerous when countries have nuclear weapons. The Indian public and its media need to realize this fact; the world also needs to embrace this stark reality. Any situation of such an extreme can only be averted if India comes to the terms of removing the bilateral irritants. Easier said than done, it will take a high degree of statesmanship as well as shared will to enter an era of progress and prosperity.

Source: <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2019/03/28/pakistan-retains-regional-relevance/>

Fixing Our Energy By Humayun Akhtar

Khan

It seems that the warnings about the frailty of our energy supply are mostly true. And though successive governments have pledged to fix the sector, it is still where it was three decades ago. Only, a bit worse.

As before, we still depend considerably on imported fuel, straining our usually modest forex reserves. The price of fuel is subject to the volatility of supply and demand as well as of geopolitics. Available energy stock is usually meagre, which may have been a concern during the recent crisis on the eastern border.

Defying economic logic, while the price of electric power is high, it is still in short supply. This is because the policy for power generation is flawed. Revenue loss from weak governance and theft is massive, over 26 percent of all power. Estimates of financial loss range between Rs150 billion and Rs200 billion. Resultantly, the system cannot recover costs. The government says that a dysfunctional power sector pre-empts large budget resources in subsidy. It is possible that much of it indirectly funds the generous incentives for private power production. We must correct the fundamental issues that plague power supply.

A new development that has become more pronounced in the last decade is loss in transmission of gas. Some estimate the loss to be Rs50 billion a year. In fact, energy and power theft has shadowed us with bull-headed tenacity.

The test of a reliable energy supply chain lies in how it services consumers. Unreliable power supply still constrains industrial growth and exasperates consumers. Loadshedding, high prices and faulty billing are conditions that we have learned to accept. Despite major increase in LNG import, gas supply is uncertain and costly. Gas distributors add an estimated 40 percent premium to the input cost of gas. This is unreasonably high.

There is much for the government to do to set right decades of accumulated wrong. Many areas need correction, though why they have not been dealt with by successive governments is baffling. Estimates of cost to the economy from energy shortage vary, though 2.5 percent of GDP is the accepted figure. This

equals a whopping Rs875 billion a year. Shortage slows economic activity, retards competitiveness and hampers growth.

It doesn't have to be this way. Pakistan is blessed with large conventional and renewable resources. Over the years, the country has also built a reasonable stock of infrastructure for supply of energy and power. Thousands of kilometres of electric wiring and oil and gas pipelines link many million consumers. Yet, about 30 percent of the population, or 60 million people, do not have electricity. More than 50 percent of Pakistanis rely on biomass as cooking fuel. Forests are subject to slash and burn.

The reality is that the problem of Pakistan's energy sector is not about availability of resources but about weak policies and management. Overall, the government of Pakistan has been found wanting in its ability to frame and regulate energy and power policy. Because of generous incentives, the Private Power Policy, 1994 and its later editions have made power costly to produce. Its implementation has not favoured efficiency or better fuel mix. In fact, by encouraging imports, it deterred development of energy resources.

We must embark at once on a comprehensive plan for a viable and sustainable energy and power sectors. To begin with, it is necessary to establish energy demand and then determine the desired energy mix, optimising between the goals of affordability, environment, technical viability, and reliability. It is important also for the government to implement its energy efficiency plans. Savings from it could equal 2,250 MW in generation capacity. Above all, the plan must have a financing model to take care of the large capital need.

The Petroleum Institute Pakistan or PIP estimates that Pakistan's 2017 energy deficit was 10 million tonne oil equivalent. This is in addition to the 72 MTOE available that year, including 34.5 MTOE imports. PIP estimates that with GDP growth of about 5.5 percent annually, our energy needs would be about 230 MTOE in 2030. Of this, they estimate import will be about 45 percent, nearly \$50 billion.

Offshore findings, if confirmed, would reduce imports. Even within imported energy, geopolitics has restrained us from the cheaper option of piped gas from Iran or Turkmenistan. It now seems that Central Asian energy, though still

available, is lost opportunity, as the region is now connected widely with other economies.

There are several options to indigenise energy supply. In addition to offshore energy, Pakistan's shale resources are high. However, there are major financial and technical challenges in that, especially at the present world energy prices. Tight gas is a possibility. Its exploration has begun. The government may review the policy framework for tight gas to fast track realisation of the estimated 35 billion barrels of reserves that exist. Overall, exploration and production of oil and gas is very low compared to the available sedimentary area.

We also have large coal deposits in Thar. Yet, environmental concerns and the unproven clean coal technology is a constraint. Most important, we have realised only a part of the massive hydro potential. Though initial capital cost is high, hydro energy has great potential. In addition, with costs coming down, solar and wind too are attractive energy sources.

Moving to electric power, there is much to do here also. Focus on generation has caused imbalance between power production, transmission and distribution. We do not have enough capacity to disseminate the power produced. The inability to recover costs has starved the power supply chain of resources, limiting investment. Yet, increase in tariff alone is not enough. Higher tariff is an incentive for more theft. Also, it dampens demand and is unfair on paying consumers. We must take strict administrative action to plug revenue loss. Also, we must immediately act to increase the share for hydro, coal and solar to bring down average cost of power.

The writer was commerce minister from 2002 till 2007. He is chair and CEO of the Institute for Policy Reforms.

Source: <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/450730-fixing-our-energy>

Judicial Policy Reforms By Zia Ullah Ranjah

The National Judicial Policy Making Committee (NJPMC) – a body of all chief justices charged with bringing judicial reforms in the country – has resolved that applications under section 22-A of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) may not be entertained by courts unless accompanied by a pronouncement from the district SP Complaints. The bar councils oppose such reforms.

Some argue that the bar councils oppose judicial reforms to protect their legal practice. These reforms refer to the National Judicial Policy 2009 for early disposal of cases, formulated by former chief justice (CJ) Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry and the reforms of chief justice Asif Saeed Khan Khosa to reduce unnecessary burden on courts. It is argued that lawyers oppose these reforms because they benefit from numerous cases with extended delays. My contention is that judicial reforms in Pakistan cannot succeed without meaningful institutional engagement from the bar. The Bar and Bench being two wheels of a chariot need to work together to reform our justice system.

CJ Khosa apparently believes that our courts are burdened with cases which may be resolved elsewhere – for example, under the Police Complaint Redressal Mechanism at the district level. This mechanism addresses issues related to the registration of cases by police, the transfer of investigations from one police officer to another, and forms of neglect, failure or excess committed by a police authority in relation to its functions and duties (Section 22-A (6) of CrPC). Justice Khosa wants to avoid the involvement of the judiciary in the functions of the executive; he emphasizes on the constitutional doctrine of “separation of powers”. Those who oppose these judicial reforms argue that diverting these cases to the police may further expand their power and open a new avenue of corruption; the new mechanism will cause further inconvenience to the complainants.

The long-term solution for delay-reduction, however, lies in increasing the number and capacity of judges at each level and cultivating a widespread public appreciation for the degree to which judicial rulings, in keeping with existing laws, will be enforced.

In any case, the current focus on judicial reforms is appreciated given Pakistan's ranking (117 out of 126 countries) in the World Justice Project 'Rule of Law Index' 2019. Unfortunately, judicial reforms in the past have largely failed due to none or limited consultation with key stakeholders. Therefore, an institutional mechanism for effective consultation between the bench and the bar is required. Further, the process of judicial reforms should be institutionalized to sustain any change of chief justice.

Section 3 of the National Judicial (Policy Making) Committee Ordinance, 2002 may be amended to provide representation to the national and provincial bar councils in judicial policy making. For comprehensive judicial reforms, periodic national surveys can also be conducted to project perceptions as to the functioning of our justice system.

NJPMC's opinion that the issuance of directions by Justices of the Peace under Section 22A of CrPC, which are now proposed to be issued by district level SP Complaints, are executive in nature and cannot overrule earlier judgments of the Supreme Court. A five-member SC bench has ruled (PLD 2016 SC 581) that the functions of an ex-officio Justice of the Peace are not executive, administrative or ministerial inasmuch as he does not carry out, manage or deal with things mechanically. The SC held that "the functions of a Justice of the Peace are quasi-judicial as he entertains applications, examines the record, hears the parties, passes orders and issues directions with due application of mind."

It is the function of courts to direct the executive to act in accordance with the law. If the issuance of 'quasi-judicial' directions is construed as an 'executive function', then the mandate of courts to deliver justice to citizens against the executive authority of the state would fail. The concept of judicial review dictates that courts must ensure that executive officials comply with the letter and spirit of the law. The NJPMC's argument, therefore, challenges the constitutional doctrine of separation of powers.

However, Justice Khosa's argument seems valid on the ground that if a complainant is provided a remedy within the hierarchy of police then recourse to the courts in the first instance may be avoided to reduce the burden on the courts. It is not clear whether the proposed reforms will increase malpractice and inconvenience or enhance the powers of the police. Conversely, they could make

the SHO more accountable within the police department. Nonetheless, orders passed by the police will remain subject to review by the courts.

In a nutshell, the proposed judicial reforms will reduce some of the burden on our courts. The long-term solution for delay-reduction, however, lies in increasing the number and capacity of judges at each level and cultivating a widespread public appreciation for the degree to which judicial rulings, in keeping with existing laws, will be enforced. Given the fragile performance of our legal system, all the stakeholders should work for earnest judicial reforms. As such, the government and the bar should be encouraged to engage with the process and support effective judicial reforms.

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Source: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/370753/judicial-policy-reforms/>

PAKISTAN & WORLD RELATIONS

KSA Backs Pakistan | Editorial

SAUDI Arabia has once again expressed its total sincerity for security and well-being of people of Pakistan by undertaking serious efforts aimed at reducing tension between Islamabad and New Delhi in the wake of Indian aggression against Pakistan. Saudi Minister for Foreign Affairs Adel al-Jubeir on Thursday paid a daylong visit to Islamabad as part of Riyadh's efforts to seek de-escalation in South Asia. The Minister called on Prime Minister Imran Khan, Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi and Army Chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa and conveyed an important message of Saudi leadership to Pakistani leaders.

Saudi Arabia was one of those countries that showed not just serious concern over increasing tension between Pakistan and India but also took practical measures aimed at defusing this tension. Saudi King and the Crown Prince decided to send their Foreign Minister immediately to the region but the visit was apparently delayed due to non-responsive attitude of India. The unequivocal support extended by Saudi Arabia to Pakistan and the sentiments expressed by the Foreign Minister of the Kingdom are source of strength for people of Pakistan at this critical juncture. This support has been consistent and Riyadh always came to the help of Pakistan whenever there was any political, diplomatic or financial crisis in the country. KSA always made sincere efforts to promote national harmony in Pakistan that is frequently threatened due to internal problems. Diplomatically as well, Saudi Arabia has been instrumental in supporting the core causes of Pakistan like Kashmir issue. The level of Saudi support can be gauged by the fact that during the visit Mr. Adel al-Jubeir assured Foreign Minister Qureshi of Saudi Arabia's complete and overwhelming support towards solving the issues with India in a peaceful manner. People of Pakistan are fully appreciative of this timely gesture of steadfast support by Saudi especially the crown prince's offer to help resolve the current stand-off between the two neighbours.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/ksa-backs-pakistan/>

Managing Iran-Pakistan Relations | Editorial

Following Crown Prince Muhammad Bin Salman's recent visit to Pakistan and the nearly \$20 billion dollars in foreign investment that came with it, it is necessary that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government play a delicate balancing act with Tehran.

For this reason, Prime Minister (PM) Imran Khan's telephonic agreement with Iran's President Rouhani for increased regional cooperation between the two countries is a positive development. According to a statement released by the PM's Office, an agreement was also reached for PM Khan to visit Iran in the near future, and it was stressed that there needs to be closer cooperation between the two countries' intelligence agencies regarding cross-border terrorism. This has been especially important following the February 14 attack in Iran on an Iranian Revolutionary Guards bus which killed 27 people.

The Iran-Pakistan border is one of the most difficult to police in the world, making it a hotbed of terrorism and drug trafficking. This has often resulted in friction between the two countries. For example, in October last year, it was reported that around a dozen Iranian security personnel were kidnapped on the border along Balochistan, to which Iran responded by firing mortar shells into Pakistani territory. Luckily no casualties were reported, thus the situation did not escalate, but the two countries will not always be this lucky.

Therefore it is necessary to expedite a diplomatic process between Iran and Pakistan which would bring the two closer together and initiate cooperation in security efforts as well as other fields. *

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Source: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/363684/managing-iran-pakistan-relations/>

US-Pakistan Relations | Editorial

Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi recently stated that US-Pakistan relations are taking a new turn despite a sceptic approach adopted by US officials. He was speaking in context of Islamabad's regional foreign policy initiatives in light of Indo-Pak tensions and its role in bringing Washington and the Taliban to table talk.

The two countries' relationship was largely based on mutually converging goals, who would part ways once their objectives were achieved. This had been the case during the Cold War when Pakistan aligned itself with the US to fight communism. When the Soviet Union's sun was setting, the two countries distanced themselves for a prolonged period. Of course, the situation in Kabul required Islamabad to jump in which later turned out to be a costly measure when the 9/11 Attacks occurred.

Since then, the two powers fought the War on Terror together for strategic reasons, but mistrust gradually increased over the years owing to Islamabad's alleged support to certain groups of the Afghan Taliban.

The complexities cannot be reviewed from specific angles since there were other factors in place which influenced US-Pakistan ties. New Delhi's increasing sphere of influence in the region and the world at-large made it a strategic ally for Washington. This made Islamabad quite wary for an extended amount of time.

Long story short, complexity of US and Pakistan ties perfectly make them frenemies. No matter what the two sides state regarding their relations, it would always be considered a love-hate relationship.

The Taliban may be ready for talks and perhaps, peace could be achieved in Kabul sans any major hindrance. Nevertheless, Washington's strategy for South Asia would be tied to security and economic factors. Its containment of China policy is already in jeopardy while India is still reeling from a major diplomatic setback received at the hands of Islamabad.

This makes Pakistan an indispensable 'ally'-albeit on reluctant grounds. The Trump administration knows that disposing off Islamabad would be a lethal mistake in the context of the Afghan peace process. History is cruel but learning from it teaches not to repeat the mistakes of the past. This is the key reason for US-Pakistan relations to sustain over the decades even if they were bumpy on certain points. To renew the ties to an acceptable level, mutual trust should be sustained, and focus should shift from security to economic angle. This is the only way to build a lasting relationship based on realpolitik. *

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Source: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/364139/us-pakistan-relations-2/>

Defusing Pakistan-India Tensions By Talat Masood

There are many facets of the recent brief but a dangerous confrontation between Pakistan and India. One of the most striking features of the conflict was that it raised the profile of the Kashmir issue internationally and boosted the morale of those demanding independence or association with Pakistan. Kashmir has been on the global backburner and the world had continued to ignore it. In the last few weeks, it has brought into sharp focus the weakness of India's Kashmir policy before the international community and its own people.

Undoubtedly, there is now a better realisation that freedom struggle in Kashmir could flare up into a Pakistan-India war. The possibility that two nuclear powers could actually engage in war is a terrifying prospect that could no more be ignored and rang alarm bells globally.

Gross human rights violations by India in occupied Kashmir that previously were being treated lightly also came into the spotlight.

It reaffirmed and validated Jinnah's postulation of Pakistan's *raison d'être* that extremist Hindu leadership would not tolerate Muslims and give their due rights despite being a significant minority in India.

The weaknesses that were apparent on the Indian side in planning and execution of the recent military engagement with Pakistan must have planted doubts in the minds of US policymakers. Is India with the current level of military power and leadership capable of standing up to China in the near future? The fact that India was dissipating its national power against Pakistan instead of developing it to be a responsible regional power is likely to disappoint its international backers.

The current crisis reaffirmed Pakistan's case for developing a nuclear deterrent and would be better understood abroad. However, conventional superiority of India and significant disparity between the two countries in sustaining a major conflict economically could push Pakistan towards crossing over the nuclear threshold. This is a dangerous prospect that demands statesmanship and understanding of the huge responsibilities that go with being a nuclear power.

At the lower level of conflict, Pakistan's weak economy totally disproportionate to its military muscle undermines its ability to absorb economic shocks or sustain long-term conflict. It is clearly its most vulnerable area that India could exploit. PM Imran Khan's offer for dialogue and readiness to jointly investigate the terrorist incident reflected that Pakistan's interest lay in defusing the situation from every aspect.

Moreover, Pakistan's policy in the past to support militant organisations to act as a hedge against India has proven to be a huge liability and has undermined the moral and legal position of Pakistan. The domestic ramifications are even greater. It has allowed these organisations to acquire disproportionate power and the ability to challenge the state. What is equally disconcerting is that there is sympathy and support for them in certain sections of politicians who not only use them to leverage their position but share their ideological leanings. This was reflected in the last elections where a few known militant leaders were elected.

As is obvious Pakistan would remain under microscopic scrutiny with regard to its policy toward Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammad and other UN- and US-listed banned organisations. Linked with it is meeting the strict criteria of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). Lately, the government knowing that it is in the national interest and equally important to fulfill its obligations concerning the FATF is taking the project seriously. The condition of registering millions of account holders through biometric verification is one such activity. Pakistan stands a good chance of being able to exit from the grey list.

There are major national issues that reflect years of neglect and predicament. The question arises is if the government is equipped to deal with these, and is it not preferable that it takes along the opposition parties in parliament to jointly address major national issues. Although in the prevailing state of antagonism wherein parliament's legislative business has remained paralysed to expect any mature behaviour on either side in the near future would be wishful thinking. It was, however, reassuring to listen to Bilawal Bhutto's recent interview with the BBC wherein he articulated his party's position effectively on human rights, economy and issues of national importance. His critique of Modi's policies was objective and without malice.

The government's ability to work harmoniously with the armed forces leadership strengthened Pakistan's resolve to resist Indian designs. The opposition also played its role maturely sending a strong message at a critical period. It is, however, disconcerting that government's relations with the opposition have since lapsed into bitter animosity. The government has a greater responsibility for normalising the political climate.

As democracy matures, it is expected that the civilian government functions and exercises power in national decision making according to its constitutional obligations. And bureaucratic and security institutions remain confined to theirs. The present Chief Justice has set the high standards of focusing and improving the judiciary as an example that others need to emulate.

History reminds us that many a time major crises have turned into opportunities. The United States and the former the Soviet Union were on the brink of nuclear confrontation, but fortunately, sanity prevailed and the latter decided to reverse its decision to station nuclear weapons in Cuba. Present relations between the US and Vietnam and more pertinent, France and Germany, once bitter enemies, now together in the European Union are examples that indicate nothing is permanent. Not even bitter animosity prevented the leaders to yield to a more constructive paradigm in the larger interest of their people.

Any qualitative change in the relationship between Pakistan and India would only be possible if they take definitive steps on those vulnerable issues that have remained the main obstacles in normalisation. India would have to seriously revisit its Kashmir policy and honour its international commitments. Whereas, Pakistan should ensure that the measures it has taken against militant groups especially Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammad and others are fully credible. As it is also a requirement of the FATF, Pakistan has a stronger incentive to ensure compliance. These actions are meant not merely to meet international obligations but to serve the best national interest.

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Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1928071/6-defusing-pakistan-india-tensions/>

Pakistan, Afghan Peace and India By Ikram Sehgal

After almost two decades the US-led NATO intervention in Afghanistan aimed at eradicating the Taliban has no end in sight. US President Donald Trump and the American people, if not the US military, decided that an honourable exit was necessary to end the longest war in US history. Despite the fact that one of Trump's election promises was to exit Afghanistan (as well as Iraq and Syria) he had approved the military surge advised by the Pentagon but unfortunately this could not reverse the situation. The Taliban are controlling more territory today than they did at any time after the collapse of their government in 2001. Pursuing his 'America first' agenda and tacitly recognising the existing military situation, a frustrated Trump authorised negotiations with the Taliban. In protest US Defence Secretary Gen James Mattis resigned. Choosing Afghan-origin Zalmay Khalilzad to lead the US side was a brilliant choice, which is already paying dividends.

