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# Editorial

## America, Israel and India Nexus

It is said in this world that if you are powerful you can get away with anything; this stands true both on a micro level as the rich and powerful are exploiting the less privileged members of their society and on a macro level where powerful nations are inhumanely exploiting other nations for their benefit. These nations or individuals blatantly disguise their cruelty in the name of justice and peace when in reality, they are interested in acquiring more wealth influence, power and primacy. These individuals and nations refuse to look in the mirror and keep talking of a big game where their cause is noble and innocent people fighting for their right are criminals or terrorists.

Leading this movement from the front is the dynamic duo of America and Israel. Israel's existence is the perfect example of terrorists entering a land, killing the natives and driving them out their own homes and making those homes their own. This is the how Israel came into existence. The crimes committed by the occupying Israeli forces against the innocent unarmed people of Palestine are not hidden from anyone instead the videos of those crimes circulate the social media where people watch those videos and remain silent against a cruel of highest level and apartheid nation.

The Israeli nation and the Americans are common in a way that they are both usurpers. Americans acquired their land by eliminating the native red Indians, basically they are connected with a past, present and foreseeable future of bloodshed. This pattern of tyranny against the natives is similar to what is practiced by the terrorist organizations of today for instance ISIS. This gives reinforces the fact that ISIS is in fact the tool of America to support Israeli cause, keeping American supremacy over world and looting the wealth globally. American state machinery, particularly the American media is and has been very effectively used to support Israeli cause, to the point that very few American media houses are not under Israeli pressure as a result Israeli interest is never ignored.

Supporting their cause in South Asia and living up to their tyrannical ways is India. Indian treatment of the Kashmiri people is not hidden from anyone in the world. So far they have killed over a hundred thousand innocent Kashmiris, since 1947. Much like the Israeli forces they target the young, old and the women of Kashmir. Suggested by Israel, Indian forces are currently using pellet guns to blind and maim the youth of Kashmir.

Similar to the behavior of Israelis with Palestinians, Indians humiliate Kashmiri women and children as a form of mental torture. It is important to note here that targeting of children, women and elderly is practiced by Tehrik-e-taliban Pakistan (TTP) and ISIS among other terrorist organizations operating in the world, leaving very little doubt as to who fathered these organizations. Even after committing such heinous crimes against humanity they refuse to back down and have no remorse.

Instead they justify their actions or simply no heed to the criticism pretending as if nothing happened. America invaded Iraq stating that Saddam Hussain had weapons of mass destruction, when the world knew very well that this invasion was done for Iraq's oil. As a result, Americans defended the weapons of mass destruction justification as long as they wanted to and later admitted that it was a false alarm, acknowledged it was a mistake and to stay in Iraq. American stay in Iraq and Afghanistan has brought nothing but extremism and destruction for the countries but they still remain adamant that they are in Iraq and Afghanistan to eliminate terrorism, despite the world knowing better that America has built nine underground bases to keep an eye on Russia, Chia, Iran,

Pakistan and central Asian states full of natural wealth. America, has achieved in Afghanistan what it wanted to.

It now interested to keep Afghanistan destabilized so that American bases remain safe. Instead of backing down, members of this nexus have expanded to India, bringing more destruction and blood shed to more countries like Afghanistan, Libya, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Egypt, Nigeria, Somali, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and other Muslim countries. The main reason for this mindless crusade is mainly the Israeli vision of a greater Israel in the region and to keep maintain it supremacy over world to loot and humiliate the mankind. In order to achieve and sustain these ideas they are working to destabilize any country which, in terms of land area, military might or population might pose a threat for the greater state of Israel and America's unipolar status.

Consequently, Israel has decided to solve the problem of Palestinians by eliminating them entirely and addressing other Muslim countries of the region through India and America. As a result, three of these apartheid countries; India, Israel and America who have created an Axis of evil to destabilize, Pakistan and Iran and endanger the world peace. Further, Pakistan is looking to achieve financial independence through CPEC and this does not suit their plans as Pakistan is already a military and nuclear power but lacks financial stability.

This Nexus of America, Israel and India is a threat to the peace of this world and it is important to address this rising threat collectively. It is very likely that America may use its ultimate weapon of weather modification against Pakistan as it had used in 2005 and 2010 against Pakistan and in 2011 against Japan. If this could be proved, Pakistan has the right of befitting reply and Pakistan should be prepared for it. With Trump in Power, the world peace is totally in danger and this axis will be tool for any war, increasing miseries to human beings.

## **Summarized News & Articles**

## **A Hero Dies ( 1930-2018)**

### **Pakistan Nuclear physicist & former head of (PAEC)**

#### **Dr. Ishfaq Ahmad passes away**

ISLAMABAD (JANUARY 18, 2018) The Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) acknowledged the deceased scientist's contribution, saying Dr Ahmad's services in the field of nuclear energy were exemplary. Dr. Ishfaq, who had also served as the former science advisor to the government of Pakistan, was heading the PAEC when Pakistan became a nuclear power in 1998.

His work was also acknowledged by the government of Pakistan and other institutions on various occasions. In 1989, Dr Ahmad was bestowed with first state honour, Sitara-e-Imtiaz by then prime minister Benazir Bhutto; and Hilal-e-Imtiaz in 1995. In 1998, Ahmad received the highest state honour, Nishan-e-Imtiaz, given to any national of Pakistan, for his services to the country in a graceful state ceremony. He was also awarded gold medallion by the Institute of Leadership and Management in Lahore, in the same year. Dr Ishfaq lefts behind thousands as members of extended family of PAEC colleagues

Dr. Ishfaq Ahmed laid to rest : On 21st Jan. The funeral prayer of former chairman of (PAEC), Dr Ishfaq Ahmed was offered at H-11 Graveyard, Islamabad. People belonging to different walks of life participated in the funeral prayer. He was 87-year-old.

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### **Pakistani nation felt betrayed on trivializing decade old cooperation: COAS**

Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Qamar Javed Bajwa has informed Commander US Central Command (CENTCOM), General Joseph L Votel that “entire Pakistani nation felt betrayed on trivialising our decade old cooperation. We won't ask for restoration of financial assistance but honourable recognition of our contributions.”

Comd US CENTCOM and a US Senator telephoned COAS to discuss security coop post US President Donald Trump's tweet. Bajwa received two phone calls over the week to discuss Pak-US security cooperation. A press release was given by Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) which read, “General Joseph L. Votel apprised COAS about the US decision regarding Security Assistance and Coalition Support Fund.” Gen Votel said US values Pakistan's role “towards war on terror and expected that on-going turbulence [between the two countries] remains a temporary phase”.

The press release further stated that US is not contemplating any unilateral action inside Pakistan but is “seeking cooperation to tackle Afghan nationals who, according to the US, use Pakistan's soil against Afghanistan.”

COAS reiterated Pakistan's response and said that nation felt betrayed over US statements despite decades of cooperation. “Accordingly, unanimous national response reflected the same sentiments,” the press release read. Bajwa further added that Pakistan shall continue its sincere counter terrorism efforts even without US financial support in accordance with national interest and shall remain committed to bring it to its logical conclusion along with other stake holders.

“COAS said that Pakistan has suffered hugely due to great power competition in the region. He said that Pakistan is fully aware of US concerns on activities of Afghan nationals in Pakistan and we are already undertaking multiple actions through Operation 'Radd ul Fasaad' to deny any residual capacity to terrorists of all hue and colour for which return of Afghan refugees is an essential prerequisite,” the press release stated.

## **Pakistan's nuclear capability a 'weapon of deterrence':**

### **DG ISPR responds to Indian Army chief**

Jan. 13, 2018| Responding to a remark by the Indian army chief that his country's armed forces are ready to call Pakistan's "nuclear bluff", the chief of Pakistan Army's media wing has said that India should not harbour any illusion about Pakistan's defence capabilities, while the Foreign Office (FO) warned India against any misadventure.

Indian Army Chief Gen Bipin Rawat had said that the Indian army would not hesitate to cross the Pakistani border to carry out an operation if ordered by the government, Hindustan Times reported. "We will call the (nuclear) bluff of Pakistan. If we will have to really confront the Pakistanis, and a task is given to us, we are not going to say we cannot cross the border because they have nuclear weapons. We will have to call their nuclear bluff," Gen Rawat was quoted as saying.

Director General of Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), Maj Gen Asif Ghafoor, while talking to state-run PTV World termed the Indian army chief's statement "irresponsible" and "unbecoming" of a four-star general who is serving as the chief of army staff.

Asked what Pakistan's response would be if India resorted to any such misadventure, Maj Gen Ghafoor said: "Should they [India] wish to test our resolve they may try and see it for themselves. We have a credible nuclear capability exclusive[ly] meant for threat[s] from [the] East."

The ISPR chief said Pakistan considers its nuclear capability to be a "weapon of deterrence" and not an option for war. He said India was unsuccessfully targeting Pakistan through sub-conventional threats and "state-sponsored terrorism" because it could not subdue Pakistan through conventional engagement following overt nuclearisation in the region. "[The] only thing stopping them is our credible nuclear deterrence as there is no space of war between the two nuclear states," he said. The ISPR chief said Pakistan is a responsible nuclear state with a professional army, therefore India "must not remain in illusion".

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### **No country understands how to defeat terrorism better than Pakistan, Sri Lankan COAS**

( January 16, 2018) Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Qamar Javed Bajwa has said that Pakistan and Sri Lanka are probably the only two countries that understand what they take to defeat the menace of terrorism. He remarked during meetings with the top military leadership of Sri Lanka after landing there on a two-day official visit on invitation from his counterpart, said a statement issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR).

Gen Qamar held meetings with Sri Lanka's chief of defence staff and the chiefs of all three services. He was given guards of honour in all three service headquarters. The army chief also visited the Command and Staff College Sri Lanka and interacted with faculty and staff.

According to the ISPR, the Sri Lankan military leadership expressed their gratitude and appreciation for Pakistan's unequivocal moral and material support during the country's successful war on terror. They also appreciated successes of the Pakistan Army in its ongoing war against terrorism. During the meetings, various new initiatives and ongoing projects were discussed to improve the existing defence ties between the two brotherly countries, the statement added.

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### **CPEC's results already coming in, says PM Abbasi at Davos**

DAVOS: Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi stated on Wednesday 24th Jan. that the results of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) have already started to come in. Speaking at a session titled 'The Belt and Road Impact' at the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, Switzerland, Abbasi said

CPEC is about developing infrastructure, power plants, airports, seaports, highways and special economic zones for export growth. Sharing the results of the over \$56 billion CPEC, Abbasi said the cement industry has grown by 56 per cent while exports are up by 15 per cent, adding that the project has resulted in the creation of "great investor confidence". Talking about foreign investors in CPEC, the premier said there is a need to ensure that the projects are inclusive and open to all investors with the same level playing field that's available to local players. "Pakistan can provide connectivity to most of land-locked Central Asia," he stated.

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### **Prime Minister Abbasi inaugurates Northbound section of Lyari Expressway**

Karachi 28 Jan. : Speaking at the inauguration ceremony, the prime minister congratulated Sindh governor, chief minister, FWO for completing the project despite many hurdles . He said the Rs5 billion project was completed at Rs10 billion, adding that cost was raised due to delay . "It is unfortunate. Citizens of Karachi had to wait for 10 years," said he. The project's completion coincided with the Sindh government's announcement of developing a similar carriageway the 38-kilometre Malir Expressway that would run along the Malir River under a public-private partnership.

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### **PM inaugurates Gwadar Free Zone, Expo 2018**

January 29, 2018 : The prime minister opened the Gwadar Expo 2018 - the two-day conference and exhibition aimed at providing a platform for Pakistani and Chinese businessmen, already working on CPEC-related projects. He visited different sections of the Free Zone, Business Centre and the Exhibition, Hall showcasing over 100 stalls by the companies.

Spread over 60 acres, Gwadar Free Zone will be operated by China Overseas Port Holding Company, which has also set up a Business Centre for handling of operations. The Business Centre will provide a one-window operation for matters including immigration, customs, visa operations and port clearance facilities.

The South Area of the Free Zone (Phase I) will develop a commercial logistics zone with the leading functions of commodity exhibition, transit and distribution, relying on the existing port, as well as fishery processing.

Processing and manufacturing areas will be developed in the North Area and divided into three construction phases. Daily necessities and small household appliances, fishery, stone processing, machinery manufacturing and metal processing are the main introduced industries.

The Free Zone will adopt tax exemption policy in the development of bonded logistics.

President AJK Masood Khan, Chief Minister Balochistan Abdul Qudoos Bizenjo, Interior Minister Ahsan Iqbal, Maritime Affairs Minister Mir Hasil Bizenjo, Minister of State for Information Marriyum Aurangzeb, Special Assistant to PM Musaddiq Malik, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee General Zubair Mahmood Hayat, Chairman China Overseas Port Holding Company (COPHC) Zhang Baozhong, Chairman Gwadar Port Authority Dostain Khan Jamaldini and China's ambassador Yao Jing were present besides businessmen of 93 leading companies of Pakistan and China.

Prime Minister Abbasi along the Chief Minister, the CJSCS, President AJK and others jointly pressed a large button to unfurl a huge red and green banner, covering the front gate of economic free zone, amidst a huge applause of Pakistani and Chinese nationals, gathered at the historic event.

### **CPEC is a purely economic project: China**

BEIJING: The China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is purely an economic cooperation project that does not involve the issue of territorial disputes against any third party, Chinese Foreign Ministry

spokesperson said . "China has clarified its position on many occasions and I will not repeat it here," said Hua Chunying during a regular press conference held by the Chinese foreign ministry.

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## **Rape, murder of 8-year-old shocks Pakistan**

KASUR: (10 Jan, 2018) The streets of Kasur were filled with the stench of burning tyres as residents voiced their anger and outrage at the news that little Zainab, who went missing on Saturday 5 Jan. had been found raped, dead, and buried in garbage. In the morning, in front of DHQ Hospital, a crowd of protesters demanded the public flogging and hanging of "the monster responsible". Inside, her body was on an autopsy table. It was the eighth incident during the last five years, but instead of arresting the killer, the police had only picked up innocent people randomly "as is their routine practice", since the very first incident was reported.

Around the same time, protesters gathered outside the deputy commissioner (DC) office. The crowd soon turned violent and attempted to attack the office. Policemen opened indiscriminate fire and killed two protesters. At least two others were injured.

### **Condemnations**

The Chief of Army Staff condemned the cold blooded murder of Zainab and directed "immediate all out support to civil administration to arrest the criminals and bringing them to exemplary justice"

On January 10, 2018| Zainab, a seven-year-old girl, was laid to rest amid sobs and tears as hundreds of devastated family and friends turned up to attend her funeral prayer in Kasur.

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## **Kasur rape case: Murderer of 8-year-old Zainab finally arrested**

(January 23, 2018) Twenty-four-year-old man arrested and linked to 'at least seven' other killings. At a news conference in the capital, Lahore, Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif identified the suspect as Mohammed Imran, 24, who was arrested near Kasur.

All of the other young female victims lived within a 3km radius, went missing from near their homes and were dumped on rubbish sites or in abandoned houses nearby. Chief Minister of Punjab Shebaz Sharif said the provincial forensics lab processed 1,150 samples of DNA before arresting Imran. "The beast has confessed to have committed the past such crimes," he said. "His DNA was matched 100 per cent with samples collected from crime scenes."

Zainab's father sat next to the chief minister at the news conference. He expressed satisfaction with the investigation.

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## **Naqibullah Mehsud Murder: Sindh Govt Removes SSP Anwar Rao Ahmed Khan**

Naqeebullah, 27, was reportedly picked up by personnel in civvies from a tea shop at Karachi's Sohrab Goth area on January 3. Later, the police killed him along with three others after declaring him an operative of the outlawed Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP).

The Sindh Police have decided to arrest former SSP Malir Rao Anwar and his entire police party, allegedly involved in 'extrajudicial murder' of Naseemullah alias Naqeebullah Mehsud.

The decision was taken during a high-level meeting of police officials in Karachi, headed by Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) Additional DIG Sanaulah Abbasi, who is also heading a committee formed to probe into the alleged custodial killing. Anwar, also called an 'encounter specialist', had been working as SSP Malir for the last few years.

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## **Rao Anwar's tenure in Malir saw 444 accused killed in encounters**

The summary details the number of police encounter cases of District Malir which occurred during the tenure of SSP Rao Anwar. The data has been collected from July 25, 2011, to January 19, 2018. The report reveals that during the period, 745 police encounter cases were registered, in 192 cases the accused were killed and in 553 the accused weren't killed. At least 891 suspects have been arrested in police encounter cases.

FIR registered against Rao Anwar, name added to ECL after SC takes notice of attempt to go abroad. The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) foiled Anwar's attempt to leave the country from the Benazir Bhutto International Airport. Interior minister awards certificates to FIA officers for foiling Rao Anwar's attempt to flee.

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### **Police kills 19-year-old youth 'Intezar Ahmed' in Karachi:**

KARACHI (January 14, 2018) : According to DIG Crime Investigation Agency Saqib Ismail, personnel of Anti-Car Lifting Cell (ACLC) of the Sindh Police allegedly shot dead a young man in Defence Housing Authority's Khayaban-e-Ittehad area. The police had earlier said the youth, identified as Intezar Ahmed, was killed in firing by unidentified assailants on motorcycles.

Six ACLC officials arrested for killing of youth 'Intezar Ahmed'.

The deceased's father, Ishtiaq Ahmed, told the media outlets that Intezar, who recently came back from Malaysia, had a fight with two men, Fahad and Haider, a couple of days ago, who are said to be the sons of a lawyer and policeman respectively.

CM takes notice, demands daily progress reports and directed the police to ensure proper investigation of the case and directed.

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### **Four soldiers martyred in unprovoked Indian firing across LoC**

Jan. 15, 2018 : ISLAMABAD: According to the army's media wing, ISPR, the soldiers were working on lines communication maintenance in the Jandrot and Kotli sectors of Azad Jammu and Kashmir when they were attacked with heavy mortar fire. According to the ISPR, the Pakistan Army responded to the attack and killed three Indian soldiers and injured many others. The Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said the troops were fired upon and hit by a heavy mortar round in Jandrot and Kotli Sectors of Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

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### **Two women martyred in cross-border Indian firing in Sialkot**

Thu. 18, 2018 | RAWALPINDI: According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), five other civilians including three women were injured in the cross-border firing by Indian troops since Wednesday 17 Jan night. The ISPR said the Indian forces targeted the civilian population in Kundanpur Village of Sialkot. Border guards of the Punjab Rangers conducted retaliatory fire and destroyed an Indian force, the ISPR said.

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### **Six, including four security personnel, martyred in Quetta suicide bombing**

QUETTA: (9 Jan.) At least six persons, including four Balochistan Constabulary personnel, were martyred and 17 others injured in a suicide bombing near the Balochistan Assembly building in Quetta. The attacker blew himself up close to a police truck near GPO Chowk on Zarghoon Road, located in the provincial capital's high-security Red Zone just 300 metres from the provincial assembly building. The blast also damaged a nearby public bus.

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## **Security forces personnel martyred 6 injured**

in gun attack in Balochistan's Kech

QUETTA (Jan. 16, 2018) : The deceased include Constable Zakir, Lance Naik Masood, sepoy Farhanullah, sepoy Shehbaz and sepoy Masood. The attacker blew himself up close to a police truck near GPO Chowk on Zarghoon Road, located in the provincial capital's high-security Red Zone just 300 meters from the provincial assembly building.

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## **Six of a family martyred in Kurram roadside blast**

PARACHINAR (30 Jan.) : The sources said the family was travelling to Boshera from the Maqbal area when their vehicle was hit by a roadside bomb. Members of Anjuman-e-Hussainia, Member National Assembly Sajid Turi and local elder Ibrar Hussain condemned the blast and said that anti-state elements wanted to create a law and order situation in the country through such terror acts. They said that Turi and Bangash tribes would continue supporting the security forces for maintaining law and order.

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## **Former Pak Air Chief Asghar Khan passes away**

RAWALPINDI ( 5 Jan 2017) : Asghar Khan became first commandant of the Pakistan Air Force Academy in 1947 and was also the first to head the Directorate-General for Air Operations (DGAO) in 1950. In 1957, Asghar Khan became the youngest to-date and the first native Air Force Commander-in-Chief of the PAF. His tenure as air commander saw the extensive modernisation of the PAF. He was authored of several books, including an autobiography, titled My Political Struggle, in 2008.

On Saturday 6th Jan, Air Marshal Asghar Khan laid with full military honours to rest in his native village Nawanshehr, Abbottabad. Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi and other government and military dignitaries attended the state funeral of former chief of air staff Air Marshal Asghar Khan at the Nur Khan Air Base. Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal Sohail Aman, Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Zafar Mahmood Abbasi, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee General Zubair Mahmood Hayat, and other top civilian and military officials also attended the funeral.

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## **Renowned Chef Zubaida Tariq passes away in Karachi**

Fri, 5 Jan 2017: KARACHI: Renowned chef Zubaida Tariq, popularly known as Zubaida Aapa, passed away on Friday night after a protracted illness. Sources said she was suffering from Parkinson's disease. She was 72. Zubaida Tariq achieved fame doing culinary shows on television and writing cookbooks. Her regular culinary advice segments on various TV channels were so popular that 'Zubaida Aapa' became a household name across Pakistan. She lovingly came to be known as Zubaida Aapa. Of late, Zubaida was working with Masala TV and her cooking programme 'Handi' had been the most watched cooking show of Pakistan. She covered more than 1000 episodes for the show. Zubaida Aapa had millions of followers and lovers across the globe.

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## **Famed columnist, poet Munnu Bhai passes away**

LAHORE: Renowned columnist and poet Munir Ahmed Qureshi, more commonly known as Munnu Bhai, passed away on Friday 19 January. He was 84 years old. The senior journalist was suffering from kidney and cardiac problems for quite some time, and was also going through routine dialysis treatment. Munno Bhai was born in Wazirabad on February 6, 1933. He was affiliated with journalism for more than 25 years. He also wrote dramas for Pakistan Television, his most famous

being 'Sohna Chandni' which will always be remembered by his fans. In 2007, he was given Pride of Performance award by the state of Pakistan.

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### **Pakistani UN peacekeeper in Congo martyred in rebel attack**

Pakistani peacekeeper, Naik Naeem Raza, deployed with the United Nations stabilisation mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) was martyred in an ambush. At least one other peacekeeper, Pakistan's Sepoy Bilal , was wounded following an attack by members of an armed group near Lulimba, 96 kilometres south-west of Baraka, in the DRC's South Kivu Province, according to the UN.

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## **Brief News International**

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### **Suicide bombing kills at least 20 in Kabul, including 16 police officers**

KABUL A day of tensions between police and shopkeepers in the Afghan capital took a deadly turn on Thursday 4th Jan, when a suicide bomber blew himself up, killing at least 20 people, including 16 members of the city's police forces, officials said. Police had raided shops in the Banayee neighborhood on Wednesday 3rd Jan, on suspicion that their owners were selling illicit substances including alcohol and hashish, said Najib Danish, a spokesman for Afghanistan's Interior Ministry. On Thursday, 4 Jan, the shopkeepers took to the streets in protest, alleging that the police had killed one of them. When the police returned to the scene, the suicide bomber detonated the blast. Hours later, the Islamic State claimed responsibility for the attack through the group's own news service, Amaq.

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### **At Least 19 Dead After Overnight Battle at Kabul Hotel**

Jan. 20, 2018 | KABUL (Reuters) - Gunmen in army uniforms who stormed Kabul's Intercontinental Hotel and battled Afghan Special Forces through the night killed at least 19 people and wounded 12 more, although the final toll of dead and wounded may still be higher. All five attackers were also killed, interior ministry spokesman Najib Danesh said. Local airline Kam Air said around 40 of its pilots and air crew, many of whom are foreigners, were staying in the hotel and as many as 10 had been killed. Local media reports said the dead included Venezuelans and Ukrainians.

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### **'Suicide bomber in ambulance kills at 100, wounds over 150, one of the deadliest attacks of Afghanistan war**

Afghanistan (27-1-2018): The explosion was the third high-profile attack in Afghanistan in a week, and the deadliest this year, highlighting the fragile security situation in the country, more than 16 years after a U.S. invasion ousted the Taliban from power. The vehicle made it past a checkpoint in a heavily secured area near the capital's Sadarat Square about half a mile from the US Embassy and NATO's Resolute Support headquarters before being stopped at a second checkpoint, where it exploded, Basir Mujahid, a spokesman for Kabul Police said. It was lunchtime and many people were in the street.

The Taliban claimed responsibility and said the bombing targeted a building used by the Interior Ministry and High Peace Council, a body set up in 2010 to negotiate with insurgents.

## **Survivors Describe Scenes Of Horror Three Days After Hotel Attack**

An Afghan lawmaker has raised questions about how insurgents knew which room he lived in after they blew open his door. Footage received by TOLO news from inside the hotel shows that the attackers had used explosives to blow open hotel room doors and then sprayed the rooms with bullets killing and wounding the people inside.

Survivors also said money and mobile phones that they had in their rooms had gone missing after the attack. But survivors say the scanners were not working in the lead up to the attack.

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## **Five Afghan Soldiers Killed wounded 10 in IS- Attack On Army Post**

Kabul: 29-1-2018 | The Afghan Defense Ministry said that, a suicide bomber first attacked the unit responsible for guarding the Marshal Fahim Military Academy, then the other insurgents engaged soldiers in a gunbattle that killed at least five Afghan soldiers.

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## **As many as 51 killed, 9000 injured in unrest after Burhan Wani's killing: J-K govt July 2016 Feb 2017: J-K govt. Confirms 6221 pellet injuries, 2449 eye injuries in Occupied Kashmir**

By: PTI | Jammu | January 12, 2018

In a written reply to the question of a National Conference MLA in the state Assembly, Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti said that, 51 people were killed and over 9,000 injured, including over 6,000 due to pellets, during the eight months-long unrest in Kashmir after the killing of Hizbul Mujahideen Burhan Wani from July 2016. She said 9,042 people were injured in firing of bullets, pellets, pava-shells and others during the period.

Of these, 6,221 were injured due to pellets, 368 due to bullets, four due to pava shells and 2,449 suffered other injuries, she said. As many as 782 suffered eye injuries of which 510 were hospitalised, she said, adding that 5,197 cases of pellet injuries were treated at district hospitals and the rest were referred to super speciality hospitals. The highest number of deaths-16-took place in Anantnag district followed by 13 in Kulgam district, 7 in Pulwama and 5 in Kupwara, Mufti added.

