

Pakistan is Consolidating its Defenses	Editorial
Summarized News & Articles
Rabita Forum International
RFI Training Program	S. Haseeb Ali Shah
Second strike capability	S.ikandar Ali Solangi
Pakistan's second strike capability	S. Haseeb Ali Shah
Second strike capability	Gohar Zaidi
Pakistan calls for making global non-proliferation
Dr. Jumma Marri Baloch - A Rebel Leader	Shirin Naseer
Pakistan's geo-strategic significance	Shahbaz Tufail
Regional Connectivity, open trade key
Missing persons probe
Russian envoy to India defends
Civilian authorities in Pakistan	Usman Kabir
Overseas Pakistanis Foundation 'OPF'	Irshad Salim
Beating the Indian Navy without going broke	Shahid Raza
India & Pakistan quietly making nuclear war	Tom Hundley
Weapons US & Russian nuclear arsenals set	Julian Borger
A new approach to Afghanistan Imran Jan
Seymour hersh says Hillary approved	Eric Zuesse
Sinister machinations of a rogue nation	Tariq A. Al Maeena
Trump opens a Pandora's box in Middle East	M K Bhadrakumar
China's maritime Silk Road	Michael J. Green
Xi Jinping and the Boao Forum	S. M. Hali
Empire strikes back	Munir Akram
Getting ready for Nuclear War	Brian Cloughley
Trump might give Iran an incalculable windfall	Max Boot
Analysing current American geo-strategy	Zahid M. Zahid
US hybrid war arrives to replace Cold War	Dmitri Trenin
CIA chief's meeting with Kim Jong-un	Austin Ramzy
'We are not the Soviet Union	Maliha Nasir
Rape, murder of minor Kashmiri girl in India,
CPEC and the Global Scenario	Mirza Kashif Baig
My views on reviews	Shafique A Shafique

Pakistan is Consolidating its Defenses

The current global scenario is changing and becoming more dangerous on a daily basis. New alliances are being formed, new powers are emerging which are challenging United States super power status and there are global increasing war threats. One of the greatest game changer in the South Asian region is the emergence of CPEC (China Pakistan Economic corridor) which is one of the six parts of the OBOR (One belt one road) initiative. Pakistan's is crucial in this project due to his geographical location and its close ties with China. This initiative of CPEC is mutually beneficial for Pakistan as well as for China and thus the whole region and the whole world. It will further complement China's growing influence and will serve to strengthen Pakistan's economic situation. However, US and India are not particularly in favor of this initiative and feel threatened. They are addressing this insecurity of theirs by creating roadblocks in the way of CPEC. Russia, who happens to be a key ally of India is in favor of CPEC and despite reassurances from China that CEPC will be beneficial for all stakeholders in the region, India's opposition continues. In contrast, US's biased attitude towards Pakistan, it's opposition of CPEC and its hostile behavior despite Pakistan being its ally, has compelled Pakistan to move closer to Russia. Pakistan has reduced its dependence on America to zero and is looking to increase cooperation with Russia further. Russia and Pakistan both feel the need to improve their relationship as India is tilting away from Russia and towards America which made Russia realize the need for a new ally in the region further it is necessary to keep USA in check. Meanwhile China is challenging American dominion and is emerging fast as next super power. China is trying to adjust its attitude and image accordingly and is trying to play the greater role. They have tried to end relations with India by enhances its trade with the country which reached a record high of \$84.4 billion in 2017. This means that China is still trying to convince India to become part of this OBOR initiative and to move away from America. China's lenient stance towards India, America's presence in Afghanistan, the attitude of the Afghan government, bullying behavior of India and the growing Israeli support of Indian actions has compelled Pakistan to consolidate its defenses in order to keep the enemy in check.

Pakistan's joint venture with China of JF-17 thunder has brought positive result for the country both in terms revenue generated and the modernization of Air Fleet. Pakistan has achieved full spectrum deterrence and its missile technology is one of the best in the world. In order to further improve its defensive capability. Pakistan is in talks with Russia for the acquisition of SU-35 fighter jets which may be finalized in a few years' time, Pakistan is also looking to acquire t-90 tanks from Russia which is termed by Mr. Khurram Dastagir, Defense Minister of Pakistan) as a long term commitment as opposed to a one time purchase. Further Pakistan has also expressed interest in Russia's S-400 air defense system and hopes to seal the deal soon. Considering China's role and its own needs Pakistan has also entered into economic cooperation with Russia where Peshawar will be connected to Chaman city via Railway system. Chaman is already connected to Quetta via rail road; this will now be extended to Peshawar. This measure is viewed by many as the beginning of RPEC (Russia Pakistan Economic Corridor). Pakistan has shown confirmed Second strike capability. Its missile accuracy is perfect. Its tactical war heads intact and airforce is vigilant and army is well prepared with skill and better training and quality equipment. These measures will considerably boost Pakistan's defense capabilities. Indicators could be seen for future strong relationship between Pakistan and Russia. Pakistan has also improved its relation with Iran and Uzbekistan. Furthermore, Pakistan is growing its ties with other countries of the region such as Maldives which had discussed the possibility of joint patrol of Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) with Pakistan. All these measures clearly indicate that Pakistan is reading the situation well and is taking constructive measures accordingly. These measures are military, economic and political in nature and all aimed at enhancing Pakistan's defensive capability so that Pakistan may defend its interests against those who seek to destabilize it.