On New Year's Day 2018, Trump had in an early morning tweet accused Pakistan of perfidy, of doing nothing to help the Americans win the war in Afghanistan despite receiving billions of dollars in aid. Reversing his stance barely a year later, Trump reached out to Pakistani Prime Minister (PM) Imran Khan, seeking cooperation in bringing the Taliban to the negotiating table. He now acknowledges that Pakistan is an irreplaceable partner in the Afghan peace process. This underscored the painful truth to many observers led astray by constant Indian anti-Pakistan propaganda, that Pakistan is not part of the problem but central to any solution in Afghanistan. Determined to withdraw US forces, the US is now ready to a compromise with the Taliban.

Taking cognisance of the dramatic change taking place in international relations in the region Pakistan's new government fully supports the need for peace in Afghanistan no prosperity in Pakistan is possible without that. The credibility of the US as a strategic partner having suffered, Pakistan can never be sure of its position with the US. However other friendly countries closer to home also have a credible interest in a peaceful Afghanistan. Joining the Afghan peace efforts and recognising the political role of the Taliban in a post-war Afghanistan are China, Russia and Iran, and even Saudi Arabia and the Arab Emirates. Last year's conference initiated by Moscow and participated in by the regional promoters of

peace was a successful first meeting between regional promoters of peace and intra-Afghan political forces including the Taliban. Significantly, after many decades personal acquaintances were made and initial positions were exchanged.

The only country in the region not interested in peace in Afghanistan is India. Keeping strife going in the unfortunate country is a tailor-made formula whereby India keeps Pakistan in turmoil. Moreover this proxy war costs India nothing in either money, manpower or material. The US is mostly footing the bill while the Afghans not only take most of the casualties but sustain continuing material damage to infrastructure and urban areas. Virtually taking over Afghan intelligence agency KHAD Indian's RAW attacks the ideology and territory of Pakistan by clandestinely supporting the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) alongwith many other Jihadi factions. In the process the Kashmir freedom movement was successfully clubbed with the Afghan Taliban and labelled as "terrorist" by India for the world. More damaging for Pakistan is being portrayed as supporting and fomenting terrorism. All this time the US poured in money for the Afghan military, the govt and the economy while sustaining casualties billions of US dollars themselves. In effect the US was fighting India's proxy war against Pakistan while India in a strategically brilliant ploy has stood by and enjoyed the residual benefits while Afghans, Americans and Pakistanis died. Paraphrasing Patton's "no man ever won a war by dying for his country, he won a war by making the other (person) die for his country," India's second line reads, "we can win the war against Pakistan by letting the US and Afghans die for their country".

Bad relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan over the Durand Line have been used by India to keep a viable threat of a possible second front against Pakistan as a counter to the indigenous uprising in Kashmir

For the last 10 years I have faced US intelligentsia at Think Tanks frustrated by "Pakistan Fatigue," this exponentially increased as the US got more deeply embroiled without hope of success in the Afghan War. I was derided and attacked even by my close friends in Wash DC and New York for Pakistan's "falsehood". Unluckily for us Asif Zardari's pointman Hussain Haqqani, appointed as the Pakistan Ambassador in the US, led this anti-Pakistan campaign even while he was Pakistan's Ambassador in the US. What were the US intelligentsia to believe when the glib-talking Pakistan's prime official representing Pakistan in

Wash DC gave credence to the Indian-manufactured “facts”! Haqqani violated the oath he gave to the Supreme Court (SC) for exiting the country and never coming back. He only came out in the open after he was removed from his post and now regularly sponsors the Indian propaganda verbatim. It is strange that Asif Zardari or the PPP never mentions this, what to talk about condemning his calumny? Once virulently anti-Pakistan Zalmay Khalilzad and became “Born Again” as the reality dawned on him, why is the Indian-supported Ashraf Ghani govt now having a go at Khalilzad?

Afghanistan has been a central point of relevance for Indian regional policy. During the last twenty years India had supported the Northern Alliance in its fight against the Taliban only because the Northern Alliance Opposed Pakistan. The only country in the world that wants the Afghan war to go on is India. Many Indians occupied many Consulates in Afghanistan, UN Disarmament, Demilitarization and Reintegration Corps (DDR) and construction efforts. India built a sizable developmental and considerable intelligence footprint in Afghanistan since 2001, spending more than \$2 billion in aid and infrastructural development. Building on Indian influence with the UN and the Afghan governments India gained almost a free hand for using the permeable border with Pakistan to encourage militancy and terrorism across the border and then blaming Pakistan for it. India’s development contributions in Afghanistan is the “soft” part of New Delhi’s strategic encirclement policy to make Islamabad vulnerable in any potential conflict. That is the reason why Pakistan made it a condition that India be kept out of the negotiations for bringing the Taliban to the negotiating the relative success so far has caused major frustration in India.

U.S. support for successive Afghan governments under Karzai and now Ghani was vital for maintaining security and stability. Without America’s protective umbrella these characters will vanish sooner rather than later. That is why the present Afghan regime is desperate for the talks not to succeed. With a post-war Afghanistan that includes the Taliban as a major political force in the making India’s Afghan policy is facing bankruptcy. During their many years of presence in Afghanistan Indians have never missed an opportunity to damage Pakistani interests there. It is probable that India may remain a peripheral player in post-war Afghanistan but New Delhi will find itself unable to influence the situation the crossway it had did for the last two decades. India’s recent critical stance at the

United Nations for the failure to sanction Taliban leaders seems out of sync with emerging ground realities in Afghanistan.

India's entire Afghan policy has been Pakistan-specific. Does it worry them at all if Afghans die by the thousands and the country's infrastructure is laid to waste? Bad relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan over the Durand Line have been used by India to keep a viable threat of a possible second front against Pakistan as a counter to the indigenous uprising in Kashmir. Thus the Indo-Pak relationship and the Kashmir conflict is casting their shadows on the Afghan question as well. Real peace will be only possible when these outstanding conflicts are finally resolved (the writer is a defence and security analyst).

The writer is a defence and security analyst

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Source: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/368431/pakistan-afghan-peace-and-india/>

PM Mahathir's Visit | Editorial

THE visit of Prime Minister Imran Khan to Malaysia last November really helped build up the momentum and renew relationship with the South East Asian country whose dividends could be seen with the three-day Pakistan visit of Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Muhammad – the great Muslim statesman who reshaped the entire landscape of his country with wide ranging reforms in different sectors, from which our leadership can also learn and put the country on the right course.

The visit of Mahathir Muhammad indeed was significant and useful one as the private sector of both the countries signed a number of very important agreements which will definitely pave the way for future close cooperation between the two Muslim countries. And using the platform of Malaysia, Pakistan can also access other ASEAN countries.

The Malaysian investors have shown great interest in investing in the telecommunication, ICT and software, automobiles, Halal Food and establishment of electric car manufacturing unit in Karachi. As many countries including those in our neighbourhood are fast moving towards cleaner sources of fuel and have also given a deadline to halt the production of diesel and petrol run vehicles, Pakistan should also move towards environment-friendly fuel alternative vehicles which will also help reduce its reliance on expensive imported oil and address the issue of environmental degradation. The entry of Malaysian electric car Proton is a good news for Pakistan which will encourage other automobile companies to invest in the manufacturing of environment friendly fuel vehicles. Incentives should also be given so that the necessary infrastructure for the refuelling of such cars could also be established without any delay as China and some other companies have also shown their interest of producing electric cars in Pakistan. The development of refuelling infrastructure indeed will increase the demands of such cars and we will be able to attract more companies to locally manufacture these vehicles.

Then Malaysia has shown interest to import Halal food from Pakistan which in fact has a great scope in the world market. There are 1.3 billion Muslims in the world and this Halal food is now moving to a trillion-dollar market. Having huge

potential in livestock, dairy and poultry sectors, Pakistan has so far failed to capture its due share in the rapidly growing Halal market. The country is among top livestock producing countries with 160 million livestock and it can export Halal meat products to meet the rising global demand but for this we need to adopt latest technology and trained staff in order to meet the international standards. The establishment of Fauji Meat Limited is a step forward and with the cooperation of Malaysian friends, we can achieve many milestones in this particular field.

Another good news that emerged from the visit of Mahathir is that Malaysia has expressed interest to purchase JF-17 fighter jets as well as anti tank missiles. This indeed is recognition of the high tech and quality defence products that are being produced by our scientists and engineers. The Malaysian Prime Minister during his interaction with Pakistani leadership himself stressed for promotion of bilateral trade between the two countries and now it is up to us how we grab the opportunity. Firstly we need to stay engaged with Malaysia at different levels in order to not only materialize the MOUs signed recently but also exploit more avenues of cooperation. We also need to renegotiate the FTA signed back in 2008 in order to ensure that our products easily make their way to the Malaysian markets which will also open doors for our products to other ASEAN countries.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/2019/03/25/mahathirs-visit/>

Pakistan-China Strategic Partnership By

Muhammad Asif Noor

Relationship between China and Pakistan further cemented into higher level of strategic partnership with a unified vision of shared future for the regional peace and progress as Foreign Minister of Pakistan Shah Mehmood Qureshi concludes his official visit to Beijing this week to attend the first ever Pakistan-China Foreign Minister's Strategic Dialogue. As Prime Minister Imran Khan will be visiting China to attend the second Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation to be held in Beijing in the last week of April, the talks hold important place in the overall ongoing developments between Pakistan and China. Currently also a large political representation from all political parties from Pakistan are in conversation with their counterparts in Beijing to develop understanding with each other. The second such forum will be held in Islamabad next time. These watershed talks on strategic cooperation between two iron brothers further cemented the relations to a unified higher level and especially keeping in view the recent India and Pakistan skirmish, the talks at such higher level pose meaningful in the larger regional and global context. With reaffirming the support to each other on all the core issues of the national interests, both sides during the dialogue also highlighted the state sovereignty and territorial integrity. China has also assured Pakistan for standing by the country for any foreign aggression which is a loud and clear message to India as to avoid any further misadventure in the future. With having no territorial and political dispute or clash of interest with no competition between the two is providing much impetus to the thriving relations hence making headway to build the strategic rapport with each other. With recent engagement reads the statement to uphold the bilateral engagement with mutual bilateral approach towards regional issues.

In the wake of economic development, security has been a major concern of China and Pakistan in the region wherein terrorism threats remain high

The strategic partnership between Pakistan and China was not built in a day, however, there's decades old struggle and leadership from both sides that have made this possible. For Pakistan, China holds a very important position in its foreign policy outlook especially in its building of the strategic partnership with China is a strong pillar towards Pakistan's quest for dealing with its regional

insecurities. This fragile environment especially the Indian threat posed to Pakistan, China has always stood firm with Pakistan and provided assistance to build a robust defence mechanism. The China-Pakistan partnership is momentous in the South Asia and larger Eurasian region political milieu. India has remained as one common factor that has further brought together to build together the strategic ties including cooperation in the defence cooperation, military to military contacts and other multidimensional horizons of cooperation between Pakistan and China. China also provided technological and defence production assistance to Pakistan as well including being the largest defence equipment supplier apart from assisting building the two important nuclear reactors of Pakistan. The strategic alliance is also manifested from the regular military exercises between Pakistan and China.

Pakistan and China support each other in their regional outlook as well. With recent India and Pakistan conflict, China lauded Pakistani efforts to deescalate the conflict with India according to the norms of international law saying, "The Charter of the United Nations and the norms of international law should be earnestly observed". China ardently aspires to have a normalised relation between Pakistan and India to have a peaceful region specially when the larger economic development projects including Belt and Road Initiative and CPEC are building and progressing day by day. With recent Indian led UN Security Council resolution to declare JeM chief Masood Azhar as the global terrorist put on hold by China to give enough time for the dialogue. Apart from India, Afghanistan came under deliberation in the wake of ongoing Afghan Peace process as Afghanistan shares land border with both, China and Pakistan. Both foreign ministers expressed satisfaction and agreed to support "Afghan led and Afghan owned" peace process implying no foreign design can bring stability to Afghanistan. Moving one step ahead in mutual peace building efforts, both sides agreed to strengthen Pakistan- China-Afghanistan Foreign Ministers Dialogue Mechanism in order to assist Afghanistan amid peace, economy and sustainable development.

Over the years, much has been done in the strategic sectors between the two and there was a normal and steady development in the economic spheres. However, after the advent of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) cooperation as part of the larger Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) the economic dimension has increased to manifold too. During the ongoing dialogue, there was

a shared resolve to protect CPEC from any aggression from outside. As CPEC enters in most crucial stage of infrastructure development, both sides have also agreed to joint contribution and extensive consultations. CPEC is not only economically viable but also strategically important too for Pakistan as the Corridor is providing the much need uplift to its unique geographical location. Currently, CPEC has the second phase of its development with building of Special Economic Zones apart from building socio-economic development projects. CPEC has been the pivot of the strategic dialogue and both parties agreed to further advancement of projects along the corridor to make it operational at earliest possibility. The development of infrastructure will not only help Pakistani economy to boost but offer China a transit route and industrial capacity towards the regional and global markets. China and Pakistan further agreed to plan well though industrial parks framework and social development projects in Pakistan aimed at sustainable social development and employment maximisation.

In the wake of economic development, security has been a major concern of China and Pakistan in the region wherein terrorism threats remain high. China acknowledged the sacrifices Pakistan has made to combat terrorism and admired steps taken to curb this evil while extending Chinese support to Pakistan in combating terrorism of any kind within the state. Meanwhile, Wang Yi, State Councillor and Foreign Minister of China, urged the world to acknowledge Pakistani commitment to counter terrorism and “treat Pakistan in an impartial manner”.

In this strategic dialogue, comprehensive issues pertaining to regional peace and stability are of unique importance. Both partners appeared to be concerned about whole region and not only towards bilateral issues covering Afghanistan and India. It is the manifestation of shared philosophy of multilateralism, be it economy, security or politics in which China believes and Pakistan acknowledges. The new government in Pakistan envisions an open economy based on shared development and a political entity which adheres all international norms and statues. Pakistan offers India to negotiate on core issues including Kashmir and Terrorism, facilitating Afghan Peace Process, inviting other countries to join hands in CPEC to mutually coexist, develop and prosper. China appears to be an iron brother in supporting the agenda of development,

peace and prosperity in Pakistan. Both China and Pakistan have much to offer to the region with support to peace and prosperity in the region.

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Source: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/370041/pakistan-china-strategic-partnership/>

ECONOMY

Tensions and Stock Markets | Editorial

The violation of Pakistan's airspace by Indian fighter jets on Tuesday and Pakistan's responsible and restrained retaliation for the act of aggression by shooting down two Indian jets and the arrest of two Indian pilots on Wednesday have badly rattled the stock markets on either side of the border — with general elections in India tentatively scheduled for April-May. The tumbling of stock markets in India and Pakistan is in contrast to the uptrend at global bourses in response to easing of the trade tension between the US and China.

Moreover, the limited air strikes have for sure caused losses in billions of rupees on both sides as the two countries had to close their airspace for commercial flights. The airports in Lahore, Faisalabad, Multan, Sialkot, Islamabad and Karachi were closed for commercial flights and the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority declared an aerial emergency. If the situation worsens, this may result in losing the services of and the revenues international airlines bring, as they might cease their operations in the two leading economies of the region.

There was already little direct cross-border trade between the two countries. The escalation in tensions has brought the nominal trade to a standstill. Indian traders have cancelled cement import consignments from Pakistan, reasoning that their government has increased import duty by 200 per cent on imports from this country. In addition to this, India withdrew the Most-Favoured Nation (MFN) status from Pakistan following the Pulwama incident without investigating who was behind the attack.

If there is a full-fledged war, it would have highly disastrous consequences for both the countries rendering millions of people internally displaced, orphans and widows on either side of the border. So India should accept Pakistan's peace and talks offer considering the fact that both countries possess nuclear weapons.

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Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1919741/6-tensions-stock-markets/>

FATF Action Plan | Editorial

THE finance secretary has warned that Pakistan risks coming under sanctions if the action plan given to the Financial Action Task Force is not implemented in full. Considering that he was present at the latest meetings of the global terror-financing watchdog held in Paris, and personally witnessed the proceedings, his warnings need to be taken seriously.

The prime minister has struck the right note in emphasising the National Action Plan once again and issuing the necessary orders to seize the assets and halt the operations of proscribed outfits. In the days to come, the resolve behind this move will be tested, and it is important that the government's focus not be diluted as it moves ahead to clamp down on banned outfits here.

The finance secretary's remarks suggest that Pakistan had a difficult time at the Paris meetings of FATF last month. Eight organisations were named in the FATF press release issued afterwards. This is unusual, because while these groups have always been at the heart of Pakistan's dealings with FATF, they had never been named previously.

Pakistan on FATF's grey list: what, why, and why now?

Apparently in the run-up to the Paris meetings, Pakistan had submitted a terror risk assessment matrix to the Asia Pacific Group, the regional grouping of FATF to which Pakistan belongs. In that, it had designated the eight named groups as 'low risk', and this created problems in the Paris meeting. India seized the opportunity and tried to rally countries to put Pakistan on the blacklist with immediate effect; it took strenuous diplomatic pushback from the government to pre-empt that move.

Having narrowly averted being blacklisted in February, the government must not allow history to repeat itself. The same steps have been taken by previous governments as well, only to be allegedly stymied by the powerful handlers that these groups have.

The presence of these groups drove Pakistan towards a difficult position internationally and imposed a steep economic cost as the country's financial system was flagged as being open to risk of terror financing. The grey listing, as it is known in FATF parlance, was lifted with great difficulty and much wrangling back in 2015 against Pakistan's commitments of further action against these groups. However, whatever action was taken was clearly not enough, and the country slipped back onto the grey list.

Today, we face the prospect of being put on the blacklist if concrete steps are not evident to what will undoubtedly be a sceptical FATF audience in June. These groups and their existence on Pakistani soil have become much more than a nuisance and an embarrassment.

It is quite clear that none of them should have any presence here. The finance secretary's remarks need to be absorbed fully and earnest action against proscribed groups must be taken immediately to eliminate the scourge once and for all.

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Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1468123/fatf-action-plan>

National Tariff Policy | Editorial

Prime Minister Imran Khan has approved the country's first National Tariff Policy amid a flurry of activity to increase government revenue and encourage domestic productivity while maintaining transparency. The tariff policy aims to improve competitiveness, attract investment which creates jobs, and streamline the tariff structure. The policy aims to reduce exemptions and restructure tariff rates to aid domestic industry.

Meanwhile, the federal cabinet has also approved the sale of state land to pay off the ballooning government debt, which has gone past Rs27 trillion. The prime minister has directed the Privatisation Commission to set up an Asset Management Cell to sell real estate assets, according to reports. It will be for the first time since its creation about 30 years ago that the Privatisation Commission will sell real estate that is owned by the federal government ministries and departments at a large scale.

The commission had already written to government departments to share details of their vacant properties which led to the identification of more than 45,000 properties. But many of these are under disputed ownership. Also, given that it will take at least six months to sell any land and even longer for payment, the proposal is not a short term solution.

The move to sell state land is surprising, given that the government only recently removed at least 55 entities from the active list of privatisation, limiting it to only eight enterprises.

The third 'new' revenue generating avenue seems to be a renewed effort to catch major tax evaders. It has been decided to pick the top 100 cases from every Regional Tax Office and Large Taxpayers Unit, which will expand the final list to 2,400, according to FBR officials. These 2,400 people include politicians, celebrities, sportsmen, media persons, and real estate tycoons, according to the FBR.

The FBR has been under constant pressure from the prime minister after the PTI came into power last year. Despite this, the collection-revenue target gap

continues to widen, and with the economy showing no signs of a serious resurgence, improving collection is going to be an uphill task.