'Indian Express'

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## **Daesh declares war on Palestine's Hamas resistance movement**

Cairo JANUARY 5, 2018 : The Egyptian wing of Daesh Takfiri terrorists has released a new execution video, declaring war on the Palestinian Hamas resistance movement based in Gaza. The video released, purports to show the execution of a man who Daesh claims cooperated with Hamas' armed wing. In October, the Palestinian resistance movement arrested four senior Daesh terrorists in Sinai.

In July 2015, Daesh released a video saying that it would overthrow Hamas "tyrants" for their perceived lack of religious rulings in Gaza. Takfiri groups such as Daesh have never attacked Israel despite operating close to Syria's borders with the occupied Palestinian territories. Israel is widely believed to be supporting terrorists in Syria by launching airstrikes against various targets there from time to time. 'Agencies'

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## **U.S. Freezes More Than Half Of Aid To U.N. Agency For Palestinian Refugees**

(17 Jan. 2018) The State Department is withholding \$65 million it planned to send to the U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees, calling for reforms and for other nations to step up their support especially those that criticize the Trump administration's positions regarding Palestinians and Israel. The U.N.

Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian refugees in the Near East had stood to receive \$125 million in U.S. Funding.

Instead, the State Department will send \$60 million, money that State Department spokesperson Heather Nauert said is meant "to sustain schools and health services to ensure that teachers and also health care providers can be paid their salaries."

The funding freeze comes weeks after the U.S. was soundly rejected in its attempts to block a nonbinding resolution in the U.N. that called for countries not to move their embassies to Jerusalem as President Trump pledged to do in early December.

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### **Iran oil tanker explodes, sinks off China with no survivors**

January 14, 2018 | TEHRAN, Iran The Sanchi, carrying 136,000 tonnes of light crude oil, has been in flames since colliding with the CF Crystal, a Hong Kong-registered bulk freighter, 160 nautical miles east of Shanghai.

Sanchi, carrying nearly 1 million barrels of a gassy, ultra-light oil bound for South Korea, burst into flame. The collision and disaster of the Sanchi, which carried 30 Iranians and two Bangladeshis, had transfixed an Iran still reeling from days of protests and unrest that swept the country at the start of the year.

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### **Twin suicide bombings in Iraq's capital Baghdad kill 38, leave 105 wounded**

15 January, 2018 : The attackers struck during rush hour in the city's Tayran Square, which is usually crowded by labourers seeking work. The twin explosions also wounded at least 105 people, the officials said, speaking on condition of anonymity as they were not authorised to talk to the media. The twin explosions shocked residents in the Iraqi capital because large attacks had decreased significantly in Baghdad and other parts of country since security forces retook nearly all territory once held by IS militants.

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### **Twin car bombs kill at least 27 in Libya's Benghazi**

24-1-2018 : Agence France-Presse | The death toll following a double car bomb attack in the Libyan city of Benghazi on Tuesday night has risen to at least 27. A further 20 people were injured. An explosives-rigged vehicle blew up in front of a mosque in the central neighbourhood of Al-Sleimani, a security source said.

A second car exploded 30 minutes later in the same area, causing more casualties among security services and civilians. The mosque is known to be a base for Salafist groups which fought jihadists in the eastern port city alongside forces loyal to military strongman Khalifa Haftar.

Turkey launched "Operation Olive Branch" to remove PYD/PKK from Afrin, in the north Syria

With Turkish Military Invasion, the Americans Are Once Again Trapped in Syria

Jan. 20th 2017: Turkey's military, the second largest in NATO, has conducted air strikes and artillery barrages against targets in Afrin, and its soldiers and allied Syrian rebels have tried to push into the Kurdish-held district from west, north and eastern flanks.

### **Erdoğan says Afrin operation will ensure safety, security of Syrians**

#### **Plans for Afrin operation Olive Branch started three months ago**

İsmail Metin Temel, who is a 2nd Army Command General oversaw preparations that preceded the Afrin operation. After the coordination and joint operation concept was put in place, the green light to start preparation was given three months before the start of Operation Olive Branch. After

receiving orders to start preparations for the operation, Temel frequently monitored the “extensively well-prepared” plans on the ground and was personally in charge of the preparations of Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) personnel and Free Syrian Army (FSA) forces. Since the mid-1980s, the PKK has waged a wide-ranging terror campaign against the Turkish state in which an estimated 40,000 people have been killed.

### **Thousands of Syrian Rebels Backed by Turkey Say Kurds Now Face Payback**

Syrian Rebels see the battle to wrest control of the northern Kurdish enclave of Afrin and outlying Arab villages as vengeance for the coordination they allege took place in February 2016 between the YPG and Russian-backed forces loyal to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in an offensive to encircle Aleppo. That offensive saw the YPG grab the opportunity to seize a string of Arab villages and towns in northern Syria to the southeast of Afrin, including traditionally Arab Tell Rifaat. "The problem is not only that the Kurdish fighters cooperated with the Syrian regime and the Russians during the battle for Aleppo, but that the YPG burned dozens of Arab villages and displaced their inhabitants," Gen. Salim Idris, a former rebel chief of staff, told .

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### **The United States: Addicted to Special Forces**

**By: Belen Fernandez**

The Special Operations forces of the United States - currently 70,000-strong and thus larger than the regular militaries of many sizable countries - occupy a very special place in US national mythology. According to TIME Magazine, Special Ops "heroes" are the "planet's most skillful soldiers" and "toughest warriors" - operating in their very own "secret world". Newsweek hails them as "dead accurate, lethal and all-but-silent. They are the military's elite - highly trained badasses armed with bullets and brains in equal measure".

The obsequious glorification of "badass" warriors is of course hardly surprising, given that US society has been inculcated to view international relations as a sort of video game in which the US gets points for blowing things up. ore surprising, perhaps, are the dimensions of the oh-so-secretive world.

In a recent dispatch, investigative journalist and author Nick Turse reveals that Special Operations forces were active in no fewer than 149 countries in 2017 - meaning that the "secret world" has managed to encompass 75 percent of the globe. This record high is courtesy of US President Donald Trump, that self-appointed "very stable genius" who is now building on the special forces frenzy fuelled by his predecessors, Barack Obama and George W. Bush.

Exempt from scrutiny : The US Special Operations Command was officially established in 1987, but the appeal of its services grew considerably among the US political establishment in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. Now, Turse writes, the push to further expand Special Operations "comes at a moment when [various US senators] continue to acknowledge how remarkably clueless they are about where those elite forces are deployed, and what exactly they are doing in far-flung corners of the globe". He refers to the shock expressed by certain officials in Washington in 2017, following the news of the demise of four Special Operations commandos in the West African country of Niger.

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### **Russia's newly-built supersonic strategic bomber Tupolev-160M**

KAZAN, January 25. /TASS/. New Tupolev Tu-160 strategic bomber will strengthen Russia's nuclear triad, Russian President Vladimir Putin said after watching the aircraft perform a flight demonstration in the city of Kazan. "It is a serious step to advance the development of the high-tech industry and strengthen the country's defense capabilities, because it is one of the elements of our nuclear triad," Putin said while talking to workers at Kazan's Gorbunov Aircraft Plant.

The Tupolev-160M will boast a new computerized control system, cockpit and navigation equipment, onboard communication complex, radar and radio-electronic countermeasure equipment. Control of the fuel consumption and balance system and engine operation will be improved. The upgrade will increase the effectiveness of Tupolev-160M by 60%. The plane is capable of flying 12,000 kilometers without refueling. In combination with the Ilyushin-78 tanker plane, which performed its first flight on in Ulyanovsk on January 25, 2018 the Tupolev-160M will have round-the-globe capability. 'Russian News Agency Tass

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### **India tests-fires Agni-V, a nuclear-capable ICBM**

New Delhi : The nuclear-capable Agni-V is believed to be India's most advanced ICBM. It was fired on Thursday 19 Jan. morning India time from Abdul Kalam island off the coast of the eastern state of Odisha, the ministry said in a tweet. It called the test a "major boost" to the country's defense capabilities.

'Stepping up the complexity'

India is estimated to have around 120 to 130 nuclear warheads in its arsenal, according to the Federation of American Scientists, compared to several thousand for the US. Vipin Narang, an associate professor of political science at MIT who studies nuclear proliferation, said Agni-V test did not demonstrate any "new capability, (this) was simply a developmental test before India inducts it into operational service."

Narang said it's possible India's armed forces were testing the canister the missile is launched out of, as well as its ejection, flight performance and accuracy -- a "regular technical test in that regard." The Agni-V has been tested five times since 2012, with the most recent being in December 2016. That launch drew the ire of India's two most important geostrategic adversaries: Pakistan and China.

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### **Entire China could soon be within India's nuclear strike zone**

By : Rajat Pandit |India Economic times

NEW DELHI: India is a step away from gate-crashing into the super-exclusive club of countries with intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) with the successful "first pre-induction trial" of Agni-V that, with a range of over 5,000km, brings all of Asia, and thus China, within its nuclear strike capability.

Sources said India's most formidable missile will undergo one more pre-induction trial "within this year" before it is inducted into the Agni-V regiment already raised by the Tri-Service Strategic Forces Command (SFC) with the requisite command and control structures. Once that happens, India will rub shoulders with the US, the UK, Russia, China and France. While a belligerent North Korea has, over the last six-seven months, rattled the US with tests of its two new ICBMs Hwasong-14 and Hwasong-15 expert opinion is divided on whether they are fully operational and deployed as of now. The missile's canister launch version makes it deadlier because it gives the armed forces the requisite operational flexibility to swiftly transport and fire the missile from anywhere they want. The SFC already has regiments of the Prithvi-II, Agni-I, Agni-II & Agni-III (see graphic) missiles, which are mainly meant to deter Pakistan. Agni-IV and Agni-V, in turn, have been developed with China in mind.

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## **India's Nuclear Safeguards: Not Fit for Purpose**

Author: John Carlson

Currently, the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) is considering India's application for membership. In this context NSG members are reportedly discussing membership criteria for states not party to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), including a requirement for clear and strict separation of current and future civilian nuclear facilities from non-civilian nuclear facilities. In this paper, John Carlson examines India's Separation Plan and safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and shows that they do not meet this standard that current arrangements create an unverified grey zone between military and civilian material, and are not sufficient to verify that India is not using safeguarded material to benefit military purposes. In light of these deficiencies, it seems unlikely there will be consensus within the NSG to admit India, unless the Separation Plan and the agreement are amended. The situation also has implications for Pakistan, which has raised concern about the strategic threat posed by India's unsafeguarded materials and facilities and is also seeking to join the NSG. The paper discusses steps that should be taken to create a clear and verifiable separation between civilian and military nuclear materials and activities in India and to protect the integrity of IAEA safeguards.

(Discussion Paper (Cambridge, MA: Project on Managing the Atom, Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard Kennedy School, January 2018 )

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## **Modi is a close friend of Israel, Netanyahu 6 Day historic India tour in Delhi**

14 Jan: Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu arrived in New Delhi for the first visit by an Israeli leader to India in 15 years, promising closer ties with the regional power. Netanyahu will be only the second Israeli PM to visit India and the first since Ariel Sharon in 2003. "I very much appreciate the gesture," Netanyahu said.

"Your visit to India is historic and special. It will further cement the close friendship between our nations," Modi said. During Netanyahu's six-day stay the two countries are expected to sign agreements on cybersecurity, energy and space cooperation and film production, India's External Affairs Ministry said.

## **Congress Mocks PM Modi With Hug Video, BJP Says Party At "Lowest Ebb"**

The BJP has condemned a video tweeted by the official handle of the Congress that mocked Prime Minister Narendra Modi with shots of his hugs with various world leaders. The Congress has lost its "sense and balance" and is at its "lowest ebb", said senior BJP leader and Union minister Prakash Javadekar.

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## **Huge hospital blaze kills 41 in South Korea**

SEOUL: A huge fire tore through a South Korean hospital Friday killing at least 41 people, reports said, in the country's worst blaze for over a decade. More than 80 others were hurt in the blaze. The six-storey structure housed a nursing home as well as the hospital. Video footage and pictures showed the building engulfed by thick, dark smoke and surrounded by multiple fire trucks.

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## **Axact sold fake degrees to thousands of UK citizens: BBC**

The investigation by the BBC Radio 4's File on Four programme found that fake degrees were bought by National Health Service (NHS) consultants, nurses, and a large defence contractor in the UK, with one British citizen spending as much as £500,000 on bogus documents. According to the BBC, more

than 3,000 fake Axact degrees were sold to UK-based buyers in 2013 and 2014, including master's degrees, doctorates, and PhDs. The UK buyers included a consultant at a London teaching hospital who purchased a degree in internal medicine from the fake Belford University in 2007. A defence contractor, FB Heliservices, got seven of its employees, including two helicopter pilots, fake degrees from Axact between 2013 and 2015. The company has now branched out into extortion and blackmail, former FBI agent Allen Ezell, who has been investigating Axact since the 1980s, told the BBC.

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## **The truly alarming scale of the global ocean plastic crisis laid bare by Storm Eleanor**

By : Patrick Scott , Data journalist | 9 JANUARY 2018

The masses of plastic dumped on the beaches of Cornwall by Storm Eleanor throws into stark relief the global crisis being caused by human rubbish in the world's oceans. As the storm passed, pictures emerged of the picturesque Cornish coast left strewn with waste and its rockpools clogged with plastic. In recent years rising demand for single-use items such as food wrapping and bottled water has helped lead to us producing more plastic in the last decade than in the previous century. Fleeting conveniences such as disposable coffee cups can outlive their use in minutes, but take up to 450 years to degrade once discarded. The result is the world's oceans are now choking with billions of tonnes of plastic.

# Sports

Pakistan tour of New Zealand, 2018

5 ODIs, 3 T20s. Jan 03-Jan 28 | Schedule & Results

## 5 ODI Series Result

Jan 06, Sat | New Zealand vs Pakistan, 1st ODI

NZ 315/7 (50 Ovs)      PAK 166/6 (30.1 Ovs)

New Zealand won by 61 runs (DLS method )

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Jan 09, Tue | New Zealand vs Pakistan, 2nd ODI

PAK 246/9 (50 Ovs)      NZ 151/2 (23.5 Ovs)

New Zealand won by 8 wkts

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Jan 13, Sat | New Zealand vs Pakistan, 3rd ODI

NZ 257/10 (50 Ovs)      PAK 74/10 (27.2 Ovs)

New Zealand won by 183 runs

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Jan 16, Tue | New Zealand vs Pakistan, 4th ODI

PAK 262/8 (50 Ovs)      NZ 263/5 (45.5 Ovs)

New Zealand won by 5 wkts

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Jan 19, Fri | New Zealand vs Pakistan, 5th ODI

PAK 262/8 (50 Ovs)      NZ 263/5 (45.5 Ovs)

New Zealand won by 15 runs

**New Zealand Won ODI Series by 5/0**

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### 3 T20I Series Result

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Jan 22, Mon

New Zealand vs Pakistan, 1st T20I

PAK 105/10 (19.4 Ovs)

NZ 106/3 (15.5 Ovs)

New Zealand won by 7 wkts

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Jan 25, Thu

New Zealand vs Pakistan, 2nd T20I

PAK 201/4 (20 Ovs)

NZ 153/10 (18.3 Ovs)

Pakistan won by 48 runs

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Jan 28, Sun

New Zealand vs Pakistan, 3rd T20I

PAK 181/6 (20 Ovs)

NZ 163/6 (20 Ovs)

Pakistan won by 18 runs

### **Pakistan Won T20I Series by 2-1**

**Pakistan reclaim the top ranking in T20 internationals  
after their 2-1 series victory over New Zealand**



Roundtable Conference Organized by  
**Rabita Forum International**

On 13th January 2018

**American Threat & Solidarity with Pakistan**

A roundtable conference was organized by Rabita Forum international on American Threat & Stability of Pakistan and discussed the whole situation by Intellectuals, businessmen, Media personnel, ex-servicemen of armed forces, Lawyers, diplomats and all walks of life.

Those who spoke were Syed Nasir Hussain Shah Minister of Information and Labor, Lt. Gen.(R) Moinuddin Haider, Air Marshal® Riazuddin Shaikh, Nusrat Mirza, Prof. Farid Ahmad Dayo Vice president Supreme Bar Association, Haider Imam Rizvi President Karachi Bar Association, Vice Admiral® Asaf Humayoon, Dr. Huma Baqai IBA, Dr. Shaida Wiazarat Director Research IOBM, Ahmad Khan Malik President Karachi Press Club, Yasin Azad Former President Supreme Bar, Prof. Seema Naaz Siddiqi Urdu University, Commodore® Syed Obaidullah and other They unanimously resolved:

1. That we the representatives of civil society of Pakistan, in the capacity of professors, businessmen, lawyers, members of the media, Intellectuals, ex-service men, and from all walks of life gathered on 13th January 2018 at local hotel Karachi in a roundtable conference strongly condemn the American Trump Administration's undiplomatic, threatening attitude and ungratefulness towards Pakistan's sacrifices to make America single super Power in 1989 and then helping in the war of terror after 9/11.
2. This conference pays rich tributes to Pakistan's armed forces Law enforcing agencies including civilians who have given precious lives and properties to achieve the honor for Pakistan being the only country of the world that has defeated terrorism and Hybrid war imposed upon it by the foreign powers.
3. This gathering of intellectuals considers that America is blaming Pakistan to cover up its failure in Afghanistan. Pakistan has done so much for USA led war on terror that no other country has done against terrorism. There is no safe haven of any terrorist organization in Pakistan.
4. This roundtable conference representing the feelings of the people of Pakistan express that Pakistan has done enough and it is the time that America does more. We are not prepared to fight or favor to an ungrateful country, ungraceful Trump administration of USA, which earlier was a secular and liberal country turning to a racist one.
5. This assembly of peace loving people of Pakistan demands that America should stop Pakistan bashing and should openly accept Pakistan's sacrifices of lives, property and collateral damages and should pay due respect and compensation.
6. This conference demands USA and its administration should also stop creating war like situation in the world. It should also stop supporting India and terrorists who are doing acts of terrorism to increase the sufferings of the people of Pakistan, trying to destabilize Pakistan from safe havens of Afghanistan under shelter of USA, Afghanistan and India.
7. This conference strongly demands peace loving people of the world should warn India the consequences of interference and doing numerous acts of terrorism in Pakistan and also violation of Line of Control.

- 8.** This conference does understand that America is one of the super powers, the determination of people of Pakistan, however, is to protect the sovereignty and solidarity of Pakistan in any eventuality at any cost.
- 9.** This conference reached to this conclusion that USA is in the hands of irresponsible administration which lacks credentials for world peace, respect sovereignty of other countries and moral values.
- 10.** This conference thankful to China, Turkey Iran and Russia for supporting Pakistan's position and accepted our sacrifices in the war of terrorism and have asked Trump Administration to recognize the Pakistan's services to mankind.
- 11.** This conference appeals to the world and to the people of United States of America to contain Donald Trump to save the golden future of the world.
- 12.** In case of further bullying Pakistan by America, the American access to land and space should be stopped.

## **Interaction Selected Articles**

**Pakistan**

# The Tyranny of Justice

By General Mirza Aslam Beg

Timely dispensation of justice helps maintain correct balance of the social order, but persistent delays, distort the order, creating serious administrative and security problems, now being faced by Pakistan. There are more than 38000 cases with the Supreme Court and hundreds of thousands with the lower courts, pending over the years, denying justice to the people, with no solution insight. This has caused many serious problems, but the one, which has caused so much of death and destruction has taken away peace from the very recess of our souls - is terror.

Thus terror has become endemic to our day to day life, mainly because of delayed justice. There is a historic justification for this phenomenon, as one of the main causes of terror, related to our administrative and judicial fault line. In 1969, the law of the states of Swat and Dir was replaced by Pakistani Law. The people of the two states, having suffered the painful delays in dispensation of justice for over two decades, rejected our law and demanded that the Shariah Law of the State must be revoked. Their demand turned into protests and by 1990 became violent. Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto accepted their demand in 1994 and granted establishment of Shariah Courts in the two states.

The process continued with a slow pace and was completely stopped by General Musharraf, who decided to crush the movement using the Army. The movement led by Sufi Muhammad and his son-in-law Fazlullah, spread to the adjoining areas of Bajaur and Khyber Agency. Army launched full-fledged operations, forcing the rebels to flee to Afghanistan, where Fazlullah formed his rebel group and conducts terror operations inside Pakistan.

Musharraf added fuel to the fire by launching the Army in Waziristan in 2005. In 2007 he let loose his commandos to crush the protesting girls of Jamia Hafsa. Thus the rebellion spread far and wide, leading to formation of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, which continues to launch terror acts into Pakistan from across the Afghan border, as well as from within the country.

In the process FATA, developed as the support base of these terror groups and was secured by the Army, yet terror has not died down completely. The tyranny of justice thus found its parallel into the administrative follies of the government, steeped into security obsessions, ruling-out compassion, reconciliation and dialogue. Indiscriminately ban has been imposed on the dissenting organizations and groups. As a result now there are more than two dozen banned outlets, let loose in the country.

As if this was not enough, the government now is hell-bent, upon creating another terror base out of FATA. They want FATA to be merged with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province under Pakistani law, which is being opposed by Maulana Fazalur Rehman and Mr. Mahmood Achakzai, for political reasons, but they may not succeed and merger of FATA may take place.

I am sure the people of FATA, like Swat and Dir, would also reject the merger. Their culture is different as different, as 'Ilaqa-e-Ghair' has been for the rest of Pakistan for decades. They need to develop their own culture in a free environment, as a separate province. Pakistan has to provide them with all the support needed, to function as a province, because Pakistan disparately needs more provinces to create political balance, as an essential element of a robust democratic order.

The government of Pakistan and the higher courts of justice are quite cognizant of the need to introduce corrective measures, and remove the faults causing delays in dispensation of justice. It is a hard task to be undertaken by the experts, to help evolve policy decisions by the parliament on this matter. This being the test case for the government and a very important issue for the general

elections 2018, it must be handled with utmost care, under the judicial reforms package to achieve timely dispensation of justice.

It is difficult to imagine the sufferings of our people because of delayed justice. It is suffocating for those who do not know the art of taking cover behind the weaknesses of the state, to exploit the poor and the defenseless. As a result, "An angry nation is ready to explode.

The mood of the people is now turning from angry to rebellions"- Shaheen Sehbai. Public fury at Kasur on Zainab's funeral and four years long furious agitation against corruption thriving under the law of the state; and terror eating away the peace of our souls, are unhealthy signs of a brewing storm.

# **Pak-US relations at a tipping point**

**By General Mirza Aslam Beg**

Pakistan has been a trusted ally of USA since the 1950's a period of six decades. During this period Pakistan suffered "four regime changes" and Musharraf's immoral decision of 2001, to join America's war on Afghanistan, which caused much shame and misery to the people of Pakistan. During the period 2001-2008, Pakistan bartered away its national security interests rather cheaply, priced at US\$ 33 billion by the US President, whereas Pakistan has suffered over US\$ 120 Bn losses and the loss of precious lives of 50,000 Pakistanis and over 6000 security personnel. Yet Trump says, he has been cheated.

In fact, Trump outbursts are the moaning of a declining super power, suffering from defeat, humiliation and setbacks. When Soviet Union broke-up suffering defeat at the hands of Afghan freedom fighters, America found the opportunity to promote its interests globally. They reckoned that Soviets would take several decades to regain their lost power and prestige and China would be way behind to achieve any reckonable position. Thus America launched Crusade-One, focusing on the Muslims, particularly Islamic governments, political Islamists as well as the moderate Muslims such as Pakistan and succeeded in destroying and decimating Syria, Iraq, Somalia, Libya, Yemen and Afghanistan and killed over two million Muslims.

They cheated the Afghans, induced a civil war, and made 9/11 incident, the excuse to invade Afghanistan. Now they claim Afghanistan as their colony and are not prepared to leave, despite suffering a shameful defeat at the hands of Taliban, the freedom fighters, whom they shamelessly call terrorists. The tables have turned on USA during the last two decades. Russia under "Putin's logic of conflict" has emerged strong, putting Russia back to the centre of world politics. Their diplomatic and military gains in Georgia, Ukraine and Syria have placed America on the back foot. Russia also has gained considerable influence in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The Chinese, following their geo-economic policy of "peace and development, through economic cooperation", have earned them a prestigious position in the world. Their economy now is the second largest of the world. America feels threatened and has formed the Indo-Pacific Pivot, to contain and curb the rising power of China. Since 1980s, America has continued to demonize Iran, as threat to regional peace and imposed sanctions and embargoes to cause economic hardship, but Iran faced these moves with courage and unmatched national resilience, while remaining engaged in military confrontation in Syria, Iraq and Yemen, gaining considerable influence in those areas, which is worrisome, both for Saudi Arabia and America. These engagements, no doubt, have put strain on Iranian economy and national development plans. Unemployment is high and so are the consumers' goods prices, which are the cause of agitation and unrest, supported by USA and the anti-Iranian lobby. It is an attempt to regime change in Iran. A similar attempt was made in Turkey, a few years back, but failed.

Similarly, for the last four years, Pakistan is suffering from political agitation, seeking regime change into a "technocrat's government", which could deliver a liberal order, as in Bangladesh. The agitations in Iran are not very serious because Iran is quite capable of dealing with them. The Iranian government has yet not called the IRGC, in aid of civil power. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard, with AIQuds and Basij forces, numbering over ten million, under command, are quite capable of dealing with such agitations. They have the experience of eight year's war with Iraq, and the war in Syria and Yemen. It is a reckonable force indeed.

Despite their best efforts, with every passing day, the occupation forces are losing ground in Afghanistan. During the last year Taliban launched over 2500 big and small operations, inflicting

heavy casualties of men and material. Taliban now control over 70% of Afghan territory, where Shariah is the law. Thus America is loosing or has lost on all the fronts Russian, Chinese, Iranians and the battle ground of Afghanistan.

Hopelessly US now is focusing on Pakistan to rescue them. Pakistan cannot rescue them. It's a pity that "the US military, which is a hollow force, is unready, not sufficiently equipped or trained to carryout its responsibility to defend the nation" Harlam Ullman. The American military is consuming over US\$ 700 billion budget a year and is pleading for rescue by Pakistan military which is fully defending the nation with only US\$ 7.