Summarized News & Articles

Pakistan successfully test launches enhanced version of Babur cruise missile

RAWALPIND (Saturday 14 April 2018): Pakistan on Saturday conducted a successful test of an enhanced range version of the indigenously developed Babur cruise missile, Babur Weapon System-1 (B) incorporated with advanced aerodynamics and avionics that can strike targets both at land and sea with high accuracy, at a range of 700 kilometres (km). According to details, it is a low flying, terrain hugging missile, which also carries certain stealth features and is capable of carrying various types of warheads.

The Babur Weapon System-1 (B) is equipped with state-of-the-art navigational technologies of Terrain Contour Matching (TERCOM) and all-time Digital Scene Matching and Area Co-relation (DSMAC), which enables it to engage various types of targets with pinpoint accuracy even in the absence of GPS navigation, thus making it an important force multiplier for Pakistan's strategic deterrence.

The missile launching was witnessed by Strategic Plans Division (SPD) director general and other senior officers, NESCOM chairman, senior officers from strategic forces, scientists and engineers of strategic organisations. The president and prime minister conveyed their appreciations to scientists and engineers on the successful conduct of the missile test. Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCSC) and services chiefs also congratulated the scientists and engineers of NESCOM and NDC for the successful test.

Pak COAS Gen. Qamar Javed Bajwa two-day official visit to Russia

Rawalpindi: (24 Apr 2018) --- Moscow keen to expand military cooperation with Pakistan, Russian commander tells Pak COAS. Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa met with Commander of Russian Federation Ground Forces Colonel General Oleg Salyukov at the Kremlin Palace, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said.

Upon his arrival, General Bajwa was presented guard of honour. He also laid wreath at the tomb of the unknown soldier. National anthems of both the countries were played.

During the meeting, the Russian ground forces commander acknowledged achievements of Pakistan Army in fight against terrorism and contributions for regional peace and stability. Colonel General Salyukov said that Pakistan is a geo-strategically important country and Russia is keen to expand its existing bilateral military-to-military cooperation, according to the ISPR.

The COAS thanked the Russian commander and said that Pakistan reciprocates desire of enhanced bilateral military engagements. General Bajwa said that Russia has recently played a positive role to help resolve complex situations in the region. He said that Pakistan will continue to play its part to keep conflicts away from the region and seek approaches which bring regional convergences into play rather than the divergences.

The Russian Ground Forces Commander acknowledged achievements of Pakistan army in the fight against terrorism and contributions for regional peace and stability. He said that Pakistan was a geo-strategically important country and Russia is keen to expand its existing bilateral military-to-military cooperation.

Pakistan not to make CSF part of budget estimates

ISLAMABAD(April 11, 2018): ---- After 16 years, Pakistan has decided to exclude the Coalition Support Fund (CSF) receipts from the United States from its new fiscal year budget estimates, indicating that the relations between the two countries are unlikely to revive to the pre-Donald Trump era in the near future. The decision to exclude the CSF estimates from the budget 2018-19 has been taken during the pre-budget meetings being held in the finance ministry, according to sources. The CSF payments are reimbursements of the cost that Pakistan has incurred while fighting the US-led global war against terrorism.

Since 2001 when Pakistan became a frontline state in the war against terror, the country received CSF at an average of \$971.5 million per annum. However, this will be the first time since then that the government will not make the CSF receipts part of the budget, as the US did not disburse any sum in the past one year. The CSF disbursements will not be part of the non-tax revenue estimates being prepared for the financial year 2018-19, said Dr Miftah Ismail, Adviser to Prime Minister on Finance.

The de facto finance minister said the US still owed \$9 billion to Pakistan that "we spent while fighting the war against terrorism".

Ismail's statement indicates departure from the past when the budgets were presented by understating the expenditures and overstating the revenues. For the outgoing fiscal year, Pakistan had budgeted Rs141.8 billion

(or \$1.33 billion) from the US on account of the CSF disbursements. But so far Washington has not released any amount.

Diamer-Bhasha dam gets go-ahead at last

ISLAMABAD: (17 April 2018) Pakistan gave a final go-ahead to the construction of Diamer-Bhasha dam at an estimated cost of Rs474 billion aimed at increasing the country's depleting water storage capacity. Headed by Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecnec) approved five mega projects at the total cost of Rs. 504 billion. The Central Development Working Party (CDWP) had cleared the Diamer-Bhasha dam at a cost of Rs. 625 billion. Subsequently, the planning ministry excluded the land component and construction of a colony from the dam cost, bringing the price tag down to Rs474 billion.

The dam will have a 6.4 million acres feet live storage capacity and an installed power capacity of 4,500 megawatt, according to an announcement by the Prime Minister Office. However, the power house component will be approved separately and the Rs. 474 billion cost is meant for building the reservoir. On completion, the project will increase national water storage capacity from 38 days to 45 days and enhance life span on downstream reservoirs, including the Tarbela Dam, said the PM Office. The project will also increase the Dasu hydropower project efficiency by 28%, according to a planning ministry official. The Water and Power Development Authority (Wapda) informed the prime minister that land issues have to be sorted out before starting the construction of the dam, according to the officials.