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Transforming the Investment Landscape of Pakistan By Hassnain Javed

After the last government's poor financial performance, Pakistan is still recovering from growth which was fueled by short term debt and declining investments. The economy was in shambles and Pakistan was almost on the verge of bankruptcy by the end of the year 2018. In these circumstances, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government has chosen to control the supply side of policies with the aid of reduction in government spending to encapsulate austerity drives and increase taxes.

So what should be the government's focus in order to boost investment in the country? A major highlight from Finance Minister Asad Umer's speech on the new mini-budget was the relief and incentives being given to the investors to ensure ease of doing business. According to recent stats, Pakistan is ranked at the 136 in the Ease of Doing Business Index (EDBI), and 173 in terms of complicated tax systems. The investment-to-gross domestic product (GDP) ratio of Pakistan has been stagnant at approximately 15 percent, while countries like China, India and South Korea have been able to sustain the ratio to more than 30 percent. Therefore, the new government should aspire to raise the investment-to-GDP ratio to at least 20-25 percent during the government's five-year tenure. Such a move will improve job creation, productivity, and exports.

Recently, the Finance Supplementary (Second Amendment) Bill, 2019 was passed by the National Assembly, which is termed as a business-friendly reform package. This is because a tax reform package would encourage investment, promote industrial growth as well as boost the country's stagnant exports. Before this announcement, Abdul Razak Dawood, who is the Adviser to the Prime Minister on Commerce, Trade, Textile, and Investment has also said that the bill would allow investment opportunities and business activities will increase in the country. Regarding this, the Chairman Pakistan Afghanistan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PAJCCI) Zubair Motiwala acknowledged decisions of the government and speculated that it would help to boost exports and investment.

The investment landscape of Pakistan shows some promising trends but in order to fully upturn prevalent economic conditions, more effort from the government is required

Following these encouraging policies, the State Bank of Pakistan reported that private sector borrowing has jumped by over 92 percent to Rs600.5 billion during the July-February 22 period, compared to Rs312 billion in the same period last year. These numbers are encouraging for the government as the private sector continues to borrow at a stronger pace despite a steep rise in interest rates, which shows increased confidence of investors in the economy of Pakistan.

Foreign investment in Pakistan is also showing positive trends with countries like the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Turkey showing interest in investments. Turkey has further expressed interest in developing a legal framework for tourism infrastructure planning, allocation of public properties to the investors, determination, and classification of qualities of hospitality facilities based on international standards. The main focus would be the rendering of technical support to Pakistan in order to facilitate promotional marketing of tourism, advertising a positive image of the country and production of promotional material.

In early October last year, PM Imran Khan spoke at the Future Investment Initiative Conference (FIIC) in Riyadh, where he discussed Pakistan's economic challenges and invited foreign investors to invest in the country. In this conference, the PM communicated the policy of his tenure that is to enable an environment for investment. He further added that the plan is not just to attract foreign and overseas investors, but also Pakistani investors as well.

The crown prince of Saudi Arabia visited Pakistan last month, showing staunch support and promising \$20 billion in investment. Haroon Sharif, who chairs Pakistan's Board of Investment claimed that the UAE has also nearly finalised plans to establish an oil refinery in Pakistan with an anticipated production capacity of about 300,000 barrels. This project would entail \$8 billion in investments.

Recently, Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi held a meeting with a delegation led by Luxembourg Foreign Minister Jean Asselborn. Both

governments have exchanged views on bilateral relations, trade, and matters of mutual interests. Furthermore, agreement exchange of delegations for enhancing bilateral ties besides cooperation in science, technology and education sectors.

Conclusively, the investment landscape of Pakistan shows some promising trends but in order to fully upturn prevalent economic conditions, more effort from the government is required. Firstly, a multiplicity of taxes and redundant procedures hurt businesses. Pakistan is advised to transform its entrepreneurial environment by encouraging cottage industries to improve the domestic market. By easing the procedures to start a business, the investors could be encouraged by allowing construction permits as indicators through one-window or online operations. Moreover, reforms in contract enforcement, tax payments and protecting intellectual property rights among others are also needed.

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CPEC is a Key to Cultural Relations Between China and Pakistan By Komal Niazi

China and Pakistan are exchanging their cultural values, norms and patterns with the initiative of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). CPEC is the latest venture in the history of bilateral economic cooperation. Culture refers to the ways of life of a society or of groups within a society. It includes how they dress, their marriage customs, language, family life, their patterns of work, religious ceremonies and leisure pursuits. Cultural relations are more neutral and comprehensive between China and Pakistan. This has been especially true under President Xi Jinping, marking the revival of the Silk Road, that the cultural exchanges between the 'iron brothers' have met new momentum. The Belt and Road Summit held in Beijing in May 2017 as well as the 19th plenary session of the Communist Party of China emphasised the need for cultural exchange and people to people ties. CPEC, as the flagship project of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), both countries have once again embarked on a journey for colourful cultural exchange.

The purpose of cultural relations is not necessarily to seek a one-sided advantage. The most effective purpose of this project is to achieve understanding and co-operation between national societies for their mutual benefit. Chinese and Pakistanis are exchanging socio-economic patterns to promote mutual understanding, exchanging both material and non-material culture. In material culture China and Pakistan are exchanging products, commodities and resources with each other. In non-material culture involves food, language, dress, religion and living patterns. So, this proves that economic development also gave strength to the social ties and bounds between two nations and their friendship become flourishing.

Pakistan has also actively participated in different cultural activities. Jamal Shah, the director of Pakistan National Council of Arts (PNCA), came with their delegation and participated in Xinjiang Cultural festival, PNCA given numerous performances which reflected the rich culture of Pakistan.

Chinese and Pakistanis are exchanging socio-economic patterns to promote mutual understanding, exchanging both material and non-material culture

The tendency of sharing cultural activities between China and Pakistan is increasing day by day like a storm. During a field survey, a respondent had the view, “He is too much inspired by Chinese work ethics and working hours. They care for the life security of the local labour, working hours are the same as Chinese labour, if they work extra time, they are paid extra money for the extra work”. Pakistani students are making progress in China’s best universities and carrying their cultural traits, patterns, norms and values. Every year on cultural days, Pakistani student present their culture. Similarly, in China everyone knows about Pakistan, a local shopkeeper or taxi driver know about China-Pakistan friendship. When they know, we are from Pakistan, the first word they use in Chinese (haopengou) meaning good friends. Local people from both countries take pride in this friendship.

Food is a pillar in cultural and people to people relation between China and Pakistan. Chinese who are living in Pakistan, enjoy Pakistan food and spices. During the interviews, “A Chinese respondent said, they are in love with chicken biryani, chapati and chicken. Pakistani most of the time bring food from their homes for their Chinese co-workers. Chinese are of the view that Pakistanis are very hospitable people. Even they have not enough earning resources, but they are always ready to feed people in a good way. As contrast to Pakistani workers are working with Chinese has view, they always share their food and introduce Chinese food to them. At larger scales there are some Chinese restaurants opened in Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi. These restaurants provide the same taste food which is available in China. Similar, Pakistani food restaurants are also found in the big cities of China where we can find the same Pakistani food. Another positive effect of CPEC that Chinese and Pakistani individuals are marrying each other. Before initiation of CPEC, Pakistani male students married to Chinese girls. Most of the couples lived in China and earning money together. But now Chinese males are working in Pakistan in different projects marrying Pakistani women and living with them in Pakistan. It is taking a beginning of new bond between two diverse cultures. This is new cultural wave taken place in China and Pakistan. Even, when we visit the big cities in Pakistan, we do not see the faces of Americans, but we see Chinese people everywhere in Pakistan.

Chinese language has replaced English as the language of job opportunities in Pakistan. Chinese language and history are also getting strong attention in

Pakistani academic courses. The University of Agricultural Faisalabad opened a Chinese language institute, attract the number of students to learn Chinese language. Even most of the students passed their HSK score and then applied in Chinese universities, which enhanced their chances of admission in China. Even at local areas, the workers who learnt Chinese language from their employees, teach language at their small towns or villages. And same thing is happening with Chinese workers that they are learning Urdu and other local languages of Pakistan.

We cannot understand culture without knowing their material and non-material aspect of each other's culture. With the CPEC both countries interact with each other and understand their lives, motivations, concerns and interests. CPEC is a powerful human tool to inherit both cultures, develop a new pattern of society and add new knowledge in Pakistan and Chinese societies.

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The Sino-US Trade War By Prof Anis H Bajrektarević

Who has the upper hand?

The main task of any liberal state is to enable and maintain the wealth of its nation, which of course rests upon wealthy individuals. That imperative brought about another dilemma: O wealthy individual, the state will rob you, but in absence of it, the pauperized masses will mob you. The invisible hand of Smith's followers have found the satisfactory answer— sovereign debt. That 'invention' meant: relatively strong central government. Instead of popular control through the democratic checks-and-balances mechanism, the state should be rather heavily indebted. With such a mixed blessing, no empire can easily demonetize its legitimacy, and abandon its hierarchical but invisible and unconstitutional controls. This is how a debtor empire was born. A blessing or totalitarian curse?

The USSR— much as (pre-Deng) China itself— was more a classic continental military empire, while the USA was more a financial-trading empire. On opposite sides of the globe and cognition, to each other they remained enigmatic, mysterious and incalculable. However, both had a super-appetite for omnipresence. Along with the price.

No global leader has ever emerged from a distrustful neighborhood

Consequently, by the mid 1980s the USSR cracked under its own weight, imperially overstretched. So did the Americans – the 'white man's burden' had fractured them already by the Vietnam War. However, the US imperium managed to survive and to outlive the Soviets. How? The USA, with its financial capital (or an outfoxing illusion of it), evolved into a debtor empire through Wall Street guarantees. Titanium-made Sputnik vs. gold mine of printed-paper... Nothing epitomizes this better than the words of the longest serving US Federal Reserve boss, Alan Greenspan, who famously said to then French President Jacques Chirac: "True, the dollar is our currency, but your problem". Hegemony vs. hegemony.

Conventional economic theory teaches us that money is a universal equivalent to all goods. Like no currency before, the US dollar became after World War II the universal equivalent to all the world's other moneys. The core component of the non-precious metals money is a so-called promissory note– the belief that, at any given future time, a particular paper will be smoothly exchanged for real goods.

Thus, roughly speaking, money is nothing else but a civilizational construct about imagined tomorrows– that the next day (which nobody has ever seen in the history of humankind, but everybody operates with) definitely comes, and will certainly be better than our yesterday or even our today.

This and similar types of social contract (horizontal and vertical) over the collective constructs hold society together as much as its economy keeps it alive and evolving. Hence, it is money that powers economy, but our blind faith in (constructed) tomorrows and their certainty empowers it.

Clearly, the universal equivalent of all equivalents– the dollar– follows the same pattern: Strong and widely accepted promise. What does the dollar promise when there is no gold cover attached to it ever since the time of Nixon shock of 1971?

The Pentagon promises that the oceanic sea lines will remain open (controlled by the US Navy), and that the most traded commodity, oil, will be delivered. So, it is not crude or its delivery that covers the dollar– it is a promise that the oil of tomorrow will be deliverable. That is a real might of the dollar, which in return finances the Pentagon's massive expenditures.

Admired and feared, the Pentagon further fans our planetary belief in tomorrow's deliverability– if we only keep our faith in the dollar, and so on and on in perpetuated circle of mutual reinforcements.

The two pillars of US might on the East coast (the US Treasury/Wall Street and the Pentagon) together with the two pillars of the West coast, both financed by the dollar and spread through the open sea-lanes (Silicon Valley and Hollywood), are the essence of the US posture.

This nature of power explains why the USA have missed taking mankind into another direction; towards a non-confrontational, decarbonized, demonetized, definancialized and de-psychologized, self-realizing and green humankind. In short, to turn history into a moral success story. They had such a chance when, past Gorbachev's unconditional surrender of the Soviet bloc, and Deng's Copernicus-shift of China, the USA— unconstrained as a sole superpower— solely dictated terms of reference; our common destiny and direction to our future.

Sadly enough, that was not the first missed opportunity to soften and delay its forthcoming multidimensional imperial retreat. The very epilogue of the WWII meant a full security guarantee for the USA, geo-economically (54 percent of anything manufactured in the world was Made in USA), and geostrategically (nearly a decade of nuclear monopoly). The USA still conducted the most N-tests, has the largest nuclear arsenal, and is the only power ever deploying it on another. To complete the irony, Americans enjoy geographic advantage like no other empire before. Save the USA, as Ikenberry notes: "...every major power in the world lives in a crowded geopolitical neighborhood where shifts in power routinely provoke counterbalancing".

Why an empire by invitation did not evolve into an empire of relaxation, a generator of harmony? Why does it hold (extra-judicially) captive more political prisoners on Cuban soil than the badmouthed Cuban regime has ever had? Why does it remain obsessed with armament at home and abroad? Is the intensity inadequate of our confrontational push or the course of our civilizational direction false?

Indeed, no successful and enduring empire relies merely on coercion, be it abroad or at home. However, the prevailing archrival is only a winner, rarely a game-changer.

To sum up; After the collapse of the USSR, the USA accelerated expansion while waiting for (real or imagined) adversaries to further decline, 'liberalize' and bandwagon. The Expansion is the path to security dictum only exacerbated the problems afflicting the Pax Americana. That is how the US capability to maintain its order started to erode faster than the capacity of its opponents to challenge it. And the repeated failure to notice and recalibrate its imperial retreat brought painful hangovers to Washington by the last presidential elections. Inability to

manage the rising costs of sustaining the imperial order only increased the domestic popular revolt and political pressure to abandon its 'mission' altogether.

When the USSR lost its own indigenous ideological matrix and maverick confrontational stance, and when the US dominated West missed triumphing although winning the Cold War, how to expect from imitators to score even a momentary economic victory?

Neither more confrontation and more carbons nor more weaponized trade and traded weapons will save our day. It failed in past, it will fail again any given day.

Interestingly, China opposed the I World, left the II in rift, and ever since Bandung it neither won nor joined the III Way. Today, many see it as a main contestant. But, where is lasting success?

Greening international relations along with greening of economy is the only way out. Historically, no global leader has ever emerged from a distrustful neighborhood, or by offering some more of the same in lieu of an innovative technological advancement. It all starts at home. Without support from a home base, there is no game changer. China's home is Asia.

Hence, it is not only a new, non-imitative, turn of technology what is needed. Without truly and sincerely embracing mechanisms such as the NAM, ASEAN and SAARC (eventually even the OSCE) and the main champions of multilateralism in Asia, those being India Indonesia and Japan first of all, China has no future as global leader.

By Prof Anis H Bajrektarević.

The author is chairperson and professor in international law and global political studies, Vienna, Austria. He has authored six books (for American and European publishers) and numerous articles on, mainly, geopolitics energy and technology.

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Corporate Giving And Poverty Alleviation

By Dr Pervez Tahir

The launch of the Poverty Alleviation Programme Ehsas, this week by the Prime Minister recognises poverty as problem number one. There are only two known paths to overcome mass poverty. One is the Chinese way of double-digit growth sustained over at least two decades to push people out of poverty. The other is a caring state and society helping people out of poverty. In the past decade and half, growth in Pakistan has been less than the historic average of six per cent. Even this average was far less than the potential. The state, even in the best of times, has never spent more than four per cent of GDP on social sector and transfers to the poor, leaving a huge gap to be filled by society. While we like to imagine ourselves as the most giving nation on earth, the undocumented sources and beneficiaries have landed us in trouble with the international watchdogs of terror financing.

However, there are many documented sources of giving. Among these, the most documented is the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). The PM's programme aims to better target the CSR.

Looking at the current status here. With UNDP assistance (it seems no report is possible any more without assistance from somewhere abroad), Pakistan Centre for Philanthropy has published a report, 'Corporate Philanthropy in Pakistan 2017'. It covers 464 Public Listed Companies (PLCs), 204 Public Unlisted Companies (PUCs) and 208 Private Limited Companies (PvLCs). The largest amount of Rs7.56 billion came from PLCs, 79 per cent of which was contributed by top 25 companies of the group. The contribution by the PUCs and the PvLCs was just Rs1.03 billion and Rs1.5 billion. The larger the company the more it gives. To see how much is enough, the absolute numbers have to be put in some perspective. Like the never-achieved target of 0.7 per cent of GNP for Overseas Development Assistance, the target for corporate giving is one per cent of profit before tax. (Originally, the international target was also one per cent of GNP as it included private flows also.) According to the report, the PUCs have contributed 0.7 per cent of their profits before tax. Since 2012, the gap has been widening rather than narrowing.

Where is the money going? The report maps CSR programmes around Multi Poverty Index (MPI) and Human Development Index (HDI) to conclude “that the neediest areas do not get much of CSR spending”. There seems to be a problem with the mapping exercise. As per the report, the CSR foundations and departments spend 41 per cent of their resources on quality education, 28 per cent on good health and eight per cent on clean water and sanitation. Also, the report finds that the oil and gas exploration companies are the largest contributor to CSR. These companies are located in the poorest and the most backward areas. What else is the definition of the needy areas in the eyes of the authors of the report? In a goal-counting exercise, the report observes, “Undoubtedly, health and education are the areas where Pakistan is lagging behind even the poorest countries in the world but other areas included in the SDGs are equally important and need to be focused on. The least focused Sustainable Goal is ‘No Poverty’ which only gets 0.12% share from the total annual giving.” This after admitting that poverty is multidimensional! ‘No Poverty’ can only be the outcome of multiple interventions, education and health being the most important. This is also the message of Ehsas.

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Trade Outlook 2019: Mostly Cloudy –

Analysis By Evan Rogerson

Prospects for global trade in 2019 are overshadowed by policy uncertainty and the weakening of the system of multilateral rules. The few more positive developments include the launch of broad plurilateral negotiations on electronic commerce and the continuing active commitment of middle-sized economies to the multilateral system.

The global trade outlook continues to be a sombre one, as the effect of policy tension and uncertainty make themselves felt. The latest World Trade Organisation (WTO) Trade Outlook Indicator, published on 19 February 2019, stands at 96.3 on a base of 100, its lowest reading since March 2010. The WTO warns that it could drop further if trade conditions continue to deteriorate. So far this year there are few signs of a lasting improvement in the policy environment.

Certainly markets have lifted on the news that the US has postponed the imposition of 25% tariffs due on 1 March. This reflects apparently encouraging progress in bilateral trade talks with China. It would be premature, though, to celebrate the end of the US-China trade war. It is more likely to be a fragile truce.

Trump Effect & Outlook in the West

President Trump is looking for a success, with next year's election coming up and US agriculture and industry feeling the impact of the current tariffs. On the other side US actions, current and threatened, are hurting China's already slowing export sector and economic growth.

The talks may produce undertakings from China on a range of US concerns including intellectual property and technology transfer. Even so, enforceability will become an issue. Both sides need breathing space.

However the trade confrontation is a manifestation of deeper systemic and geopolitical stresses that will not be eased by soundbite diplomacy. These stresses are sending tremors throughout the region, such as the Huawei controversies, which in turn raise the level of tension. US concerns with China's rise will not dissipate quickly and it is unlikely that the Chinese government will

agree to make deep changes in its key economic structures and industrial policies.

In the Western Hemisphere the environment is equally unpromising. At present Brexit looks headed for delay, but a no-deal exit cannot be ruled out. The negative effects would be serious not just for the United Kingdom but for all its trading partners. Irish, Dutch and Danish meat could face steep tariffs; Spanish fruit and vegetables could rot in customs queues.

Brexit Spillovers?

Even with an eleventh-hour agreement there are a vast number of issues still to be resolved, such as the terms for extending existing EU trade agreements to the UK. This is not a question of simple rollovers, as Japan has made clear. The impact could also extend well beyond Europe, for example to Kenya's vital horticultural sector.