Billion annual budget and is reckoned as one of the best in the world. It is American alone, who can help themselves by meeting the Taliban demand of 'Exit now, and negotiate peace', and then Pakistan military will be too willing to rescue them. US also have to accept the reality that Taliban are not terrorists. They are freedom fighters, who have made unprecedented sacrifices to defeat the mightiest of the mighty of the world during the last thirty seven years. They stand tall and confident and cannot be defeated or cheated any more.

Such are the predicaments Trumps is facing. He is trapped in Afghanistan, with a deep sense of wounded pride. He is unpredictable like a novice boxer, who could hit below the belt defying the rules of the game. Pakistan has to be careful, because "Pakistan has given nothing, but lies and deceit, thinking of US leaders as fools." Fools, they are. So far Pakistan's response has been well-calculated and diplomatically appropriate. Our armed forces and the civil administration must be fully ready with plans to deal with the crisis with confidence, which could be possible if our politicians bury the hatchet and stop the political mudslinging, and stand as one to face the challenges. We stand at the turning point of history, to correct the mistake we made in choosing our ally, half a century back.

It is never too late, to correct the course now and look beyond to provide the much needed "Strategic Security Depth" to Pakistan, Iran, Afghanistan and Turkey, bound together in a friendly alliance, with China and Russia providing the "God-send security bond" against Trump's threats and diatribes. Allah be praised.

## High on bombast, low on capability

While there is not much searching examination of India's defence readiness, Pakistan has worked with limited resources to maximize its national defense

**By Ajai Shukla**

Last month (Dec. 2017) in Islamabad, Lieutenant General (retired) Khalid Kidwai outlined a new Pakistani approach to defence strategy. Kidwai is someone worth listening to carefully, being uniquely qualified across the spectrum of Pakistani security and a trusted establishment spokesperson. An artillery officer with deep roots in conventional warfare planning, Kidwai saw battle in Bangladesh in 1971, ending up in an Indian prisoner-of-war camp.

As a Lieutenant General, Kidwai moved in 2000 into the realm of nuclear planning when he was appointed to head Pakistan's Strategic Plans Division (SPD). During an unprecedented 15 years in SPD, Kidwai masterminded Pakistan's nuclear doctrine of "full spectrum deterrence". This included the deployment of "tactical nuclear weapons" (TNWs) short-range, low-yield nuclear bombs that cause lesser damage, creating the illusion of "usability".

TNWs are meant to deter Indian retaliation against any major terrorist provocation from Pakistan, which would involve lightning Indian armoured attacks on multiple fronts to quickly overwhelm Pakistan's smaller military. In deploying TNWs, Pakistan is following the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, which planned to use TNWs in the 1950s and 1960s to avoid being overwhelmed by massive Soviet Union armoured offensives into Western Europe.

Pakistan has deployed Kidwai's measured articulation on two occasions to rationalise Pakistan's controversial TNW policy. In March 2015, at the Carnegie Endowment in Washington DC, Kidwai explained that TNWs were meant for "reinforcing deterrence, preventing war in South Asia [and] ensuring peace..." Naturally, he did not mention that this wish for peace was not so much for Indo-Pakistan relations to flower, but rather to provide Pakistan the leeway to pursue "sub-conventional operations" the use of terrorist and armed militants in cross-border operations against India without fearing military retaliation.

Kidwai also dismissed as "bluster", India's doctrinal promise that any attack on Indian forces with weapons of mass destruction (including TNWs) would invoke "massive retaliation". This is not described, but is assumed to mean the use of heavy nuclear weapons against Pakistani cities, killing tens of millions. Kidwai pointed out this would inevitably evoke a matching response by Pakistan against Indian targets, given the rough parity between the two nuclear arsenals (credible recent assessments say Pakistan's arsenal is larger) and that numerous Pakistani nukes would survive Indian retaliatory strikes, howsoever massive.

Now Kidwai has been fielded again, this time as Advisor to Pakistan's National Command Authority, which controls Pakistan's nuclear arsenal, to signal a new, less apologetic, international policy. Speaking at a seminar in Islamabad, Kidwai outlined a two-point argument. First, he said India had realised that conventional war was no longer possible, due to Pakistan's nuclear capabilities meaning TNWs for war-fighting, with the main arsenal deterring Indian retaliation. Second, without the option of conventional military force, India was now developing sub-conventional capabilities (read terrorist proxies).

Said Kidwai: "Because of mutually assured destruction, there is unlikelihood (sic) of a hot war or conventional war and therefore the conflict has shifted towards sub-conventional level." In essence, this involved a "cold war era for regional supremacy... [through the] creation of proxies." Essentially, Kidwai dragged India down to Pakistan's level, justifying Pakistan's support for cross-border terror with his postulation that this was now the new cold war. Pakistan's allegations of "Indian terrorism" are rich in irony and could have been convincingly dismissed, coming from a government that has long used terrorism and armed militancy as instruments of state policy. India has done this in the past when Islamabad accused New Delhi of backing separatists in Balochistan, and destabilising its Pakhtoon (Pashtun) border belts from its consulates in Afghanistan.

But this time Kidwai could point to "public pronouncements by Indian [political] leadership of using terrorism to destabilise Pakistan". This reference was to Manohar Parrikar who, while serving as defence minister on May 22, 2015, told a gathering in New Delhi (to loud applause): "We have to use terrorists to neutralise terrorists".

Pakistan has been presented the chance to take advantage of India's jingoistic security narrative, in which political leaders regard the military as a handy prop for nationalistic grandstanding. In this, reality is second to posturing before the domestic audience. Much was made of the "surgical strikes" of September 2016, but figures tabled in Parliament hardly suggest that Pakistan has been taught a lesson. Ceasefire violations almost doubled in 2017, rising from 405 in 2015; and 449 in 2016, to well over 800 this year. Pakistani firing killed 10 Indian soldiers (including from the Border Security Force) in 2015; and 13 died in 2016, but India lost more than 30 soldiers on the border in 2017. Armed militants took a beating in encounters in the Valley in 2017, but the number of soldiers killed in those encounters also rose. An alert media and strategic community should be parsing these figures, but is not discharging its duty.

Nor is there much searching examination of India's defence readiness. The army does without basic infantry weapons and soldiers fight without ballistic helmets, bulletproof jackets or fire- and water-retardant clothing. The army remains desperately short of artillery guns, air defence protection, tactical battlefield drones and high-mobility logistics vehicles. The navy commissions warships without sonars and anti-submarine helicopters.

Last month, the prime minister presided over a farce while commissioning a new submarine that lacks critical combat capabilities the Scorpène shares a tiny stock of 64 two-decade-old torpedoes with four old Shishumar-class submarines. The air force remains short of fighters; and the ones it has deliver such low serviceability rates that the 2016 contract for 36 Rafale fighters had to include a \$350-million clause binding the vendor, Dassault, to deliver a serviceability rate of 75 per cent for five years a rate that modern fighters, incorporating modular engineering and built-in test equipment should achieve as a matter of course.

Pakistan's security establishment, despite its appallingly immoral approach to conflict, has worked with limited resources and money to maximise its national defence integrating nuclear, conventional and sub-conventional resources to continue bleeding an apparently hapless India. Officials like Khalid Kidwai can stand before an international forum and detail a strategy for Pakistan to achieve its security interests. In contrast, India's approach to defence is best summed up by this simple fact:

Over the preceding year, three separate defence ministers have occupied that hallowed corner office in South Block. Not one of them would be able to lucidly explain India's defence strategy and how our military would fight the two-front war we claim to be ready for. Asked how we would match India's expansive defence allocations with the shopping list of badly needed weaponry, not one would have a coherent answer. Will this change in 2018? Probably not.

# A tribute by Air Cdr Sajad

**By Air Commodore (R) Sajad A. Haider**

Birth and death are indelible certainties, pre-ordained by ALLAH SWT. It is the interregnum which lays open the bounties and opportunities for everyone to explore.

The achievers choose challenging mission as *raison de etre* in life, and pursue their dream through qualitative endeavour, strident determination with incontrovertible honesty, personal example and leading from the front with resolute will to achieve success in their mission.

They are anointed with Stature of leadership rather than mere Status of rank as head of an institution, community, or even a nation. Status gets buried with the person in perpetuity. Stature achieved through Sterling performance in life leaves behind a blazing trail of legacy and a place in the hereafter. Yesterday, a trail blazing meteor like light speeded towards the galaxy's final frontier.

It was the soul of one of the greatest son of this soil, Air Marshal Mohammad Asghar Khan, the father of Pakistan Air Force, a fighter pilot par excellence, an incomparable Commander in Chief and one who achieved the stature of leadership in the hearts and minds of all those he surveyed in the institutions he propelled to highest firmament but the nation at large denied him the sublime political vision he offered.

His indomitable qualities of incredible vision, moral courage, integrity, inexorable truthfulness, pristine honesty and resolute dedication to his mission in life, as a strict disciplinarian, was strident in the pursuit the legacy of Quaid e Azam which he imbibed and lived in the highest traditions of an officer, commander, a leader and a sublime gentleman to his last moments.

What were the indelible achievements which stood this man of sterling character apart from any other in Pakistan's history after the Quaid e Azam. Was he a Falcon, an Eagle or an Ukab? He was a manifestation of all three.

An outstanding fighter pilot from WW11, The first to fly a fighter jet (Meteor with RAF) captained the initial missions into Kashmir vale in a lumbering Dakota against IAF agile Tempest fighters.

He propelled the PAF from a rudimentary..... Air force to the firmament of best air forced in the world, within 18 months as the youngest C-in-C in the world, at ripe age of 36 years, PAF under his stewardship created world military aviation record by Formation Aerobatics with 16 aircraft performing loop in front of King Zahir Shah of Afghanistan and a massive crowd watching in awe n some defence Diplomats in shock.

Soon after on Eid-UI-Fitr day as the Muslims were in supplication an Indian spy bomber violated Pakistan air frontiers. The early air defence system effectiveness created as his priority policy responded with incredible alacrity and a young Flg off brought the bomber down at 40,000 feet, way above PAF fighter's operational capability. Both Indian pilot and navigator were taken in custody.

Such was the verve, moral high and the professional excellence spawned by AM Asghar Khan, by all ranks to perform beyond expectations. That was the indomitable spirit with which the PAF fought the 1965 War, trained, readied and motivated by Asghar Khan who was allowed to quietly retire in what was an intrigue of national leaders, who were planning war in Kashmir in weeks of his retirement but kept the Air Force C-in-C in the dark. Luckily his successor was well honed leader and the war was lead by the next best, the intrepid AM Nur Khan. Rest is glorious history of PAF PERFORMANCE in 1965 n more so in 1971 but taboo because Truth is a revolution here.

Today, the formidable performance of PAF in Zarb e Azab which continues with ferocity and velocity, has rattled the rafters of not only the beasts of terror, but a signal to the perpetual adversary India, to check before takeoff heading west, because return is not an option.

The PAF today, and foreseeable future will continue to build stronger edifice of operational formidability on the foundations laid by a.m. Asghar Khan with steel and mortar and blood, sweat and tears of the pioneering cavalcares, who joined the saga of courage, passion for fulfilling the mission, resonating to this day ordained by the Quaid-e-Azam's, exhortation " the PAF to be second to none.

He stood apart in his unmatched achievements which are things beyond the pale of Guinness book of record. He followed the beacon which was legacy of the Quaid e AZAM and performed even beyond the raison d etre ordained by the Father of the Nation for the Pakistan Air Force "To be Second to None".

His political life was an Oracle of astuteness which was overaerd by Machiavellian sobriquet" end justified the means".

May the noblest soul rest in heavenly peace. Ameen.

A subordinate, an admirer and protégé.

# Afghanistan - A view from Pakistan

By K. Hussan Zia

President Trump and his cohorts are accusing Pakistan of perfidy for taking \$33 billion in aid from the U.S and not doing enough in return. First of all, nearly half of the amount mentioned was not aid but payments for goods and services that Pakistan provided to the U.S troops. Secondly, Pakistan sacrificed much more than she actually received from the U.S.

1. Making available five air bases as well as services that included 0.4 million litres of aviation fuel per day and an air corridor that covered two-thirds of the country.
2. Facilities at Pasni on the coast for landing 8,000 U.S marines and their equipment.
3. Carrying out 99 raids to capture and hand over 420 foreign suspects to the U.S in the first year alone. The practice was continued afterwards. U.S intelligence agencies were given a virtually free run of the country according to the Institute of Strategic Studies, Pakistan.
4. Established 665 military check posts along the Afghan border each comprising 40 men.
5. In CENTCOM's words, 'In spite of ominous threat on Eastern Border, Pakistan is maintaining a sizeable portion of her strategic forces (75,000 troops) on Western Border.' She has mounted major operations in the region that caused nearly 8,000 battlefield casualties, more than three times what the U.S has suffered.
6. In addition, according to CENTCOM in 2002 alone, 'Pakistan's economy suffered a loss of over US\$ 10 billion. Major losses were caused to the civil aviation, tourism, investment and shipping due to rise in the rates of insurance. Besides this, Pakistani exports also suffered adversely and foreign investments experienced a visible decline' The haemorrhaging has continued since then. The war had cost Pakistan upwards of \$250 billion dollars by 2016 according to Pakistan's minister of finance.
7. There was hardly any terrorism in Pakistan to speak of until she joined the U.S' war. Since then she has been subjected to more than 500 suicide bombings alone killing or injuring more than 75,000 innocent people.

No other country has done more for the U.S than Pakistan. While she was doing all this to help the U.S, President Bush was telling British Prime Minister Tony Blair that he 'wanted to go beyond Iraq in dealing with WMD proliferation, mentioning in particular Saudi Arabia, Iran, North Korea and Pakistan' (see Douglas Jehl in The New York Times of 14th October 2005).

No matter what Pakistan did for the U.S she was always exhorted to do more regardless of how it impacted her own national interest, including present and future relations with other countries in the region. Failing this, she was threatened with cutting off aid which was an enigma. It is for consideration if a country whose economy could withstand a loss of more ten billion dollars in one year really needed a few hundred million dollars worth of aid to survive? President Trump also made India her strategic partner knowing that she has been using Afghanistan as a base for supporting terrorism inside Pakistan as confirmed by Secretary of Defence Chuck Hagel.

For instance, what is the real U.S aim in Afghanistan? Is it really about fighting terrorism or something entirely different? Newt Gingrich had this to say: 'The fact is, if you slow down the casualty rate and you're not losing young Americans, the American people will support gradually growing allies for a long time' that will make long-term troop presence in Afghanistan acceptable to the American people as happened in the case of Germany, Japan and Korea.

Why the U.S need these military bases in Afghanistan is open to conjecture. What interest can Pakistan possibly have in making it possible for the U.S knowing that these could be used against her

and how can she be a party to this knowing that it will negatively impact her relations with neighbouring countries?

For twelve years the U.S tried to subdue Afghanistan using 130,000 NATO troops and many more mercenaries without success. To claim that it can now be done with one-tenth that number is simply not credible. In any case, according to Global Terrorism Index only seven per cent of all the situations involving terrorism worldwide have been resolved using the military alone. More than eighty percent have been settled through better policing and addressing the grievances of those that support terrorism.

Using the military leads to indiscriminate and excessive deaths. In his book, *Body Count: Global Avoidable Mortality Since 1950* (2007) Professor Gideon Polya at La Trobe University in Melbourne concludes that total avoidable Afghan deaths since 2001 under ongoing war and occupation-imposed deprivation amount to around 3 million people, about 900,000 of whom are infants under five. Killing is not a recipe for peace. Under the Afghan tribal culture (Pakhtoonwali) revenge killing (badla) becomes a family obligation. After what the U.S have done, Afghanistan and parts of Pakistan that suffered drone attacks will not be safe places for any American male above the age of twelve for generations to come.

There are persistent reports of increasing numbers of ISIS fighters appearing in Afghanistan. We don't know how they make their way through hostile countries that surround Afghanistan nor who arranges their upkeep and military support. All we know for certain is that they are hostile to Taliban. Russia has pointed the finger at the U.S for bringing them so has President Hamid Karzai. Whoever it might be, this lot will need substantial support inside Afghanistan to survive and it will not be coming from the people of Afghanistan. Other countries in the region also look at this development with considerable alarm which is not helpful to finding a solution in Afghanistan.

Taliban are the successors to Reagan era Mujahideen or 'freedom fighters' as he called them. They are composed of more than forty different groups mostly but not exclusively composed of Pashtoon tribesmen, the dominant ethnic grouping in the country with close ties to Pakistan. Haqqanis about whom there is so much hype these days are just one of these originally most favoured CIA-funded groups.

Taliban are not a unified regular force and come together only for specific operations. They enjoy wide popular support largely because they want to rid the country of foreign occupation and the corrupt and ineffective government in Kabul. Since they already control more than half of Afghanistan and contrary to the impression being created they don't need any bases in Pakistan. It is an unrealistic expectation that they can be rendered ineffective through use of force. The Soviets tried and failed and for all intents and purposes so have the United States.

The groups coordinate their actions through a consultative body known as shura. It does not exercise any military or financial controls that are mostly decentralized as is much of the rest. Mainly because of ethnic affiliation and in the absence of any other choice, they have close links with Pakistan but in matters of policy they remain fiercely independent. They also have links with other countries in particular Iran, India, the U.S, Russia and China.

Pakistan still plays host to more than three million of the original five million Afghan refugees displaced by the wars waged first by the Soviet Union and then the United States. They are a considerable drain on her precious resources. With the U.S now tightening screws on Pakistan, it is an open question as to how long she can continue to bear this burden.

Pakistan has a vital interest in Afghanistan and the reverse is just as true. Karachi has the largest concentration of Pashtoons as compared with any other city, including Kabul. There are more

Pashtoons living in Pakistan than there are in Afghanistan where they are the largest and dominant ethnic group. Whatever happens to them affects Pakistan directly.

Virtually, all of Afghanistan's trade passes through Pakistan. Almost every Afghan, be it in the north or south understands if not speaks Urdu, Pakistan's national language. There are extensive family connections between people in the north and west of Pakistan and across the border in Afghanistan. It was all one country before Britain and Russia made a buffer state out of Afghanistan in late nineteenth century.

The two countries are inseparably joined at the hip by their common history, ethnicity, religion, culture as well as economy both history and the dynamic at work in Afghanistan favour the Pashtoons who live mostly in the south and southeast of the country. They have ruled Afghanistan since its inception. Their attitude will always remain pertinent and critical to any settlement. It was a mistake to choose war over negotiations in dealing with them. Chances are they will have greater share of power in any settlement. This does not necessarily mean they will support the so-called Jihadi elements. Given what Afghanistan has been through, it is most unlikely that any government, including Taliban, will allow terrorists to operate out of the country. Paradoxically Taliban, because of the way they work, are more likely to be able to control the situation. In addition, it will be in Pakistan's interest to use her leverage and ensure that they do.

As for US-Pakistan relations President Trump's choice of bluff, bluster and threats to coerce Pakistan into acting against her best national interest has been an unfortunate one. Chances are it will not work and may lead to needless alienation between the two countries. Not only will it make finding a solution in Afghanistan much more problematic but also put access to Central Asia in jeopardy for the U.S. It is not a choice that wise men should be making.

The writer is author of 'Pakistan: Roots, Perspective and Genesis' and 'Muslims and the West: A Muslim Perspective'.

# Tweets and consequences

By Munir Akram

The insult contained in President Trump's new year tweet accusing Pakistan of "lies and deceit" was followed by announcement of the injury the \$255 million cut in Foreign Military Financing by the Indian-origin US ambassador to the UN. Further punitive measures may be revealed shortly. These are the latest developments in the progressively unravelling Pakistan-US relationship.

Pakistan is the world's fifth largest country; it fields one of the most powerful militaries; it is a nuclear weapons state. It has its own priorities and interests in the region. It cannot be threatened and pushed around like a banana republic. Pakistan needs to articulate its interests and objectives, and execute its policies, boldly and clearly. The rambling statement issued by the National Security Council meeting in Islamabad did not adequately respond to the American insult or injury. It was left to the statement issued by the PTI leader, Imran Khan, to express the anger and sentiments of the Pakistani people. Pakistan needs to boldly and clearly articulate its interests and objectives to the US. If it has not already done so, Pakistan should tell the US clearly and boldly that: one, we expect the Afghan and coalition forces to halt all cross-border attacks against Pakistan from Afghanistan. These attacks are emanating from 'safe havens' which the TTP, Jamaatul Ahrar (JuA) and IS terrorists enjoy in the 40pc of Afghanistan's territory which is ungoverned; two, Pakistan will encourage the Afghan Taliban, whose fighters, commanders and leaders are in Afghanistan, to engage in political dialogue with the National Unity Government in Kabul.

They are likely to respond to political incentives, not the escalation of force; three, Pakistan will not kill or capture Afghan Taliban leaders who happen to be on Pakistani territory as long as they are not involved in cross-border attacks or terrorism on or from Pakistani territory. To expel them, we will have to expel all the Afghan refugees; four, Pakistan sympathises with the legitimate aspirations of the Kashmiri people. It will act against all militant groups on Pakistan territory, including the pro-Kashmiri groups, but only in accordance with its obligations under UN Security Council resolutions, nothing more or less; and, five, Pakistan will discuss restraints on its nuclear and missile programmes, with the US or in any other format, only if these discussions involve reciprocal restraints by India.

Pakistan should make a clear policy decision not to accept US financial assistance or the so-called reimbursement from the Coalition Support Fund. So long as Islamabad accepts US money, it will be treated as a 'gun for hire'. If money is to be extracted from the US, it should be in the form of high fees for the transit of goods for its forces in Afghanistan that are presently allowed to flow free of charge through or over Pakistan. However, Pakistan should review its agreement to allow this land and air supply to US-NATO forces in Afghanistan. What is the rationale for facilitating supplies to forces that could, one day, perhaps sooner than expected, pose a threat to Pakistan's security?

Indeed, there are now good reasons for Pakistan, and other regional states (China, Russia, Iran, Turkey and the Central Asians), to consider ways to secure the early departure of US and NATO forces from Afghanistan. The Trump administration has opted for an escalation of force in Afghanistan. It wants to stay there indefinitely to project power in the region. This is a recipe for perpetual war. The Taliban will not accept a settlement that omits the exit of foreign forces from Afghanistan. Nor can they be defeated militarily.

Second, the US has obviously not 'done enough' to eliminate the TTP, JuA, IS and affiliated terrorist groups which conduct cross-border attacks on Pakistan from their Afghan 'safe havens'. It is plausible that the US has endorsed Indian-sponsored terrorism against Pakistan, perhaps to disrupt the CPEC project. Third, the US has reportedly formulated plans to 'seize or destroy' Pakistan's

nuclear capabilities in a crisis. Obviously, its special forces in Afghanistan are likely to be used for this purpose. Fourth, Russia and Iran are openly suspicious of the US relationship with IS / Daesh. It is strange that IS has emerged in Afghanistan under America's watch. It could spread from Afghanistan to neighbouring countries.

It requires a collective effort, including Afghan Taliban cooperation, to eliminate this virulent brand of terrorism. Given the US reluctance to promote a political solution, the regional states should assume the responsibility of doing so. They should contact and cooperate with all willing Afghan parties and groups to evolve the parameters for a possible political solution to the conflict in Afghanistan. There are several formats available to conduct such a peace process, with or without US cooperation.

In this context, Pakistan needs to review the nature of its relationships in Afghanistan. It should open and maintain contacts with all relevant parties in Afghanistan, including Kabul and the Afghan Taliban. It should build new ties with the various warlords. It should adopt a differentiated approach to the Afghan refugees, supporting those who are friendly and need Pakistan's help, extenuating those who abuse Pakistan or collaborate with India.

A strong response to the US attempts to bully Pakistan would reflect the sentiments of the vast majority of the Pakistani people, from the liberal elite to the religious extremists. Pakistan may suffer financially and face immense diplomatic pressure.

We have endured and emerged stronger from past bouts of US-led sanctions. In any case, from a strategic perspective, a Pakistan-US alliance has become unsustainable. The US is aligned with our enemy, India, and opposed to the rise of our strategic partner, China, including the Belt and Road Initiative and CPEC. It supports India's campaign to crush the Kashmiri struggle for freedom.

It has recognised Holy Jerusalem (Al Quds al Sharif) as Israel's capital thus foreclosing the establishment of a viable Palestinian State. It is supporting instability in Iran. It is pushing Saudi Arabia into an alliance with Israel and confrontation with Iran. For all these reasons, it would be best to work out ways for an amicable separation with Trump's America.

The writer is a former Pakistan ambassador to the UN.

# Don't let China start calling the shots in Pakistan

By Tim Willasey-Wilsey

The vast size of the proposed China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has players on all sides struggling to calculate the pros and cons for their own interests. From the benefit of creating new trade routes to the obstacle of the war in Afghanistan, regional leaders and their citizens are assessing whether and how much to get involved in the estimated \$62 billion Chinese project.

In Pakistan, many see CPEC as a magic carpet that will transport them from a world of power outages, terrorist atrocities and political scandals to a future of prosperity as an Asian communications and transport hub. But a significant minority is increasingly worried that the project is unaffordable, and that China might turn out to be a more frugal and less-forgiving partner than the U.S. Some make comparisons with the era of the British East India Company, when an apparently benign trading relationship turned into two centuries of colonial tutelage.

The debate is not helped by the lack of clarity about CPEC and China's wider Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). BRI can be viewed as an incoherent set of bilateral agreements comprising disparate projects with a diverse set of countries from the Central Asian Republics to the Balkans. Alternatively, BRI can be seen as a masterly strategic move to buy the loyalty of countries between China and Europe with apparently unthreatening commercial contracts that can be leveraged for future military benefit. Either way, the financial numbers are breathtakingly large, leading some analysts to wonder whether it can be supported even by the Chinese economy.

The initial idea was that CPEC would provide China with a route for importing raw materials that would bypass the Strait of Malacca, a trading bottleneck thought by Beijing to be under Western control. Key to this is Gwadar, a port in Pakistan's Balochistan province. Gwadar is strategically located, but also remote 650 km from Karachi, 930 km from Quetta, 1,160 km from Kandahar, and 2,000 km from Kashgar, in western China's Xinjiang Province. The diminutive port and the new roads heading east and north are vulnerable to disruption by Balochi insurgent groups. The Chinese are anxious about security. They have had bad experiences in Balochistan before, and they are not convinced of the Pakistan military's ability to provide protection, despite the formation of an Army Special Security Division (SSD) of 15,000 men to defend CPEC and the Navy's Task Force 88 for seaward defence. To the alarm of skeptics, the Chinese are now offering their own advisers to oversee security.