Russia begins delivery of advanced assault helicopters to Pakistan

Russia has started delivering Mi- 35 assault helicopters to Pakistan Army Aviation Corps. Pakistan ordered the military helicopters from Russia back in 2015. According to new sources, a video has appeared to have surface on the social media which shows a Mi-35 helicopter draped in the colors of the Pakistan Armed Forces flying somewhere in Pakistan.

According to The Diplomat, an import-export log from Pakistan appeared to record the delivery of helicopter-related equipment including ammunition. The package is delivered from Russian state-owned defense exporter Rosoboronexport to the Pakistan Army.

Russia had already handed over four Mi-35M helicopters to Pakistan Army Aviation Corps last year. The delivery of these choppers likely took place in Russia. However, the transfer of gunships took place later. Pakistan and Russia made a \$153 million helicopter deal during the visit of Retd. General Raheel Sharif's visit to Russia in June 2016. An official contract was signed at the Pakistan Army General Headquarters in Rawalpindi in August 2015. This article originally appeared in The Diplomat

Pakistan cutting dependence on American arms

WASHINGTON Amid strain ties between Islamabad and Washington, Pakistan is cutting its dependence on American military technology in a gradual way, giving space to its neighbouring country, China, an international media report said. The shift in the policy, which was hinted by Foreign Minister Khawaja Asif last year, will have repercussions on the geo-political situation of the region, it warned. Speaking at a seminar organised by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) in Islamabad on Dec 6 2017, the foreign minister said that Pakistan had been following a US-centric policy for a long time, adding that it was the need of the hour to bring a change in it and shift it towards Russian and China.

The change started occurring during the last days of former US President Barrack Obama's tenure when Congress disallowed subsidising the sale of eight F-16 fighter jets to Pakistan. Initially, the \$699 million deal for the jets was to be partially financed through the US Foreign Military Financing (FMF) programme and Pakistan was expected to get the fighter planes at just \$270 million. The Congress had blocked the deal accusing Pakistan of not taking action against Haqqani network, besides showing concerns on country's nuclear programme. This was the time when Pakistan started focusing on the JF-17 warplanes, which the country is developing with China and compete F-16 in terms of capabilities, the report said. The ban also pushed the Islamabad to acquire weapons from Beijing or make domestically with its support.

According to data of Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, US weapons exports to Pakistan observed a sharp decrease since 2010, reaching from \$1 billion to just \$21 million last year, the report said, adding that Chinese weapon exports to Pakistan also went down during this period but the difference was

minor as it just slipped to \$514m from \$747m. In a recent move, US President Donald Trump halted \$2 billion military aid to Pakistan, fueling the already constraint bilateral relations.

PM Abbasi, COAS attend closing ceremony of Gulf Shield-1 in KSA

RIYADH (16 april, 2018) Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Qamar Javed Bajwa and the heads of the Arab countries attended the closing ceremony of Gulf Shield-1 joint military exercise in Saudi Arabia. The month long exercise Gulf Shield-1 was participated by troops from 24 countries and was aimed at strengthening "military and security cooperation and coordination" among the regional countries. The prime minister attended the exercises on the special invitation of Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud. The closing ceremony was also attended by the heads of Arab countries. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi met Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and discussed matters pertaining to mutual interests. Minister for Defense Khurram Dastgir Khan and Chief of the Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa also accompanied the prime minister during the meeting. The premier also met crown prince Muhammad bin Salman and Minister for Defense.

'Reciprocal' travel restrictions to be imposed on Pakistan diplomats: US

By News Desk : April 18, 2018| United States Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Thomas Shannon said 'reciprocal' travel restrictions will be imposed on Pakistani diplomats in the United States (US). In an exclusive interview with Voice of America's Uzbek Service, Shannon said, "Our diplomats are under travel restrictions. They can travel further [than 40 kilometres], but they have to notify the government of Pakistan. It's very common in diplomacy". The senior US official also referred to travel restrictions placed on US diplomats in Pakistan which requires them to inform the government of movement beyond 40 kilometres of their station.

Two FC soldiers martyred, five injured in Afghan cross-border attack

PESHAWAR (April 15, 2018) Originating from Afghanistan's Khost province, the attack targeted FC troops conducting routine surveillance near the Laka Teega check-post in Lower Kurram Agency. According to ISPR, the security officials have countered the attack while ensuring there were no civilian casualties. Meanwhile, the political administration in Kurram Agency has said that the tribesmen from Bangash and other tribes have also started to assemble to aid security forces.

Afghanistan returns captured Pakistani soldier, five bodies

KHOST: April 16, 2018 | The soldier and the bodies were handed to Pakistani troops, said Khost governor Hukum Khan Habibi. The dispute arose over Pakistan's work on a fence intended to span nearly the entire disputed 2,500-km border, much of it mountainous and porous. Afghan officials have alleged that Pakistani troops crossed onto Afghanistan soil, prompting firing on Sunday 15 April, by border forces and the local tribal force. The two sides later agreed on a ceasefire. The Pakistani military has previously said that two of its soldiers were killed. An Afghan army commander has said two tribesmen were killed in the skirmish. A spokesperson for the Pakistan Army could not be immediately reached.