The Brexit follies exacerbate an already difficult European economic and political situation. There is little doubt that they have contributed to the disturbing rise of nationalist politics across the continent.

The collective security of the multilateral trade rules has never been more relevant and important. Unfortunately they have never been as weakened as they are today. The multilateral negotiating function of the WTO is trapped in the wreckage of the Doha Round and handicapped by big-power standoffs.

The dispute settlement function is threatened by the impending collapse of the appeals system because of US opposition to replacing retiring Appellate Body members. Cases invoking national security as a justification for raising tariffs risk embroiling it in a lose-lose political outcome.

And the longstanding tensions between emerging and developed economies have moved centre stage, with strongly opposing positions staked out by the US on one side and India, China and South Africa on the other.

Seeking a Middle Ground

The argument over the respective responsibilities of emerging and developed economies in the trading system has simmered for years. It was a major reason

for the failure of the WTO's Doha Round, and it has become another aspect of the US-China confrontation.

At present developing-country status in the WTO is self-designating. Recent US proposals to establish a system of categories for eligibility have brought the issue to the boil and united a range of developing countries besides China, the main target, in opposition. It is hard to see consensus emerging on new rules or criteria in this area.

On the contrary, it could be another polarising element in the mix for the 2020 WTO Ministerial. Efforts are being made by other governments to seek middle ground on this and other divisive issues. A recent study commissioned by Sweden and co-authored by the present writer points toward a more pragmatic issue- and sector- based approach. It is available here: <https://bit.ly/2TvOc8l>

Brighter Spots

One brighter spot in the prevailing gloom is the launch of a broad plurilateral negotiation in January on Electronic Commerce. This is notable for bringing together a broad range of participants, developing and developed, including the US and China, to negotiate rules on this key growth sector.

Of course there are significant challenges for the negotiators. China, a last-minute recruit, can be expected to take a hard line on data localization. India, a big player in the sector, has so far stayed out. However the coverage of any eventual agreement will be significant. So is the achievement of those governments who worked to get the process launched, among which Singapore was a leader.

The activism of middle-sized economies in defence of the multilateral trading system is another brighter spot. Led by Canada, they are playing an irreplaceable role in the WTO reform discussion. How far this will be able to go in the absence of buy-in by the majors is unclear, but it sends a strong signal of commitment to multilateralism.

An even stronger signal would be progress in the WTO negotiations on fisheries subsidies. Even the modest aim of banning subsidies to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing has so far proved out of reach, despite being agreed in the

UN Sustainable Development Goals. The negotiators have set a deadline of the end of this year. Meeting it will be a key test of the system's ability to deliver. In these areas and in their regional initiatives economies in the Asia-Pacific region are helping to keep the lights on for co-operative and constructive trade policies. It is vital that they continue to do so.

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Source: <http://www.eurasiareview.com/29032019-trade-outlook-2019-mostly-cloudy-analysis/>

EDUCATION

Supremacy Over Efficiency: A tale of Civil Services By Mohsin Saleemullah

It was not until 1862 when neither a single Indian joined the Indian civil services rooted in during the British rule back in 1855. Though, the highly prestigious civil services wasn't a piece of cake, except for members of affluent families. Their highly groomed sons could succeed after taking a sea-sickening voyage to London along with bearing boarding and lodging expenses. Beside this, Hindus had been engulfed in their superstitious beliefs of traveling across the ocean as a bad omen until the civil services became an all-white affair. But fortunately, Satyendranath Tagore stood first amongst the brown skinned to qualify ICS in 1863 and served in the Bombay presidency cadre for more than 30 years of his service. With each passing year, there was an increase in the percentage of Indians appearing for the exam with an aspiration of elevating their social stature pushed them to mortgage their assets against the hefty loan, when for the first time well-known philanthropist JN Tata had offered a conditional scholarship to study abroad only, if they were to appear for the ICS exam in London. This exam continued to take place in London until 1922 onwards. It was held in both London and Allahabad with an age limit of no more than 24 years when the last exam was held in 1943 and no fixed retirement age for any ICS officer. The ICS exam wasn't just meant to recruit people for the administrative services, but it is worth mentioning that more than 50 percent of a judgeship in the state high court was through this exam and the rest were elevated from the high court bar. An ICS officer could only aspire for the highest post of a governorship in any of the 11 provinces, under the British dominion.

On the contrary in Pakistan, the British-inherited civil services steel frame was carried to ensure each civil servant should serve the public to justify where they have been positioned. In the beginning, civil services went well. It was only tasked to collect land revenue taxes and maintain the law and order situation, like the ICS officers. These highest echelons of power had a grip over the administrative machinery and a knowledge of law gave them an edge to reign

over their arena, but their authority and mystique never transcended their responsibilities and moral authority. Their mastery in directions was proven in the testing times they had sailed through efficiently.

However, in the later ages, Pakistan's civil services structure wasn't molded to adapt to the changing circumstances of a newly born country. Thus, post-independence the evolution of a civil servant to a "bureaucrat" has made it difficult for an ordinary citizen to interact with their absolute administrator and their unresponsive attitude to address people's concern is yet to clamp down. Apart from the central services, another parallel set of administration Provincial Management Services PMS previously known PCS is running within the province is as different as chalk and the cheese. Though, the Punjab civil services was a post-independence affair, made up of two cadres, the Punjab Secretariat Service (PSS) and Punjab Civil Service Executive (PCS) prior fusing into one during the devolution process in 2001. Thus, later PMS services rules came into being and were promulgated in 2004. The irony is that the central and provincial civil bureaucracies aren't only a far apart worlds, but have a completely different approach to governance. Despite the contrast, both have continued functioning with "infinite powers" had remained unchecked were in the best interest of totalitarian regimes to the democratic rulers we have a throne to date. As were depicted in the last PML-N government in Punjab and other provinces, a chief minister preferred to operate through select bureaucrats, who swear personal loyalty to him rather than democracy or their oath to serve the country. Nonetheless, this personal choose and pick formula doesn't work in the centre, after the PM Imran Khan has been pounded with the dual-disaster of rocketing gas prices and hikes in the dollar exchange rate, which has crippled our economy. It may sound like a cliché, but it's never too early nor too late since PM Khan has experienced the maneuvering of highly tactful executives of the last government in federal have muddled with their respective institutions. By the time the new PM took office, he could have and should have brought urgent structural reforms in Pakistan's conventional civil services structure. The unprecedented mandate he had with him and the voter's faith in his promises to cleanse Pakistan's governance, as never done before has to materialise.

By the time the new PM took office, he could have and should have brought urgent structural reforms in Pakistan's conventional civil services structure

But why did Khan roll up his sleeves to overhaul the bureaucracy? The reply is quite explicit: he needed a set of people who work as “government servants” to address public grievances. The consistent laments of the downtrodden have echoed in Pakistan’s “kacharis”, an administrative hub of district offices. This is a depraved place to visit even once in one’s life, until it continues for ages. Each day seems to bring more despondency amongst the people, who adjoin to form an infinite chain awaiting outside the fortified offices to get their issues resolved. This is not a mere generalisation: I can cite many instances to corroborate my observation where I have observed the ineffectiveness and dependency of the administrative machinery has nearly halted due process and caused an immense loss for the people to endure. I had a chance to visit the offices of Assistant Commissioner AC, District Police Officer DPO and other civil services officer in three of central Punjab’s districts where I observed the much trumpet PM’s austerity remained a paper bill for the government office, since no office-bearers were following the new office hours of 9 am- 5 pm, but preferred to continue their past norm of coming late on the pretext of a surprise visits to unscheduled official meetings in a neighboring district. An exception to their routine can be that they may arrive early and leave at late hours with no destitute permitted to step in to have his issue redressed, except those who are the exclusive guests honored to enjoy Hi-tea in the elegant offices with blinds dropped down to block peeps. In addition, the higher officials in the provincial secretariats and the ministries are solely dependent on their section officers because neither have a grip over law nor acquainted with the procedures and their duties. It won’t be a different scenario, if superintendent and assistants are abolished at the divisional level and head clerks in the districts. The four federating units will come to a standstill.

Furthermore, the judicial system isn’t o par with civil services. Where I have seen judges presiding over court proceedings on time till late hours to lessen their backlog cases, though their lower staff is often seen retaliating and hindering their efficiency, however this fourth pillar of the state has continued functioning quite efficiently and have had chances to supplement its performance, if bars and benches resolve their differences.

Consequently, if we agree that the highly competitive exam for these services catches the best candidates for these jobs, we need to scrutinize what happens thereafter. Despite, flowing through common trainings to specialized training programme with fields attachments may help them to overview their realm,

however they lack a basic understanding of the ground level intricacies makes them handicap. These young officers are thrown into a convoluted system marred with incompetencies, political interferences and unscrupulous senior drives them to become corrupt and simply lazy for these jobs. It's simply to blame every government, which is equally guilty of supporting their political parties to bully civil servants and pushing them for the cash-partnerships. It's high time for PM Khan to take a quick action to execute civil services reforms draft, otherwise, it will be tabled yet again with no results as in past.

The writer is a freelance contributor

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Austerity and Education By Faisal Bari

FISCAL and foreign currency account deficits were destabilising the macroeconomic situation. The government, in a bid to acquire macroeconomic stability, has been trying to reduce both deficits. Devaluation and import duty changes are the main tools on the currency side. Additional taxation measures have been taken to raise revenues and an austerity drive has been initiated to reduce expenditures. The economy has responded to the changes to an extent, and trade and fiscal deficit have narrowed a bit or won't be as large as they would have been had these measures not been taken.

Import and expenditure curbs will slow down the growth rate. This means lower employment generation and lower income increases for all. Expenditure cuts have mainly hit development expenditures. Development expenditure is where the government has the most discretion, so most cuts inevitably hit development the most. But development expenditures impact growth directly.

Development has been cut at both federal and provincial levels. The federation asked provinces to run surpluses in their budgets. Some complied. Those that did have had to slash their development spending deeply. In some cases, the provinces do not even have the money to run existing programmes. For example, Punjab has halted the expansion of private-public partnerships in education, and is even having trouble coughing up money for programmes that were already under way.

The austerity imperative is not just going to go away in a year or two. For Pakistan to be able to increase expenditures and open up imports, we need structural changes in the economy. Stabilisation does not guarantee structural change. If exports and tax collections do not start increasing, the government will not have the fiscal space to increase expenditures. And exports and tax collections are not going to go up in a year or two. The need for austerity, though it may be not as severe as it was this year, will remain with us for some time.

Our education sector needs significant improvement. How is this possible without more money?

The provinces are going to feel the pinch even more. The federal government is looking to reduce the share of the provinces in the next National Finance Commission award. There is going to be some provision, out of provincial shares, for former Fata as well. There might be a cut for Punjab if the weight of population is reduced in the NFC formula. No province has a local tax base and they all depend on federal transfers for resources.

We have 20-odd million children out of schools. The quality of education in most of our schools, private and public, needs significant improvement. How is this possible without more money?

This government has promised equality of opportunity to all — and education is a big part of this. The government, through numerous statements, has said they want 'uniform' education for all. How is this going to happen under austerity?

I want to debunk a really misleading argument that has been doing the rounds in Pakistan courtesy of some education experts. They argue that we do not need to spend more money on education but to spend more efficiently, and that will give us the necessary gains. There is no doubt that expenditure efficiency, whatever the field, is low in Pakistan and could be improved, but if a nation only spends 2 per cent to 2.5pc of GDP on education, there is no way, whichever way it stretches this money, that it is going to be able to provide education for a population of 207m with a large proportion of young people.

If 20m children are not going to school, clearly, they are mostly those whose parents cannot afford to send them to private, fee-based schools. How are these children going to be educated without more schools? How many can you fit in existing schools and classes when a lot of your existing primary schools only have two to four classrooms?

Rahim Yar Khan has 2,200-odd government primary schools and only 222 high schools, Rajanpur has 989 primary schools and only 69 high schools, for Bhakkar the numbers are 1,027 and 114, and for Rawalpindi 1,198 and 388. When the objective of the government is to have every child finish high school, how do we cater for all children who join primary school if we do not set up more high schools? Can children from 2,200 primary schools fit into 222 high schools? And we do not even provide transport to children.

Dataset after dataset is showing the poor quality of learning in our schools. It might be improving a little, but the level is still very low compared to where children should be at their age and compared to where their peers from other countries are. How does one improve the quality of learning without more resources? We have already gotten gains in learning through introducing monitoring systems across the education system. Teacher attendance is also up. Now learning gains probably need to come by improving teacher motivation as well as their pedagogic and subject skills, and by creating communities of learning around our schools. How do we do all this without more funds? It is hard to see how large-scale interventions (there are 100,000-plus government-run schools across Pakistan) can be made without more resources.

Unless more resources are available, it is hard to see how the government will be able to achieve any of its education promises. And resources are definitely not going to be available for the next couple of years. It might even be longer if our exports do not respond and if the provinces and federation do not find new ways of taxing and of extending the tax net. It seems 'education for all' and national and international commitments will remain unrealised promises for quite some time to come.

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Technical Education By Umar Bin Abdul Aziz

NO nation could progress unless it promotes technical education. Technical education plays a vital role in human resource development of a country by creating skilled manpower, enhancing industrial productivity and improving the quality of life. Pakistan is an under-developed most populous country in the world. Human recourse is the main factor of development and growth of any nation. Skilled inhabitants can be the asset of a country. In the modern world, skilled man is an important asset of the nation. No nation can make progress without experts. Skillful and educated persons are the back bone of economy. It is clear that without proper trained and proficient labour and human resources, no nation can make growth and development. All industrial nations focused on specialization and training of people.

“Knowledge is power, and competent personnel shape the future.” Xi Jinping. In Pakistan, if we want to make progress we should train our people for all sectors. The production depend on skilled and trained labour. If we want to increase production then we must have qualified and educated people for it. We need experts for agriculture, carpentry, engineering, medical, driving, piloting, mechanics and manufacturing. We need technicians for making factories, roads, bridges, canals, buildings, airports, machinery, cars, tractors, aero planes, military weapons, locomotives, food.

In the present world, all countries are focusing on the industrial growth and manufacturing. Industrial development depends upon the skilled labour and workforce. Without such people industry can't build up and flourish. For increasing production and growth skilled people are significant. Technical education is important for the development and growth of Pakistan. Regrettably, technical education in our society is not promoted as it should be. Technical education plays vital role in the expansion and escalation. In our country, we have less institutions of technical education and training on government as well as private level.

Technical education is crucial for the economy. All developed nations have trained their people for the production of goods. China, Japan and similar nations focused on the technical education therefore they are making everything in their

countries. Their exports are more than their imports because they have trained their people for making goods in their own countries. They stress on the technical education for more production of machinery and goods. In our country, we don't have any policy for increasing skilled and trained personnel for our industry and economy. Here still we are producing simple graduate and traditional workers who cannot produce anything for country. We are wasting our time and energy on simple F.A and B.A education. These people only can do a job of clerk in any office. But we don't need simple graduates. If we want to make progress in industry and other sectors we should focus on technical education.

We should change the mindset of the nation. Technical education should be promoted on school and college level. People should be guided for technical courses. As we observed that diploma holders can easily get job as compared to simple graduates. So technical education is necessary for employment and growth of economy. We can export more skilled labour to the Middle East and other countries if we train and teach them technical education. Technical education is crucial for increasing production and exports and for decreasing unemployment, imports and inflation. The Government should focus on technical education. New technical institutions must be built on Tehsil and Union Counsel level. Private institutions should be promoted for this purpose and their fee and quality must be checked and controlled by government. I think, technical subjects must be included in our syllabus of matriculation and intermediate classes. We can train our people for local industry as well as foreign countries. We can increase the remittance by exporting more technical and expert people.

Government should provide subsidy for promoting technical education in the country. Without promotion of technical education, the dream of development is not possible. Our Prime Minister is talking about free visa of Qatar and other countries, I think when we will have more experts and skilled people then foreign countries will automatically import them as per their requirements. First of all, we should train our people then talk about exporting them. Unskilled person could not be adjusted in local as well as international market. Government should make the policy for increasing technical education. For this purpose, we can take advantage by the experience of our friend country, China. Without technical education the dream of development is not possible.

–The writer is freelance columnist, based in Islamabad.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/2019/03/25/technical-education/>

WORLD

Afghan Peace Talks Continue | Editorial

Talks between Washington and the Afghan Taliban continued in Doha after two days on Saturday, though progress has remained slow. Not only did the Taliban attack an Afghan government military base in Southern Afghanistan on Friday, they continue to refuse to engage with the Ashraf Ghani regime in Kabul.

The attack by the Taliban killed 23 members of Afghan security forces and wounded 16 others.

It should be noted that Washington insists that both a complete ceasefire and engagement between the Taliban and Kabul are necessary for the progress of the peace process and the eventual removal of all United States (US) troops in Afghanistan.

Regardless, the Afghan government has expedited efforts a team that will eventually join the talks in Qatar. This includes former Afghan envoy to Islamabad Hazrat Omar Zakhilwal and former Afghan deputy foreign minister Hekmat Khalil Karzai. Whether the Taliban will soften their stance on negotiating with the government in Kabul however, remains to be seen. Islamabad, Washington as well as the Kremlin must do all they can to make the Taliban see reason in this matter. Let's not forget, the Taliban met Afghan representatives — which included members of Prime Minister Ashraf Ghani's opposition — in Moscow last month.

Meanwhile, Islamabad must use its ties with the Taliban to make them agree to a ceasefire. The humanitarian cost of the Taliban offensive has reached alarmingly high levels. The United Nations reported last year that 2018 had been the bloodiest year in Afghanistan's recorded history. 3,804 civilians died in 2018, including 927 children. 7,189 civilians were injured. Afghanistan cannot begin the process of healing from decades of war until this carnage continues.

Regardless, these were the highest level negotiations between the Taliban and the US since Washington ramped up peace efforts last year. This can be ascertained from Taliban cofounder Mullah Abdul Ghani joining the Taliban's negotiation team and engaging directly with US special representative Zalmay Khalilzad.

Regional players must keep their eyes locked on the ball and keep moving forward to secure a safer, less radicalised Afghanistan which cannot be used as a launching pad for terrorist activities against any other state. Meanwhile, the international community must also keep a close eye on the ongoing fighting between India and Pakistan on the Line of Control and how it could impact Afghanistan. *

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Mourning The INF Treaty By Tom Nichols

On February 1, the Trump administration made official what had been in the offing for some time: the United States will withdraw from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty. Signed in 1987, the treaty banned the United States and Russia from developing or deploying any ground-launched missiles that could travel between 500 and 5,500 kilometers, or about 300 to 3,400 miles. Washington claims—correctly—that Russia is building and testing systems prohibited by the treaty, including a new cruise missile that the United States claims can travel at prohibited ranges. The Russians have responded by announcing their own plans to withdraw and develop new weapons.

The INF Treaty was one of the few arms control agreements that became an institution in its own right. The first treaty to eliminate an entire class of nuclear delivery systems, it was the foundation for denuclearizing most of Europe. Today, Russia is violating the agreement, and the Trump administration is right to protest. But provocative as Russia's cheating may be, the U.S. decision to walk away rather than make a serious effort to bring Moscow back into compliance will undermine the long-term security of both Europe and the United States.

The INF Treaty removed the most dangerous nuclear weapons from European soil: "intermediate range" weapons that are meant neither for the battlefield nor for long-distance strategic strikes but for nuclear attacks deep into NATO or Russian territory. The limited reach and short flight times of these weapons ideally suited them for a large but geographically confined theater, such as Cold War Europe. Dramatically outgunned and overmatched in terms of conventional firepower, NATO deliberately placed these nuclear missiles in the path of Soviet forces. If Moscow invaded Western Europe, its advancing troops would force NATO leaders to use or lose these weapons, potentially setting off a nuclear war. This risk, the thinking went, would deter the Soviets from trying to overrun Europe.