The idea that CPEC should also provide a strategic route through Afghanistan to Central Asia emerged slightly later, and speaks to the fluid nature of the whole project. This would establish a route between Gwadar and Quetta where the Afghan 'Ring Road' can be accessed via Kandahar. This is in direct competition to India's collaboration with Iran for development of the Chabahar port with road links to Central Asia via Zahedan in Iran and the newly built Zaranj to Delaram Highway in Afghanistan.

To be viable, the two routes require the end of the war in Afghanistan. China considers Pakistan best-placed to deliver this through the army's close relationship with the Afghan Taliban. Meanwhile, Afghanistan, in spite of preferring the Chabahar option, shows signs of recognizing that China has more sway than the U.S. over Pakistan. Much will depend on China's willingness to use its economic muscle over Pakistan to demand compliance.

Investigations by the Pakistani newspaper Dawn have revealed other significant dimensions to CPEC. Dawn found that the focus of much of the CPEC Long-Term Plan was concerned less about international trade than generating support to the economy of China's Xinjiang province. In

discussing textiles, for example, the 231-page document seen by Dawn betrays a fascinating echo of colonialism: "China can make the most of the Pakistani market in cheap raw materials to develop the textiles & garments industry, and help soak up surplus labour forces in Kashgar."

There are also proposals to lease thousands of acres of Pakistan's agricultural land to Chinese enterprises. Meanwhile, Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces in Pakistan have been earmarked for mineral extraction—chrome, gold and diamonds. The plan also includes a series of "Safe City" schemes throughout Pakistan, with extensive video surveillance. So how should the West respond? There might be an initial temptation to leave Pakistan to face the perils of CPEC on its own, in part out of schadenfreude. Many in Washington and London are fed up with Pakistan, seeing it as responsible for NATO's setbacks in Afghanistan, as well as for nuclear and missile proliferation and for sponsorship of terrorism.

But Pakistan is too important for the West to turn its back. The potential nightmare scenario of a country with nuclear weapons falling into the hands of extremists has long preoccupied Washington, and losing Pakistan entirely to Chinese economic and political domination would be a serious strategic mistake. Furthermore, there are aspects of CPEC that are potentially exciting. Thanks to its geographic location, Pakistan should indeed be a communications and transport hub.

But CPEC would be a far better plan if it included India. As the powerhouse of the subcontinent, India is the obvious destination for much of the trade from the Central Asian Republics and beyond. The reason the U.S. and India are giving for staying out of CPEC—the fact that it crosses the disputed territory of Gilgit-Baltistan—doesn't stand up to serious scrutiny.

Under all past proposals and any likely future settlement of the wider Kashmir dispute, this area will be awarded to Pakistan, just as Jammu will be to India. There have been large building projects in the area in the past by both China and the U.S. And China has acknowledged that the area is still disputed. That means India, by joining CPEC, would not prejudice its legal position. The Pakistani Army Chief General Qamar Bajwa has invited India to participate. But that offer may have been made in the hope and expectation of the firm rejection that it received.

By contrast, the repeated Chinese offer to India is more genuine. China worries that India has the ability to disrupt the corridor plan, perhaps using Balochi insurgents, and that participation in CPEC is too narrow. India would be much wiser to be on the inside of CPEC, not least as an assurance that it does not develop threatening strategic dimensions. The West, too, should embrace CPEC for the same reasons, but also to prevent China gaining an economic chokehold over Pakistan from which Islamabad might never be able to escape.

Former British diplomat Tim Willasey-Wilsey warns that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a proposed development project as part of China's massive Belt and Road Initiative, could end up being bad for the West and for Pakistan—but it'll be worse if the U.S. and India refuse to participate.

# Ulema put their weight behind antiterrorism edicts

By Kalbe Ali

The government on Tuesday launched Paigham-i-Pakistan, a document that offers a counter-narrative to extremist ideas by collating edicts that declare all kinds of terrorism against the spirit of Islam. Launched by President Mamnoon Hussain, the document declares several anti-state actions, including rebellion, attacks and suicide attacks against the state, spreading of sectarianism and anarchy in the name of religion, or issuing a call to jihad without the consent of the state, as un-Islamic.

The counter-narrative also holds that the use of force against the state of Pakistan in the name of Sharia is un-Islamic and prohibits the use of force against the government. Signed by 1,829 religious scholars from nearly all mainstream sects in the country, the document was compiled through the efforts of the International Islamic University Islamabad. Paigham-i-Pakistan declares all violence against the state 'un-Islamic'; says no justification to term military, govt personnel 'infidels'.

It terms the use of force in the garb of implementation of imposing Sharia, the waging of an armed struggle against the state, or the use of violence and terrorist tactics to settle ethnic, geographical, religious and sectarian disagreements as contrary to the injunctions of Sharia law. Speaking at the launch event, President Mamnoon Hussain said that evolving a national counter terrorism narrative could help eradicate terrorism and be instrumental in the reformation of people who had lost their path due to negative propaganda from aberrant elements.

The president noted that the state and its institutions had fallen short of discharging their responsibilities from the 1970s to the 1990s, which gave rise to several complexities. The decrees highlighted in Paigham-i-Pakistan, he said, had been prepared by religious scholars and the Wifaqul Madaris the umbrella body for the regulation of religious seminaries in the country after thorough consultations, and termed it a step in the right direction. "I believe that these decrees, prepared in the light of the true teachings of Islam, will transform their hearts and pave the way for their salvation in the hereinafter," he said.

The chapter containing decrees from various schools of thoughts contains seven points, mostly related to suicide attacks on civilians and the armed forces, the call to jihad by individuals and faith-based sectarian killings. "The suicide attacks which are being carried out in Pakistan, encompass three different types of grave crimes suicide, the killing of innocent persons and rebellion against an Islamic state. These attacks are not justified in any interpretation and supporting such an attack is akin to supporting a collection of sins," it maintains.

Those involved in violent activities against the government in the guise of implementing Sharia law, or in the name of ethnic differences were, in fact, tantamount to high treason against an Islamic state. The decrees also highlight ideological differences among various schools of thought, but notes that the differences must be restricted to scholarly and ideological debates. The edicts declare it haram (prohibited) to kill one another or to impose one's ideology on others through force, or to commit homicide.

The Paigham-i-Pakistan document bears the signatures of Shia scholars and clerics, even though the Shia school of thought only allows an ayatollah to issue such decrees. Explaining the issue, Majlis-i-Wahdatul Muslimeen leader Allama Nasir Abbas told Dawn that Shia clerics had signed the document to show their support and consent for the ideas contained therein. "We cannot issue a fatwa, therefore our signatures should be considered as our consent for Paigham-i-Pakistan," he said,

adding that nearly all the topics highlighted in the edicts were part of various decrees already issued by mujtahideen in the past.

The fatwas signed by several clerics, including Ahmed Ludhianvi of the proscribed Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat, states: "We unanimously reject extremist ideology and extremism in all its forms and manifestations." The joint declaration also points out that any negligence in implementing any part of the Constitution does not constitute the denial of the Islamic identity and basis of the formation of Pakistan. "On the basis of such negligence, there is no justification to declare personnel of the government, military or other security agencies as infidels." The document concludes by expressing support for military operations "initiated to strengthen the security and stability of Pakistan".

# Space programme 2040

The Space Programme 2040 is a satellite development and launch programme of the Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (Suparco), Pakistan's supreme space research authority. The Space programme 2040 intends to replace the Badr satellite programme and geo-stationary communication satellite. On 11 August, Paksat-IR was launched from Xichang Satellite Launch Center by China, making it first satellite to be launched under this programme. According to Suparco, five GEO satellites and six low earth orbit(LEO) satellites will be launched between 2011 and 2040

The stated goals of the program are expected to gain significant experience in satellite development, practising of space medicine, and to promote socio-economic sector in the country. While the programme intends to learn to develop the military and space technologies and to conduct experiments on fundamental sciences in space frontier, the government maintained that Space programme-2040's prime purpose is to bring the benefits of the full spectrum of space technology to the people of Pakistan. On 15 July 2011, Prime Minister Yousaf Gillanigave official approval of the programme with the 2011 Pakistan fiscal year budget.

## Spacecraft

The Space Programme 2040 included the development of five GEO satellites and six LEO satellites to replace Suparco's existing satellites in the orbit.[3] There are no plans for development of a Launch vehicle, and the programme is entirely intended to launch more communication and remote sensing satellites from other countries. In 11 August, the Suparco launched the Paksat-IR, as first satellite as part of this programme.

## Geo-satellites

According to Suparco, the Space Programme intends to launch five GEO satellites from 2011 till 2040. Here the details are given

## Paksat-IE

The Paksat-IE was country's first GEO satellite that was operated by the Suparco. Previously owned by Boeing and operated under lease by Paksat. It was launched on 31 January 1996 and leased to Suparco in 2003. Since then, Suparco initiated to developed its own GEO satellite programme, financed by People's Republic of China. The satellite will be replaced by its advanced and upgrade satellite, the Paksat-IR.

## Paksat-IR

The Paksat-IR is a first GEO satellite that was launched at 21:17hrs 11 August as part of this programme from People's Republic of China. Its satellite vehicle was the Long March 3E carrier rocket from the Xichang Satellite Launch Centre in China's Sichuan province. The China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation and the Suparco was the main contractor to build Paksat-IR, and DESTO was selected to build the primary heat shield and electronic materials for the spacecraft. The Paksat-IR objectives are to support all conventional and modern Fixed Satellite Service (FSS) applications, with a total of 30 Communication Transponders (12 in C band and 18 in Ku band).

The GEO satellites that are under development or proposed are listed below:

- Paksat-MM1
- Paksat-MM2
- Paksat-II

## **Low earth orbit**

In 1992, Suparco launched her first LEO project, and it was completed in 1996. Badr-II was Suparco's first LEO satellite and was launched in 2001 by Baikonur Cosmodrome by the Russian Space Agency. Since then, Suparco took initiatives to replace her first Suparco satellite, therefore, Remote Sensing Satellite programme in January 2007.

## **Optical satellite**

Suparco plans to launched her first Optical satellite in the end year of 2011 from People's Republic of China. The satellite is reported to have payload of 2.5 meter PAN in 700 km in SSO. It is the first satellite that is locally manufactured by the Suparco and to meet the national and international user requirements in the field of satellite imagery

## **Remote sensing programme**

There are six remote sensing satellites are expected to be developed and launched under this programme. Suparco is intending to launch her first remote sensing satellite in 2014 and it is named as PRSS-O1. According to Suparco, the planned and manufactured satellites are list below.

**Afghanistan**

# Why the war in Afghanistan is an even bigger defeat than Vietnam

By John Haltiwanger

After 13 years of fighting, the War in Afghanistan is finally winding down. American and British forces just withdrew from Camp Leatherneck and Camp Bastion and handed over the military complex to Afghan forces. The event marked the end of British combat operations in Afghanistan, and the beginning of the end of US involvement in the country.

In September, the United States and Afghanistan signed a long-term security pact that will allow 9,800 Americans and at least 2,000 NATO troops to remain in Afghanistan after combat operations formally end on December 31. Thus, this does not necessarily mark the end of American involvement in Afghanistan, but it does signify the transition of Afghanistan's defense from foreign forces to its own people.

The war is ending but the Taliban is still thriving

Camp Bastion-Leatherneck has been a key military base throughout much of the war and is one of the largest military compounds in Afghanistan. Likewise, it's located in the Helmand Province, a characteristically tumultuous region. Many of the bloodiest battles of the war occurred in Helmand. Since the war began in 2001, about 350 Marines and 407 British soldiers have been killed there.

Correspondingly, much of the territory remains under the control of the Taliban. Accordingly, the entire withdrawal operation was kept a secret in order to protect the departing US Marines and British forces. Moreover, there are trepidations that Afghan forces will not be able to defend the territory from the Taliban onslaught.

Afghanistan has been a failure

This has been the longest war in American history, and it has also been an immense failure. The objective of the war was to defeat the Taliban and rid Afghanistan of Al-Qaeda's presence, and both are still thriving. While it's true that the initial invasion did bring an end to the Taliban's rule in Afghanistan, it also led to the insurgency that has prolonged this conflict. In essence, the war emboldened the Taliban and drove people to its cause.

As Colum Lynch notes for foreign policy

... Thirteen years later, the Taliban remains a powerful force in Afghanistan, and the United States continues to battle Islamic extremists from Somalia to Iraq and Syria. Thus, in many ways, the war created more terrorists than it eliminated. Furthermore, many locals in the Helmand province claim that the Taliban has never been stronger.

Additionally, the Taliban sees the American and British withdrawal as a victory: Taliban claim they "forced invading enemy to leave" Helmand. Statement says "invaders evacuated Grand Military Base of Bastion" Afghanistan. Historians often regard the Vietnam War as the first war that the United States truly lost, and they aren't necessarily wrong. Yet, Afghanistan has been an even bigger defeat. This might appear a premature conclusion, but the argument here is that this war was lost a long time ago, almost as soon as it began.

The war in Afghanistan is worse

Than the Vietnam War

The Vietnam War was waged in order to prevent communism from taking hold in the country. Ultimately, the United States failed in this endeavor and was forced to withdraw. Accordingly, this conflict is often viewed as a defeat.

Despite the fact that US forces won essentially every major battle, it ultimately lost the war. In essence, one might argue that America won militarily, but lost politically. The US government could

not sustain public support for the conflict, and ultimately it was seen as too costly. Moreover, it became apparent that communism never really posed a significant threat to the United States.

Thus, with Vietnam, America withdrew when it knew that it was a lost cause. Yet, the United States has held on in Afghanistan in an attempt to create the illusion of success. Ultimately, close to 60,000 Americans died in Vietnam, and three million people died in total throughout the conflict. This is a staggering statistic in comparison to Afghanistan, in which 2,349 Americans have died. Yet, the loss of any human life is tragic, particularly those who volunteer to protect their country. What makes Afghanistan even worse than Vietnam, however, is that we are not safer as a consequence of it.

Likewise, as Robert Wright

contends for the New York Times

Though Vietnam was hugely destructive in human terms, strategically it was just a medium-sized blunder. It was a waste of resources, yes, but the war didn't make America more vulnerable to enemy attack. The Afghanistan war does. Just as Al Qaeda planned, it empowers the narrative of terrorist recruiters that America is at war with Islam. ... We're creating them [terrorists] faster than we're killing them. And some of these enemies, unlike the Vietcong, could wind up killing Americans after the war is over.

After the Vietnam War ended, the communist regime that took over had no intention of using their country as a staging ground for attacks on Americans. Contrarily, the Taliban and other terrorist organizations certainly have much different aspirations when it comes to Afghanistan. After all, their rallying cry is "Death to America." Taliban spokesmen even tweet about it: Death to America! Simply put, the War on Terror acts as a recruiting poster for extremism. Consequently, the Taliban is alive and well, and terrorism still poses a threat to the United States and much of the Middle East.

The costs of war

Hence, it's not surprising that most veterans of the Afghanistan war now view it as not worth the costs, as does the majority of the American public. Collectively, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have cost \$4 trillion. Furthermore, there is evidence that much of the resources provided to Afghanistan by the United States end up in the hands of the Taliban, including weapons.

Iraq is now in shambles, as ISIS continues to make territorial gains in and around the country. Correspondingly, Afghanistan is not any more secure than it was 13 years ago when the war began.

# **Pakistan's asymmetrical response to Trump is a clever way to flip the tables on Afghanistan**

**By Andrew Korybko**

Pakistan's announcement that it will seek the expulsion of over 1.5 million Afghan refugees in the next 30 days is being tacitly justified by Trump's tweet and channels his zero-tolerance stance towards immigration from "terrorist"-prone states, but it also represents the employment of reverse- "Weapons of Mass Migration" in pushing Kabul closer towards the edge of collapse and consequently filling the Taliban's rank of supporters.

Trump is going to soon regret what he tweeted about Pakistan on New Year a Day in accusing it of "giving safe haven to terrorists", since Islamabad is poised to hit Washington with an asymmetrical counterpunch that it surely won't forget.

The Pakistani government just announced that over 1.5 million Afghan refugees must leave the country within the next 30 days, a plan that it's been working on for a while but which just received a fresh impetus and internationally-acceptable justification with Trump's tweet.

Had it not been for the American President's zero-tolerance towards immigration from what his administration labels as "terrorist"-prone countries, which crucially includes Afghanistan for substantial and not political reasons (as the latter relates to Iran's inclusion and Saudi Arabia's exclusion), then Pakistan would have risked drawing heavy pressure from the State Department on exaggerated claims that it's "violating the human rights" of the refugees.

Trump, however, said that Pakistan was "giving safe haven to terrorists", and since the US formally regards Afghan refugees as being too much of a potential security hazard to allow into its own country, it's forced to accept Pakistan's expulsion of 1.5 million of them on the implicit basis that they also constitute a serious terrorist threat to the state such as the one that the President just tweeted about.

This isn't at all what Trump meant when he issued his tweet, nor the reaction that he was expecting, but by cleverly exploiting the President's own policies at home and the suggestion he was making towards Pakistan abroad, Islamabad found a creative way to asymmetrically strike back at Washington.

Not only could Pakistan soon rid itself of actual terrorist sleeper cells and societal malcontents who have long overstayed their welcome in the neighboring country, it will also be catalyzing a series of cascading crises for Kabul through the employment of what can be described as reverse-"Weapons of Mass Migration".

To briefly explain, Ivy League researcher Kelly M. Greenhill introduced the concept of "Weapons of Mass Migration" in 2010 to describe the ways through which large-scale population movements whether "naturally occurring", engineered, or exploited impact on their origin, transit, and destination societies, theorizing that this phenomenon can have a strategic use in some instances.

Of relevance, the influx of millions of Afghan "Weapons of Mass Migration" into Pakistan since 1979 had the effect of destabilizing the host country's border communities and eventually contributing to the spree of terrorist attacks that have since claimed over 60,000 lives in the past 15 years, but now the large-scale and rapid return of these "weapons" to their country of origin will also inevitably destabilize Afghanistan.

The landlocked and war-torn country is utterly unable to accommodate for what amounts to a roughly 3% increase in its total population in the next 30 days, especially seeing as how the Kabul

government exerts little influence beyond the capital and has no sway in the approximate half of the country that's under the control of the Taliban.

The US-backed Afghan government is already failing its citizens as it is and that's why so many of them have either joined the Taliban or sympathize with it in the first place, so the odds of the returned refugees successfully reintegrating into their homeland's socio-economic fabric and becoming "model citizens" is close to nil, meaning that it should be expected that the vast majority of these 1,5 million people will more than likely come to side with the Taliban than Kabul and consequently make the country much more difficult for the US to control.

In essence, what Pakistan has done is throw Trump's tweet right back at him by using it as the internationally plausible pretext for initiating this long-planned move that was originally predicated on solely apolitical security-centric domestic interests but has now pertinently come to embody geo-strategic contours by powerfully turning the tables against the US in Afghanistan through the employment of reverse-"Weapons of Mass Migration". The author writes for this publication in a private capacity which is unrepresentative of anyone or any organization except for his own personal views. Nothing written by the author should ever be conflated with the editorial views or official positions of any other media outlet or institution.

# Cutting off Pakistan, US takes gamble in complex Afghan war

By Mujib Mashal and Salman Masood

Afghan officials have pleaded with several United States administrations now to reconsider their support for Pakistan, which was both receiving billions of dollars in American aid and harboring on its soil the leaders of a Taliban insurgency that the Americans have struggled to defeat. But when President Trump suspended nearly all American security aid to Pakistan on Thursday for what he has called the country's "lies and deceit," any jubilation in the halls of power in Afghanistan and there was some was leavened with worries over how the move might affect a complex war that has pushed the Afghan government to the brink. If there is one consensus among Afghan leaders and their American counterparts, it is that dealing with Pakistan is both vital and difficult.

American and Afghan officials accuse Pakistan's powerful military intelligence service of maintaining influence with the Taliban and the group's most ascendant faction, the Haqqani network, which is behind many of the large-scale attacks on Afghan cities. Through those links, Pakistan has the ability to control at least some of the tempo of the fighting in Afghanistan and it has done little to constrain it over the past two years, the officials say. At the same time, Pakistan enjoys leverage over the American military response to that militant violence: The United States mission has always relied on Pakistani air and ground routes for supplies to the troops in Afghanistan. The question on the table after the cutoff of military aid to Pakistan is who will be most disrupted: the Pakistanis or the coalition fighting the Taliban.

Pakistani officials expressed both anger and caution over the American move. Several indicated that cutting off ground supply routes to Afghanistan was actively being considered, but that a formal decision was not likely to be announced on Friday. The commander of Pakistan's air force also seemed to suggest that Pakistani airspace might be blocked to the Americans. In Islamabad on Thursday, Air Chief Marshal Sohail Aman said his force was "fully prepared to defend all the aerial frontiers of the country." On Friday, the foreign ministry released a statement saying that "we are engaged with the U.S. administration on the issue of security cooperation and await further details." "We believe that Pakistan-U.S. cooperation in fighting terrorism has directly served U.S. national security interests as well as the larger interests of international community," the statement said. And in a measured criticism of Mr. Trump's move, it said that working for peace requires "mutual respect and trust," adding that "arbitrary deadlines, unilateral pronouncements and shifting goal posts are counterproductive in addressing common threats." Across the Pakistani political spectrum, officials accused the United States of making Pakistan a scapegoat for the failures in Afghanistan.

Imran Khan, a prominent opposition politician and former cricket star who has long criticized American actions in the region, called for steps to disengage diplomatically from the United States. His public positions on foreign and defense policy are often closely aligned with Pakistan's security establishment. "We must immediately remove excessive U.S. diplomatic, non-diplomatic and intelligence personnel from Pakistan so that diplomatic parity is established according to international legal norms governing diplomatic relations between states," he said in a statement, adding that the ground and air routes for American military supplies should also be shut down.

From the American and Afghan standpoints, trying to change Pakistan's outlook has only grown more difficult in recent years as the relative consensus has broken down among major players in the region like Russia and Iran over the American mission to eradicate international terrorist groups in Afghanistan. In private, senior Afghan officials said they were watching for just how focused the

United States would be in maintaining the pressure on Pakistan, a nuclear state that has long managed to shrug off previous interludes of American and international pressure.

More publicly, however, President Ashraf Ghani and his government were measured in their reaction, staying away from directly addressing Mr. Trump's move to freeze what could amount to more than a billion dollars in American aid. "We welcome any decision that contributes to bringing stability in the region and Afghanistan," said Haroon Chakhansoori, a deputy chief of staff to Mr. Ghani. "We want honest partnership in the region to fight against a common enemy, terrorism."

'Courtesy New York Times'.

## '60 minutes' story on Afghanistan highlights 16 years of US failures

**Ghani also made a staggering claim of 21 international terrorist groups operating in the country, making Afghanistan less safe.**

A fifteen minute story on CBS network's famous show '60 minutes' highlights glaring US failures, amid growing insecurity after 16 years of operations, in Afghanistan. The story is covered by Lara Logan who interviews both Afghan President Ashraf Ghani as well as US General John Nicholson on the current situation and progress of US operations in Afghanistan.

In the beginning of her story Logan reveals how unsafe Kabul has become with foreign dignitaries and diplomats having to fly for a mere 2 km distance to the airport due to the risks associated with using roads. Gen. Nicholson, during his interview, also presents a picture of doom and gloom stating that Afghanistan is at war, with its capital 'under attack by a determined enemy'.

The story further reflects on US cutting short the number of troops to less than 10,000 creating a deadly vacuum in 2016. This vacuum was then filled by militant groups, who successfully carried out suicide attacks and have terrorised Kabul city since then.

Logan while interviewing President Ghani enquired why the city had changed so much in recent years with tight corridors and high barriers. Ghani, who now rules from his Palace, said that it was because the war in Afghanistan had transformed from 'a war against the armies to a war against the people'.

Ghani also made a staggering claim that 21 international terrorist groups were operating in the country, making Afghanistan less safe. Such a statement gives a clear indication of how the United States and coalition forces have failed to achieve any of their intended security objectives in terms of War against Terror since invading the country in 2001. Ghani also believes that a brutal Taliban campaign has also turned the Afghan people against him.

During a tough line questioning from Logan, Ghani revealed how his country is heavily dependent on the US, with Kabul not having enough resources to sustain its military for even six months.

The US taxpayer is paying 90 percent of Afghanistan defense budget, which amounts to more than \$4 billion a year. However, even with USA's financial support for Afghan security forces, the situation is still dire. The story claims that "in just four months last year, more than 4,000 Afghan soldiers and police were wounded, another 2,500 killed. Since then, Ghani has refused to reveal casualty figures".

The story, even though roughly fifteen minutes long, not only presents a scathing account of the US failures in Afghanistan, but also provides little hope for any improvement in the security situation of Afghanistan.

Logan, in additional footage under the title '60 minutes overtime', rues the fact that her previous visits to Kabul felt safer than her latest one. Logan also claimed that the blast walls had doubled, and in some cases tripled, in size since her last visit. Finally, one of the story's producers, in the same segment, asks

'if a city controlled by US/NATO forces for 16 years is even unsafe to drive, where is the US standing in this war then?'

## US creates Afghan transit route with counter-narrative in Central Asia

The US President Donald Trump made a significant diplomatic breakthrough in the Afghan war by getting Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev to commit at their meeting in the White House on January 16 to pledge “to deepen bilateral defense and security relationships... (and) to conclude several agreements that enhance cooperation, interoperability, access, and logistical routes in support of regional security.” Nazarbayev has guaranteed the “continuous logistical support and access” to Afghanistan and to contribute in other ways to the US-led strategy to stabilize that country. These contributions include Kazakh:

- affirmation that “only” an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process will bring stability and security to Afghanistan;
- willingness to support “fair burden sharing” in tune with its past financial contributions to Afghan security forces;
- “commitment of additional support to address security challenges in Afghanistan”;
- offer to extend a program to train Afghan civilian and security personnel in Kazakhstan; and,
- participation in Afghan transportation infrastructure development projects.