Suicide bombers target security forces in Quetta; Six Policemen martyred

Quetta (24 Apr, 2018) --- At least 6 policemen embraced martyrdom and 15 security personnel were wounded when three suicide bombers blew themselves up in quick succession in the provincial capital, Quetta. "The first suicide bomber blew himself up outside a paramilitary frontier corps checkpoint in the outskirts of Quetta city after he was spotted by the guards, "Just in the next moments, another bomber who was covering the first attacker exchanged fire with the security forces and later blew himself up." Some eight paramilitary officials were wounded in this attack, he said. Around half an hour later a third bomber drove his motorcycle into a police truck on a road leading to the airport, Balochistan Home Secretary Ghulam Ali Baloch said adding that six policemen embraced martyrdom as a result of the explosion. It was not clear whether the third bomber was wearing an explosive vest or if the bike was filled with explosives.No group immediately claimed responsibility for the attacks.

Baloch activist says RAW asked him to heckle Nawaz in 2015

WASHINGTON: A senior Baloch activist claimed on Tuesday 17 April, that he heckled former prime minister Nawaz Sharif during his 2015 visit to Washington at the behest of Indian intelligence agency Research and Analysis Wing (RAW). Ahmer Mustikhan, founder of the American Friends of Balochistan (AFB) group, posted three online statements on Facebook on Tuesday after a district court in Maryland rejected an appeal to muzzle him.

AFB's two Indian supporters Soumya Chowdhury and Krishna Gudipati had filed the appeal, asking the judge to stop Mr Mustikhan from publicly sharing the internal affairs of the group. The court agreed with the Baloch activist's plea that the US constitution guaranteed his freedom of expression. Mr Mustikhan, who is also a journalist, claimed in the videos that he was "let down" by RAW operatives working from the Indian embassy in Washington. He identified one of them as Nagesh Bhushan who, Mr Mustikhan said, manned RAW's Balochistan Desk.

On Oct 22, 2015, Mr Mustikhan heckled Mr Sharif during his speech at the US Institute for Peace in Washington and was removed by security personnel as he continued shouting for several minutes. He then appeared on a series of Indian talk shows, explaining why he heckled the prime minister. He also heckled other Pakistani leaders, particularly former president Pervez Musharraf. "I did this with a heavy heart, as I have no fight with Nawaz Sharif. He is an elected prime minister," he told Dawn. "Others, I heckled willingly." Mr Mustikhan said that India was supporting terrorism in Pakistan and this support started after the Kargil war and that's why the current insurgency had continued for 12 years. Mr Mustikhan claimed that RAW encouraged militants to kill Punjabi, Pakhtun and even Sindhi civilians. "We have no fight with civilians. They are our brothers," he said. "They gave me a lot of mental torture [for opposing their plans]. They say if you kill, you are a hero otherwise you are zero." 'Courtesy Dawn News'

Pakistan Army cadet clinches medal at Royal Military Academy Sandhurst

RAWALPINDI: Fri 13th April 2018 | Pakistan Army Cadet Sheroz Shahid clinched the Overseas International Medal at Royal Military Academy Sandhurst (RMAS) UK, said the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR). Shahid was awarded the medal for high performance in education, training, and physical fitness fields displayed during the training period. The medal was awarded by Chief of General Staff of British Army General Sir Nicholas Patrick Carter, who was the reviewing officer of the parade. Sheroz joins Major Uqbah Hadeed Malik to make the country proud. The latter, who graduated from the Sandhurst in 2007, became the first Pakistan military officer to be appointed as an instructor at the British military academy.

Major Uqbah made headlines in English press when his British cadets rendered a tribute in his honour by singing Pakistan's national anthem as a surprise for him.

Dr. Umer Saif appointed chair - holder of UNESCO Chair for ICTD

World-renowned Pakistani computer scientist Dr. Umar Saif has been appointed as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Chair for using Information and Communication Technology for Development (ICTD). This UNESCO Chair in the field of ICTD will help Pakistan become a centre of excellence in using Information Technology for development, especially use of technology to address the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), said a press release issued earlier. Dr. Umar Saif, who heads the Punjab Information Technology Board overlooking all public sector IT projects in the country's most populous province, is a graduate of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Cambridge University. He is the first Pakistani to be named as one of the top 35 innovators in the world by MIT Technology Review (TR35) in 2011, and a Young Global Leader by the World Economic Forum in 2010.

Pakistan appoints first female diplomat in Saudi Arabia

JEDDAH Setting a new precedent, Pakistan for the first time in its 70 years history has appointed a female diplomat in Saudi Arabia. Fozia Fayyaz Ahmed has been designated as consular at Consulate General Pakistan in Jeddah, reflecting the country's resolve to empower women. Fozia Fayyaz has been served in Washington and New Delhi and it is her third diplomatic posting in KSA.

Pope Francis wears Sindhi Ajrak gifted by Pakistani youth

A Pakistan youth recently presented Sindhi Ajrak to Pope Francis as an Easter gift which he happily accepted. The pontiff also posed for a selfie with the youth identified as Daniyal by Al Arabiya's Urdu language website. According to the site, Daniyal, a member of Jesus Youth of Pakistan Saint Paul, was in Vatican to attend the central ceremony of Easter, a Christian holiday. The Christian community celebrated Easter with zeal on April 1. Special services were held and prayers offered in all churches of Pakistan like other parts of the world. The Christians lit candles at different churches to celebrate the day.