But placing these arms on the frontlines of a possible East-West war was immensely destabilizing, as it gave leaders only a few minutes to deliberate in the event of a crisis. NATO's strategy did not keep the peace so much as it made both sides look for a way out of an unsustainable and unbearably tense situation.

Soviet leaders were so on edge that a NATO military exercise in 1983 nearly convinced them that an attack was under way. In his memoirs, former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev described U.S. intermediate-range weapons as “a pistol to our head”—a sentiment shared in Europe and the United States about similar Soviet missiles aimed their way. In 1987, Gorbachev and U.S. President Ronald Reagan found an exit in the form of the INF Treaty, under which both sides physically destroyed their intermediate-range missiles, accompanied by regular mutual inspections.

Critics argue that whatever its merits in the past, the treaty has outlived its usefulness. They cite—rightly—Russia’s reckless cheating and argue that the United States cannot sit idly by as the Russians develop new nuclear systems. They also point to China’s huge arsenal of intermediate-range missiles as proof that the treaty is a needless straitjacket for the United States in East Asia. At the very least, we are told, the United States needs to rethink arms control commitments from the last century.

The problem with this line of reasoning is that it mistakes war-gaming for strategy. The case for abandoning the INF Treaty and developing intermediate-range missiles focuses almost entirely on operational thinking about complex battlefield scenarios. By contrast, little thought is given to a logically prior question: whether these weapons increase or decrease the chances that war might break out in the first place. Put simply, any discussion about intermediate-range missiles must begin by asking how they affect deterrence. The answer, in almost all cases, is that they corrode it.

AN OUTDATED STRATEGY

Consider the situation in Europe. Today, the biggest threat to NATO is no longer a full-scale Russian invasion but that Russian President Vladimir Putin will make a grab for Baltic or Polish territory, perhaps as an attempt to distract his increasingly restive population. Putin might be tempted to show that NATO is a paper tiger by taking a small patch of allied territory, daring the United States to eject his forces while acclimating Europe and the world to yet another “frozen” conflict, as he has done in eastern Ukraine.

Western nuclear threats will mean little to Putin in such a circumstance. The Russians know that a conflict on the edge of central Europe is not the same as a

Soviet march to the Rhine or the English Channel and that Washington will not risk a nuclear holocaust over a localized and relatively small conventional conflict.

The INF treaty's critics mistake war-gaming for strategy.

Indeed, how could U.S. leaders even begin to make such a nuclear threat credible? Imagine, for the moment, that the United States redeployed intermediate-range nuclear missiles to Europe to deter Russia. Where would it place these weapons? Unlike in 1985, today NATO includes Poland and all of the Baltic states. For U.S. missiles to lie directly in the path of a possible Russian attack, they would have to be deployed right along the Russian border. To situate them there would be insanely provocative and would furnish Moscow with a convenient excuse to aim hundreds of similar weapons at the capital of every NATO member, as it did in the 1980s.

In truth, NATO has the conventional power to eventually dislodge a Russian incursion without nuclear weapons. Russian leaders know this and have sought to offset NATO's superiority by threatening to go nuclear should they find themselves losing a conventional war, even if they are the aggressor. This is exactly the threat that NATO reluctantly relied upon over 30 years ago. Today, the burden of nuclear escalation rests entirely on Moscow. Why would the United States voluntarily relieve Russia of this problem by engaging in a new nuclear arms race?

STORMY WEATHER

Never mind Europe, critics contend: the real threat lies farther east. China—which is not a signatory to the INF Treaty—has deployed intermediate-range systems on its territory and may well use them in a future conflict. Freed from the shackles of treaty compliance, Washington can now respond by shoring up its regional presence with similar weapons systems.

Yet doing so inevitably raises the same strategic questions as in Europe. Assuming that Japan or South Korea agreed to station U.S. missiles on its territory—an unlikely proposition—this would instantly make either country a legitimate target for a preemptive Chinese nuclear attack in the event of a crisis. Would deterrence and strategic stability in Asia be enhanced as a result?

Arming the missiles in question with conventional rather than nuclear warheads won't solve these problems. The United States could, of course, develop ballistic and cruise missiles that can strike quickly and destroy important targets without using nuclear force. In practice, however, even these conventional systems could quickly bring the United States close to the nuclear precipice, since opponents cannot tell ahead of time whether they are being targeted with conventional or nuclear weapons if the delivery systems can be armed with both. The same goes for launching platforms that are indistinguishable from systems also designed for strategic attack, such as submarines.

We know this from close calls in the past. As recently as 1995—a time of relative Russian-U.S. comity in the happier days right after the end of the Cold War—the launch of a single Norwegian weather satellite was enough for the Russian military to hand then President Boris Yeltsin the nuclear codes. Yet today's advocates of a new arms race in both Europe and Asia are confident that if the United States launched a swarm of missiles in a future conflict with Russia or China, leaders in Moscow and Beijing would wait until impact to assess the damage and calmly fine-tune their response.

The underlying problem here is that advocates of an intermediate-range missile arms race gloss over the interests at stake and the risks involved—yet strategy is about choice within constraints, including the limitations imposed by risk. Too often, the starting point is to simply “assume a war” and then calculate which weapons systems will give U.S. forces an edge over their opponents. Such is the result when analysts spend too much time looking at charts and specifications in the sterile environment of think tanks and simulation rooms, as thinkers such as former U.S. National Security Adviser McGeorge Bundy and the military historian Sir Michael Howard warned us during the Cold War.

In the heat and fog of war, with the safety of the homeland at stake, real decision-makers will act like normal human beings: they will make assumptions, jump to conclusions, and commit errors. Above all, they will probably not wait to see if incoming warheads are appropriately configured for the next iteration of the game.

WHAT ARE WE FIGHTING FOR?

To account for the unpredictable behavior of humans in high-stakes situations, weapons should be designed and deployed with an underlying strategic logic rather than based only on their technical characteristics. The Trump administration, like the administration of Barack Obama before it, lacks the most important ingredient of such a strategy: an actual set of policies that defines U.S. interests and goals in Europe and Asia.

In the heat and fog of war, decision-makers make assumptions, jump to conclusions, and commit errors.

Under Obama, the United States mortgaged much of its foreign policy to the overriding goal of reaching a nuclear deal with Iran. The Trump administration's approach, meanwhile, reflects the president's general ignorance of, and hostility to, alliances and treaties. As it stands, the U.S. reaction to Russian cheating has amounted to an admission that Washington doesn't like the INF Treaty any more than Moscow does and that it wishes everyone in Europe the best of luck as it heads off to start arms racing the Chinese. More by necessity than conviction, NATO has declared its support for the U.S. exit from the treaty, but the message to Europe is clear: "You're on your own."

What would a more comprehensive U.S. strategy look like? First and foremost, it should disentangle American interests in Asia and Europe. The United States is time limited in its decisions about Europe, where the equally important New START treaty is set to expire in early 2021. Responding to China's rise, meanwhile, will take much more than reopening the door to any single weapons system: more investment in conventional forces and especially a recommitment to U.S. naval power in the Pacific.

Responding to China's rise, will take much more than reopening the door to any single weapons system.

In Europe, the United States should engage Russia on several issues that both sides care about, such the New START treaty, sanctions, and Ukraine. The United States should go into these talks with clear plans for exacting a price for Russian intransigence. Linking such disparate issues might not have been advisable in an earlier time, when Washington and Moscow still had open lines of communication to discuss them separately. Today, however, relations are at

such a low point that only a forceful and comprehensive engagement can head off a larger conflict down the line.

For such talks to be successful, the United States needs to treat NATO members like allies rather than clients or serfs and to work with them to reinforce the alliance's eastern borders. A more powerful conventional defense bolstered by U.S. forces would serve as a deterrent, ensuring that Russia would lose any conventional engagement quickly and decisively, before its half-baked nuclear threats could even come into play.

Most important, U.S. leaders should ask themselves what, exactly, they are willing to fight for, and why. The United States needs a better plan than to keep leaning not only on the crutch of nuclear weapons but on weapons systems it got rid of more than 30 years ago.

Source: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2019-03-04/mourning-inf-treaty>

India Faces International Isolation

WASHINGTON/ISLAMABAD: In a bid to isolate Pakistan in international community, India is now finding itself isolated as the US has removed it from the preferential trade list and the United World Wrestling (UWW) has also suspended its membership besides a warning by the International Cricket Council (ICC) on hosting rights of the Cricket World Cup and World T20 events.

The US President Donald Trump has announced that he plans to end India's preferential trade treatment that allows duty-free entry for billions of dollars worth of Delhi exports to enter the country.

In a letter written to the leaders of the Senate and House, the president said that he intends to terminate India's designation as a beneficiary developing country."I am taking this step because, after intensive engagement between the United States and the government of India, I have determined that India has not assured the United States that it will provide equitable and reasonable access to the markets of India as set forth," the letter stated.

He has taken the decision under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) programme. The GSP programme provides duty-free treatment to goods of designated beneficiary countries.

The programme was authorised by the Trade Act of 1974 to promote economic growth in the developing countries and was implemented on January 1, 1976. India has been the world's largest beneficiary of the GSP programme. Under the rules, certain products can enter the US duty-free if the beneficiary developing countries meet the eligibility criteria established by Congress.

The president apprised the Congress of the plan explaining that India has not assured the United States that it will provide equitable and reasonable access to the markets of India as set forth in the programme rules and regulations. "I will continue to assess whether the government of India is providing equitable and reasonable access to its markets, in accordance with the GSP eligibility criteria," the president said in the letter.

The US trade representative's office told media outlets that removing India from the GSP programme would not take effect for at least 60 days after notifications to Congress and the Indian government, and it would be enacted by a presidential proclamation.

Meanwhile, the United World Wrestling (UWW) directed all the members to suspend their relations with the Indian Wrestling Federation (IWF) till the time it guarantees (in writing) in-time visa facility to all athletes willing or drawn to compete in any international event the country hosts.

The international wrestling body called Indian government's failure to mix sports with politics as an act against the Olympic Charter. "Indians involve politics in sports and deny players and officials visa to compete in international events. All member countries are advised to suspend relations with Indian Wrestling Federation," the world body said in a letter to all member countries.

Pakistan has requested the International Cricket Council (ICC) to strip India of their hosting rights for the T20 and 50-over World Cup if India does not assure the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) of issuing visas to its players.

According to sources, the PCB has told the cricket's governing body that until and unless India assures them in writing that they will issue visas to their players and officials, their hosting rights should be taken back from them.

India is scheduled to host the T20 World Cup in 2021 and the 50-over World Cup in 2023. The ICC has asked the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) that they need to assure that they will issue visas to Pakistan players for the mega tournaments, the sources added.

Moreover, the ICC has ordered the BCCI to take written guarantee from their government, a year in advance before the tournaments kick-off in the country or they will look to another country to host the events.

The issue was raised by the PCB Chairman Ehsan Mani at a recent ICC meeting in Dubai, where he pointed out that India recently denied visas to Pakistani athletes to participate in events held in the country. On this, the ICC chief

Shashank Manohar ruled that the Indian board has to obtain a written guarantee from their government about the issuance of visas.

Source: <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/440273-india-faces-international-isolation>

After India Loses Dogfight to Pakistan, Questions Arise About Its ‘Vintage’ Military

By Maria Abi-Habib

NEW DELHI — It was an inauspicious moment for a military the United States is banking on to help keep an expanding China in check.

An Indian Air Force pilot found himself in a dogfight last week with a warplane from the Pakistani Air Force, and ended up a prisoner behind enemy lines for a brief time.

The pilot made it home in one piece, however bruised and shaken, but the plane, an aging Soviet-era MiG-21, was less lucky.

[Read about how tensions have affected an American cricket team with players from both countries.]

The aerial clash, the first by the South Asian rivals in nearly five decades, was a rare test for the Indian military — and it left observers a bit dumbfounded. While the challenges faced by the India’s armed forces are no secret, its loss of a plane last week to a country whose military is about half the size and receives a quarter of the funding was still telling.

India’s armed forces are in alarming shape.

If intense warfare broke out tomorrow, India could supply its troops with only 10 days of ammunition, according to government estimates. And 68 percent of the army’s equipment is so old, it is officially considered “vintage.”

“Our troops lack modern equipment, but they have to conduct 21st-century military operations,” said Gaurav Gogoi, a lawmaker and member of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defense.

American officials tasked with strengthening the alliance talk about their mission with frustration: a swollen bureaucracy makes arms sales and joint training

exercises cumbersome; Indian forces are vastly underfunded; and the country's navy, army and air force tend to compete rather than work together.

Whatever the problems, the United States is determined to make the country a key ally in the coming years to hedge against China's growing regional ambition.

Last year, when Defense Secretary Jim Mattis announced that the Pentagon was renaming its Pacific Command — to Indo-Pacific — he emphasized India's importance in a shifting world order.

"It is our primary combatant command," said Mr. Mattis, who left the Pentagon at the end of the year. "It's standing watch and intimately engaged with over half of the earth's surface and its diverse populations, from Hollywood to Bollywood."

The American military began prioritizing its alliance with India as its close relationship with Pakistan soured over the last two decades. United States officials are concerned that Pakistan is not doing enough to fight terrorism, a charge the country denies.

In just a decade, United States arms sales to India have gone from nearly zero to \$15 billion. But Pakistan can still draw on a powerful American-supplied arsenal.

Indian officials say Pakistan used one of its F-16 fighter jets to down its MiG-21 last week. Islamabad rejected the claim, but on Sunday the American Embassy in Islamabad said the United States was looking into the report. The offensive use of an F-16 warplane against its neighbor might have been a violation of the sales agreement.

"We are aware of these reports and are seeking more information," the embassy said in a statement. "We take all allegations of misuse of defense articles very seriously."

However troubled its military, India holds an obvious strategic appeal to the United States by virtue of both its location and its size.

India will soon become the world's most populous country, on track to surpass China by 2024. It shares a long border with southern and western China and controls important territorial waters Beijing needs for its maritime trade routes.

All that can help the United States try to box in its rival.

“India’s sheer demographics, its long-term military potential, its geographic expanse — it makes India worth waiting for,” said Jeff Smith, a research fellow for South Asia at the Heritage Foundation in Washington and the author of “Cold Peace: China-India Rivalry in the 21st Century.”

“As China rises and the United States fights to keep its dominance, it will need a swing state to tip the balance of power in the 21st century,” Mr. Smith said. “And that swing state is India. The United States knows this and is willing to be patient.”

For India’s military, funding remains the biggest challenge.

In 2018, India announced a military budget of some \$45 billion. By comparison, China’s military budget that year was \$175 billion. Last month, Delhi announced another \$45 billion budget.

It is not just a question of how much India spends on its military, but how it spends it.

The majority of the money goes to salaries for its 1.2 million active duty troops, as well as pensions. Only \$14 billion will be used to buy new hardware.

“At a time when modern armies are investing hugely on upgrading their intelligence and technical capabilities, we need to be doing the same,” said Mr. Gogoi, the Parliament member.

Unlike China, where an authoritarian government is free to set military policy as it wishes, India is a democracy, with all the messiness that can entail.

Cutting troop levels so that the military can spend the money on buying modern equipment is not so simple. India’s military has long been a source of jobs for a

country struggling with chronic underemployment. That is likely to be a big issue in elections scheduled for later this spring.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi won elections in 2014 promising to reform the economy and provide the one million jobs needed each month to satisfy its growing work force. But with elections around the corner, Mr. Modi has shelved promises of economic reform and embraced the usual populist measures.

“The thrust of this government is to focus more on economic development, which has to precede military strength,” said Amit Cowshish, a former defense ministry financial adviser for military acquisitions. “That was what China did — they focused on developing their economy and then focused on acquiring their current military stature. The difference is that China started 20 or 30 years ahead of us in terms of economic liberalization.”

Government officials in New Delhi say they are struggling to improve the lives of their citizens in the most basic of ways — dealing with high illiteracy rates and poor sanitation infrastructure, as just two examples — making it hard to funnel more money toward the military at a time when China is making incursions into India’s backyard by land and sea.

China has significantly outpaced its rival, creating a robust and taxable middle class. China’s economic boom has allowed it to invest aggressively in buying top military hardware and producing it at home.

As the world’s conflicts are increasingly fought with state-of-the-art weaponry rather than the large invading armies of the past, India is falling behind. Despite being the fifth-largest military spender, only about a quarter of its military budget this year will purchase new equipment.

Although the purchase of military hardware is a slow-moving process in most countries, in India it moves even more sluggishly amid a swollen bureaucracy.

There are also concerns about corruption.

Mr. Modi is currently being grilled by the opposition over a murky \$8.9 billion deal to buy 36 Rafale fighter planes from France. His political opponents have cast the agreement as corrupt in an effort to discredit him ahead of elections.

The purchase will help India replace its aging fleet of MiG-21s and other jets. And on Saturday, the prime minister tried to turn the tables on the opposition, saying India would have fared better in its skirmish with Pakistan last week if it had had the Rafale jets.

“The country has felt the shortage of Rafale,” Mr. Modi said.

Source: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/03/world/asia/india-military-united-states-china.html>

Time For UN to Resolve Kashmir Dispute By Malik Ashraf

The announcement by Prime Minister Imran in the joint session of Parliament to release captured Indian pilot has not only strengthened Pakistan's credentials as a peace loving nation but has also put it on a higher moral pedestal in the eyes of the world community. UN, US, Russia, China, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and a number of other countries have welcomed this sagacious move by the Prime Minister and termed it a good move towards de-escalation of tension between the two countries. Even certain sections of the Indian media have also welcomed this gesture which has caught the Indian Prime Minister off guard.

The situation that had developed as a result of the naked Indian aggression could have easily escalated into a full-fledged war between the two nuclear neighbours with all the accompanying disastrous consequences for the region and beyond besides incalculable harm to both the countries. However the restraint shown by Pakistan has helped lower the temperature to some extent.

The US intervention and efforts have also contributed to prevent further escalation. UN and Turkey also have offered to mediate between the two countries. Some countries including Saudi Arabia have initiated efforts for mediation between them and Russia has offered to host talks between Pakistan and India. Indian Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj also made a statement while in China that India did not want further escalation. The foregoing developments corroborate success of the efforts made by Pakistan on the diplomatic front to give peace another chance.

Pakistan not only condemned the Pulwama incident but also offered cooperation in the investigations assuring India that if it could provide any credible evidence to support her allegations against her it would take severe action against the perpetrators of the terrorist act. But unfortunately the Indian government instead tried to use the tragedy for reaping political advantage by fomenting anti-Pakistan feelings among the Indian masses supported by the Indian media and building war hysteria which ultimately brought the two countries to the brink of war and also left India with a bloody nose. Indian Opposition parties including Congress have also accused Modi of using the Pulwama episode for political gains. Chief

of Indian extremist political party Maharashtra Navnirman Sena Raj Thackeray called the Indian soldiers killed in the Pulwama attack 'political victims' maintaining that truth would be revealed if the country's National Security Adviser Ajit Doval was probed. Pakistan in response to a dossier provided by India of late has given a word to take action if the evidence was credible.

Whether Modi government would be able to reap political advantage from the post-Pulwama situation in the coming elections remains to be seen. Nevertheless one thing is quite evident that it was an extremely ill-conceived and dangerous move which could have unleashed disastrous consequence not only for the two countries but also the entire region. He clearly jeopardized Indian security for his narrow political gains. He is a man who has even done incalculable damage to the secular disposition of India through his communal politics and deliberate policy initiatives to turn India into a war-like state. Under his stewardship the Indian security forces have let loose an unprecedented reign of terror in the IoK. His government is also trying to have articles 370 and 35-A of the Indian constitutions undone to withdraw special status of the state and to change its demographic features respectively; an irritant which might give further impetus to the freedom struggle in IoK.