In sum, Kazakhstan has stepped forward to support Trump's Afghan strategy, which aims at outright military victory. It's a resounding diplomatic triumph for Trump. Trump may have put Pakistan on notice that he is risk the transit routes and air corridor through Pakistan, which has been Islamabad's trump card all along, if push comes to shove. Trump lavishly praised Nazarbayev in his media remarks (here and here.) Moscow may not like Kazakhstan identifying with and providing a vital underpinning for Trump's Afghan strategy. But Nazarbayev is shrewdly balancing the Kazakh national interests.

He endorsed Trump's proposal to expand the C5+1 format (at foreign minister level) with the inclusion of Afghanistan. The C5+1 has been Washington's brainchild, an exclusive regional forum with Central Asian states. Through Afghanistan's inclusion, US aims to create “strategic depth” for the effective execution of the war. The Trump administration is preparing to challenge Russia's traditional influence and China's cascading influence in the region. Given Kazakhstan's geography (straddling the “strategic underbelly” of both Russia and China) Nazarbayev must be conscious that he holds a strong hand. He said with candor and great self-confidence,

☐ I'm also here representing Central Asia, in the format of five Central Asian countries... Central Asia became into the focus of big global players, because we are bordering Russia on one side; on the other side, we have China; to the south, we have an Islamic world. But we want also the United States to be present there... And we would appreciate this new format of collaboration (C5+1).

☐ Kazakhstan very steadfastly supported the fight of the United States against terrorism, and now we continue to collaborate closely in Afghanistan with your country. While the American troops are in Afghanistan, I think it's the mission of the whole world to make sure that Afghanistan is stabilized, and it's also a mission for us, as a neighboring country to see that peace prevails in Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, he also made an unwarranted reference to US-Russia tensions: “Kazakhstan, being a neighbor of Russia physically, of course, is following very closely the dynamics between the U.S. and Russian relations, which suddenly plunged into the abyss.” The old warhorse hinted subtly that Kazakh-US ties could be sequestered from the New Cold War.

The media statement mentioned Syria but pointedly ignored the Astana process (involving Russia, Turkey and Iran). Instead, it flagged the UN-led Geneva peace process. Which is ditto the US stance.

However, what may upset Moscow is that Nazarbayev and Trump agreed to “consult on sanctions issues to avoid any unintended consequences for Kazakhstan's economy.”

In effect, Nazarbayev conceded Washington's prerogative to apply the litmus test to Kazakhstan's new projects with Russia. This is the first time that Washington is openly inserting itself into the relationships between Russia and any of the Central Asian states. The message will resonate in the steppes. Again, US and Kazakhstan plan to strengthen cooperation in the “use of space technologies”. The point is, while Russia may use the Soviet-era Baikonur Cosmodrome till the lease period expires in another 10 years, the looming American presence will cast a shadow. The on-going construction of the Vostochny Cosmodrome in the Amur Oblast in the Russian Far East gains urgency. Baikonur is best known as the launch site of space missions since 1955, but a secret site there was also known to have been used to test liquid-fueled ballistic missiles. Both Russia and China will be watching closely the activities under the rubric of US-Kazakh cooperation in space technologies.

Trump is smitten by Kazakhstan with its potential to be the Kuwait of the steppes. He smells immense business possibilities to further “America First”. Trump repeatedly reminded Nazarbayev that “fair and reciprocal such an important word, reciprocal trade benefits both of our countries.” Business deals worth \$7 billion were concluded involving companies such as Boeing and General Electric.

All in all, the US has made a dramatic re-entry into the great game by enhancing the Pentagon's capacity to fight the Afghan war, while from a long term perspective, also positioning itself to compete with Russia and China for regional influence. The American analysts have propagated that the US and China have common interests in rolling back Russian influence in Central Asia. But Moscow and Beijing could see through the ploy to create misunderstanding between them. The emergent geopolitical reality won't leave Russia and China in any doubt, either.

Two main arteries of the Silk Road heading for the west are destined to run through Kazakhstan. So far, Beijing it had a free hand to advance the Belt and Road Initiative. But the US is sure to create a counter-narrative. The proposed “C5+1+Afghanistan” is the harbinger of new tidings. Trump and Nazarbayev agreed to “pursue initiatives fostering greater political and economic cooperation in the region.”

# US - Pakistan split - Whither Afghanistan?

By Andrew Korybko

The escalating tensions between the US and Pakistan over what Washington says is Islamabad's provision of "safe havens to terrorists" might lead to NATO being cut off from Afghanistan. In a telling sign of his priorities for the year, Trump's first foreign policy tweet of 2018 slammed Pakistan and was soon thereafter followed up by the suspension of an estimated \$900 million of military aid to the South Asian state. In response, the Pakistani Foreign Minister stated that his country was no longer in an alliance with the US and said that its partner was treating it as a "whipping boy" for its failure in Afghanistan, powerfully remarking that America is "a friend who always betrays". This gave rise to a growing choir of voices in Pakistan who are urging the government to suspend the US' transit rights through their territory en route to Afghanistan, effectively dealing a major blow to Trump's mini-surge there, while others have said that Islamabad should massively raise its transit fees instead in order to recoup its losses.

About those, Prime Minister Abbasi actually claimed that his country never even received anywhere near the almost \$1 billion that Trump said that he'll freeze, telling The Guardian that "the aid in the last five years at least has been less than \$10m a year. It is a very, very insignificant amount. So when I read in the paper that aid at the level of \$250m or 500 or 900 has been cut, we at least are not aware of that aid." The downward spiral of US-Pakistani relations reminds people of what happened back in 2011 when NATO killed 28 Pakistani troops and Islamabad responded by stopping the bloc's access to Afghanistan, forcing it rely on the much longer and costlier multimodal "Lapis Lazuli" corridor across the Caucasus and Central Asia.

The stakes are raised even higher now because not only is a repeat of this scenario being contemplated, but Pakistan announced that over 1.5 million Afghan refugees have 30 days to leave the country after their legal presence there ended at the beginning of 2018, and Kabul will probably be thrown even deeper into crisis if it's suddenly forced to provide for a roughly 4% spike in its population. Of course, Pakistan might ultimately be bluffing, but its best bet is nevertheless to play the Afghan card in one capacity or another as an asymmetrical response to the US. Farooq Moin, Pakistani journalist who's travelled around the world for news coverage since 1976, and Shahid Hameed, Islamabad-based International Relations analyst and regular contributor to 'Urdu Alerts' & 'Kashmir Points', shared their views.

**Middle East**

# Trump's failed coup in Iran

By Eric Margolis

Listen to the state-'guided' US media this past week and you'd believe a series of spontaneous anti-government protests broke out across Iran. The protests, according to President Donald Trump and his Israeli allies, were caused by 'anger over Iran's spending billions on wars in Syria, Iraq and Lebanon and helping the Palestinian movement Hamas.' Trump tweeted that Iranians were finally rising up against what he called their hated, brutal regime.

Talk about manufactured news. Most Iranians were elated and proud of their nation's role in thwarting US plans to occupy much of Syria and overthrow the government of President Bashar al-Assad. By contrast, the other side in this long proxy war—the US, Israel, Saudi Arabia and Britain—was smarting with defeat and seeking ways to exact revenge on the hateful trio, Syria, Iran and Russia.

Interestingly, the so-called news of protests over Iran's military spending did not apparently originate in Iran but rather in Washington which spread it far and wide to our state-guided media. This was clumsy, but the US and Israel were so eager to get this piece of made-up good news out that they forget the basics of propaganda management: wait for the event before you proclaim it.

What in fact was going on in Iran where more than 21 demonstrators have died violent deaths? As a very long-time Iran watcher allow me to explain. Restive minority groups in Iran's Kurdish, Azeri and Sunni Arab regions, most far from the big cities, have been demonstrating and protesting severe economic problems. Iran is a big, resource-rich nation of 80 million people that should be booming. But it has been under economic siege warfare by the US and its allies ever since a popular uprising in 1979 overthrew the US-British backed monarchy that was raping the nation and keeping it a vassal of the western powers.

Iran's new Islamic Republic was deemed a dire threat to Western and Israeli strategic and military interests (think Saudi Arabia). The very idea that the Islamic Republic would follow the tenets of Islam and share oil wealth with the needy was anathema to London and Washington. Israel's intelligence agency, Mossad, ran Iran's dreaded, brutal secret police, Savak. The crooked royal family looted the nation and stored their swag in California.

The West's first act was to induce Saddam Hussein's Iraq to invade Iran, in Sept 1980. The West (including the Gulf Arabs) armed, financed and supplied Iraq. As I discovered in Baghdad, Britain and the US supplied Iraq with poison gas and germ warfare toxins. After eight years, 250,000 Iraqis were killed and nearly one million Iranians died.

Ever since the Islamic Revolution, the US, Britain, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Arabs have been trying to overthrow the Tehran government and mount a counter-revolution. CIA and Britain's MI6 has ample practice: in 1953, the CIA and MI6 mounted an elaborate operation to overthrow Iran's democratically-elected leader, Mohammed Mossadegh who sought to nationalize Iran's British-owned oil company. Mobs of specially trained anti-Mossadegh plotters poured into Tehran's streets. Bombs went off. Army commanders were suborned, lavish bribes handed out.

The 1953 coup went perfectly. Mossadegh was ousted with backing from the Army and Savak. Iran's oil remained safe in western hands. The successful Iran uprising became the template for future 'color revolutions' in Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Russia, Poland, and Romania. But in 2009 a US-engineered 'color revolution' in Iran went badly wrong even though it used all the latest arts of social media to whip up protestors and deploy them in the streets. Something similar happened in Iran this past weekend where mobs of 20-somethings, agitated by US and British covert social media, poured into the streets of dingy provincial towns.

As of now, this medium-sized uprising in Iran looks to be over, though it could re-ignite at any time. Young Iranians, at least 40% of the population, suffer due to 50% unemployment. Iran's \$11 trillion economy is extremely fragile and in some cases barely functioning after decades of US-engineered economic warfare and boycotts. High unemployment is a result of US economic warfare and bullying other nations not to do business with Iran, producing 13% overall unemployment and a 40% inflation rate. The latter and wide-scale corruption were the spark that ignited the latest riots.

In two more weeks, President Trump, who makes no secret of his hatred and contempt for Muslims, must decide whether to reaffirm the multilateral nuclear energy deal with Iran or heed Israel's demands and refuse to certify it. His cutoff this week of US military aid to Muslim Pakistan bodes ill for Iran. Many Iranians observing the current US-North Korea nuclear standoff will wonder if their nation was not better off continuing its nuclear program and holding the Saudi oil fields at risk to deter a US attack. Trump's wild, inconsistent and often infantile responses on this issue are making matters murkier...and ever more dangerous.

# 6 ways life in SA will change in 2018

By Zahraa Alkhalisi

The kingdom is pushing ahead with an economic overhaul aimed at ending what Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman once called its "addiction" to oil. Change is now coming thick and fast, and several major reforms announced since bin Salman unveiled his Vision 2030 in 2016 will take effect this year. "Many Saudi government shifts... have been a long time coming," said Sam Blatteis, CEO of The MENA Catalysts, a regional public policy advisory firm. "Reforming an economy as large as Saudi Arabia is almost like moving an aircraft carrier. It's probably not wise to make quick turns," he added.

Here are some of the biggest changes slated for the coming 12 months:

## **Gas prices are going up**

Saudis have just started paying a lot more for gas. State-owned Aramco, the world's biggest oil producer, jacked up prices at the pump by as much as 127% on January 1. Premium gasoline now costs 2.04 riyals per liter -- equivalent to about \$2.05 a gallon. "Though this could weaken consumption, this was expected and should reaffirm the government's resolve to driving the growth of the non-oil economy," said Riyadh-based Al Rajhi Capital in a report. Saudis are also paying more for most consumer goods and services. A new 5% sales tax took effect on January 1, part of an effort to boost government revenues from sources other than oil.

## **Cinemas will return**

Saudis will get to go to the movies. After a 35-year ban, the government will begin granting commercial movie theater licenses this year, and it expects the first cinemas to open their doors in March. International and regional chains are already eyeing opportunities in the new market of 30 million people. AMC (AMC) CEO Adam Aron told CNN Money that the movie market in the kingdom could be worth \$1 billion.

## **Women will be able to drive....**

A long-standing ban on women driving will finally be lifted in June. The announcement followed a royal decree in September. Many women campaigned for the right to drive for years and some have been arrested for defying the ban. The move is expected to spur growth and give women a much bigger role in the economy. Only 22% of women are active in the workforce. Vision 2030 aims to lift that to 30%. The government has set itself the target of generating 65% of GDP from the private sector, and getting more women into work is key.

## **And watch sporting events**

Women will be allowed into three stadiums in major cities. The General Sport Authority, the country's governing body for sports, said in October that three of the country's biggest stadiums will begin "accommodating families" early in the year. Saudi men and women are customarily separated in public places. But that restriction is also slowly being relaxed. Men and women were able to sit together at several music concerts and events in 2017. "The most notable reforms this year will involve advancing women's rights," said Salman Al-Ansari, president of the Saudi American Public Relation Affairs Committee. "In fact, I wouldn't be surprised at all if we see the appointment of a Saudi woman to a ministerial position."

## **Tourists will get visas**

Tourists will be able to visit Saudi Arabia for the first time. Prince Sultan bin Salman, head of the Saudi tourism and national heritage commission, told CNNMoney's Richard Quest that the kingdom would issue its first tourist visas in 2018. Visas were previously restricted to people traveling to the country for work or to visit its holy sites. The kingdom has ambitious plans to grow its tourism industry. It has already announced several projects, including one to build a series of resorts on about 100 miles of the Red Sea's sandy coastline. It is aiming to attract 30 million visitors a year by 2030, up from 18 million in 2016.

## **Aramco will be privatized**

Saudi officials have repeatedly stated that they're planning to sell a small stake in Aramco in 2018. If it happens, the sale is expected to be the biggest stock market listing in history. Officials have said they expect

an initial public offering to value Aramco at around \$2 trillion. If the market agrees, selling just 5% would raise \$100 billion. Apart from the exact timing and size of the IPO, Saudi Arabia still has to decide where to list Aramco. It's also reportedly keeping open the option of selling a stake to a strategic investor first.

**'Courtesy CNN'**

## US, Israel step up hybrid war in Syria

The Russian airbase in Syria, Hmeimim, and the naval base at Tartus came under simultaneous drone attack. The advanced Russian air defence system thwarted the attack. A wave of 13 drones was involved, and, interestingly, three of them were brought down intact. After forty-eight hours of careful analysis of the incident, Russian Defence Ministry in Moscow came out with a statement: During the hours of darkness Russian air defense facilities made clear 13 remoted unknown small-sized air targets approaching the Russian military assets. Ten combat UAVs were approaching Russia's Hmeymim air base and three more the logistics center of Tartus.

Engineering solutions used by terrorists when attacking Russian facilities in Syria could have been received only from a country with high technological potential on providing satellite navigation and distant control of firing competently assembled self-made explosive devices in appointed place. The countries with such "high technological potential" and capability for "Satellite navigation and distant control" which are involved in the proxy war in Syria are just two in number United States and Israel. Take your pick. To my mind, it is improbable that Israel, despite its bravado, would dare to attack Russia.

In sum, there was a spiteful American attack on Russian "assets" on the Christmas Day of the Russian Orthodox Church. The statement in Moscow was made after evaluation of the 3 drones that have been captured. It's fairly explicit tone is meant for the folks in Pentagon. To be sure, Pentagon suo moto came out with a pre-emptive statement deflecting the blame to Syrian rebels. That is an act of plausible deniability, since there are rebel groups operating in northern Syria. But they are al-Qaeda affiliates, who are American and Israeli proxies. The RT has a tongue-in-cheek rejoinder, here, to the Pentagon disclaimer.

Why is the US is contesting the Russian bases in Syria? The point is, these Russian bases are located in Latakia province along the Mediterranean coast. And the US military objective is to gain access to the Mediterranean coast for the Kurdistan enclave it is creating in Syria without which the enclave will be landlocked and dependent critically on supply routes via Turkey or Iraq, apart from being economically unviable (although it is an oil-rich region of Syria.) The Saudi establishment daily Asharq Al-Awsat reported that the Trump administration is planning to grant diplomatic recognition to the Kurdistan enclave in northern Syria (which is of the size of Lebanon.) The idea is to create a permanent foothold for the US and Israel in a strategic, economically self-sufficient independent Kurdistan where the borders of Turkey, Iraq and Syria meet, and which may eventually reach Iran's western border with northern Iraq.

But the US-Israeli strategy will remain a pipedream if the Kurdistsn is land-locked and continues to be challenged by Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria. Hence the criticality of creating an access route to the Mediterranean via Latakia province. Russia and Turkey understand the US intentions perfectly well. That explains their latest move to clear the al-Qaeda affiliate groups that are ensconced in the Idlib province adjacent to Latakia. The Syrian government forces and its allied militia with Russian air support are advancing on Idlib in an operation that began last week. Idlib is a fairly big province and some protracted fighting is needed to vanquish these al-Qaeda groups. Syrian government forces captured a strategic town, Sinjar, which brings them within 20 kilometers of the sprawling air base at Abu Zuhour in Idlib. By the way, the highway connecting Damascus and Aleppo also passes through eastern Idlib.

Turkey is cooperating with Russia in clearing Idlib of the al-Qaeda groups. (Idlib borders Turkey.) Indeed, Turkey is staunchly opposed to the US efforts to create a Kurdistan in northern Syria.

President Recep Erdogan openly threatened last weekend that Washington will “never be able to turn northern Syria into a terror corridor,” vowing to “hit them (US) very hard. They should know that we are determined on this. Areas that they consider as part of the terror corridor could turn out to be their graves.”

Conceivably, the recent attempts by the US and Israel to stir up turmoil within Iran is linked to all this. The US-Israeli game plan is to get Iran bogged down in internal issues. The Syrian and Iraqi governments are dependent on Iran and Hezbollah to do the heavy lifting in the war against the US-backed al-Qaeda and ISIS groups. Tehran understands the US-Israeli strategy. The Iranian regime is highly experienced in defeating the US and Israel covert operations. The Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei understands that the Syrian conflict is also an existential battle for Iran. The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps commanders are on record that the choice is between fighting the US-Israeli proxies in Syria and Iraq or fighting them on Iranian soil.

How will Moscow react to the US-backed drone attack on its bases? A permanent solution lies in retaliating against the American forces and inflicting heavy casualties like in Beirut in 1983. If a few dozen American body bags arrive in Washington from Syria, President Trump is sure to say, 'enough is enough, boys, come home.' But the problem is that the US is fighting a “hybrid war”, embedded within the Kurdish militia and cannot be targeted easily. Pentagon has also inserted “contractors” (American mercenaries) so that political risk is minimized. Therefore, Russia's option will be to step up the operations to cleanse Idlib province of the al-Qaeda groups backed by US and Israel once and for all. Indeed, Nikki Haley will begin howling in the UN on Israeli instructions alleging “war crimes.”

Of course, as they say, all is fair in love and war and there is another option open to the Russians or Iranians, too equipping the Afghan Taliban with drones. But they are unlikely to go that far as of now, at least.

## **Arab states to seek recognition of East Jerusalem as Palestinian capital**

Jordan's foreign minister and the head of the Arab League said they would push for an international resolution on naming Jerusalem as the Palestinian capital. This follows the US move to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's. Arab states will push for the international community to recognize East Jerusalem as the capital of a Palestinian state, Jordan's foreign minister said, a month after US President Donald Trump recognized the city as Israel's capital.

"We will confront the US decision by seeking a resolution, an international one, to recognize a Palestinian state on 1967 borders with Jerusalem as its capital," Ayman Safadi said following a meeting of Arab leaders in the Jordanian capital, Amman. Foreign ministers of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, the United Arab Emirates and the Palestinian Authority attended the meeting along with the head of the Arab League, Ahmed Abul Gheit.

Speaking alongside Safadi, Gheit said foreign ministers would attend a meeting of all Arab League states to discuss the decision at the end of January. He added they would also discuss Washington's role in ongoing peace talks between Israeli and Palestinian leaders. "We want to lessen any losses on the Palestinian side and lessen the Israeli gains," he said.

### **Arab indignation**

Many Arabs consider the eastern part of Jerusalem as the capital of a future Palestinian state. They reject Israel's claim over the entire city, which it captured in a 1967 war and later annexed, as illegal. Trump's decision to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital led to fierce anti-American and anti-Israeli protests in multiple Arab countries in December.

The Arab League branded the move a "dangerous violation of international law" with no legal impact. At the end of December, a majority of the UN General Assembly rejected the US decision, while the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) called on "all countries to recognize the State of Palestine and East Jerusalem as its occupied capital."

The city's fate is a central issue in the ongoing peace talks between Israeli and Palestinian leaders. In 2012, the UN General Assembly voted to make Palestine a "non-member observer state," deemed by many a de facto recognition of statehood. It also reiterated a longstanding UN call for Israelis and Palestinians to resolve the future status of Jerusalem through negotiations.

Jordan's King Abdullah II appeared to support that position when he told Arab diplomats that "the question of Jerusalem must be resolved within the framework of a just and lasting peace agreement between Palestinians and Israelis."

**'Courtesy Deutsche Welle'.**

**CHINA**

# A Chinese drone for all seasons

The MIT Technology Review featured a riveting article some months ago entitled China's AI Awakening. Its blurb was positively startling: 'The West shouldn't fear China's artificial-intelligence revolution. It should copy it'. For any Indian seething with a sense of rivalry vis-à-vis China, the article gives a sinking feeling. On how many fronts simultaneously can you 'rival' with someone who belongs to a far higher league ranging from Buddhism to Doklam to Belt and Road Initiative?

The AI puts China in an exclusive league with the United States and, possibly, Russia. How did China manage it? It's innovation, stupid! An IMF economist wrote last week that "China is on track to be the world's innovation leader. By the end of 2018, it will be apparent to all just how quickly and easily this latest chapter in the Chinese success story will be written." He went on to explain how China has managed this and there is indeed some food for thought in it for the Indian leadership and policymakers who craft our China policies along the archaic formula of 'rivalry':

Total spending on R&D in China (as a percentage of GDP) more than doubled from 0.9% in 2000 to 2.1% in 2016. To date, the increase has mostly been focused on applied research and commercial development, with only 5% dedicated to basic science. Nevertheless, China ranked 22nd in the 2017 Global Innovation Index ... China's share of high-impact academic publications (the top 0.1% of papers in Scopus, which rates by citations) has grown, from less than 1% in 1997 to about 20% in 2016.

The sheer volume of university graduates (6.2 million in 2012, six times the 2001 total) combined with an internationally trained, highly skilled diaspora whose members return home in large numbers there are 800,000 Chinese students in tertiary education abroad is likely to produce enough talent to achieve the desired effect.

Coming back to the topic of AI, Financial Times carried an essay recently expanding on the theme of the MIT Technology Review article, which estimated that China's target is no less than becoming "the world's unchallenged AI superpower... US and Chinese tech companies alike are ploughing money and talent into AI, but Beijing's blueprint for investing in artificial intelligence creating a \$150bn industry by 2030 underlines its desire to beat the US."

The Chinese media disclosed on the New Year Day that in "combat-ready" drone aircraft, China has perhaps overtaken the US. The Global Times newspaper reported on Monday that the a high-end reconnaissance-strike unmanned aerial system (UAS) drone named as Wing Loong II UAS "will be widely used in future military operations." During multiple live-fire tests, the drone had a hit rate of 100 percent by hitting five targets in succession "with five different types of missiles in a single sortie" in simultaneous operations from a single ground station. It claimed that the drone "successfully hit a moving target that the US counterpart had failed to hit for eight years."

Once China completes its global navigation satellite system, "we will soon develop a true global combat capability." For the present, though, the UAS will be deployed in "China's future military actions... and border patrol operations." An intriguing part of the report was that China has "already obtained the largest order of Chinese advanced large-scale UAVs in the overseas market, even before its maiden flight." Who could have placed the "largest order"? No second guesses, please. Hopefully, the drone that Adani Enterprises Ltd. plans to manufacture in Gujarat will indeed 'rival' Wing Loong II UAS when it hovers in the skies above our western border with Pakistan. Or else, all this becomes fake rivalry.

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# China's breathtaking transformation into a scientific superpower

By Robert J. Samuelson

The National Science Foundation and the National Science Board have just released their biennial "Science & Engineering Indicators," a voluminous document describing the state of American technology. There are facts and figures on research and development, innovation and engineers. But the report's main conclusion lies elsewhere: China has become or is on the verge of becoming a scientific and technical superpower.

We should have expected nothing less. After all, science and technology constitute the knowledge base for economically advanced societies and military powers, and China aspires to become the world leader in both. Still, the actual numbers are breathtaking for the speed with which they've been realized.

Remember that a quarter-century ago, China's economy was tiny and its high-tech sector barely existed. Since then, here's what's happened, according to the "Indicators" report:

- China has become the second-largest R & D spender in 2015. Only the United States, at 26 percent, ranks higher, but if present growth rates continue, China will soon become the biggest spender. From 2000 to 2015, Chinese R & D spending, accounting for 21 percent of the world total of nearly \$2 trillion in R & D outlays grew an average of 18 percent annually, more than four times faster than the U.S. rate of 4 percent.
- There has been an explosion of technical papers by Chinese teams. Although the United States and the European Union each produce more studies on biomedical subjects, China leads in engineering studies. American papers tend to be cited more often than the Chinese papers, suggesting that they involve more fundamental research questions, but China is catching up.
- China has dramatically expanded its technical workforce. From 2000 to 2014, the annual number of science and engineering bachelor's degree graduates went from about 359,000 to 1.65 million. Over the same period, the comparable number of U.S. graduates went from about 483,000 to 742,000.

Not only has Chinese technology expanded. It has also gotten more ambitious. Much of China's high-tech production once consisted of assembling sophisticated components made elsewhere. Now, says the report, it's venturing into demanding areas "such as supercomputers and smaller jetliners."

Of course, there are qualifications. China still lags in patents received. Over the past decade, American firms and inventors account for about half the U.S. patents annually, and most of the rest go to Europeans and Japanese. Recall also that China's population of 1.4 billion is more than four times ours; not surprisingly, it needs more scientists, engineers and technicians.

In a sane world shorn of nationalistic, economic, racial and ethnic conflicts none of this would be particularly alarming. Technology is mobile, and gains made in China could be enjoyed elsewhere, and vice versa. But in our contentious world, China's technological prowess is potentially threatening, as the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, a congressional watchdog group, has often pointed out.