Nawaz Sharif, Jahangir Tareen disqualified for life: Supreme Court

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan: In a unanimous decision, a five-judge larger bench of the Supreme Court on Friday declared that the former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) former Secretary General Jahangir Khan Tareen would remain disqualified for life time under Article 62 (1)(f) of the Constitution. The bench announced the verdict written and ready by Justice Umar Ata Bandial in a case under which the time period had to be determined for a person if he was disqualified under Article 62 (1)(f) of the Constitution. Following the judgement, Nawaz Sharif, Jahangir Tareen and all those who were declared disqualified under Article 62 (1)(f) have now been barred from contesting elections permanently.

IHC Disqualifies Foreign Minister Khawaja Asif under Article 62(1)(f)

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Foreign Minister Khawaja Asif was disqualified by failing to disclose his employment in a UAE company and the monthly salary he was receiving. The court announced its verdict on a petition stating that Asif did not mention his foreign employment in his nomination papers. A three-member bench headed by Justice Athar Minallah announced the verdict and ruled that Asif is not 'honest' and 'truthful' as per the Constitution. Moreover, the apex court recently ruled that parliamentarians disqualified over the clause will be ineligible to contest elections or hold party office for life.

Pakistan world's largest host of refugees: UNHCR

By APP : April 16, 2018 ----- The United Nations High Commission for Refugees has said that Pakistan is home to the largest refugee population in the world, according to a report published by the international body. As per UNHCR, Pakistan is hosting the largest number of refugees globally, which number more than 1.45 million in the country, and most of them hail from Afghanistan. The report added that Pakistan unconditionally hosted millions of refugees and provided best possible facilities to affected people of different countries. It praised Pakistan for giving special treatment for Afghan citizens when the Afghan war was on its peak. 1.45 million of them still live in Pakistan, the report noted. Since March 2002, UNHCR has facilitated the return of approximately 4.1 million registered Afghans from Pakistan, it underlined.

World's largest plane, Antonov AN-225 Mriya, lands in Karachi Airport

Fri 20 Apr 2018: Russian made largest cargo aircraft, Antonov AN -225 Mriya, made its first landing in Pakistan on Friday 20 April, at the Jinnah International Airport in Karachi for refueling, Bound to Dammam, Saudi Arabia, the world's largest cargo aircraft took off from Colombo, Sri Lanka. Russian-made wide body aircraft is powered by six turbofan engines is the longest and heaviest airplane ever built, with a maximum takeoff weight of 640 tonnes. It also has the largest wingspan of any aircraft in operational service.

Renowned actress and Ajoka Theatre founder Madeeha Gauhar passes away

LAHORE: Ajoka Theatre founder, playwright, actor and director of social theatre Madeeha Gauhar passed away in Lahore on Wednesday 25 April, after a prolonged battle with cancer. Madeeha was suffering from cancer for the past three years. The actor, director and women's rights activist founded Ajoka Theatre in 1984 as part of her commitment to theatre for social change. Ajoka's plays have been based on social issues and human rights such as female literacy and honour killings. Ajoka has performed in various countries across Asia and Europe and has also staged productions in backyards and open spaces in poor localities to raise awareness.

In 2006, Madeeha became the first Pakistani to be honoured with the prestigious Prince Claus Award for her leadership of Ajoka. The award was given to her by Ambassador of Netherlands Willem Andreea. Punjab Chief

Minister Shehbaz Sharif extended condolences to Gauhar's family. "Madeeha Gauhar was a talented performer who transformed theatre," Shehbaz said. "Her services to TV and theatre will be remembered forever," he added.

Brief News International

ISIS suicide bomber kills 60 at Afghanistan voter registration site

KABUL (April 22, 201) -- A suicide bombing outside a voter-registration center in the Afghan capital, Kabul, has killed at least 60 people and wounded 119 others, officials say. Interior Ministry spokesman Najib Danesh said a bomber on foot targeted a crowd that had gathered to pick up national identification cards ahead of legislative elections later this year. The government said 22 of the dead were women and eight were children. Some of the dead children were students at a nearby high school. The extremist group Islamic State (IS) claimed responsibility for the attack in Dashte Barchi, a heavily Shi'ite-populated area in western Kabul, through its Amaq news agency.

Afghan capital hit by morning rush hour blasts, 21 killed and 27+ wounded

KABUL (Reuters) - Two blasts hit the Afghan capital Kabul on Monday, 30th April, killing at least 21 people, including a photographer for French news agency AFP. The photographer, Shah Marai, was among a group of journalists caught in the second explosion as they were reporting on the initial blast. The attacks came just a week after a blast at a voter registration center killed 60 people, in the wake of warnings by security officials against the risk of increasing attacks ahead of parliamentary elections planned in October.

US, UK and France Targeted on Syrian so called 'Chemical Weapons Sites'

WASHINGTON (APRIL 14, 2018) ---- Defense Department officials said that American-led strikes against Syria had taken out the "heart" of President Bashar al-Assad's chemical weapons program, but acknowledged that the Syrian government most likely retained some ability to again attack its own people with chemical agents. Warplanes and ships from the United States, Britain and France launched more than 100 missiles at three chemical weapons storage and research facilities near Damascus and Homs, the officials told reporters, in an operation that President Trump and Pentagon leaders hailed as a success.