The real cause of conflict and enmity between Pakistan is the existence of Kashmir dispute which has remained unresolved during the last more than seventy years because of Indian refusal to fulfill her obligations towards the people of Kashmir as enshrined in the UN resolutions, her hostile posture towards Pakistan and defiance of the Simla Agreement which provided another avenue of resolving mutual disputes including Kashmir through bilateral mechanism governed by the UN Charter. India instead of trying to resolve the Kashmir issue has used the bilateral agreement to claim that it had precluded Pakistan's right to invoke the UN resolutions on Kashmir being unmindful of the fact that UN resolutions took precedence over any bilateral arrangement on the same subject. India also has been claiming Kashmir as her integral part notwithstanding the fact that UN through its resolutions 91 and 122 repudiated the Indian claim unequivocally reiterating that the question of accession of the state could not be resolved through any arrangement except through a plebiscite held under the auspices of the UN.

Indian intransigence to resolve the Kashmir issue forced the people of loK to launch freedom struggle in 1989. The Indian security forces have killed thousands of Kashmiris since then. The freedom struggle has gained further impetus since the killing of Burahan Wani in 2016. It is noteworthy that the Indian Army Chief Bipin Rawat in an interview with Economic Times last June accepted indigenous character of the freedom struggle in loK and suggested giving dialogue a chance. Reportedly former chief of Indian intelligence agency RAW AS Dulat in an interview with an Indian TV has said” South Kashmir is not in Indian control and aggression will further alienate people of Kashmir. Coercion will not succeed as it is a historic truth. Pakistan is a reality and there is no way out but to talk to Pakistan.”

While the efforts of the world community are welcome and a step in the right direction to defuse tension between the two countries in the backdrop of Pulwama incident, there is however an imperative need for removing the root-cause of animosity between Pakistan and India on permanent basis through the resolution of Kashmir dispute. Until and unless it is resolved in conformity with the UN resolutions peace and security in the region will remain an elusive dream. It was time for India also to recognize the ground realities in her own interest as well as for the UN and the world community to play their role in creating conditions for the people of Kashmir to exercise their right of self-determination so that no Indian adventurist like Modi could endanger the regional peace.

— The writer is freelance columnist based in Islamabad.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/time-for-un-to-resolve-kashmir-dispute/>

Russia's Tragic Great Power Politics – **Analysis By Robert E. Hamilton**

International Relations Theories and Russia

(FPRI) — Many Western scholars studying Russia and policymakers dealing with Russia have long found it an exhausting and bewildering endeavor. Winston Churchill famously described it in 1939 as “a riddle wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma.” More recently, Bobo Lo noted that Russia’s enduring characteristics include “an abiding sense of greatness and strategic entitlement; suspicions toward outside influences; an imperial mentality; and a profound political and moral conservatism.”^[i] Olga Oliker has observed that Russia will always have a definition of its minimal security requirements that is out of the norm for a 21st-century European power. This will make it hard for the West to reassure Russia and easy to escalate tensions with it, even inadvertently. All of these observations support Stephen Kotkin’s conclusion that for the foreseeable future Russia will remain “a problem to be managed” for the West.

Other scholars, primarily those of the realist school of international relations, see Russia’s behavior as more normal and predictable. These scholars often fault the West for failing to take Russia’s legitimate security interests into account, thereby provoking Russia to lash out against perceived Western encroachment. John Mearsheimer, one of the foremost of these scholars, argues that although states “seek only to be secure” they nonetheless “act aggressively toward each other.”^[ii] Three factors combine to drive this security competition: the absence of a central authority that can protect states from each other; the fact that states always have some offensive military capability; and the fact that states can never be certain of one another’s intentions. This, for Mearsheimer, is what makes relations between great powers tragic: none desire conflict, but all are driven toward actions that make conflict more likely. Seeking to make themselves more secure by building their military capability, they make their rivals less secure, leading to arms races and sometimes to wars no one intended.

Russia seems to be a textbook example of Mearsheimer’s theory. Its fixation on territorial security, its belief that military power is the currency of international relations, and its outsized – some would say paranoid – perception of threats

posed by other states drive it to act in exactly the way Mearsheimer predicts. But as compelling as it is for its simplicity and predictive power, Mearsheimer's theory is ultimately limited in its ability to explain state behavior. And, ironically, by behaving in the way realist theories like Mearsheimer's predict, Russia brings the limitations of these theories into focus.

Scholars like Alexander Wendt have noted that although Mearsheimer is correct that the world lacks a central authority, there is nothing inherent in this condition of anarchy that requires states to compete for power and security.[iii] Wendt sees interaction among states under anarchy as a more complex phenomenon than Mearsheimer does. Instead of a single "culture of anarchy," Wendt proposes three. Under "Hobbesian anarchy," states view one another as enemies and war is a common feature of international life, with the loser sometimes ceasing to exist as a state. Under "Lockean anarchy," states view one another as rivals who compete for power and influence. Although war exists here too, it is less common and its effects are less catastrophic for the loser than under "Hobbesian anarchy." Finally, under "Kantian anarchy," states view one another as friends, and often cooperate to their mutual benefit, although healthy competition is still a fact of life.

Mearsheimer's view of the international system is attractive for its simplicity and predictive power. Wendt's is attractive because it offers a more accurate model of how the international system functions. The problem with Mearsheimer's "tragic" view of great power politics is that it deprives states of agency. The fact that some states respond to their environment in a way that drives them toward security competition with other states does not mean all states must do so. States have options, and many states cooperate with their neighbors to mutual benefit, while still others simply choose not to view the actions of other states through a lens of cynicism and suspicion. And their refusal to strive for "perfect" security – defined as having military advantage over all potential rivals – does not consign them to perpetual insecurity or guarantee their geopolitical irrelevance, as realist theories of international relations predict.

On the contrary, many of these states are both richer and more secure than states, like Russia, which insist on viewing the world through the lens of nineteenth-century great power politics. Wendt and other constructivist theorists note that identities form the basis of interests. In other words, who we are and

who we interact with determines how we define our interests in the interaction. And identities can change through interaction, so that states which had once defined one another as enemies can learn to redefine themselves as healthy rivals or even friends. And through this interaction a “Kantian anarchy” can emerge. NATO and the EU are good examples here: through bitter experience the states of Western Europe learned that great power competition, which realism sees as endemic and compulsory, is actually a choice, and one which usually leaves all parties worse off.

Russia has also had its share of bitter experience, but it has drawn very different lessons from it. Its lack of natural borders and history of invasions – by Mongol, Polish, French, and German armies to name but a few – predispose it to view itself as alone in a hostile world. Lacking allies and defensible borders, Russian statesmen from the tsars to the Soviets and Putin, share a worldview defined by fixation on external threats and an obsession with eliminating them, even when they are latent or only theoretical. While this fixation is understandable, it does not serve Russia, and, in fact, condemns it to perpetual conflict with its neighbors and the West.

How Russia’s Quest for “Perfect” Security Makes it Less Secure

In Ukraine, Georgia, and the Baltics, Russia’s quest for “perfect” security has actually made it less secure. In Ukraine, Russia’s intervention came on the heels of several months of political and social upheaval in Kyiv. Things culminated on February 22, 2014, when the parliament voted to dismiss Ukraine’s pro-Russian president Viktor Yanukovich, giving interim presidential powers to the speaker of parliament. Russia immediately denounced the removal of Yanukovich as a “coup” and added it to the list of “Color Revolutions,” which, it claimed, the U.S. intelligence services had staged across the former Soviet Union and the Middle East.

From here, Russia’s disinformation machine went into high gear. Starting the day after Yanukovich’s removal, Russia’s military intelligence service began a campaign to influence key decision-makers and the public in Ukraine. Using fake accounts on Facebook and its Russian equivalent VKontakte (VK), the GRU portrayed the opposition to Yanukovich as “Nazis” and “fascists,” and claimed that they formed armed groups, which were moving toward Crimea and southeastern Ukraine, bent on violence toward civilians there. To bolster these

claims, GRU agents, posing as Ukrainian nationalists, posted online threats against Yanukovich's allies.

Having created the specter of "Nazis" and "fascists" bent on violence, Russia's intelligence services had an easy time convincing many in Crimea and southeastern Ukraine that their best bet for salvation was an alliance with Moscow against Kyiv. Other factors certainly contributed to a pro-Russian view in these regions. Crimea has longer historical and stronger cultural ties to Russia than it does to Ukraine. Southeastern Ukraine is economically tied to Russia in a way the rest of the country is not. And successive Ukrainian elections had shown a clear split in voting, with Crimea and Ukraine's southeast reliably voting for more Russia-friendly candidates. But the fear stoked by the GRU was the spark required to cause these latent tensions, which had long existed, to burst into a separatist conflagration.

Unfortunately for Russia, its actions also influenced Ukrainians outside of Crimea and the southeast. In sowing fear, fomenting separatism, and catalyzing civil war in Ukraine, Russia created there the thing it most feared: a strongly anti-Russian and pro-Western Ukrainian national identity. The foundations of that identity had long been present, especially in Ukraine's far western regions, which had a long history as part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and a fairly short experience as part of the Soviet Union. But before 2014, the more Russia-friendly identity that predominated in Crimea and the southeast served as a counterweight to the anti-Russian view that predominated in the west.

Today, outside of Crimea and the Donbas, Ukraine bears little resemblance to the Ukraine that existed from 1991 until the seizure of Crimea. Signs and symbols of a uniquely Ukrainian national identity are everywhere. That identity is strongly pro-Western, with a distinct anti-Russian tinge. Polls bear this out: whereas in 2010 only 28% of Ukrainians supported NATO membership for their country, in 2018 67% did. In part, these numbers reflect the fact that citizens of Crimea, Donetsk, and Luhansk are no longer counted in polls of this type, but support for Western integration is stronger in the rest of Ukraine as well.

And by carving out of Ukraine the regions most skeptical of a Western trajectory for the country, Russia has eliminated a natural, internal brake on Ukraine's drive to integrate with Europe. Ukraine has turned toward the West before, most

recently with the Orange Revolution in 2005. But by 2010, Ukrainians were fed up with the infighting and lack of progress of their pro-Western government, and voted in the Russia-friendly Vladimir Yanukovich. Russia's seizure of Crimea and fomenting of separatism in the Donbas have eliminated the potential for another such voluntary turn to the East by removing the most Russia-friendly voters from the Ukrainian electorate and catalyzing the formation of a strongly anti-Russian national identity in the rest of Ukraine.

Another consequence of Russia's intervention in Ukraine is a hardening of Western and especially American will to provide military assistance to Ukraine and Georgia, another state subjected to recent Russian military intervention. The revisions in policy toward Ukraine and Georgia between 2008 and today are striking. Before the 2008 Russia-Georgia War, U.S. military assistance to these states was tightly focused on developing their capacity to send forces to Iraq and Afghanistan, and carefully avoided providing any sort of assistance that Russia might view as provocative.[iv] To avoid provoking Russia, America's NATO allies were even more reticent.

Since 2014, the U.S. has provided Javelin anti-tank missiles to both countries and is considering the provision of other high-end weaponry. France has agreed to sell anti-aircraft missiles to Georgia. And the U.S. and its NATO allies have undertaken training missions in Ukraine and Georgia designed to assist both countries in repelling invasion from Russia. None of these events was conceivable prior to 2014. All make Russia marginally less secure by increasing the military capability of states along its borders and increasing NATO interest in their security.

The Baltics is another area where Russia's insistence on "perfect" security makes it less secure. The entry of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia into NATO in 2004 did not change the military balance between Russia and the Alliance: the combined military forces of the Baltic States number just over 40,000, just 2.8% of Russia's total force of 1.45 million. And the Baltic militaries lack armor, artillery, and air power, all things Russia has in huge numbers. As long as the Baltic States did not become a base for troops from other NATO members, Russia could afford to be sanguine about their Alliance membership. Unfortunately, Russia's own actions brought about the exact outcome it sought to avoid.

Although NATO can be criticized for failing to understand the deep psychological impact its incorporation of three former Soviet republics had in Russia, the Alliance was careful to signal it had no intention of deploying forces on the territory of its newest members. Indeed, in the initial years after the accession of the Baltic States, NATO was focused on Afghanistan and other “out of area” missions; it was unconcerned about any potential threat to its members from Russia. The unofficial NATO mantra in this period was “out of area or out of business.” The idea behind this slogan was that since NATO’s own backyard was an area of stability devoid of any serious military threats, NATO needed to learn to operate in places like Afghanistan to remain relevant as a military alliance and contribute to global security.

This all changed in 2014. Russia’s intervention in Ukraine awakened NATO to a critical deficiency in the security of its Baltic members. Alliance planners who had not seriously considered the idea of a Russian military intervention there now began to do so. NATO’s answer to this problem was the adoption at its 2016 summit of what the Alliance calls its “enhanced forward presence” (EFP) policy. This entailed the deployment of four multi-national battlegroups to Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. The battle groups are led by Canada, Germany, the UK, and the U.S., and are composed of forces from these countries and 14 other NATO member states.

Before 2014, Russia confronted only the comparatively meager forces of the three Baltic States across its western border; now it confronts the forces of the majority of NATO member states. While the 4000 NATO troops deployed to Poland and the Baltic States under EFP are not enough to pose a direct military threat to Russia, Moscow now has to contend with the fact that any war in the Baltics could draw in the rest of NATO. While NATO’s Article 5 always made it possible that a war in the Baltics would draw in other NATO members, this was not assured. Article 5 only stipulates that each member will consider an attack on one Ally an attack on all – it does not dictate how each Ally will respond to that attack. Instead, it says that each will take “such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force.” NATO’s EPF deployment, taken in response to Russian intervention in Ukraine and saber-rattling against NATO Allies, make it far more likely that at least 22 NATO members would now deem it necessary to go to war with Russia in the event of a war in the Baltics.

Conclusion: Why Perfect is the Enemy of Good Enough

Russia's fixation on military capability as the currency of international relations, its reflexive mistrust of the intentions of other states, and its insistence that it be afforded the privileges of a nineteenth-century great power comport well with the predictions of John Mearsheimer's realist worldview. Mearsheimer would also be unsurprised that Russia's pursuit of "perfect" security has made it less secure – this is exactly the type of tragedy implicit in the title of his book. In this sense, turning to Mearsheimer as a guide for Russian behavior is useful.

But this view misses the fact that states have choices, and states that make different choices than Russia often end up wealthier and more secure. Yes, there is risk in this path. A neighbor trusted as a friend or ally today can turn into an enemy and a threat. But these transformations are rare and do not happen overnight. Through interaction, states are able to gain information on the intentions and capabilities of other states, so any transformation from friend to adversary is likely to come with some warning. Next, the consequences of such a transformation are not as catastrophic as realism claims. The "Hobbesian anarchy" that provides the theoretical foundation for much realist thinking is a relic of the past. While war is still far too common in the international system, states that lose wars no longer face a threat of extermination.

Given these facts, states can, and routinely do, choose security that is good enough over security that is perfect. This allows them to focus more resources on social and economic development of the type that Russia sorely needs. Instead, Russia's quest for perfect security has left it relatively less secure in 2019 than it was even in the 1990s, when – according to Putin's rhetoric – it was "on its knees" and at the mercy of the West. But in the 1990s the West had no interest in confronting Russia. Instead, Western states alternated between ignoring and assisting it. Europe was struggling to deal with the Balkan Wars and attempting to engage Russia as a partner in the effort. The U.S. was demobilizing from the Cold War and focused on spending the "peace dividend" it expected to reap – the U.S. Army reduced its presence in Europe from 300,000 to some 30,000 and the U.S. defense budget declined from \$426 billion in 1988 to \$296 billion in 1998.

In large part due to Russia's insistence on being treated as a great power and its hyper-suspicious view of the intentions of other states, all these trends have been reversed. Moscow's intervention in Ukraine, its saber-rattling against NATO

members, and its continued attempts to destabilize perceived adversaries throughout Europe and North America have had an effect opposite from the one it presumably hoped. Russia now faces a revitalized and more cohesive NATO, which has deployed forces to within 100 miles of St. Petersburg, and has taken a much greater interest in the security of Russia's neighbors, Georgia and Ukraine. An American President who came into office hoping to "get along" with Russia has now withdrawn the U.S. from the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty and pledged to "outspend an out-innovate" Russia if it comes to a nuclear arms race. Russia's attempts to destabilize the Balkans drove Montenegro and North Macedonia toward NATO – the latter suddenly proving amenable to a compromise on its name, the issue that had kept it out of NATO for over a decade. Montenegro is now a NATO member and North Macedonia is in the final stage of its accession talks.

All of these events have degraded Russia's security and all of them were avoidable. Each was the result of Russia reacting to potential or theoretical threats as if they were actual threats, and in the process causing actual threats to materialize. The true tragedy of Russia's great power politics is that this outcome was not determined by the structure of the international system but by the choices Russia itself has made. These choices turned theoretical threats into actual threats, making Russia less secure in the process.

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Source: This article was published by FPRI

[i] Bobo Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder*, (London, Chatham House, 2015), 203.

[ii] John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001), 3.

[iii] Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 247.

[iv] For example, when I was the Chief of the U.S. Office of Defense Cooperation in Georgia from 2006-2008, we were specifically prohibited from providing any assistance to the Georgian armor, artillery or attack helicopter forces. The reason for this prohibition was that those forces were not needed in the Georgian contingent in Iraq, and assisting those forces was seen as too provocative to Russia. This prohibition was so comprehensive that we were even prohibited from assisting the Georgian Army in developing training course syllabi for these forces.

Source: <http://www.eurasiareview.com/09032019-russias-tragic-great-power-politics-analysis/>

The US, China and the return of a Two-bloc World By Gideon Rachman

During the cold war, there was an “east” bloc and a “west” bloc and nations were defined by whether they were closer to Washington or Moscow.

Now, nearly 30 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, rising tensions between the US and China are re-creating a geopolitical dividing line. And countries are increasingly expected to make clear whether they stand with Washington or Beijing.

The latest example of this came last week, with the news that Italy is close to becoming the first G7 country to sign a memorandum of understanding endorsing China’s giant infrastructure project, known as the Belt and Road Initiative. Within hours, a White House spokesman had criticised the BRI as “made by China, for China”, and suggested that it would bring no benefits to Italy. The Chinese foreign minister fired back, reminding the Americans that Italy is an independent nation. President Xi Jinping is planning to visit Italy later this month to seal the deal.

The tug of war over Italy underlines that the US-Chinese rivalry is now global. China’s economic and political pull reaches well beyond its Asian hinterland and stretches deep into Latin America and western Europe, areas that were once seen as naturally part of the American sphere of influence.

This Sino-American struggle is also increasingly overt. The Trump administration’s decision to launch a trade war on China ended the era when both sides could insist that trade and investment were neutral territory that could be kept separate from strategic rivalry. At the same time, the sheer ambition of the BRI has stoked fears in Washington that China is entering a new phase in its rise to great power status. If the BRI succeeds it will link the whole of the Eurasian landmass much more closely to China, potentially undermining the importance of transatlantic links.

In Washington, big Chinese investment projects are now routinely scanned for their strategic implications. The fact that Chinese firms are investing heavily in

ports around the world is seen through the prism of an emerging naval rivalry with the US. And the international expansion of Huawei, the Chinese telecoms company, has become part of a broader struggle over technological supremacy and espionage. American officials have spent recent months imploring their allies not to allow Huawei to run 5G networks, arguing that this would be an intolerable security risk.

Several key US allies, including Japan and Australia, have already taken the American line on Huawei. But others, such as Britain, are still thinking about it. If the British allow Huawei in, they will be taking a security risk that could damage their precious intelligence-sharing arrangements with the US. But if they block Huawei, British hopes for a post-Brexit trade surge in trade and investment from China will be at risk.