One danger is military. If China makes a breakthrough in a crucial technology—satellites, missiles, cyber warfare, artificial intelligence, electromagnetic weapons—the result could be a major shift in the strategic balance and, possibly, war.

Even if this doesn't happen, warns the commission, China's determination to dominate new industries such as artificial intelligence, telecommunications and computers could lead to economic

warfare if China maintains subsidies and discriminatory policies to sustain its firms' competitive advantage.

"Industries like computing, robotics, and biotechnology are pillars of U.S. economic competitiveness, sustaining and creating millions of high-paying jobs and high-value-added exports," the commission said in its latest annual report. "The loss of global leadership in these future drivers of global growth" would weaken the American economy. Chinese theft of U.S. industrial trade secrets compounds the danger.

The best response to this technological competition is to reinvigorate America's own technological base. For example: Overhaul immigration to favor high-skilled newcomers, not relatives of previous immigrants; raise defense spending on new technologies to counter China; increase other federal spending on "basic research." (Government provides most of the money for this research, which is the quest for knowledge for its own sake, and amazingly has cut spending in recent years).

"We are involved in a global race for knowledge," said France Córdova, head of the NSF. "We may be the innovation leader today, but other countries are rapidly gaining ground."

It is hardly surprising that China has hitched its economic wagon to advanced technologies. What is less clear and more momentous is our willingness and ability to recognize this and do something about it.

# China's end game

## The path towards global leadership

By Timothy R. Heath

Dueling high level strategy documents in both the United States and China portend an intensifying competition for leadership and influence at the global systemic level. The coming years are likely to see a deepening contest in the diplomatic, economic, cyber, and information domains, even as the risks of major war remain low. Although the US strategy has garnered considerable scrutiny, less attention has been paid to the directives outlined in key official Chinese strategy documents.

The National Security Strategy recently released by the Trump administration surprised many in its stark depiction of China as a “revisionist power” that seeks to “displace the United States in the Indo-Pacific region.” The strategy's striking tone has drawn widespread commentary, but in many ways it reflects a grim, but realistic recognition of the realities of a deepening rivalry. Indeed, a closer look at authoritative Chinese documents suggests that preparations are well underway in that country to compete with the United States at the global level.

In the 19th Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Congress report, China's most authoritative strategy document, Beijing articulated for the first time an ambition to contend for global leadership. It stated that by mid-century, China seeks to have “become a global leader in terms of composite national strength and international influence.” Given that China already has the second largest economy and one of the largest militaries in the world, this phrasing strongly suggests that, over the long term, China is mulling competition with the United States for the status of global leader.

Beyond reasons of prestige, global leadership affords a country the opportunity to reap considerable economic and security benefits by shaping international norms, rules, and institutions, as the United States has done since World War II. And if trends that narrow the gap in national power continue, global competition between the two giants could become unavoidable in any case.

To be sure, the future remains undetermined and there are many reasons why China may never succeed in mounting such a challenge, but the report's contents suggest China's leaders are positioning the country to seize such an incredible opportunity should it present itself.

### China's interest in global leadership

Clues as to the sort of preparations underway can be seen in the sections of the 19th Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Congress report that outline policy objectives for 2035, a new category designed to serve as an intermediary point between the two well-known centenaries of 2021 (centenary of the founding of the CCP) and 2049 (centenary of the founding of the People's Republic of China).

The objectives reflect a much stronger awareness of the need to compete globally than was the case in previous CCP Congress reports. The shifting emphasis reflects the reality that China has grown into a great power with global interests, and that consequently elements of domestic and international policy increasingly overlap.

Underscoring this point, the 19th CCP Congress report describes China's ambitions as interlinked with the world. It observed, “The dream of the Chinese people is closely connected with the dreams of the peoples of other countries.” Not coincidentally, the 19th CCP Congress elevated the role of the Foreign Ministry in policy making.

The goals outlined for 2035 hint at the need for global competition. But as a public document, the report unsurprisingly features diplomatic and elusive terms on sensitive topics, such as foreign policy. Some clues about Beijing's intentions can nevertheless be deduced through careful study of the report's entire contents, however.

For example, the report directs officials to avoid war and maintain peaceful, cooperative relations with the United States and other great powers. It also highlights the need to safeguard core interests of sovereignty and territory, as well as protect the resources, markets, and citizens abroad needed for national development. These imperatives are not new, but they will probably remain essential for years to come.

The report does introduce new requirements, however, such as the need to achieve technological leadership, build a network of strategic partnerships, and expand China's international influence and involvement in global governance.

## **Technological leadership**

The 19th CCP Congress report stated that by 2035, China seeks to have “become a global leader in innovation.” This ambition is important for three reasons. First, leadership in technological innovation increases the likelihood that a country will enjoy higher productivity and wealth than its peers.

Second, the transferability of military and civilian technology means that a technologically advanced country is better positioned to build a premier military an idea captured in the report's directives for “military-civilian fusion.” Third, technological leadership enhances a country's international influence, or “soft power,” because others tend to emulate the world's technological leader and the lifestyle changes it affords. Indeed, some experts regard the contest for technological leadership as among the most consequential for deciding global leadership.

## **Build a global network of strategic partnerships**

Any global superpower requires a network of supportive, powerful countries to bolster its authority. Traditionally, this has meant military alliances, but China is exploring alternative arrangements. The 19th CCP Congress report directed the development of a network of “partnerships, not alliances.”

Commentary in the People's Daily, the official newspaper of the CCP, explained (in Chinese) that this means China will “form a global partnership network.” Articulating the logic of this idea, the commentary argued that in the contemporary world, countries are more threatened by a lack of development and nontraditional threats than by traditional threats, and thus China has concluded that partnerships may actually prove more relevant and useful than traditional security alliances.

The commentary stated that China has established partnerships with “about 100 countries, regions, and regional organizations.”

## **Expanded international influence and leadership**

The 19th CCP Congress report outlined goals to expand the country's “soft power” and its international leadership. Among goals set for 2035, the 19th CCP Congress report declared, “China's cultural soft power will have grown much stronger” and “Chinese culture will have greater appeal.”

The report also called for China to take an “active part in reforming and developing the global governance system” and “keep contributing Chinese wisdom and strength to global governance.”

## **How China plans to prevail in global competition**

The report carries contradictory guidance on how to realize these ambitions. For example, the 19th CCP Congress report stated, on the one hand, that China “opposes acts” that “interfere in the internal affairs of others.” This directive argues for a passive approach to international developments, no matter the consequences for China's interests. On the other hand, the report stated, “No one should expect China to swallow anything that undermines our interests.”

This argues for an energetic involvement in the affairs of other countries to disrupt or defeat any threat to China's interests. This contradiction lies at the heart of the most critical challenges for China's foreign policy in the next few decades: how to intervene in other countries to safeguard and advance China's interests without appearing to do so.

The 19th CCP Congress report's contents suggest that Chinese leaders aim to resolve this conundrum in part by enhancing the country's prestige. China's pursuit of steady growth, technological leadership, cultural superiority, and a modern military, if successful, could incentivize countries to respect a wealthy and powerful China's interests and avoid antagonistic policies.

But enhanced prestige is unlikely to suffice. The report's contents recognize that more direct means may be required to protect China's overseas interests. In addition to activities undertaken under United Nations authority, Chinese leaders are exploring ways to incentivize foreign leaders and build political support in other countries. Some of these methods are reviewed below.

### **Manipulation of diplomatic incentives**

Through partnerships, Chinese officials seek to employ incentives and punishments to induce leaders in other countries to respond to Chinese concerns. Partnerships are depicted as highly moralistic, reciprocal relationships in which China bestows financial and other benefits in exchange for deference and cooperation on issues of importance to Beijing. For example, the 19th CCP Congress report described partnerships in terms of “cooperation” on issues that advance “justice” and “profits” and yield “win-win” outcomes.

Left unspoken, but implied, is the idea that insufficient cooperation could result in punishments through economic sanctions, diplomatic freezes, or other measures. A recent example of such punitive actions can be seen in China's decision to cancel concerts by South Korean music bands and scale back import of some goods to signal displeasure with Seoul's decision to proceed with hosting the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) missile system. One Chinese scholar explained the logic of such a reciprocating, hierarchical relationship as one of “the more you do for others, the more you have; the more you give, the more you get.”

### **Deepen regional dependence through integration**

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) aims to deepen “connectivity” in policy, infrastructure, trade, financial, and inter-personal contact across the Eurasian landmass. Chinese officials and scholars explain that the BRI will grant China the advantage of extending its influence by expanding the number of countries that depend on standards of technologies and infrastructure set by China.

As Wang Yiwei, a scholar at People's University, explained (in Chinese), the BRI provides the advantage of “interoperability based on infrastructure construction” and standards set by China. Wang cited in particular areas such as high-speed rail, nuclear power, energy, electricity grid, and information technology connectivity in which Chinese companies will gain advantage.

“If Eurasia forms an interoperable whole” under presumably Chinese leadership, Wang concluded, “then there will not be much left for the United States.”

## **Increase reform of international institutions and agenda setting**

In a commentary published in People's Daily, State Councilor Yang Jiechi explained (in Chinese) that the 19th CCP Congress calls for an expansion of China's influence in existing institutions and the creation of new ones as needed. Chinese leaders have stepped up senior leader engagement in international venues, such as the Davos Summit, G-20, United Nations and Paris Climate Accord.

Where existing institutions have proven insufficiently responsive to Chinese demands, China has created alternatives, such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. Yang Jiechi also noted that the UN has incorporated some Chinese concepts, such as the idea of a “community of common destiny,” into its documents.

## **Expand United Front tactics**

The CCP has upgraded the importance of its “United Front” - a CCP led organization dedicated to building a domestic and international coalition of individuals, groups, and organizations that support Beijing's aims. Reflecting its growing importance, authorities established a central leading group on the topic in 2015.

In a 2017 article, the United Front Department's Research Office (in Chinese) defined its “new direction” in terms of “the three tasks of serving the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, safeguarding the state's core interests, and maintaining the long term stability of Hong Kong and Macao and complete the unification of the motherland.” The article noted that Xi had directed the United Front to build the broadest base of support possible based on common interests in other countries.

## **Mobilize overseas Chinese**

Chinese authorities regard diaspora, or overseas Chinese, as an important resource for advancing the country's agenda. The 19th CCP Congress called for “uniting” with overseas Chinese to “revitalize the Chinese nation.”

In a 2017 article, State Councilor Yang Jiechi called (in Chinese) for cultivating overseas Chinese support for the Belt and Road Initiative as a means of accessing advanced technology. Yang Jiechi also characterized cooperation with ethnic Chinese abroad as an “important means to contain separatist forces and safeguard the core interests of the country.”

Reflecting the growing strategic importance of the diaspora, the Chinese government appears to be taking an interest in how other countries treat ethnic Chinese. In the same article, Yang stated that it had become “necessary to actively push the governments of other countries to build a favorable environment conducive to the survival and development of ethnic Chinese compatriots.”

China's approach to extending its global influence differs considerably from that taken by the United States or imperial European powers of past centuries. Lacking an imperialistic military or the U.S. advantage of globally distributed armed forces, China has little choice but to rely on a more diffuse and loose-knit approach involving diplomacy, limited deployment of military, paramilitary and contractor security forces, covert intelligence operations, propaganda, and the use of economic and political benefits and sanctions.

The wide range of resources available provides China the flexibility to tailor its approach to the type of country involved. For example, in impoverished and weakly institutionalized countries, China may support local security forces or hold regimes accountable and withhold support when they fail to do so, as appears to have happened recently in Zimbabwe.

In wealthier and more politically stable countries, by contrast, China may find more useful the use of propaganda, united front tactics, and the mobilization of ethnic Chinese citizen sentiment to mute criticism and protect Chinese interests. Sensational reports of just these sorts of tactics in Australia, New Zealand, Canada and Great Britain have recently made headlines.

### **Overlapping, parallel globalizations?**

Fearing the risks of an escalating rivalry, China and the United States have for years faced the prospect of competition with well-founded apprehension. China attempted to head off rivalry by proposing a “new type of great power relationship,” while the United States emphasized cooperation with China, even as it bolstered its military position and presence in Asia under President Obama's “Rebalance to Asia.”

But the 19th CCP Congress report's directions and the Trump administration's designation of China as a strategic competitor signals the competition may be evolving into a more intense stage.

Thankfully, the risks of military conflict remain low, owing principally to the fact that globalized production, trade interdependence, mobility of populations and the spread of transnational threats continue to provide powerful incentives for the two countries to maintain cooperative relations. Nor is there any serious domestic or international support for global conflict.

Beneath the placid surface of cooperative relations, however, the two countries appear poised to step up the struggle for advantage. The struggle could intensify in the shadowy worlds of diplomatic maneuvering, influence operations, elite politics and cyberspace. Incapable of challenging U.S. power openly, China will likely instead focus on increasing its national competitiveness in technology, commerce, diplomatic influence and military strength.

In geopolitical terms, China is likely to prioritize efforts to further Eurasia's integration. If it succeeds, the result could be the emergence of parallel, interpenetrating globalized orders that share some institutions in common, but reflect divergent values, norms, and standards. To retain its leadership position and the immense benefits that it confers, the United States will require global vision, foresighted policies to bolster technological advantage, energetic and skillful diplomacy, adept intelligence operations, and savvy management of alliances and partnerships, especially in Asia and Europe.

The challenge of managing an intensifying contest in a stable manner will test the leaders of both China and the United States and bear directly on the prospects for peace and prosperity for the entire world.

**America**

## US creates rift among Russia, Turkey & Iran

Turkey summoned the US charge d'affaires in Ankara to convey its concerns over the US' continuing support for the Kurdish militia in Syria with weapons and training, President Recep Erdogan threatened on January 15 that it is resolute about thwarting the attempt by Washington to consolidate the emergence of a Kurdish enclave in northern Syria under American protection.

Erdogan said that Turkish military has completed its preparation to move against the Kurdish militia in their canton of Afrin, in northwestern Syria, and Manbij, in northern Syria. He added, "The operation may start any time. Operations into other regions will come after," noting that the Turkish army was already hitting the Kurdish positions. Erdogan said, "America has acknowledged it is in the process of creating a terror army on our border. What we have to do is nip this terror army in the bud."

On January 14, Turkish Foreign Ministry also issued a statement saying Turkey had reiterated on numerous occasions that it was "wrong and objectionable" to cooperate with the Syrian Kurdish militia. "On the other hand, the establishment of the so-called 'Syria Border Protection Force' (by the US) was not consulted with Turkey, which is a member of the (US-led anti-terrorist) coalition," the statement said.

It was also unknown which coalition members approved this decision, the ministry said. "To attribute such a unilateral step to the whole coalition is an extremely wrong move that could harm the fight against Daesh," it added.

On another plane, what emerges is that the US ploy to create misunderstanding between Moscow and Ankara by stage-managing the drone strike recently at the Russian bases in Syria from Idlib province close to the Turkish border has flopped. Erdogan telephoned President Vladimir Putin last week to talk's things over and the latter since then openly endorsed the assessment by the Defence Ministry in Moscow that the drone technology used in the attack was far too sophisticated to be handled by terrorist groups without the support of an advanced country. In effect, Moscow hinted at an American conspiracy.

At a press conference in Moscow today, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov also hit hard on the US' gameplan in northern Syria. For the first time, he made the specific allegation that Washington is working on the "separation of a huge territory along the borders with Turkey and Iraq" from the rest of Syria. Analysts have estimated that the area works out to a quarter of Syrian territory. Lavrov hinted that Moscow, Tehran and Ankara are in consultation on the issue. As he put it, "We, like our Turkish and Iranian partners, like many others, I am sure, are expecting detailed explanations from the US."

Meanwhile, Tehran has also voiced concern over the American (and Turkish) moves in northern Syria. The Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) Ali Shamkhani warned of the dangers posed to the regional states by the occupation of Syria.

"Any political or military action to target a part of the Syrian territories which are under the terrorist groups' control or occupation of the Syrian lands by foreign forces runs counter to people's interests, is considered as a threat to the regional countries and doomed to failure," Shamkhani warned.

However, a military confrontation between Turkey and the US is unlikely to happen. Erdogan is good at brinkmanship. Nonetheless, his future course of action will bear watch. The point is, Turkey also has its own agenda in northern Syria and may well use the presence of Kurdish militia forces along its

border regions as pretext for staging new military operations in northern Syria. Equally, Turkey still has an ambivalent relationship with some of the extremist groups operating in Idlib.

All in all a complicated matrix is developing in northern Syria where Russia, Turkey and Iran have convergence as regards their opposition to the US attempt to bolster the Syrian Kurds' control of vast territories in the region. But, having said that, Russia and Iran (and Syrian government) also disapprove of any independent Turkish military action in northern Syrian. On the other hand, they also harbor misgivings about Turkey's continuing links with some terrorist groups present in Idlib (which also have had US backing.) The Syrian government's best hope as indeed Russia and Iran's would lie in weaning away the mainstream Kurdish groups from the orbit of US influence to engage them constructively as participants in a peace process. But Turkey brands the Kurdish groups as terrorists and threatens to attack them. Damascus has repeatedly questioned the Turkish moves with regard to Afrin.

In such complicated circumstances, it remains to be seen how the proposed Syrian Congress of National Dialogue could be held in Sochi, as planned, in end-January. The expectation was that the congress would pave the way for the drafting of a new constitution for Syria. To be sure, these contradictions will be exploited by the US to create rifts between Turkey and Russia (and Iran.) The US design is to keep Syria weak and divided for a foreseeable future so that its occupation of a big swathe of land in the strategic northern regions bordering Turkey and Iraq goes unchallenged and the Russian plans to push ahead a settlement in Syria somehow within this year get thwarted.

The good part is that the recent disturbances in Iran do not seem to have affected Tehran's resolve to help Syrian government forces to regain the lost territories. In fact, Shamkhani made his remarks.

## Trump cannot afford breaking off ties with Pakistan: NYT

United States President Donald Trump cannot afford to walk away from Pakistan, which has often provided vital intelligence and has the world's fastest-growing nuclear arsenal, a New York Times article has warned, saying such a move on his part could be detrimental for America and pave way for even better Sino-Pak relations.

The article claims that Trump's aggressive and very globally audible admonition seems to indicate that he does not have a proper strategy in his plans. "President Trump's bombast and the precipitous way the decision seems to have been made have led to doubts that Mr. Trump has a serious plan for managing the ramifications of this move," the publication states.

"The president is good at venting grievances, as he demonstrated in his New Year's Day tweet on the situation: "The United States has foolishly given Pakistan more than 33 billion dollars in aid over the last 15 years," he wrote, "and they have given us nothing but lies & deceit, thinking of our leaders as fools. They give safe haven to the terrorists we hunt in Afghanistan, with little help. No more!" says the article.

Later, on January 5, the US announced that it was suspending the transfer of military equipment and security-related funds to Pakistan. Major General Asif Ghafoor the Director-General of Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said the aid suspension would impact bilateral security cooperation between the two nations as well as regional peace.

"Suspension of security assistance will not affect Pakistan's resolve to fight terrorism; however, it, for sure, will have an impact on Pakistan-US security cooperation and efforts towards regional peace," said the Army spokesman. Ghafoor said that Pakistan never fought for money, but for peace, adding that the Pakistan Army has indiscriminately targeted terrorists including the Haqqani network at a "heavy cost of blood and treasure".

The rhetoric has raised hackles in Islamabad, adding to fears that the row could undermine Pakistan's support for American operations in Afghanistan. Without laying out any details, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs warned that "arbitrary deadlines, unilateral pronouncements, and shifting goal posts are counterproductive in addressing common threats".

A decision to withdraw or limit support may, alternatively, suggest an opening into the further enhancement of Pakistan's friendship with China, "which is already investing in major new infrastructure projects and expanding its international leadership", the article states.

"Almost every military flight into Afghanistan goes through Pakistani airspace. Most supplies travel along Pakistani roads and rails. Pakistan could shut down American access at any moment, and some Pakistani officials are threatening to do just that.

Pakistan could also ally more closely with China, which is already investing in major new infrastructure projects and expanding its international leadership at America's expense, and be more hard-line in its rivalry with India. Indeed, China could once again be the beneficiary of a Trump decision estranging the United States from longtime partners."

If Trump was to realise how precariously the frail balance is being maintained at present quite unlikely taking into account how he quickly supported Senator Rand Paul's proposal to "take the money that would have gone to Pakistan and put it in an infrastructure fund to build roads and bridges here in the US" he might consider other options.

Which is, to say, "harness his new friendships with the leaders of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates". However, that "would, of course, require quiet negotiations, not shouting", the article adds.

# Very well-thought out analysis of the current US-Pakistan situation and our response

- **US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton said on record before the Congress that Pakistan had been let down by the US,**
- **Gen David Patreous, ex Director of the CIA said there was no evidence of Pakistan's role in destabilising Afghanistan,**
- **Former US Secretary Defence, Chuck Hagel stated that India creates problems in Pakistan,**
- **Gen. "Mad Dog" Mattis, the current US Secretary Defence, warned India to cool down in their support to the TTP.**

The above were all heavy weights and there were others too in the US administration, US military system and the Congress who have tried to clear Pakistan's name. It had no effect. Yet our own stalwarts are trying to find ways and means to 'explain' to the US government what our real position is. Others call it a 'misunderstanding'. Such foolish scraping and fawning is probably unique to our very own alone.

It must be clearly understood that the US is neither searching for a clarification nor is interested in seeing one. The US has decided to embark on a course of action and its decision cannot be sacrificed at the altar of the truth or reality on the ground. With a maniac like US President Trump, the 'establishment' is having a field day as they project personal agendas and spit in the face of the world.

The insignificant Dana Rohrabacher and Ted Poe types find their relevance today in discovering a cause in the separation of Baluchistan. We are unreliable, we are two faced. Our stalwarts scream that we are not, our parliament is offended, our ministers are angry, everyone is disappointed and the country is shocked.

First of all, the United States has only done what it always does, abandon Pakistan when Pakistan is no longer needed. This should be no surprise to anyone and this fact should be clearly noted, underscored and advertised, only so that our future leaders can get the message and learn from history. Secondly, so far the United States has withdrawn monetary assistance; how can we demand that they support us financially.

That is their prerogative and if they have decided to stop supporting us, why are we crying hoarse, it is neither our right nor are we employed by them. Live with it. Now we come to this nonsense that this was not our war and that we fought for the United States. Please take into cognisance, I have been in combat the longest and during that time we cleared 35000 sq kms out of 48000 sq kms. We did not do this for the United States.

The Indus Highway was closed, the Peshawar Airport was shut down, the KP Government was about to shift to Abbottabad, the businesses in Peshawar were moving out, our Agencies were no go, Bajaur had an Afghan flag and Afghan currency. We made deals and negotiated ourselves into every corner hoping that it would bring peace.

We even disgracefully surrendered the people of Swat to Sufi Muhammed in the hope that we could 'give peace a chance'. I saw people then shivering and quivering when militants entered Marghalla Hills. With short memories we forget the APS carnage, we forget the attacks on our airbases and the naval Base.

We ignore the attack on GHQ, we look the other way as the airport in Karachi was hit. We then have been saying that this was all because of joining the US war in Afghanistan and was the product of our policies? We cannot be more wrong.

How does one explain the 2000 sectarian deaths in Pakistan before 9/11? Besides, despite being members of the United Nations and having signed the unanimous UN Resolution 1377 of 12th November 2001 which should be read by all, ours was the only Army that had no one under US Command and we never operated beyond our own territory. What do these critics want - that Pakistan should have fought on behalf of the Taliban?

After all, what were the demands of the Pakistan Government to all foreigners in Pakistani territory? It was to register with the authorities, settle into designated areas and disarm or then report to centres for repatriation to their respective countries. Was this unfair? Not only did they refuse but insisted on waging war from Pakistani territory when the State had decided not to engage in Afghanistan.

They said it was their right to fight a Jihad in Afghanistan. The whole story seems upside down. It's these foreigners and our very own sold out militants who connived together for pelf and place that brought the war to Pakistan. Now we hypocritically say we have sacrificed 70,000 lives; did we do it for the United States?

No, these lives were lost in the battle for Pakistan, as we secured our country against a RAW initiated insurgency and a CIA supported terrorism. We must not belittle our achievements which were the highest in the world just to win a cheap and irrelevant argument. We secured 3500 Kms of Lines of Communications, we established the writ of the government, we have cleared our areas of all militants and we did this for Pakistan and not the United States.

Our falling out with the United States is a function of a failed foreign policy. This was recognised time and again. A government without a foreign minister for four years allowed an Indian walk-over at the Capitol Hill.

This has to be acknowledged and cannot be just brushed aside. Our PM, then, claimed he was the Foreign Minister, well then that's where the buck stops. We had Haqqani as our ambassador, we had Fathemi as our advisor!!!

We are further compromised because of the debt we have incurred, the money that we so wantonly stole and distributed amongst relatives and friends; that the very foundations of the State have been shaken up. The PM refused to even mention Kulbashan at the UN, Jindal turns up without a visa, Modi is invited to the PM's house for a wedding.

Well done!! Our leader entertains the enemies of the State even when they threaten to cut us into four pieces. This all then leads to the Dawn Leaks; an attempt to declare the Pakistan Army as a Terrorist Organisation. Having gone through all this we are shocked when the US now withholds assistance!!!

Nowadays everyone (including me) seems to have some solution to the crisis we are going through. The diplomatic scene is out since we have nothing to offer and have exhausted any space we have had thanks to this highly incompetent government. Talking our way through in search of peace is exactly like surrendering to Sufi Muhammad in Swat. Nothing to talk about!! We need to first acquire the space for any meaningful talks. Just simply saying 'let's negotiate', makes no sense and is not that easy. We are suffering the consequences of huge capacity issues in our government.

It is obvious that the US must be in the complete know that it is losing the war in Afghanistan on account of its own limited capacity and incompetence and that Pakistan is the least of the causes. Despite knowing this, it continually blames Pakistan and that serves two purposes, first, it creates a

credible justification for US failure and secondly it provides the US a casus-belle to prosecute Pakistan.

It is important to understand as to why the US would want to bring pressure on to Pakistan and what are its objectives:

## **Regional objectives**

- Contain Chinese economic growth.
- Challenge Russian military relevance.
- Observe Iran
- Retain regional influence through physical presence.
- Setup and support India as a proxy.