"A perfectly executed strike last night," Trump wrote on Twitter. "Thank you to France and the United Kingdom for their wisdom and the power of their fine Military. Could not have had a better result. Mission Accomplished!"

The strikes were the second time in just over a year that President Trump had sent missiles crashing into Syrian military targets, adding American firepower to one of the most complex and multisided conflicts in a generation.

Syria intercepted 77 of 100+ missiles launched at its civilian, military objects

14 Apr, 2018 | --- The majority of rockets fired in Syria by the UK, US, and France were intercepted by Syrian air defense systems, the Russian Defense Ministry said. Russian air defense units were not involved in repelling the attack. The warplanes and vessels of the US and its allies launched over 100 cruise missiles and air-surface missiles on Syrian civil and military facilities, the ministry stated. The strikes were conducted by two US ships stationed in the Red Sea, with tactical air support from the Mediterranean. The Pentagon deployed B-1 Lancer strategic bombers which also took part in the combat sorties, according to the statement. Syrian Al-Dumayr Military Airport, located 40 km north-east from Damascus, was attacked by 12 cruise missiles, the Russian MoD confirmed, adding that all missiles were intercepted by Syrian air defense systems. To repel the attack, Damascus deployed Soviet-made surface-to-air missile systems, including S-125 (NATO reporting name: SA-3 Goa), S-200 (SA-5 Gammon), 2K12 Kub (SA-6 Gainful) and Buk.

The ministry issued a statement saying that none of the missiles launched by the US and its allies reached the Russian air defense zones that shield facilities in the port city of Tartus and Khmeimim Air Base.

Israeli forces kill four Palestinians, wound 955 at Gaza protest

GAZA: (Fri 20 Apr, 2018) Israeli troops shot dead four Palestinians on the Gaza-Israel border on Friday, bringing to 35 the death toll in recent weeks among Palestinian protesters demanding the right to return to their former homeland. Gazans used catapults and sling-shots to launch stones at Israeli forces, and some Palestinians brought wire-cutters to cut through the border fence, ignoring leaflets dropped by the Israeli military warning residents not to approach the frontier. The deaths included a 15-year-old boy shot dead in northern Gaza, Palestinian health officials said, adding that 178 people were wounded by Israeli gunfire. UN Middle East envoy Nickolay Mladenov wrote on Twitter: "It is outrageous to shoot at children! How does the killing of a child in Gaza today help peace? It doesn't! It fuels anger and breeds more killing. Children must be protected from violence, not exposed to it."

Peace At Hand? Korean Leaders Meet For Historic Border Handshake

Friday , April 27, 2018 | An historic handshake at the most heavily fortified border in the world on Friday symbolized the hope that two Koreas could create a lasting rapprochement but failed efforts in the past weighed heavily over the moment.

"I can't stop feeling excited to meet in this historic place, and I am very moved that the President came to greet me at the demarcation line," North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said to South Korean President Moon Jae-in, according to South Korea's presidential office.

A year of especially serious tensions leading up to Friday 27 April, was followed by a sudden thaw and an offer by Kim in recent weeks to meet with President Trump. Mere months ago, the two leaders were trading insults and threatening to wage war. However, the White House appears to be taking Kim's offer seriously and the two men could meet as soon as next month.

At Panmunjom, Kim and Moon smiled and exchanged greetings. They walked side-by-side down a red carpet, observed a brightly-colored traditional Korean honor-guard ceremony, before proceeding into the three-story Peace House for their summit. Once seated inside, Kim quipped he brought Pyongyang's famous naengmyun, cold noodles, "from far away," before then correcting himself to say it wasn't so far away at all.

Koreas Set Bold Goals: Peace by Year's End and No Nuclear Arms

By CHOE SANG-HUN | SEOUL, South Korea The leaders of North and South Korea agreed to work to remove all nuclear weapons from the Korean Peninsula and, by this year, declare an official end to the Korean War that ravaged the two nations from 1950 to 1953. At a historic summit meeting that marked the first time a North Korean leader had set foot in the South, the leaders vowed to negotiate a peace treaty to replace a truce that has kept an uneasy peace on the divided Korean Peninsula for more than six decades, while ridding it of nuclear weapons. "The South and the North confirmed their joint goal of realizing a Korean Peninsula free of nuclear weapons through complete denuclearization," read a statement signed by North Korea's leader, Kim Jong-un, and the South's president, Moon Jae-in, after their meeting at the border village of Panmunjom. The meeting between Mr. Kim and Mr. Moon was marked by some surprisingly candid moments but also sweeping pledges, with Mr. Kim saying, "I came here to put an end to the history of confrontation."