Getting squeezed between Washington and Beijing can be very uncomfortable. After Canada obeyed an American extradition request and arrested Meng Wanzhou, the chief financial officer of Huawei, the Chinese response was fierce. Within days, Canadian citizens were arrested in China, and Canadian executives are now wary of travelling there. Similarly, when South Korea agreed to a US request to deploy an American anti-missile system called Thaad, Chinese tourists were directed away from South Korea and stores owned by Lotte, a South Korean retailer, were shut in mainland China after failing “safety inspections”.

The fact that China is increasingly willing to put direct pressure on US treaty allies is testament to the growing confidence of Beijing. That, in turn, reflects a shift in economic prowess. When countries along China’s Belt and Road consider whether to accept Beijing’s infrastructure packages, there is almost never a counter-offer from the US to consider. Nor is there yet an American firm that can offer an alternative to Huawei’s 5G technology.

In the battle for influence with China, the US’s trump card is often security rather than trade. Countries including Japan, South Korea, Germany and Australia now all do more trade with China than the US. But they all still look to America for military protection.

The US could undermine this security advantage if President Donald Trump goes through with his reported desire to charge allies for American protection. But China is not currently in the business of offering security guarantees. As a result, an emerging two-bloc world is unlikely to be based around rival military alliances as it was in the cold war, when the Warsaw Pact faced off against Nato.

Instead, it is technology that could become the basis of the new global split. China long ago banned Google and Facebook. Now the US is struggling to thwart Huawei. With concern mounting over the control and transfer of data across borders, countries may increasingly come under pressure to choose either the US tech-universe or the Chinese version — and they may find that the two are increasingly walled-off from each other. But a division that started with technology would not stay there. Data and communications are now fundamental to almost all forms of business and military activity.

The two-bloc world of the cold war was replaced by an era of globalisation. Now globalisation itself may be threatened by the re-emergence of a two-bloc world.

Source: <https://www.ft.com/content/35accdc0-43de-11e9-a965-23d669740bfb>

The Failure of Hanoi Talks By Dr Ahmad Rashid Malik

US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un's much anticipated negotiations fell apart in Hanoi without yielding any substantial outcome on its nuclear program.

The previous summit in Singapore had produced encouraging prospects and it was expected that both countries would head towards a tangible solution in the second one. However, expectations were too high.

As the Hanoi summit ended without giving clue to a third one, there remains a deep anxiety and frustration amongst those residing in the Korean peninsula. The future doesn't look bright and political tensions could further exacerbate the situation.

The US and North Korea have certainly missed an ample opportunity to rectify past mistakes and everything seems to be back to square one.

If the North Koreans don't shun their aggressive posturing, the situation could potentially spiral out of control. The US may have made a grave mistake by hesitating to agree with North Korean demands for lifting all sanctions. Perhaps, a better strategy could've been sought with a room for some compromise, especially on the nuclear program that has remained a thorny issue for most US administrations that dealt with Pyongyang.

If considering history, North Korea might avoid further talks with the US, which could be detrimental to the cause of regional peace and security. Nevertheless, it looks pertinent to keep the negotiations option on the table as a goodwill gesture. Perhaps, patience is the key to formulate a mutually beneficial peace plan.

A mediator, in the form of China or other regional powers, is essential to bring Washington and Pyongyang closer to sorting out their issues

The US must acknowledge that the Hanoi summit was a great failure and efforts should be made to resume diplomatic contact. Maybe a joint declaration in the

foreseeable future could pave way for the much-sought stability in the Korean peninsula.

Beijing's role is significant in this regard since it has deeper ties with the Kim regime. It could play the role of a mediator and facilitate resumption of the much-needed talks with Washington.

Beijing-based Global Times said that from North Korea's perspective, Kim's mere participation in the second summit demonstrated the country's determination to denuclearise, and his willingness to shut down nuclear facilities in Pyongyang constituted a substantive step toward denuclearisation. North Korea conditioned to shun its program and allow international inspections if the US agreed to end economic sanctions.

The North Koreans will likely devise their own strategies to prevent further expansion or reconstitution of the much-dreaded nuclear program. In lieu of that, their demand for economic revival and opening their state for trade with the outside world won't be unreasonable.

There are severe differences between North Korea and the US and without any third-party mediation, the situation would remain futile to resolve any further.

Hence, a mediator, in the form of China or other regional powers, is essential to bring Washington and Pyongyang closer to sorting out their issues.

The world has seen the horrors of past wars and conflicts and it has become imperative to contain such kind of political fallouts.

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Terror in New Zealand | Editorial

Another day, another white far-right terrorist attack. This time the target was two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand. For those who know little about the growing white fascism in places like Australia, this would be a shock. For those who have reported on growing neo-Nazi rallies in the region, the loss of 49 lives can be blamed squarely on the failure of governments to take far-right terrorism as a serious threat. Lest one forget that for almost two centuries the Australian peninsula has retained some of the most racist migration policies in the so-called developed world. There is little doubt that this is 'one of New Zealand's darkest days' as its Prime Minister Jacinda Arden said. But who could truly say that this was not coming? While Arden herself comes from a more progressive political vantage point, having criticised Australia's deportation policies, warnings that the far-right in the country was getting stronger were offered by many observers. Christchurch itself has a history of far-right violence, with several violent attacks in the city since the late 1980s. So the shock is more that the Christchurch mayor called it a 'bolt from the blue in a place like New Zealand.'

While four people have been arrested and explosive devices found, surely this is not enough to erase the horror of what happened in Christchurch. The fact is that none of the suspects was on the terrorist watch list. This is because we live in a world where white extremists apparently cannot be terrorists, where white settler governments continue the legacies of the original displacement and murder of the original inhabitants of the land. While there is little surprise in the failure of the Australian prime minister to call it a 'terrorist attack', the main attacker was an Australian citizen and Australia will need to do more to recognise its own legacy of racist violence against non-white populations.

The Christchurch attack has left little doubt that the white far-right presents a very serious terrorist threat in the West. The main attacker, who live-streamed the attack like it was a video game, claimed to be inspired by Norwegian far-right terrorist Anders Breivik. He also claimed that the attack was being planned for two years. The fact is that there are continuities between settler violence and far-right terrorism in Australia, the US and New Zealand. While a crackdown on far-right groups is in order, it is those longer legacies that also need to be rethought and questioned.

Source: <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/444474-terror-in-new-zealand>

Crown Prince MBS A Great Reformer By **Naveed Aman Khan**

IN October 2011, Crown Prince Sultan bin Abdul Aziz died, and the current King Salman began his ascent to power by becoming second Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister in November 2011. He made Mohammed bin Salman his Private Advisor. In June 2012, Crown Prince Nayef bin Abdul Aziz al-Saud died and Prince Muhammad bin Salman moved up into the number two position in the hierarchy, as his father became the new Crown Prince and first Deputy Prime Minister. He soon began remaking the court in his own image. On 02 March 2013, the Chief of the Crown Prince court Prince Saud bin Nayef was appointed Governor of the Eastern province and Prince Mohammad bin Salman succeeded him in the post. He was also given the rank of minister on 25 April 2014. Prince Mohammed was appointed State Minister. On 23 January 2015, King Abdullah died, Salman took the throne and Prince Mohammad bin Salman was appointed Minister for Defence. He was also named as the Secretary General of the Royal Court on the same date. In addition he retained his post as the Minister of the State. The most dynamic and charismatic Mohammad bin Salman 33 colloquially known as MBS, is the Crown Prince of KSA. He is currently serving as the country's Deputy Premier whereas the title of Premier being held by the King. He is also Chairman of the Council for Economic and Development Affairs, Chairman of the Council of Political and Security Affairs and Minister for Defence, presently the world's youngest at the time of his appointment. He has been described as the power behind the throne of his father. He was appointed Crown Prince in June 2017 following King Salman's decision to depose Muhammad bin Nayef from all positions, making MBS heir presumptive to the throne.

Before the appointment of MBS as Deputy Premier and Crown Prince KSA has long been an orthodox and conservative society. But MBS came to power and has led several successful reforms, which include regulations restricting the powers of the religious police and the removal of the ban on female drivers. Other cultural developments under his reign include the first Saudi public concerts by a female singer, the first Saudi sports stadium to admit women, an increased presence of women in the workforce and opening the country to international tourists by introducing e-visa system which can now easily be issued for foreigners through the Internet to attend events and festivals in KSA.

Opening of over two thousand cinemas by 2030 is another big social move. Appointments of Princess Reema bint Bandar in United States as Ambassador and lady Sarah Al-Suhaimi as Chairperson of Saudi Stock Exchange clearly reflect MBS's broad vision and approach. His Vision 2030 program aims to diversify the Saudi economy through investment in non-oil sectors including technology and tourism. In 2016 he announced plans to list the shares of the State Oil Company Saudi Aramco. On 15 December 2009, at the age of 24, MBS entered politics as a Special Advisor to his father when the latter was the Governor of Riyadh. At this time MBS began to rise from one position to another such as Secretary General of the Riyadh Competitive Council, Special Advisor to the Chairman of the Board for the King Abdul Aziz Foundation for Research and Archives, and Member of the Board of Trustees for Albir Society in the Riyadh region. In late 2015, MBS attended a meeting between King Salman and Obama, where the Prince broke protocol to deliver a monologue criticizing US Foreign Policy. When MBS announced an anti-terrorist military alliance of Islamic countries in December 2015, some of the countries involved said they had not been consulted. In December 2015 MBS established the Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition (IMCTC), a Saudi-led Islamic alliance against terrorism. The IMCTC's first meeting took place in Riyadh in November 2017 and involved defence ministers and officials from 41 countries.

On the day he became Crown Prince, Donald Trump called MBS to congratulate him on his recent elevation. Trump and the MBS pledged close cooperation on security and economic issues, and the two leaders also discussed the need to cut off support for terrorism, the recent diplomatic dispute with Qatar, and the push to secure peace between Israel and the Palestinians. MBS told the Washington Post in April 2017 that without America's cultural influence on Saudia , KSA would have ended up like North Korea. In May 2017, MBS publicly warned, "I confirm to you, no one will survive in a corruption case whoever he is, even if he's a prince or a minister". In November 2017, he ordered some 200 wealthy businessmen and princes to be placed under house arrest in Riyadh's Ritz Carlton hotel. On 4 November 2017, Saudi Prince and billionaire Al-Waleed bin Talal was arrested. Others arrested or fired in the purge included Mutaib bin Abdullah, Head of the Saudi Arabian National Guard, Adel Fakeih, the Minister of Economy and Planning, and the Commander of the Saudi Naval Forces, Admiral Abdullah bin Sultan bin Mohammad Al-Sultan. The sweeping campaign of arrests appeared to be the latest move to consolidate the power of MBS , the favorite

son and top Adviser of King Salman. The King had decreed the creation of a powerful new Anti-Corruption Committee, headed by MBS, only hours before the committee ordered the arrests.

The purge was part of a move towards reforms. MBS knows that only if he can place the Royal Family under the law, and not above as it has been in the past, can he ask the whole country to change attitudes relative to taxes and subsidies? The clampdown against corruption resonates with ordinary Saudis who feel that the State has been asking them to accept belt tightening while, at the same time, they see corruption and the power elite accumulating more wealth. Bin Salman's ambitious reform agenda is widely popular with Saudi Arabia's burgeoning youth but faces resistance from some of the old guard more comfortable with the kingdom's traditions of incremental change and rule by consensus. MBS is the first prince in modern Saudi history whose constituency has not been within the Royal Family, it's outside it. It's been young Saudis. The 2018 Arab Youth Survey found that nine out of ten 18–24 years old in the MENA region support MBS's campaign against corruption. MBS is making Saudis compatible to the modern nations. Under his leadership revolutionary diverse expansion of economy in different dimensions will make KSA one of the leading powers of the 21st century.

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Source: <https://pakobserver.net/2019/03/17/crown-prince-mbs-a-great-reformer/>

How Will the Growing U.S.-European Split Affect NATO? By Ted Galen Carpenter

An array of news stories over the past two weeks confirms that Washington's NATO allies are increasingly defiant toward U.S. policy objectives that they consider misguided or merely inconvenient. One prominent blow came when Turkey finalized its purchase of S-400 air defense missiles. Trump administration officials had told President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's government for months that executing that deal was unacceptable. Not only would the S-400s be incompatible with systems that other NATO members were deploying, thus undermining a coordinated NATO air defense, but the purchase symbolized a disturbingly cozy relationship that was developing between Turkey and Russia. The administration warned its Turkish ally that "grave consequences" would occur unless Ankara backed away from the sale. Yet Erdogan seems intent on ignoring Washington's thinly veiled threat.

Other NATO allies appear rather uncooperative as well—especially on U.S. efforts to confront and isolate Moscow. Speaking at a conference on March 10, Italian prime minister Giuseppe Conte stated that he was working to end international economic sanctions against Russia. Those measures, which the Western powers imposed on Moscow following Vladimir Putin's decision to annex Crimea in 2014, remain a high priority for Washington. Conte's coalition government, though, argues that the measures are ineffective in getting Putin to capitulate and have become an end in themselves. Meanwhile, Italian officials complain that the restrictions needlessly hurt Italy's economy. Conte is hardly alone in his negative view of the sanctions. Hungary's prime minister, Viktor Orbán, has made similar arguments for months, and other countries, including Belgium, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, and Greece, show signs of restlessness, with officials expressing increasingly critical sentiments about the sanctions strategy.

The NATO allies are even less enthusiastic about confrontational military measures toward Moscow. Vice President Mike Pence discovered that reality in February when he tried to enlist German Chancellor Angela Merkel to send warships to test the Kremlin's assertion that the Kerch Strait is now Russian territorial waters. The strait, which connects the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov,

separates Russia's Taman Peninsula from the Crimea Peninsula. Despite Moscow's annexation of the latter in 2014, Kiev still considers Crimea to be Ukrainian territory and the Kerch Strait to be an international waterway, a position that the United States and its allies back. In November 2018, three Ukrainian ships tried to force a transit of the strait without giving forty-eight hours-notice and receiving the explicit permission that Moscow requires. Russian security personnel fired on two of the ships, rammed the third one, and took the vessels and crews into custody, triggering a nasty international incident.

Pence appeared to want a "freedom of navigation" patrol to vindicate the position that the strait is still international waters. The U.S. Navy routinely takes similar actions in such places as the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait to rebut China's expansive claims. In this instance, though, he wanted Germany to serve as Washington's freedom of navigation pawn. Merkel was wary of such a provocative, dangerous maneuver, and she turned the vice president down.

Such policy recalcitrance on the part of the European allies has been growing for years. When President George W. Bush pushed hard to bring Georgia and Ukraine into NATO in 2008, both Germany and France strongly resisted that goal. Not only did they consider both countries to be governed by unstable, corrupt administrations, they feared yet another round of NATO expansion would unduly provoke Russia and worsen already tense relations with Moscow. Paris and Berlin have grown no more receptive to NATO membership for Georgia or Ukraine since then.

European rejection of U.S. policy goals is not confined to the issue of relations toward Russia. When President Trump announced in December that he intended to withdraw all U.S. troops from Syria, the allies promptly sought to torpedo that initiative. Trump's goal was to have an international peacekeeping force that included troops from both European and Middle Eastern nations replace the U.S. presence. The allies stated bluntly that they would not stay if the United States withdrew. Trump sought to soften his approach, announcing that Washington would keep 200 troops in Syria and contribute another two hundred to an international peacekeeping force. Most European allies, though, still seem unreceptive to a call to contribute their own forces .

It is true that Washington sometimes has faced resistance from its NATO allies during earlier eras. French president Charles de Gaulle was a notorious thorn in the side of U.S. officials during the 1960s. Germany and other European nations angered Ronald Reagan's administration in the 1980s when they agreed to buy natural gas supplies through a pipeline that Moscow controlled. But both the breadth and intensity of the opposition is greater this time. That development suggests that European officials and their publics are finally realizing that while American and European interests overlap, they are not congruent. Indeed, on issues ranging from policy toward Russia to how to deal with the Iran nuclear question, there are indications that American and European interests are sometimes incompatible. That reality raises profound questions regarding NATO's viability and the future of the transatlantic relationship—questions that cannot be resolved by stale invocations of Alliance solidarity.

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Source: <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/how-will-growing-us-european-split-affect-nato-47667>

North Korea Threatens to End US Talks and Restart Nuclear Tests By Song Jung and Aime Williams

North Korea is considering dropping nuclear talks with the US and restarting missile launches and nuclear tests just weeks after Donald Trump walked out of denuclearisation talks with Kim Jong Un.

North Korea's vice foreign minister Choe Son Hui told a news conference in Pyongyang that the US lost a golden opportunity to resolve the nuclear issue at the Hanoi summit between the two leaders, according to reports by the Associated Press and Russia's Tass news agency. She added that North Korea would soon decide whether to continue talks with the US and maintain a 15-month moratorium on weapons tests.

Ms Choe said Pyongyang had no intention of compromising or continuing talks with Washington unless the US changed its "political calculation" and took measures to match the steps North Korea had taken toward denuclearisation.

"We have no intention to yield to the US demands [at the Hanoi summit] in any form, nor are we willing to engage in negotiations of this kind," she was quoted by the Tass agency as saying.

Her comments came in contrast to the optimism expressed by Stephen Biegun, the chief US envoy for North Korea, about the outlook of the nuclear talks. Mr Biegun told a conference in Washington this week that "diplomacy is still very much alive" despite last month's failed summit.

In Washington on Friday, Mike Pompeo, secretary of state, said the US continued to expect North Korea to abide by the promised moratorium.

"In Hanoi, on multiple occasions, [Mr Kim] spoke directly to the president and made a commitment that he would not resume nuclear testing, nor would he resume missile testing," Mr Pompeo said. "So that's Chairman Kim's word. We have every expectation that he will live up to that commitment."

The high-stakes meeting was cut short without a deal after Mr Trump rejected a North Korean offer to destroy Yongbyon — a sprawling site of nuclear facilities — in exchange for lifting all sanctions. Mr Trump said he had insisted that North Korea destroy all its nuclear facilities and revealed the US had discovered a clandestine uranium-enrichment facility.

Mr Biegun said Washington was closely watching the latest activity at a North Korean rocket site but he did not know if Pyongyang might be planning a new rocket launch. He admitted that the two sides remained far apart over denuclearisation and stressed that North Korea should show full commitment.

Although the state department has said talks with North Korea have continued, Mr Pompeo declined to discuss the negotiations.

Mr Pompeo did, however, deny accusations that he had lost the trust of North Korea. “My relationship with Kim Yong Chol is professional,” said Mr Pompeo. “We have detailed conversations. I expect that we will continue to do that.”

North Korea suspended its programme of missile launches and nuclear tests in 2017. But recent satellite images showed that North Korea may be rebuilding a rocket launch facility at a site that was partly destroyed last year.

Seoul’s presidential office said it was looking into Ms Choe’s comments and using all available channels to find out what she meant.

Analysts were divided about North Korea’s intentions. Kim Yong-hyun, a professor at Dongguk University, said the country was just trying to gain leverage in future talks but was not likely to break its moratorium on weapons tests.

“I think her comments are in line with North Korea’s typical tactics to have advantages in talks. It is a reaction to hawkish comments from Washington about denuclearisation,” said Prof Kim. “I don’t think North Korea wants to drop nuclear talks. Mr Kim has come too far to go back to the years of missile launches and nuclear tests.”

But Lee Seong-hyon, an analyst at the Sejong Institute, cautioned that Pyongyang could actually follow through with its warning. “I don’t think it is a complete bluff. Mr Trump walking out of the Hanoi summit must have been very humiliating to Mr Kim, considering the Asian culture,” he said. “He is likely to take some steps to add pressure on Washington as the US is turning more hawkish, demanding a comprehensive denuclearisation deal.”