## **Local objectives**

Pakistan is an obstacle because of CPEC and that it contains Indian influence, Pakistan has to be dealt with effectively first:

- Create conditions for denuclearisation of Pakistan.
- Scuttle the CPEC through Indian subversion in Baluchistan and GB.
- Reward India by allowing free license in Kashmir.
- Destabilise FATA and encourage Afghan claims using TTP and Daesh.

## **Conduct**

### **To use incremental pressure, testing for effects.**

- Impact on Pakistan's economic vulnerability by withdrawing financial support and influencing international institutions for calling in the debt.
- Hoping the government would be willing to trade: financial relief for nuclear capping.
- Declare Pakistan Army a terrorist group and extend international travel bans on its personnel.
- May step up drones attacks and encourage India to undertake 'surgical strikes' which India has already been claiming it has been doing. India thus already has a tacit approval of everyone to undertake such operations.
- Finding no credible response the US may extend bombing campaigns into settled areas with intent to create discord, lack of government writ and disharmony.
- Having created the chaos and instability, may undertake boots on ground operations and encourage separatist movements in Baluchistan and GB.

## **Pakistan's responses**

The first and foremost that people generally recommend is appeasement and an abject surrender. I may even go along with it, if it could save the State. It will not. The US and India will not be satisfied without attaining the objectives listed above.

Thus diplomacy, talking etc. may sound good in a drawing room discussion, may prove that some of us are more intellectual than the rest, but the fact of the matter is, that they will not resolve anything. Such peaceful gestures can only come after having created the grounds for diplomacy.

## **Recommended response**

## **Immediate**

Reduce US presence in the country to a skeleton staff at the embassy.

Kick out all US based NGOs.

Renegotiate GLOCs (ground access to Afghanistan).

## **Concurrent**

Inform the Security Council that India by its own self-confessed statements has committed an act of war and that Pakistan retains the right to respond at a time and place of its own choosing. If India resorts to any more verbal surgical strikes, to physically respond in areas of Pathankot, Madhupur, Jammu etc.

Also bring to the Security Council's notice that US has threatened Pakistan militarily with unilateral action and that Pakistan has the right to self-defence. Inform Afghanistan that any act of hostility would trigger a response at Jalalabad, Kandahar, Kabul and Bagram.

Future

**Find common interest with Iran.**

**Speed up Russo-Pak military collaboration.**

**Enhance Chinese involvement along Kashmir.**

**Begin an aggressive Kashmir campaign.**

**Stock up on fuel and food starting now.**

Work out a debt retirement scheme through a credible and honest programme involving the people of Pakistan. Begin a proper accountability to bring closure to Memo gate, Dawn leaks, Kargil operations, Abbottabad Commission, theft and corruption.

Structure a proper lobby team to build the country's relevance and image. The US may not be ready for a physical fight beyond a certain escalation. Measured confrontation may force the US to step back. I used the term incremental pressure above. It was deliberate. At every stage where the US is not challenged, the pressure will shift and increase, step by step. By putting out our best foot we may be able to bring them to the table for talks which is what everyone wants.

Talks are only done when there is mutual respect. No one respects a loser. For now its brinkmanship and we need to see who is going to blink first. If the US is willing to come to some understanding we can offer them assistance in an honourable withdrawal, a role in the CPEC, business opportunities in the country. It is not necessary to fight the US if it can be helped. However, acquiescing is not the answer and we must not sell our selves short as we usually do. We have to go through some difficult times but that is what nations are made up of; to stand up for themselves, their sovereignty and their independence.

I am convinced if we stand up to the US, our relations can improve. On the other hand, there is a lot of cleaning up to do at home as well, without which we can never be a sovereign nation and first and foremost is to remove all maulvi influence. They shall never let this country be independent, self-sustaining and respectable.

Religion has no place in the affairs of States and the sooner we realise this the quicker we shall be on the way to redemption. Catering to a belligerent but semi educated, opinionated preacher will always bring us into an ideological conflict not only amongst ourselves but with everyone around us.

We shall be fighting a never ending Jihad. The best service we can do for Islam is to follow it in our individual sense and not pass judgments on others. Till religiosity is not removed from our political, administrative and diplomatic policies we shall always be hostage to the maulvi who has brought us to where we are.

# US's double standards and Pakistan

It is only Pakistan-US cooperation in fighting terrorism that served the US national security interests as well as the larger interests of the international community

**By Ubaid Ahmad**

The uneasy Pak-US ties since Donald Trump's new Afghan policy suffered a new year set back when on Monday Trump accused Islamabad of lying. This is really not the first time Pakistan has been accused or blamed. In his first tweet of the year on January 3rd, Trump threatened to cut aid to Pakistan for purportedly deceiving the US and offering 'little help' in its efforts against terror in Afghanistan. He also stated that the US has 'foolishly given Pakistan more than 33 billion dollars in aid over last 15 years. Notwithstanding, Islamabad and Washington walked a diplomatic tight rope for a couple of months which might put the relationship to a collision course but misconceptions merit clarifications.

There is an ineluctable need for the Twitter-obsessed US president to recall that the US funds allocated to Pakistan, an impressive bit, goes to the Coalition Support Fund (CSF), which is the reimbursement for costs incurred by Pakistan for participating in the US-led 'global war on terror' and supporting US operations in Afghanistan.

Likewise, Pakistan has also sustained unbearable human and financial losses in the said war and has always desired sustainable peace and peace talks in Afghanistan for an avowed 'enduring freedom' of the people of Afghanistan. The escalated war of words followed by the latest stresses in the bilateral relationship between the two countries has not come as a surprise. Since August, the US has been trying to put Islamabad under squeeze on the 'Haqqanis' and the alleged safe havens for the 'agents of chaos'.

Now the very question that arises here is that as Trump pledged to change the nature of relationship between the US and Pakistan, what would be that probable course of change? One hardly requires a crystal ball to extrapolate it, for Islamabad would be pressed harder with cuts in the financial aids leading to sanctions or embargoes. This is the height of incongruity on the part of the US, where once there were initiatives such as the Kerry-Lugar civilian-focused aid and endeavours to spur regional trade and productivity primarily because of Pakistan's durable role in the US led 'war on terror', now there is slight more than wrangling over bills and military equipment.

'Trump and his administration must acknowledge the sacrifices Pakistan has made so far and should also stop acting like a deranged headmaster disciplining his students, for this is certainly not the proper diplomatic way to deal with the allies'

Moreover, Trump administration this time wants India to perform major duties on its behalf. For instance, the 'greater' Indian role defined in Trump's Afghan policy has been translated into a 'leading global power and stronger strategic and defence partner' to the US in the National Security Strategy Trump administration avowed last month. This could encourage India to boast its military might because of the acknowledgment incentive from a super power. Again this is no less than an irony that the US demands a more robust defence and strategic partnership from a nation notorious for its atrocities and abuse of human rights chiefly in Kashmir valley. Likewise, the US is also aware of the fact that welcoming India as a 'leading global power' is an assured recipe for Pakistan-India proxy wars in region in general and on Afghan soil in particular.

Nevertheless, there is also no denying the fact that amidst Pakistan, the civil-military dynamics has largely and clearly affected the trajectory of Pak-US relations and steered it in the direction of being

wholly security based. A part of blame must surely lie with the civilians and the present PML-N in particular.

Trump and his administration must acknowledge the sacrifices Pakistan has made so far and should also stop bullying like a head master disciplining his students, for this is certainly not the diplomatic way to deal with the allies. The US needs to admit the fact that without Pakistan's support, peace could never be achieved in the region. And this time to earn Pakistan's support the US ought to put a halt on the dual standards it is pursuing in the region.

Thus, seeking greater Indian while turning a blind eye to the decades long Kashmir issue, cross border and the state sponsored terrorism by India will certainly not fetch regional security that US often harps on about. To conclude, it is only Pakistan-US cooperation in fighting terrorism that served the US national security interests as well as the larger interests of the international community.

**The writer is Research Associate Strategic Vision Institute (SVI) Islamabad.**

# US military plans new nuclear weapons

## Making war with Russia and china more likely, experts say

By John Haltiwanger

The Pentagon plans to build two new nuclear weapons to keep up with the modernizing arsenals of Russia and China, according to a comprehensive Department of Defense review on the US military's nuclear capabilities, sparking heated debate about the strategy: Will it bolster the U.S. military's ability to deter threats, or make a nuclear war more likely?

"While the United States has continued to reduce the number and salience of nuclear weapons, others, including Russia and China, have moved in the opposite direction," an unclassified draft of the Pentagon's Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) states. "The United States must be capable of developing and deploying new capabilities, if necessary, to deter, assure, achieve U.S. objectives if deterrence fails, and hedge against uncertainty."

One of the proposed weapons is a "low-yield" nuclear weapon for the Trident missile, a powerful submarine-launched ballistic missile designed to destroy entire countries. The Trident, which is capable of carrying multiple re-entry bodies equipped with nuclear warheads, is currently being deployed aboard Ohio-class submarines. This could be available to the military within the next two years, according to experts.

The Pentagon is also looking to develop a new nuclear-tipped sea-launched cruise missile in the "longer term," the report said. The Department of Defense contends that developing low-yield systems gives it more flexibility for responding to Russian threats and also increases the nuclear threshold the point at which countries use or would use nuclear weapons in a conflict.

"Expanding flexible US nuclear options now, to include low-yield options, is important for the preservation of credible deterrence against regional aggression," the draft of the NPR states. "To be clear, this is not intended to enable, nor does it enable, 'nuclear war-fighting.'" The draft said this would make the deployment of nuclear weapons "less likely."

In essence, the Pentagon is concerned its current nuclear weapons are too big and powerful to actually use, and that Russia and the rest of the world know it. This is why it wants smaller, less powerful nuclear weapons, which could scare US foes who believe those explosives are more likely to be used.

Critics of the plan contend it has contradictory goals by aiming to increase nuclear first-use options for deterrence while also endorsing ambiguity as a nuclear strategy. Jon Wolfsthal, who served as a senior official for arms control on President Barack Obama's National Security Council, described the NPR as a "schizophrenic document." "At the core of the strategy in this NPR are two elements: First is deter countries that are threatening to use nuclear weapons against the US, such as Russia and North Korea. That's not really the problem," Wolfsthal told Newsweek.

"The second thing at the core is a desire to achieve to deterrence by making America's threat to use nuclear weapons first more credible." This lowers the nuclear threshold in the US, Wolfsthal said, by giving the Pentagon "more options to use nuclear weapons that wouldn't be as devastating, which in some ways makes them more tempting" to use.

The NPR "definitely makes the nuclear risks greater," Wofsthal contended. The plan increases "the risk of nuclear first-use and increasing the cost and consequences of a nuclear arms race with Russia," he said.

According to Wolfsthal, the US is already set for deterrence and should spend more time enhancing its cyber and conventional (non-nuclear) capabilities as opposed to dedicating an estimated \$1.2 trillion to modernizing nuclear weapons. He acknowledged the Kremlin doesn't play by the rules and must be challenged, but said the solution to that is building "strong alliances, increasing conventional capabilities and a sound economy that can fund our military when threats come up." President Donald Trump is making this more difficult, Wolfstahl stated, with behavior that alienates the US from its allies.

But Robert Einhorn, an expert in nuclear nonproliferation and arms control at Brookings Institution, said fears about nuclear war becoming more likely are "overstated." "US leaders appreciate there's a huge, qualitative difference between conventional and nuclear weapons and would only resort to the latter in extreme circumstances," he told Newsweek. Einhorn played a significant role in formulating US policy toward Iran's nuclear program while advising the Obama administration on nonproliferation and arms control.

Robert Joseph, a senior national security official in the George W. Bush administration, was supportive of the plan in comments to The Wall Street Journal, stating it is all about "making weapons more usable" and "strengthening deterrence so that nuclear weapons are not used in the first place."

The unclassified draft of the NPR, published by The Huffington Post last week, of January 2017 was described by the Pentagon as "pre-decisional." A final draft is reportedly set to be published in February and the recommendations it includes will need to be approved by the president. Trump ordered the review after entering the White House, the first time since 2010 that a commander-in-chief has done so. The US has the second largest arsenal in the world after Russia, with roughly 6,800 nuclear warheads. But the US military is still viewed as second to none in overall military capabilities. A 2017 assessment of the world's militaries from Global Firepower Index placed the US at number one and Russia in second.

Despite its apparent advantages over Russia and efforts from previous administrations to back off from nuclear weapons, Trump seems to be determined to enhance America's arsenal as Russia and China modernize and North Korea makes advances in nuclear technology.

# A Trump decree is killing innocent civilians in Somalia

By Jamal Osman

Other clues as to US activity in Africa - where the present significant expansion of Special Ops activity surely has nothing to do with copious resources found on that continent - can be found in headlines like: "Strong Evidence that US Special Operations Forces Massacred Civilians in Somalia".

Anyway, a negative headline here and there is a small price to pay for a "secret" army largely exempt from public - and even governmental - scrutiny. Speaking of prices, a September New York Times article quotes a former Special Forces commander who speculates that it "probably costs closer to \$1.5 million" to train a special forces soldier these days.

Add to this the hefty subsequent costs of deployment and equipment - not to mention the financial demands of a conventional US military that is itself none too tiny - and it's no wonder the US has no pennies to spare for trivial things like healthcare.

"Combat boots every one of them"

One of the major selling points of Special Operations forces is that their footprint is perceived to be light, a perception buoyed by the US habit of referring to deployed forces as "advisers" and "trainers" even when these forces are directly engaged in combat.

A November TIME Magazine article quotes an assessment of the arrangement by former Navy SEAL-turned-Republican-congressman Scott Taylor: "It's easier to put 'trainers' and 'advisers' in a country and say we don't have 'boots on the ground' ... Well, that's bullshit. They're combat boots, every one of them."

As for what certain boots on the ground have been up to in places like Iraq and Syria, the US-led coalition against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, also known as ISIS) was lambasted last year for its use of white phosphorus munitions, prohibited in civilian areas under international humanitarian law. Amnesty International suggested that the coalition's reliance on white phosphorus on the outskirts of Raqqa - ISIL's former self-declared capital in Syria - "may amount to a war crime". Indeed, one gets an idea of the effectiveness of phosphorus munitions from a passage in veteran Middle East journalist Robert Fisk's book *Pity the Nation*, which quotes a Beirut doctor on the incendiary aftermath of Israel's use of phosphorus shells in Beirut in 1982:

"I had to take the babies and put them in buckets of water to put out the flames. When I took them out half an hour later, they were still burning. Even in the mortuary, they smouldered for hours."

Perpetual war

White phosphorus aside, the US Special Operations forces have been implicated in other carnage, as well - including by assisting in the coordination of air attacks in various conflict zones. In the battle for Mosul, Iraq - which ended in July 2017 and also involved plenty of US "advisers" doing more than advising - NPR reported that "more civilians than [ISIL] fighters are believed killed."

The Independent also reported a "civilian casualty rate" in Mosul "nearly 10 times higher" than the official one: "As coalition and Iraqi government forces increased their pace, civilians were dying in ever higher numbers at the hands of their liberators."

A precise casualty count has been thwarted by a number of factors, including that many bodies remain under the rubble and that, as the Independent notes, "The Americans say they do not have the resources to send a team into Mosul." Apparently, a country with an annual defence budget in the hundreds of billions of dollars - and unilateral entitlement to invade and bomb sovereign nations at will - can't be expected to count the dead.

Meanwhile, in response to a growing perception that US Special Forces are stretched to the limit, US Defence Secretary James Mattis has brought up the possibility of having conventional forces assume some of their tasks. Such an adjustment would not, however, constitute a retreat from the Special Ops obsession, but rather a reinforcement of the culture of the "badass" warrior - who, "working almost entirely in the shadows", as Newsweek puts it, has helped the US war-making apparatus permeate the globe.

And the shadows, it seems, have gotten even darker with the ascension of the aforementioned "very stable genius" to the role of military commander-in-chief, one who spends his time threatening North Korea with nuclear annihilation and otherwise scoffing at the idea of any sort of accountability to humanity.

In fact, as the US marches on towards perpetual war, it's nearly impossible to detect a bright side. The views expressed in this article are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect Al Jazeera's editorial stance.

Belen Fernandez is the author of *The Imperial Messenger: Thomas Friedman at Work*, published by Verso. She is a contributing editor at Jacobin Magazine.

## **Behind the 'enemy' line the borders of J&K**

**The closer you get to the border in J&K, the greater the yearning for an end to ceasefire violations**

**By Happymon Jacob**

“Why do you want to visit our side of the Line of Control (LoC)?” a senior Pakistan army officer asked me. My request to go on a field trip to Pakistan-occupied Kashmir with the Pakistan army for research on ceasefire violations along the India-Pakistan border was still being reviewed by the higher echelons of the Pakistan Army in Rawalpindi when this question was posed to me. He wanted to know the source of my interest (or 'angle'). I am not sure if he was convinced by my reply about my hope that my research would contribute to bilateral peace, but an invitation came through a few weeks later.

On the other side

Murree was under a thick blanket of snow on a cold December morning at the headquarters of General Officer Commanding of Pakistan Army's 12 Division. There was a great deal of politeness around, probably camouflaging the disquiet at having someone over from the 'enemy' country. For an army that has been conditioned to view India as its existential enemy, this was to be expected. The rest of the 'field visit' consisted of visits to Muzaffarabad, the capital of PoK, and the headquarters of 1-AK brigade which is deployed along the LoC facing Indian troops, the headquarters of 2-AK Brigade in Rawalakot, and finally the General Headquarters in Rawalpindi.

While on our way to the Tatrinite-Chakan Da Bagh trading point from the Battal sector (which the Pakistan Army calls a 'hot' area due to the frequent firing there) in the frontlines of Rawalakot, the Brigadier of 2-AK insisted on taking a circuitous route. The faster road connection to the trading point was right under the Indian posts and was under constant Indian firing.

“It would be a pity if you were to be shot by your country's army,” the Brigadier said half-seriously looking up at what the Pakistan Army calls India's 'Jungle Post' in the foothills of the Pir Panjal mountain range. Ducking 'friendly fire' while on 'enemy territory' seemed sensible. Some days later, on December 25, a Special Forces Unit of the Indian army crossed the LoC in the Poonch sector and killed three Pakistani soldiers avenging Indian casualties. The area of operation was under 2-AK brigade, close to where the Brigadier had warned of possible 'enemy fire'.

On day three, we drove down to Rawalpindi from Rawalakot and entered what is normally off-limits for most civilians, most certainly an Indian, the 'sanctum sanctorum' of the Pakistan Army, its heavily guarded General Headquarters. I handed my passport at the main entrance and the Pakistan visa in it read:

“Not valid for restricted/prohibited area”. Nobody seemed to bother, not when you are a guest of the Pakistan Army. The General Headquarters is an impressive world-class campus, as are the security protocols and paraphernalia in and around it. I was ushered in to have a private meeting with the Chief of General Staff (arguably the second most powerful officer in the Pakistan Army) and his deputy. He seemed upbeat about the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, the Pakistan Army's ability to handle internal security challenges, and Pakistan's return to the regional geopolitical scheme of things.

Any visitor to either side of the LoC and the International Boundary (IB) in the Jammu-Sialkot sector would be shocked by the destruction of lives and livelihoods both sides have suffered over the years. With the rampant use of high calibre weapons such as mortars and even artillery in the borders in Jammu and Kashmir, civilian casualties and the destruction of their habitats have risen steadily.

The narratives about death and destruction and how children cannot attend school due to ceasefire violations are tragically similar on both sides of the border. On the Indian side, much of this destruction is in the Jammu sector where villages fall in the range of high calibre Pakistani weapons. Notably, there is far more border population on the Pakistani side than on the Indian side which has over the years put the Pakistan Army under a lot of pressure from the local population to control the firing. Unfortunately, this doesn't seem to have put much pressure on New Delhi.

The one source of relief for the border population is the cross-LoC trade and transit that has persisted despite the ceasefire violations. Despite being disrupted for short periods due to the firing, it is eventually reinstated to the relief of the local Kashmiris on both sides. Soldiers posted on both sides also live under the constant threat of enemy firing. A senior Border Security Force officer once described this fear: "A man standing on duty at the post is always under tremendous fear of being watched by the opposite side through a telescopic rifle and of being shot at any moment." Being patriotic is one thing, dying avoidable deaths is another?

#### Uneven deployment

Pakistani military deployment on the LoC is thin compared to the Indian deployment along the counterpart sectors. The Pakistani side has not erected border fences, has stationed fewer troops, constructed fewer posts, and carries out very little patrolling along the zero line. In short, Indian forces enjoy sheer physical dominance along the borders.

This seems to have aided the ability of the Indian forces to carry out occasional 'surgical strikes', both acknowledged or otherwise, across the LoC. Thanks to its thinner presence on the borders and the asymmetric impact on its border population, there seems to be greater enthusiasm in Pakistan for confidence-building measures to reduce violations on the border. Pakistan, for instance, is keen to formalise the 2003 ceasefire agreement and to discuss other related confidence-building measures. Not so surprisingly, officers posted on either side of the LoC and IB (in Jammu) are far more open to suggestions of confidence-building measures than the political classes and civilian bureaucracies in the respective capitals. Three suggestions which seem to have some traction on both sides deserve mention. One sure way of reducing the destruction of civilian habitats is to lower the calibre of the violations. To do so, the two sides could consider withdrawing heavy artillery to 50 km behind the zero line. Two, the two Director-Generals of Military Operations, along with their delegations, could consider holding regular meetings every six months. Data show that every time the leaderships of the armed forces meet, ceasefire violations come down albeit for not too long.

Three, establishing more flag meeting points between local commanders and responding quickly to meeting requests could lead to better communication and reduced misunderstandings resulting in fewer ceasefire violations. That the Indian side suffers fewer casualties and lesser destruction of civilian habitats is no reason why we should avoid entering into joint mechanisms to stabilise the borders in Jammu and Kashmir. Over 30 slain Indian soldiers on the LoC and close to 900 ceasefire violations last year alone (note that each ceasefire violation could be tens of thousands of shots ranging from personal weapons to heavy artillery) should be reason enough for doing so.

**India**

# Pivoting against China?

By Bharat Karnad

The Indian government and its agencies, including the armed services, have been so infected by myopia and the supposed Pakistan threat that, as I have argued for some 40 years now, no one in an official post in Delhi has even a semblance of military, leave alone strategic, common sense about him.

Thousands of crores of rupees are wasted every year in modernizing and maintaining an antique order-of-battle replete with 2nd World War genus of armaments ranging from tanks to combat aircraft that are short-legged to boot and useless for sustained war fighting outside of an operating radius beyond Pakistan. And yet no effort has ever been mounted to adjust to reality of China the menace it poses growing literally by the day even as India's actual fighting capability to take on the PLA diminishes.

This is because the bureaucratic interests of the various combat arms super cedes the national interest, and the armoured / mech Generals in the Indian Army simply won't allow a more rational redistribution of resources from the three strike Corps for the plains/desert to raise a total of three new offensive mountain corps (or six new mountain Divisions), even though this is the only way the country can obtain a sizable force capable of fighting on the high-altitude desert of the Tibetan plateau, and prevent the PLA from its one-point plan of rolling downhill and around built-up areas to as far into Indian territory as their integral logistics can carry them.

The critical thing here is the redeployment of resources the offensive mountain corps cannot be an additionally to the present orbat, (orbat of battle) which is what turf-extending, empire-building, generals would like to see happen, but replacement for the three strike corps reconfigured into a single composite armoured / mechanized corps with a number of independent armoured brigades as the switchable element will be more than adequate for any Pakistani contingency, assuming there'll ever be another running war on the western front.

That provocations such as the 2001 attack on Parliament and the 2008 Mumbai strike went unanswered suggests that once nuclear weapons swing into view the option for a measured and deliberate response goes out the window. [On each of these two occasions, the Indian Air Force had the wherewithal for sharp, instantaneous, surgical retaliation in the punitive would which would have been the correct response but professed its inability to launch one. It encouraged GHQ Rawalpindi to believe, it can get away with such pinpricks. Has this situation changed in the era of "surgical strikes"?

Not really. It is one thing to react to some terrorist action with a Special Forces op 1-2 kms inside PoK. Quite another thing for a large formation to venture across to register a telling level of destruction and damage. So instant aerial retaliation is still the only counter and one to be prosecuted with urgency and dispatch literally moments after a major terrorist provocation accompanied by Delhi announcing to the world the fact of the underway/ongoing air strikes and the incident/event that triggered it to make clear India's punitive intent.

But for this there has to be ready continually updated strike plans and target coordinates and a designated unit practising such attack sorties and ready to scramble and be airborne within moments of the incidence of the terrorist act. There's no such preparation afoot, as far as I'm aware.

This means that there's no automatically of response, and the wheels start churning only after the terrorists have had their say, and by the time the retaliation sortie is ready enough time will have

elapsed for the usual sections in Government to have second thoughts, and for Washington to insert itself to save Pakistan by advising India to be the “responsible state” that it is!!]

This is generally what my classified report to the 10th Finance Commission, India, recommended, and which along with other recommendations were accepted in toto by the PV Narasimha Rao's Congress Party government in 1995. When General VK Singh was COAS he had called the GOCs of Indian Mountain Divisions deployed on the LAC for a symposium in Nainital where again I made the above case in extenso something I have been doing over the last 30 years at every army-military forum that has afforded me the opportunity.

Finally, the Army under General Bipin Rawat has decided to concentrate on the China front by investing in the building of the logistics infrastructure along the LAC complete with shunts, etc. to enable massive mobilization of the necessary forces quickly on any point along the front. This has been long overdue. Can he possibly get the cavalry generals to agree to pruning their beloved fleets of tanks and APCs during his remaining years in office?

That will be absolutely great. It would be a truly stupendous achievement if he were to get the Modi government to stamp his 13th Capital Acquisition Plan as the sole and unalterable template for the short and medium-term future at a minimum. The prompt for this re-focussing is reportedly the Doklam crisis, which proved a few of us who have long maintained that China is the proverbial paper dragon right, even as the MEA (Ministry of external affairs) has long been convinced the Indian army is a paper tiger.

But this would only be a partial solution. The real farsighted action would be for Rawat to begin reordering the force structure in line with the focus on the China threat; free up the requisite resources by demobilizing 2 strike corps and reassigning the resources to raising two additional mountain corps.

That's the sort of realignment that should have been done soon after the 1971 War when what miniscule threat there was from Pakistan had evaporated. But better late than never. It is unlikely though the Modi regime will be happy with such orientation away from Pakistan which, for domestic electoral reasons, is a politically expedient foe because it segues in nicely with the Hinduist agenda of the Indian Muslim as the other and internal security suspect of choice.