The event, at the Peace House, a conference building on the South Korean side of Panmunjom, was closely watched because it could set the tone for the even more critical summit meeting between President Trump and Mr. Kim, two leaders known for bold if unpredictable actions who only recently had the world fearing a nuclear war. 'Courtesy Asia Pacific'

Algerian military plane crashes : killing 257 in nation's worst aviation disaster

Apr 11, 2018 | Associated Press| -- ALGIERS A hulking military transport plane crashed just after takeoff in Algeria on Wednesday, 11 April 2018, killing 257 people in the worst aviation disaster in the North African nation's history and plunging the country into mourning. Soldiers, their family members and a group of 30 people returning to refugee camps from hospital stays in Algeria's capital died in the morning crash of the Russian-made Il-76 aircraft. Several witnesses told Algerian TV network Ennahar they saw flames coming out of one of the planes' four engines just before it took off. The flight was scheduled to go to Tindouf and then Bechar, the site of another military base, according to Farouk Achour, spokesman for Algeria's civil protection services. Tindouf is home to many refugees from the neighboring Western Sahara, a disputed territory annexed by Morocco.

Winnie Madikizela-Mandela: Anti-apartheid campaigner dies at 81

Johannesburg: 2 April 2018 | ---- South African anti-apartheid campaigner and former first lady Winnie Madikizela-Mandela has died aged 81. She and her former husband Nelson Mandela, who were both jailed, were a symbol of the country's anti-apartheid struggle for three decades. However, in later years her reputation became tainted legally and politically.

'Mother of the Nation'

– Mrs Madikizela-Mandela was born in 1936 in the Eastern Cape - then known as Transkei. She was a trained social worker when she met her future husband in the 1950s. They went on to have two daughters together. They were married for a total of 38 years, although for almost three decades of that time they were separated due to Mr Mandela's long imprisonment.

Number of Republicans quitting Congress hits 44-year high amid backlash against Donald Trump

By: Ben Riley-Smith, Us editor | 7 APRIL 2018

More Republicans are quitting Congress than at any time in the last 44 years, analysis for The Telegraph has revealed, as a backlash against Donald Trump gathers pace. Thirty seven Republicans in the US House of Representatives are not seeking re-election in the 2018 mid-terms a higher number than any point since 1974. Fear of being swept away by a “blue wave” of Democratic support is partly driving the exodus, according to experts and Republican insiders. The trend makes it easier for the Democrats to take back control of the House from the Republicans because incumbent candidates are harder to defeat. Losing the House would have a profound effect on Mr Trump's ability to pass new laws...

Former top U.S. intelligence officials back Trump's CIA pick

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - U.S. President Donald Trump's nominee for CIA director, Gina Haspel, has received the strong, cross-partisan backing of dozens of former top intelligence officials, according to a letter sent to the Senate Intelligence Committee. Gina Haspel, a veteran CIA clandestine officer picked by U.S. President Donald Trump to head the Central Intelligence Agency, is shown in this handout photograph released on March 13, 2018. CIA/Handout via Reuters “Ms Haspel's qualifications to be CIA Director match or exceed those of most candidates put forward in the Agency's 70-year history,” they said in the letter to the committee's leaders that was released.

Among the 53 signing the letter expressing “strong support” for Haspel were three former Directors of National Intelligence and six former directors of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Trump nominated Haspel, a veteran CIA undercover officer who is currently CIA deputy director, to be director last month. If confirmed, she would be the first woman to lead the agency. The announcement prompted objections over connections Haspel, who oversaw a “black site” prison in Thailand, may have had to the use of water boarding and other brutal interrogation techniques widely seen as torture in the years after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

Britain opens first naval overseas base in 50 years in sign of 'global reach'

By Con Coughlin, Defence editor, Bahrain | Britain's ability to maintain a global military presence post-Brexit has been greatly enhanced by the opening of the Royal Navy's new permanent base in the Gulf, according to one of Britain's most senior officers. And, at a time when Iran is continuing to pose a serious threat to the security of the oil-rich Gulf region, the Navy's new HMS Juffair base at the Bahraini port of Mina Salman will enable Britain to play its part in keeping the region's vital sea-lanes open. The Navy's new £40 million base, which was built with the Bahraini government agreeing to pay most of the cost, will allow the Navy to maintain a permanent presence in the region, without having to return warships to Britain every...

At least 25 dead 18 injured as bomb attacks Iraqi fighters' funeral

SAMARRA: (April 12, 2018) "Two bombs exploded as the funeral procession was entering the cemetery" in Asdira, village mayor Salaheddin Shaalan told AFP. It was the deadliest attack in Iraq since a January 16 double suicide bombing in Baghdad claimed 31 lives. This attack took place during a funeral for five members of the Hashed al-Shaabi paramilitary units killed Wednesday 11 Apr, night in the same village, 250 kilometres (150 miles) north of Baghdad. (AFP)

Boeing Inks Make-In-India Pact With Hal For Righter Jets

13 April 2018 | Kestur Vasuki | Bengaluru

In a major initiative to boost Indian air defence, the Indian military aviation giant Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) has announced a tie-up with Boeing and Mahindra Defence Systems (MDS) for manufacturing the F/A-18 Super Hornet in India and pursuing the joint development of future technologies. Boeing India president Pratyush Kumar, HAL Chairman and Managing Director T Suvarna Raju and Mahindra Defence Systems Chairman SP Shukla exchanged a 'Memorandum of Agreement for 'Make in India fighter' at the ongoing 'DefExpo' near here.

In a Press statement, the HAL said 'the partnership will transform India's aerospace and defence ecosystem, further building on its 'Make in India' successes. "HAL has always been at the forefront of development in India's aerospace sector. This partnership with Boeing and Mahindra Defence Systems will create an opportunity to develop capabilities of the aerospace industry and strengthen indigenous platforms in India thereby contributing to the Make-in-India activities", said T. Suvarna Raju.