Source: <https://www.ft.com/content/8a055268-46e8-11e9-b168-96a37d002cd3>

Arms Trade And Strategic Stability By Iqbal Khan

STOCKHOLM International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) has released the data in its annual report, on March 11, captioned 'Trends in International Arms Transfers-2018'; for a five-year period (2014-2018). According to the report, India has been among the top five arms importers in the world for decades. India was the world's second-largest arms importer from 2014-18; it accounted for 9.5 per cent of the global total. While for the period 2013-2017, India accounted for 13 per cent of global arms imports and was the world's largest importer. Regarding tension between Pakistan and India, a senior researcher with SIPRI has maintained that India's growing demands for weapons is driven by its fear of Pakistan and China, but India "remains unable to produce weapons itself". However, "China, by contrast, is becoming increasingly capable of producing its own weapons".

India only notionally ceded top spot to Saudi Arabia owing to decrease between 2009-13 and 2014-18, partly due to delays in deliveries of arms produced under licence from foreign suppliers, such as combat aircraft ordered from Russia in 2001 and submarines ordered from France in 2008, the report stated. These include S-400 air defence systems, four stealth frigates, AK-203 assault rifles, a second nuclear attack submarine on lease, and deals for Kamov-226T utility helicopters, Mi-17 helicopters and short-range air defence systems. India is seeking to diversify the sources of its arms imports, and in an effort in this regard, has inched closer to the US and its allies. The relationship between US and India has grown into a strategic partnership against rising superpower China, evidenced by a sky-rocketing 557 per cent increase in arms sales between India and US over the last five years. Apart, India has bought air-launched cruise missiles from France, surface and submarine-launched cruise missiles from Russia, and loitering munitions, commonly known as suicide drones, from Israel.

Israel is identified as the third major defence partner for the Indians, and the movement of arms from Tel Aviv to New Delhi has increased by 285 per cent between 2008–2012 and 2013–2017. Conflict analysts have noted that despite heightened tension along the border with arch-rival India, as well as internal conflicts, Pakistan has decreased its arms imports substantially over the past five

years. Pakistan pledged \$7 billion for its defence forces this fiscal year, and purchased 2.8 per cent of all weapons sold in the world between 2013-2017. During 2008-2012, Pakistan had imported 4.9 per cent of the total global arms imports. The report noted that despite the long-standing conflict between India and Pakistan, arms imports decreased for both countries in 2014-18 compared with 2009-13. Pakistan's biggest source was China, from which 70 per cent of arms were sourced, followed by the US at 8.9 percent and Russia at 6 percent.

China is the fifth biggest arms exporter in the world. Its weapons sales have increased by 38 per cent in the last five years. Large increases in arms supplies to Bangladesh and Algeria accounted for much of the growth in total Chinese arms exports in this period. Interestingly, China is also the fifth largest arms importer in the world. However, it has made a 19 per cent decrease in import of weapons since the 2008-2012 period. The bulk of Chinese purchases was from Russia, France and Ukraine. The US was the top arms exporter in the world during 2013–2017. Its share of total arms exports globally rose from 30 to 34 per cent over the past five years, as it delivered major weapons to at least 98 states in the last five years. SIPRI has also ranked the American nation as the 14th largest importer of weaponry as well. The US imports most of its arms from its NATO allies Germany, France and Netherlands. States in the Middle East accounted for 49 per cent of US arms exports during this period, Saudi Arabia being the largest beneficiary with 18 per cent of total US arms exports.

The report has termed Russia as the second largest arms exporter in the world, despite the fact that export of major weapons by the country has decreased by 7.1 per cent over the past five years. In 2013–2017, Russia delivered major weapons to 47 states. A total of 58 per cent of Russia's arms exports went to its top three recipients: India, China and Vietnam, which accounted for 35, 12 and 10 per cent, of the total exports respectively. Surprisingly, Russia is not on the list of the top forty global arms importers identified in the report. Trends indicate that the flow of arms increased to Asia and the Middle East in the past five years, perhaps as a result of heightened tension around new conflict zones, while there was a decrease in the flow to Africa, the Americas and Europe.

Jan Eliasson, Chair of the SIPRI Governing Board stated, "The increased flow of arms raises concerns over their impact on international peace and security...It stresses the need to improve and implement international mechanisms such as

the Arms Trade Treaty.” Active conflict zone are sucking-in higher quantities of arms, while economically declining and relatively calmer countries and zones are cutting down its arms imports. A typically out of sync case is that of India, besides huge domestic defence production complex, it is amassing all sorts of weapons from all over the World. It is essentially a case of over reach at the cost of well-being of a common Indian. Pakistan has taken a wise course, it is not competing with India, weapon by weapon, but is maintaining strategic equivalence due to its superior thought process and weapon employment strategies.

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Source: <https://pakobserver.net/2019/03/19/arms-trade-and-strategic-stability/>

How Theresa May's Brexit Deal Collapsed

By Brendan O'Leary

British Prime Minister Theresa May had hoped that the third time would do the trick. After failing twice to get her withdrawal agreement with the EU through Parliament, she was gearing up for a fresh attempt last week, until she was blocked by the Speaker of the House of Commons and by the European Council. The Speaker declared that the British government could not put substantively the same motion before Parliament twice in the same legislative session. The Council had refused to modify the withdrawal agreement, which made the Speaker's decision unavoidable, and it later imposed unexpectedly firm terms on May's request for an extension of the negotiating period, which had been set to end on March 29.

May's premiership is now hanging by a thread. Her three-pronged strategy of blackmail, bribery, and betrayal has collapsed. The blackmail involved running down the clock to force MPs to choose between her deal and no deal (for which the United Kingdom is not prepared). The European Council, however, has changed that game. Under the extension agreed by the Council, the Commons must ratify the existing withdrawal agreement (provided the Speaker allows the government to put it to the House again) no later than April 12. If it does not, then the United Kingdom must choose between leaving without a deal, revoking the request to withdraw from the EU, and accepting a much longer extension of the negotiations. The latter possibility comes with a sting: the United Kingdom would have to participate in the elections to the European Parliament scheduled for May. Those elections would inevitably approximate a fresh referendum on remaining or leaving the EU.

On top of blackmail, May has tried bribery. To win support for the withdrawal agreement from the small Northern Irish Democratic Unionist Party, upon which her government's parliamentary majority depends, she began discussions that implied future spending increases for Northern Ireland. Conservative ministers had earlier announced plans for infrastructure spending that would particularly benefit English districts that voted to leave but that are represented mainly by opposition Labour MPs. But the DUP has said it will not be bought, at least not

on this occasion, and there do not seem to be enough pro-Leave Labour MPs to get May's deal through.

The Prime Minister's politicking since losing the first vote on her deal in January has also included openly advertised betrayal. She has sought to rescind, reverse, or ambiguously gloss the solemn promises the United Kingdom made to the EU-27, and especially to Ireland, in the draft withdrawal agreement. The protocol in the text that drove May to this expedient is widely known as "the Irish backstop" and has become anathema to the DUP and the hardline "Brexiters."

In baseball, the backstop prevents balls from hitting spectators seated behind the catcher and keeps most balls inside the field of play. The metaphor is not quite right for the case at hand. The backstop in the protocol better resembles an all-hazards insurance policy. It minimizes collateral damage to the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, entrenched in a 1999 treaty between the Dublin and London governments. It pledges that citizens in Northern Ireland will continue to have the same rights as citizens of the Republic of Ireland, and vice versa—including those that derive from the Good Friday Agreement, EU law, and the European Convention on Human Rights. The Good Friday Agreement mandated cooperation between Northern Ireland and the Republic—and attached EU regional and peace programs. The backstop protects this goal and these projects, including 12 governmental functions overseen by the North-South Ministerial Council, and, according to civil servants, over 140 related distinct economic activities. These notably encompass the agricultural and food business that has developed complex supply chains across the current border and the island's single electricity market.

Most famously, the backstop promises that no fresh physical border infrastructure will be erected on the island, between Northern Ireland and the Republic—either to collect customs or as a regulatory barrier checking goods and people moving back and forth over what will become the British-EU border. This border was unilaterally imposed by the British parliament in 1920 and was the site of political contestation and armed confrontation during much of the last century. This "no hard border" pledge applies unless and until the United Kingdom and the EU strike a new trade agreement that would render it unnecessary, or agree on technological innovations that would allow trade and traffic to continue without border infrastructure.

Here's the rub for the Brexiteers. The backstop comes into effect after a short transition if the United Kingdom and EU have not made a new trade agreement (or if technological miracles have not occurred). Such an outcome seems highly likely, given how long most trade agreements take to negotiate, and how difficult it has been to reach a draft withdrawal settlement. Making things even harder, any future trade deal will likely be a "mixed agreement," meaning that it will contain non-trade components, which means each EU member state will have a veto on its ratification. When the backstop comes into effect, the entire United Kingdom will be forced to remain within the European customs union and would be unable to strike significant new trade agreements with third countries until it concluded its new treaty with the EU. The Brexiteers fear is that the United Kingdom will get trapped in the backstop.

The trap, however, is of May's own making. Back in 2017, the EU and May's negotiators drafted a protocol to allow Northern Ireland to remain within the EU's customs and single market regulatory provisions after the transition, while Great Britain would be free to leave the customs union and to deviate from the single market. In other words, an economic border would run not across the island of Ireland but down the Irish Sea, administered at ports in Northern Ireland and Great Britain.

It was a decent compromise. It recognized that Northern Ireland was different: the sole significant territory (aside from Gibraltar) in which there would be a land border between the United Kingdom and the EU. It protected the Good Friday Agreement, and respected the fact that Northern Ireland had voted to remain in the EU in 2016 (by a margin of 56 to 44 percent). And it avoided disrupting the remarkably stable Irish peace process.

Within hours of the protocol being released, however, the DUP, which has propped up May's minority government since a snap election in June 2017 left the Conservatives without a majority, signaled that it was unacceptable. These uber-British Unionists, whom May had failed to consult, feared that a border in the Irish Sea would weaken the United Kingdom's integrity. The DUP insisted that Northern Ireland should be treated exactly the same as Great Britain.

May caved. And her solution—essentially putting the entire United Kingdom into the backstop—created her current predicament. That’s when and why Conservative MPs, afraid of the United Kingdom being trapped in the backstop as a rule-taker rather than as a joint-rule maker, became obsessed with how to eliminate or breach the backstop. One way to avoid the backstop would be to leave the EU without a deal, but that would be highly costly, and a majority of Conservatives oppose this outcome. Another would be to persuade the hardline Brexiteers and the DUP that the United Kingdom can unilaterally leave the backstop, despite its solemn pledges to the EU. Reasonable people might call this latter option a betrayal of the United Kingdom’s partners—or, to invoke an old expression, an example of perfidious Albion.

In pursuit of just such a mission, May dispatched her Attorney General, Geoffrey Cox, to Brussels two weeks ago to negotiate a codicil with the EU that would give London the freedom to renege on its commitments. Cox failed. He conceded that the text with which he returned did not preclude the possibility that the United Kingdom would get trapped in the backstop. His honesty helped lead to May’s second crushing defeat.

Since then the air has been thick with suggestions seeking to help May and Cox, jointly suggesting that the United Kingdom might be able to use the Vienna Convention of 1970 to break the treaty it is proposing to sign with the EU. But as their critics—and professional international lawyers—unanimously observe, the Vienna Convention allows a treaty to be unilaterally terminated only if there is an unforeseen change in circumstances. But so far, all the discussion of the backstop has focused on entirely foreseeable circumstances, which could not justify breaking the new treaty.

Whether or not May, or her successor, gets her deal over the line, a backstop to the backstop is now emerging—this one in the United States, though Brexiteers, and their friends, do not seem to have noticed it. Irish-Americans played key roles in making and implementing the Good Friday Agreement. U.S. President Bill Clinton and Senator George Mitchell of Maine are the best known, but many others helped, including the congressmen Richard Neal, Democrat of Massachusetts and co-chair of the Friends of Ireland Caucus, and Peter King, Republican of New York. Neal also chairs the Ways and Means Committee, which has jurisdiction over tariffs.

The Friends of Ireland caucus includes several senators—including Democrats Chris Murphy of Connecticut, Chuck Schumer of New York, Sherrod Brown of Ohio, Tim Kaine of Virginia, and Bob Casey of Pennsylvania—and dozens of Members of the House. Within the caucus, a new generation of organized Irish Americans is moving to protect the achievements of its predecessors. Prominently led by Senator Murphy and Congressman Brendan Boyle, Democrat of Pennsylvania, who also sits on the Ways and Means Committee, this group is focused on protecting the Good Friday Agreement and preventing a hard border in Ireland at all costs. They will have a major say in the making of any new trade agreement between the United States and the United Kingdom. If London betrays the Irish backstop or leaves the EU without a deal, it will likely get a cold reception from Congress. Organized Irish America will insist on the maintenance—or the restoration—of the Irish backstop if Washington is to agree a trade deal with London.

Murphy, who sits on the Foreign Relations Committee, has declared that there is “no chance” of a U.S.-British trade deal if there is a return to a hard border. He has added, “We are all friends of Britain – it is an unbreakable bond – but we can’t compromise the sanctity of the Good Friday Agreement and folks [in the Commons] need to know that.” Brexiteers would be wise to recall what happened in the 1990s, the last time the United States had to choose between its special relationship with the United Kingdom and its ties to Ireland. Organized Irish America won decisively. If the Brexiteers escape one backstop, they may well find themselves trapped in another.

Source: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ireland/2019-03-25/how-theresa-mays-brexiteer-deal-collapsed>

Nuclear-tinged Crisis: India's Deployment of Nuclear Assets By Dr Zafar Nawaz Jaspal

THE risks of accidental or inadvertent use of nuclear weapons in South Asia have incalculably increased with the deployment of India's nuclear missile-armed submarine during the post-Pulwama military-standoff between India and Pakistan. The deployment of nuclear-armed submarine further spawn and fuel the crisis. However, Pakistan continued its nuclear restraint policy and refrained from reciprocating to India's operationalization of its nuclear-armed submarine. Its ruling elite categorically ruled out the possibility of using its nuclear weapons in a crisis and also reiterated its stance that nuclear weapons are a deterrence tool to prevent actual wars.

India announced the deployment of nuclear armed-submarine and nuclear capable BrahMos cruise missiles during the military standoff. The Indian Navy deployed and operationalized its nuclear-propelled, nuclear-armed submarine—INS Arihant that carries 12 theatre ballistic missiles with ranges of 700 to 1,000 kilometers. On March 18, 2018, Captain DK Sharma of Indian Navy announced, "The major combat units of the Indian Navy including the Carrier Battle Group with INS Vikramaditya, nuclear submarines and scores of other ships, submarines and aircraft swiftly transited from exercise to operational deployment mode as tensions between India and Pakistan escalated." (Vishnu Som, "India Deployed Nuclear Missile-Armed Submarine During Standoff With Pak" NDTV, 18 March 2019.

Despite conventional asymmetry, Pakistan did not deploy nuclear weapons during the standoff with India. ISPR Spokesman Maj Gen Asif Ghafoor said, "Since we have gone overtly nuclear, as India also, in 1998, our stance is that this capability eliminates the possibility of conventional war between the two states. So that is to say, this is a weapon of deterrence and a political choice. No sane country having this capability would talk about using it." Pakistan's is avoiding an escalation in a current nuclear-tinged crisis because its ruling elite believes in nuclear taboo, i.e. an all-out nuclear conflagration is unthinkable. India's deployment of nuclear assets and Pakistan's refrain from reciprocating falsify two percepts, which have been dominating India-Pakistan nuclear discourse since the 1999 Kargil conflict. Notwithstanding, Pakistan's official denial, many analysts have continued propagating that Pakistan deployed

nuclear weapons during the Kargil conflict. Secondly, Pakistan would be the initiator of nuclear war in South Asia because India has No-First-Use of nuclear weapons policy. The deployment of nuclear assets proves that India will use nuclear weapons first in a conflict.

The deployment of the nuclear-armed submarine and signaling of using nuclear capable BrahMos, short-range cruise missile questioned the critical tenet of India's nuclear doctrine, i.e., the commitment not to use nuclear weapons first in a conflict. In reality, today, India's nuclear doctrine premised on 'launch-on-warning' or preemptive nuclear strike capability. Hence, the Indian armed forces will use nuclear weapons first during the conflict without formal revision and updating of the nuclear doctrine and abandoning NFU policy.

India's deployment of the nuclear-armed submarine and contemplating to use nuclear capable BrahMos cruise missiles during the crisis was an alarming military development in the South Asia strategic environment. It compels Pakistan for tit-for-tat responses that lower the nuclear threshold between the nuclear-armed belligerent neighbors. Unquestionably, India's nuclear forces in the ready state increase the chances of accidental, inadvertent or unauthorized use of nuclear weapons.

Ironically, the international security analysts, especially the American South Asia nuclear experts ignored India's nuclear weapons deployment in the prevalent crisis. Since two decades, they have been interrogating and struggling to prove Pakistan as an irresponsible nuclear-armed state. However, they are tongue-tied over India's recent nuclear-armed submarines deployment and consideration of using nuclear capable BrahMos cruise missile. They even refrained from issuing a brief statement underscoring risks of nuclear war—by design, accident, rogue launch or system error—due to the deployment of India's nuclear weapons.

Pakistan's effective political and military response to Prime Minister Modi's war hysteria and the Indian Air Force's violation of airspace on 26 and 27 February 2019, exposed the futility of India's 'Surgical Strike Stratagem.' On 27 February, Pakistan Air Force's shooting-down two-fighter jet of India in a dogfight has reconfirmed Pakistan's will, capability and resolve to retaliate. It proves that in a conflict, Pakistan shall not chicken out of using its military assets for the sake of defence due to the fear of escalation of a conflict into a total war having the

probability of nuclear exchange. Thus, it has augmented the credibility of Pakistan's nuclear deterrence policy. To conclude, unlike India, Pakistan has appeared as a confident-cum-responsible nuclear-armed state during the post-Pulwama incident. It neither contemplated nor signaled the use of nuclear weapons during the crisis.

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A Test For The UN | Editorial

Syria is knocking at the door of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Its complaint is against Donald Trump's recognition of Israel's sovereignty over Golan Heights that Israel had seized from Syria in the 1967 Six-Day War. It is true that the move of the United States (US) is a "flagrant violation" of United Nations (UN) resolutions, as Syria in a letter to UNSC calls it.

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No one can deny the fact that the US accepting Israel's sovereignty breaches international law. However, several issues need to be kept in mind as the UN prepares to meet over Trump's irrational move. The most crucial problem in the present case is the composition of the UNSC, which comprises of five permanent members, including the US, with veto powers. Will the representative of the US in the UNSC overturn Trump's move? Considering past history of the Israel-Palestine conflict at the UN, it seems almost impossible that the UNSC will reach a consensus on the issue at hand. The present crisis that Trump's decision has created for the Middle East and the United Nations will measure the effectiveness of the UN in sorting out disputes among nations without going to wars against each other.

While deliberating upon Trump's recognition of Israel's rights over Golan Heights, the UNSC must keep in mind that if it fails in reversing Trump's decision, the concept of territorial sovereignty will lose its sanctity in international law. This is a test for the UN and its commitment to upholding past decisions and the sanctity of international law. If the body allows such flagrant violations to happen so easily, it will have far-reaching consequences for other disputed and occupied territories across the world – including Kashmir.

The performance of the UN and its subsidiary bodies, especially UNSC, in the past two decades is far from satisfactory. Both the UN and UNSC have failed in carrying out their primary task – protecting the people from the "scourges of wars". To put it bluntly, UNSC has already lost most of its credibility as a body to ensure global peace, precisely for the simple fact that its permanent members only try to secure their narrow national interests in the conflict zones.

If the UN cannot enforce such settled international law, the body should give up the pretence of fairness and stop censuring weaker nations. Should the UNSC fail to overturn Trump's move, it will make the international organisation responsible for future conflicts.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/29-Mar-2019/a-test-for-the-un>