The fly in the ointment may be the new Foreign Secretary-designate, the Mandarin-speaking Vijay K Gokhale another of the China Study Group-wallahs, always ready to back down ere China sneezes. Hopefully, his new more assertive avatar will take over as FS come end-January.

# The Indian Chief speaks - but position unworthy

## General Bipin Rawat says it like it is on Kashmir, will politicians pay heed?

Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Bipin Rawat has been known throughout his glorious military career to have always led from the front. He continues to do so as Army chief in more ways than one.

Speaking to the media ahead of Army Day, the COAS did some plain speaking on the situation in the Kashmir Valley where, it is increasingly being accepted by sober analysts and observers not given to ultra-nationalistic hyperbole, we are dealing with an Islamist insurgency if with Kashmiri characteristics.

Operationally, the COAS was clear that the security forces were working to a plan their focus would be on north Kashmir areas in 2018 after the (reasonably good results) in the pacification of south Kashmir through 2017. He iterated, however, that “terrorism is not over” in Kashmir and called Pakistan's Nuclear bluff asserting that the Indian Army would cross the Line of Control without compunction if the need arose to target Pakistan Army posts that aid and abet terrorists along the border.

But what was clearly bothering General Rawat was the internal dimension of the insurgency that is given oxygen by the narrative of separateness promoted by local authorities which provides fertile ground for an armed Islamist insurgency. His calling out of the Jammu and Kashmir State government's education department in this regard was long overdue. Essentially, he hit the soft separatism nail on the head which officially gives a fillip to a political culture of fostering separatism under the garb of celebrating distinctness. How else would one describe the fact that the children in the State are given two maps to memorize, one of India and the other of Kashmir, to emphasize the latter's separateness from the mainstream of the nation?

Accompanied as this 'teaching' of history, geography and much else besides presumably is by a running commentary from teachers who themselves have been brought up in an environment simpatico to co-religionists as opposed to fellow citizens of India, the results are there for all to see. The “grassroots problem” the COAS flagged has much to do with precisely such short-sightedness by so-called mainstream Kashmiri political leaders who bemoan the spread of militancy after having in effect having provided it with an enabling environment.

And all this, please remember, is going down in State-run and taxpayer-funded schools, not in some petrodollar funded, Wahabi inspired madrassas in the boondocks. On the latter, many of which have in the past been identified as playing a key role in radicalizing local youth and pushing them into taking up arms against the state, the COAS was forthright in stating that “some control has to be exercised”.

His eminently sensible suggestion for more schools covered by the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) to be opened in the Valley to wean youth away from an environment that leads them away from the mainstream of nation life and opportunity is worth taking up on a war footing. But are the politicians listening?

Before perennial critics of the Indian Army get all hot under the collar as is their wont, it should be emphasised that General Rawat was not arguing for an enforced uniformity nor did he in any way, manner or form suggest that he did not celebrate the diversity of India which includes that of its parts and of which the armed forces are a shining, abiding example. He was just telling it like it is. We would expect nothing less.

# Miscellaneous

## **Kim Jong-un North Korea's nuclear arsenal is now complete**

Second, deterrence requires that each side's arsenal remains invulnerable to attack, or at least that such an attack would be prevented insofar as a potential victim retained a 'second-strike' retaliatory capability, sufficient to prevent such an attack in the first place.

Over time, however, nuclear missiles have become increasingly accurate, raising concerns about the vulnerability of these weapons to a 'counterforce' strike. In brief, nuclear states are increasingly able to target their adversary's nuclear weapons for destruction. In the perverse argot of deterrence theory, this is called counterforce vulnerability, with 'vulnerability' referring to the target's nuclear weapons, not its population.

The clearest outcome of increasingly accurate nuclear weapons and the 'counterforce vulnerability' component of deterrence theory is to increase the likelihood of a first strike, while also increasing the danger that a potential victim, fearing such an event, might be tempted to pre-empt with its own first strike. The resulting situation in which each side perceives a possible advantage in striking first is dangerous

Third, deterrence theory assumes optimal rationality on the part of decision-makers. It presumes that those with their fingers on the nuclear triggers are rational actors who will also remain calm and cognitively unimpaired under extremely stressful conditions.

It also presumes that leaders will always retain control over their forces and that, moreover, they will always retain control over their emotions as well, making decisions based solely on a cool calculation of strategic costs and benefits. Deterrence theory maintains, in short, that each side will scare the pants off the other with the prospect of the most hideous, unimaginable consequences, and will then conduct itself with the utmost deliberate and precise rationality. Virtually everything known about human psychology suggests that this is absurd.

In *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon: A Journey Through Yugoslavia (1941)*, Rebecca West noted that: 'Only part of us is sane: only part of us loves pleasure and the longer day of happiness, wants to live to our 90s and die in peace ...' It requires no arcane wisdom to know that people often act out of misperceptions, anger, despair, insanity, stubbornness, revenge, pride and/or dogmatic conviction.

Moreover, in certain situations as when either side is convinced that war is inevitable, or when the pressures to avoid losing face are especially intense an irrational act, including a lethal one, can appear appropriate, even unavoidable.

When he ordered the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Japanese defence minister observed that: 'Sometimes it is necessary to close one's eyes and jump off the platform of the Kiyomizu Temple [a renowned suicide spot].' During the First World War, Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany wrote in the margin of a government document that: 'Even if we are destroyed, England at least will lose India.'

While in his bunker, during the final days of the Second World War, Adolf Hitler ordered what he hoped would be the total destruction of Germany, because he felt that Germans had 'failed' him.

Consider, as well, a US president who shows signs of mental illness, and whose statements and tweets are frighteningly consistent with dementia or genuine psychosis. National leaders nuclear-armed or not aren't immune to mental illness. Yet, deterrence theory presumes otherwise.

If something is immoral to do, then it is also immoral to threaten

Finally, there is just no way for civilian or military leaders to know when their country has accumulated enough nuclear firepower to satisfy the requirement of having an 'effective deterrent'.

For example, if one side is willing to be annihilated in a counterattack, it simply cannot be deterred, no matter the threatened retaliation.

Alternatively, if one side is convinced of the other's implacable hostility, or of its presumed indifference to loss of life, no amount of weaponry can suffice. Not only that, but so long as accumulating weapons makes money for defence contractors, and so long as designing, producing and deploying new 'generations' of nuclear stuff advances careers, the truth about deterrence theory will remain obscured. Even the sky is not the limit; militarists want to put weapons in outer space.

Insofar as nuclear weapons also serve symbolic, psychological needs, by demonstrating the technological accomplishments of a nation and thus conveying legitimacy to otherwise insecure leaders and countries, then, once again, there is no rational way to establish the minimum (or cap the maximum) size of one's arsenal. At some point, additional detonations nonetheless come up against the law of diminishing returns, or as Winston Churchill pointed out, they simply 'make the rubble bounce'.

In addition, ethical deterrence is an oxymoron. Theologians know that a nuclear war could never meet so-called 'just war' criteria. In 1966, the Second Vatican Council concluded: 'Any act of war aimed indiscriminately at the destruction of entire cities or of extensive areas along with their populations is a crime against God and man itself. It merits unequivocal and unhesitating condemnation.'

And in a pastoral letter in 1983, the US Catholic bishops added: 'This condemnation, in our judgment, applies even to the retaliatory use of weapons striking enemy cities after our own have already been struck.' They continued that, if something is immoral to do, then it is also immoral to threaten.

In a message to the 2014 Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, Pope Francis declared that: 'Nuclear deterrence and the threat of mutually assured destruction cannot be the basis of an ethics of fraternity and peaceful coexistence among peoples and states.'

The United Methodist Council of Bishops go further than their Catholic counterparts, concluding in 1986 that: 'Deterrence must no longer receive the churches' blessing, even as a temporary warrant for the maintenance of nuclear weapons.' In *The Just War* (1968), the Protestant ethicist Paul Ramsey asked his readers to imagine that traffic accidents in a particular city had suddenly been reduced to zero, after which it was found that everyone had been required to strap a newborn infant to the bumper of every car.

Perhaps the most frightening thing about nuclear deterrence is its many paths to failure. Contrary to what is widely assumed, the least likely is a 'bolt out of the blue' (BOOB) attack. Meanwhile, there are substantial risks associated with escalated conventional war, accidental or unauthorised use, irrational use (although it can be argued that any use of nuclear weapons would be irrational) or false alarms, which have happened with frightening regularity, and could lead to 'retaliation' against an attack that hadn't happened.

There have also been numerous 'broken arrow' accidents – accidental launching, firing, theft or loss of a nuclear weapon – as well as circumstances in which such events as a flock of geese, a ruptured gas pipeline or faulty computer codes have been interpreted as a hostile missile launch.

The above describes only some of the inadequacies and outright dangers posed by deterrence, the doctrinal fulcrum that manipulates nuclear hardware, software, deployments, accumulation and escalation. Undoing the ideology – verging on theology – of deterrence won't be easy, but neither is living under the threat of worldwide annihilation. As the poet T S Eliot once wrote, unless you are in over your head, how do you know how tall you are? And when it comes to nuclear deterrence, we're all in over our heads.

**This essay was originally published in Aeon (courtesy).**

# How to limit presidential authority to order the use of nuclear weapons

By Lisbeth Gronlund, David Wright & Steve Fetter

In the United States, the president has sole authority to order the use of nuclear weapons, for any reason and at any time. This arrangement is both risky and unnecessary. The risks are not hypothetical. During the Watergate scandal, President Nixon was drinking heavily and many advisers considered him unstable. During the 1974 impeachment hearings, Nixon told reporters that “I can go back into my office and pick up the telephone and in 25 minutes 70 million people will be dead.” Defense Secretary James Schlesinger reportedly instructed the Joint Chiefs of Staff that “any emergency order coming from the President” such as a nuclear launch order should go through him or Secretary of State Henry Kissinger first. But Schlesinger had no legal authority to intervene, and it is not clear what would have happened if Nixon had ordered an attack.

The United States should modify its decision-making procedures to require that one or more officials concur with a presidential order to use nuclear weapons before the military carries it out. Implementing such a requirement is readily accomplished using a tracking system operated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The FEMA succession tracking system. FEMA continuously tracks the location of officials in the presidential line of succession. This system was set up to ensure that if the president dies, is incapacitated, resigns, or is removed from office, presidential authority devolves to the next person in the line of succession, thereby maintaining continuity and stability in the US government. Although established to track those in the presidential line of succession, the FEMA system could also be used to track other government officials whose agreement was required for a launch order to be carried out. The FEMA system would allow the Pentagon's National Military Command Center (the “War Room”), which would convey an order to use nuclear weapons to the crews that would carry it out, to quickly establish secure communications with these other officials.

In extreme situations in which the War Room could not communicate with other officials, this new decision-making process could be designed to revert to the current one in which the president has sole authority. In this way, this process would not raise doubts about the ability of the United States to respond to a nuclear attack.

We propose that the use of nuclear weapons would require an order from the president and agreement by the next two people in the presidential chain of succession. Under normal circumstances, these two people would be the vice president and Speaker of the House. Our proposal applies to any use of nuclear weapons, regardless of whether it would be the first use of nuclear weapons or in response to a nuclear attack or warning of an attack. The president would choose the attack option (presumably in consultation with his or her advisors) and issue the order, but the National Military Command Center would execute the order only if the other two officials agreed.

This would avoid the need for developing consensus on the exact attack plan, but still allow either of the two others to veto the plan. These two officials should consider two factors in deciding whether to concur with the planned attack. First, the order must be valid. While the duty officer at the National Military Command Center confirms that the person ordering the attack is actually the

president, he or she is not in a position to judge whether the president is mentally fit. The two officials involved would be in a better position to assess the president's state of mind and could veto the launch order if they judged the president to be mentally unstable or otherwise unfit to give such an order. A veto would be compatible with the 25th Amendment to the Constitution, which allows for the removal of the president from office if the vice president and a majority of the Cabinet deem him or her physically or mentally "unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office." Because there likely would not be sufficient time to implement this provision of the 25th Amendment to prevent an unstable president from ordering a nuclear attack, the option of vetoing a launch order provides a necessary safeguard.

Second, the attack must be lawful. All US military operations including the use of nuclear weapons are governed by the Law of Armed Conflict (LOAC), which requires that any use of force comply with three basic principles: military necessity (attacks must be limited actions necessary to accomplish legitimate military objectives); distinction (attacks must discriminate between military and civilian targets; and proportionality (the military objective must outweigh the harm caused to civilians).

All members of the military are charged with upholding these principles, even if it requires disobeying orders from superiors. Personnel who violate the Law of Armed Conflict are subject to court martial; military leaders may be charged with crimes against humanity and tried as war criminals in international fora. The Defense Department takes these requirements seriously, as reflected by its 1,200-page 2015 Law of War Manual, which was produced by the department's Office of the General Counsel. To ensure that military leaders and commanders apply these principles, the Defense Department requires "that qualified legal advisers are immediately available at all levels of command to provide advice about law of war compliance during planning and execution of exercises and operations."

Military lawyers called judge advocates are assigned to each of the commands and advise the commanders about the legality of operations, including real-time operations in the field. Even though the use of nuclear weapons is governed by the Law of Armed Conflict, it seems doubtful that anyone in the National Military Command Center is tasked with assessing the lawfulness of a launch order before sending it out. The task of the war room is to encode and distribute the order to the launch crews and aircraft pilots. Under our proposal, the two officials would have to explicitly make a judgment about the lawfulness of the attack. This would be an important addition to the current process. Thus, the National Military Command Center would execute an order to use nuclear weapons only if both officials judged that the order met both criteria that it is valid and lawful.

A better process for authorizing the use of nuclear weapons

Who: If the president dies, is incapacitated, resigns, or is removed from office, presidential authority devolves to a specified list of eligible officials. The top six people in the chain of succession are:

**Vice-president**

**Speaker of the House of Representatives**

**President Pro Tempore of the Senate**

**Secretary of State**

**Secretary of Treasury**

**Secretary of Defense**

These are followed by the remaining members of the cabinet, in the order that the cabinet positions were created historically.

How: FEMA continuously tracks the location of officials in the line of succession, to allow them to be contacted quickly. FEMA is also tasked with keeping track of the status of these people, so it can

determine who is the president or acting president at any time. It uses a system called the Internet Protocol Locator, which in 2009 replaced the Central Locator System.

In the event the president and others in the chain of succession die or are incapacitated, this system today allows the War Room to know who is the top person in the chain of succession and hence the president and to authenticate and carry out a launch order issued by this person. To be able to assume presidential nuclear authority quickly, the vice-president has his or her own football that provides the launch options, authorization codes, and secure communications equipment necessary to order the use of nuclear weapons.

For example, on occasions when many of the officials in the line of succession will be in the same location, such as attending a State of the Union address, one official is chosen to be the “designated survivor.” During this period, this person stays at a different location, in case there is an attack that kills or incapacitates those in the line of succession above him or her. The official is accompanied by someone with a football and a biscuit with the authorization code which he or she will retain if the officials higher in the line of succession are all killed or incapacitated. Because the War Room will know which officials in the line of command are alive, and therefore who the president is, it will know which authorization code is valid. If the US government is confident that the current system would allow a quick and smooth transfer of launch authority if the commander-in-chief were killed or incapacitated, it should also be confident that this system would allow a small number of additional officials to affirm a launch decision by the president. Exceptions to the Process: In almost all circumstances, there would be sufficient time for the War Room to communicate with these officials, and for these officials to consult with each other (and advisors), to consider the options and consequences before making a decision.

**There may be two exceptions:**

A massive surprise nuclear attack by Russia. If the War Room is unable to communicate with the president and two people on the succession list, an attack could be ordered by the most senior person with whom the War Room had maintained communication (who would presumably have become president). It would require agreement by up to two additional officials from the chain of succession only if the War Room were able to communicate with them in a timely manner. If the War Room was not able to communicate with two others, the launch could be authorized by the president and one other person, or by the president alone.

Because the process would revert to the current one in which the president has sole authority to order a launch, implementing this system would not reduce deterrence against a massive Russian surprise attack. Note that this situation only pertains to a “bolt-from-the-blue” surprise attack. During a time of high tension, the United States would increase its alert level, which would include taking steps to make secure communication with officials in the line of succession possible, even after a massive Russian attack.

A US launch of its silo-based ballistic missiles on warning of an incoming Russian attack. The United States maintains silo-based missiles on high alert so they can be launched if data from early warning satellites and radars, together with other information, indicate an incoming Russian attack. Such a launch-on-warning posture would give officials less than 10 minutes to make a launch decision. Because the War Room can reach people on the succession list quickly, this should still leave time for three people to be involved in a launch decision. If, however, it is not possible to reach the president and two others, a decision could be taken by the president and one other person, or by the president alone if necessary.

Why: We believe that requiring the involvement of people in the presidential succession list in nuclear use decision-making has three important advantages. Political legitimacy: These people have

political legitimacy to take part in a decision to use nuclear weapons because they are designated by law to become commander-in-chief and assume the authority to order a nuclear attack if the officials above them were no longer in power. Democratic input:

The top three officials in the line of succession are elected and two of them are members of Congress. Unless several top officials died or were incapacitated, under our proposal at least one congressional leader would need to agree with an order to use nuclear weapons. While this falls short of requiring congressional approval for the use of nuclear weapons (as legislation sponsored by Massachusetts Sen. Ed Markey and Rep. Ted Lieu of California requires for the first use of nuclear weapons), it would provide democratic input. Independence: The top three people in the line of succession cannot be fired by the president. In contrast, cabinet secretaries and other political appointees serve at the pleasure of the president, who can dismiss them at any time.

The president could fire political appointees who disagreed with his or her decision to use nuclear weapons. Other proposals. Rather than include officials from the presidential line of succession in a launch decision, some analysts have suggested involving other officials. National security experts Richard Betts and Matthew Waxman have proposed that the attorney general and secretary of defense be involved in the case of nuclear first-use. Alternatively, the secretaries of defense and state could be required to agree with a launch order. In both cases, the FEMA system described above could be used to track and communicate with these officials. In the Betts and Waxman proposal, the decision process would require "certifications from the secretary of defense or designee that the order is valid (definitely from the commander in chief) as well as from the attorney general or designee that it is legal." Under this proposal, the requirement for certifications by the cabinet members would apply only to the situation in which the president ordered the first use of nuclear weapons and not "under conditions of enemy attack," because they believe the requirement could lengthen the authorization process. Using the tracking and communication system discussed above would make it possible to extend their scheme to all decisions about nuclear use. But as noted above, cabinet officers serve at the pleasure of the president and can be dismissed. The president could fire these officials if he or she could not gain their approval and could fire their replacements until he or she got the approval he or she was seeking. Additional steps to limit presidential launch authority. We recommend two additional steps that would limit the circumstances under which the president could order the use of nuclear weapons.

First, the United States should remove its silo-based missiles from high alert and eliminate the option of launching its nuclear weapons on warning of an attack. Instead, the United States would launch nuclear weapons only if the detonation of nuclear weapons against the United States or a US ally was confirmed. This would eliminate the risk that the United States could launch nuclear weapons based on erroneous or misinterpreted warning of nuclear attack and reduce the need for the president to make a nuclear launch decision under extreme time pressure.

Note that even if all US silo-based missiles were destroyed, the United States would retain the option of responding with a massive nuclear attack. The majority of US nuclear weapons those based on submarines at sea are able to survive a first strike. Submarines hidden at sea cannot be targeted and the United States has taken and is continuing to take steps to assure that communication with submarines would also survive a first strike. Second, the United States should declare that it will not initiate the use of nuclear weapons, and that the sole purpose of US nuclear weapons is to deter and, if necessary, respond to the use of nuclear weapons against the United States or its allies. Over the last several decades, the United States has narrowed the circumstances under which it would consider using nuclear weapons first, and at the end of the Obama presidency, Vice-President Joe

Biden stated that “it is hard to envision a plausible scenario in which the first use of nuclear weapons by the United States would be necessary or make sense.”

While the Trump administration appears poised to increase the circumstances under which the United States would use nuclear weapons first, Congress could take an important step to support a no-first-use policy by passing the bill introduced by Representative Adam Smith stating it is US policy to not use nuclear weapons first, or the Markey-Lieu bill, which would require that Congress declare war and authorize the first use of nuclear weapons before the president can order such an attack.

'Courtesy Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists'.

# Nuclear war became more likely this time here's why

By Robert Andersen & Martin J Sherwin

It is possible that the post-1945 US-Soviet peace came 'through strength', but that need not imply nuclear deterrence. It is also undeniable that the presence of nuclear weapons on hair-trigger alert capable of reaching each other's homeland in minutes has made both sides edgy. The Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 when, by all accounts, the world came closer to nuclear war than at any other time is not testimony to the effectiveness of deterrence: the crisis occurred because of nuclear weapons. It is more likely that we have been spared nuclear war not because of deterrence but in spite of it. Even when possessed by just one side, nuclear weapons have not deterred other forms of war. The Chinese, Cuban, Iranian and Nicaraguan revolutions all took place even though a nuclear-armed US backed the overthrown governments. Similarly, the US lost the Vietnam War, just as the Soviet Union lost in Afghanistan, despite both countries not only possessing nuclear weapons, but also more and better conventional arms than their adversaries. Nor did nuclear weapons aid Russia in its unsuccessful war against Chechen rebels in 1994-96, or in 1999-2000, when Russia's conventional weapons devastated the suffering Chechen Republic. Nuclear weapons did not help the US achieve its goals in Iraq or Afghanistan, which have become expensive catastrophic failures for the country with the world's most advanced nuclear weapons. Moreover, despite its nuclear arsenal, the US remains fearful of domestic terrorist attacks, which are more likely to be made with nuclear weapons than be deterred by them.

In short, it is not legitimate to argue that nuclear weapons have deterred any sort of war, or that they will do so in the future. During the Cold War, each side engaged in conventional warfare: the Soviets, for example, in Hungary (1956), Czechoslovakia (1968), and Afghanistan (1979-89); the Russians in Chechnya (1994-96; 1999-2009), Georgia (2008), Ukraine (2014-present), as well as Syria (2015-present); and the US in Korea (1950-53), Vietnam (1955-75), Lebanon (1982), Grenada (1983), Panama (1989-90), the Persian Gulf (1990-91), the former Yugoslavia (1991-99), Afghanistan (2001-present), and Iraq (2003-present), to mention just a few cases. Nor have their weapons deterred attacks upon nuclear armed states by non-nuclear opponents. In 1950, China stood 14 years from developing and deploying its own nuclear weapons, whereas the US had a well-developed atomic arsenal. Nonetheless, as the Korean War's tide was shifting dramatically against the North, that US nuclear arsenal did not inhibit China from sending more than 300,000 soldiers across the Yalu River, resulting in the stalemate on the Korean peninsula that divides it to this day, and has resulted in one of the world's most dangerous unresolved stand-offs.

In 1956, the nuclear-armed United Kingdom warned non-nuclear Egypt to refrain from nationalising the Suez Canal. To no avail: the UK, France and Israel ended up invading Sinai with conventional forces. In 1982, Argentina attacked the British-held Falkland Islands, even though the UK had nuclear weapons and Argentina did not. Following the US-led invasion in 1991, conventionally armed Iraq was not deterred from lobbing Scud missiles at nuclear-armed Israel, which did not retaliate, although it could have used its nuclear weapons to vaporise Baghdad. It is hard to imagine how doing so would have benefitted anyone. Obviously, US nuclear weapons did not deter the terrorist attacks on the US of 11 September 2001, just as the nuclear arsenals of the UK and France have not prevented repeated terrorist attacks on those countries. Nuclear weapons didn't escalate demands; if anything, such countries were less successful in getting their way. Deterrence, in short, does not deter. The pattern is deep and geographically widespread.

Nuclear-armed France couldn't prevail over the non-nuclear Algerian National Liberation Front. The US nuclear arsenal didn't inhibit North Korea from seizing a US intelligence-gathering vessel, the USS Pueblo, in 1968. Even today, this boat remains in North Korean hands. US nukes didn't enable China to get Vietnam to end its invasion of Cambodia in 1979. Nor did US nuclear weapons stop Iranian Revolutionary Guards from capturing US diplomats and holding them hostage (1979-81), just as fear of US nuclear weapons didn't empower the US and its allies to force Iraq to retreat from Kuwait without a fight in 1990. In *Nuclear Weapons and Coercive Diplomacy* (2017), the political scientists Todd Sechser and Matthew Fuhrmann examined 348 territorial disputes occurring between 1919 and 1995. They used statistical analysis to see whether nuclear-armed states were more successful than conventional countries in coercing their adversaries during territorial disputes. They weren't. Not only that, but nuclear weapons didn't embolden those who own them to escalate demands; if anything, such countries were somewhat less successful in getting their way. In some cases, the analysis is almost comical. Thus, among the very few cases in which threats from a nuclear-armed country were coded as having compelled an opponent was the US insistence, in 1961, that the Dominican Republic hold democratic elections following the assassination of the dictator Rafael Trujillo, as well as the US demand, in 1994, following a Haitian military coup, that the Haitian colonels restore Jean-Bertrand Aristide to power.

In 1974-75, nuclear China forced non-nuclear Portugal to surrender its claim to Macau. These examples were included because the authors honestly sought to consider all cases in which a nuclear-armed country got its way vis-à-vis a non-nuclear one. But no serious observer would attribute the capitulation of Portugal or the Dominican Republic to the nuclear weapons of China or the US. All of this also suggests that the acquisition of nuclear weapons by Iran or North Korea is unlikely to enable these countries to coerce others, whether their 'targets' are armed with nuclear or conventional weapons. It is one thing to conclude that nuclear deterrence hasn't necessarily deterred, and hasn't provided coercive power but its extraordinary risks are even more discrediting. First, deterrence via nuclear weapons lacks credibility. A police officer armed with a backpack nuclear weapon would be unlikely to deter a robber: 'Stop in the name of the law, or I'll blow us all up!' Similarly, during the Cold War, NATO generals lamented that towns in West Germany were less than two kilotons apart which meant that defending Europe with nuclear weapons would destroy it, and so the claim that the Red Army would be deterred by nuclear means was literally incredible. The result was the elaboration of smaller, more accurate tactical weapons that would be more usable and, thus, whose employment in a crisis would be more credible. But deployed weapons that are more usable, and thus more credible as deterrents, are more liable to be used.