"Boeing is happy to team up with HAL, India's leading company that manufactures combat fighters along with India's company that manufactures small commercial airplanes, Mahindra. This partnership brings the best of Indian public and private enterprises together with the world's largest aerospace company, Boeing, to accelerate a contemporary 21st century ecosystem for aerospace & defense manufacturing in India," said Pratyush Kumar, president, Boeing India.

Future production with Indian partners will involve maximising indigenous content and producing the F/A-18 in India thereby creating a 21st century aerospace ecosystem. "We are excited about the opportunities that this partnership will provide for us to contribute further to 'Make in India' for defence," said SP Shukla, Group President, Aerospace & Defence Sector and Chairman, Mahindra Defence Systems.

The Super Hornet Make in India proposal is to build an entirely new and state-of-the-art production facility that can be utilised for other programmes like India's Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA) programme. This partnership is intended to bring HAL, Boeing and MDS global scale and supply chain, its best-in-industry precision manufacturing processes as well as the unrivalled experience designing and optimising aerospace production facilities to both expand India's aerospace ecosystem and help realise the Make in India vision. The plan addresses the infrastructure, personnel training and operational tools and techniques required to produce a next generation fighter aircraft in India. In addition, Boeing will work closely with India industry to ensure they have the very latest technologies, applying lessons learned from the current Super Hornet production line.

FEDERAL BUDGET 2018-19

Miftah Ismail, the newly appointed Finance Minister, presented it in National Assembly on 27th April, 2018. The total outlay of budget the year of 2018-19 is Rs. 5.9 trillion With estimate 6.2 Percent Growth Target.

Finance Minister said that the GDP growth rate last year was 5.4 percent and has now grown to 5.8 percent, the highest so far in 13 years. He added that we are the 24th largest economy in the world today.

Salient Features of Budget 2018-19

- The target of tax revenue is Rs. 4.435 trillion, with an estimate of 15 percent increase.
- Rs. 1.1 trillion allocated to defense budget.
- Defence Division will get Rs. 640.644 million while Defence Production Division to get Rs. 2810 million
- Rs. 100 billion has been allocated for Armed Forces Development Program
- Rs. 5 billion for Special Provision for Competition of CPEC Projects,
- Rs. 800 billions is set for agriculture loans
- Budget for Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) is 124.7 billion rupees
- Rs. 10 billion budget for Youth Program
- No duty or tax imposed on dairy farmers and livestock
- Salaries and pensions increased by 10 per cent.
- Rs. 25 billion special package for Karachi announced and also plan to build a desalination plant for water shortage in the city.
- A hefty amount of Rs. 220 billion for subsidies on power, textile, water, construction of small dams.
- Rs. 137 bn allocated for Gwadar infrastructure development
- Capital Administration and Development Division will get Rs.15,236.924 million
- Rs. 802.699 million allocated for Climate Change Division
- Rs.1500 million allocated for Commerce Division
- Rs.70 million set aside for Economic Affairs Division
- Rs. 4336.5 million allocated for Federal Education and Professional Training Division
- Finance Division will get Rs.18,151.4 million
- Rs.199 million allocated for Foreign Affairs Division
- Rs. 46,679 million allocated for Higher Education Commission
- Rs. 5,433.1 million earmarked for Housing and Works Division
- Rs. 1775.2 million set aside for Industries and Production Division
- Information and Broadcasting Division will get Rs.1,644 million
- Information Technology and Telecom Division will receive Rs.3,046.3 million
- Rs. 51,205.8 million earmarked for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Affairs Division
- Rs. 10,118 million set aside for Maritime Affairs Division
- Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission to get Rs. 30,424.5 million
- Rs. 4,700 million set aside for SUPARCO

- Pakistan Nuclear Regulatory Authority will receive Rs. 300 million Petroleum Division will get Rs 943 million
- Rs. 27,590 million allocated for Planning Development and Reform Division
- Rs. 370 million allocated for Postal Services Division
- Rs. 40,000 million earmarked for Railways Division
- Rs. 2,660 million earmarked for Science and Technological Division
- Textile Industry Division to get Rs 280 million
- Water Resource Division will receive Rs.79,500 million
- Rs.201,600 million for National Highways Authority
- Rs..36125 million for NTDC/PEPCO
- Rs. 8.5 billion for Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority
- Rs.10,000 million earmarked for FATA 10 Years Plan (Federal Contribution)
- Rs. 45,000 million allocated for Relief and Rehabilitation of IDPs
- Rs. 45,000 earmarked for Security Enhancement
- Rs.10,000 million allocated for Prime Minister's Youth Initiative
- Rs. 5000 million set aside for Gas Infrastructure Development Cess.

Rabita Forum International

Strategic Program for Students of International Relations, Karachi University

Subjects

- Grooming.
- Introduction to Strategic issues
- Maritime Security System
- Air Force
- Army
- Comparison visions of Different countries

By:-

Commodore (R) Syed Obaidullah
Air Commodore (R) Jamal Hussain
Colonel (R) Riaz Ahmad
Mr. Nusrat Mirza, Chairman RFI
Miss Bismah Mirza, Editor

RFI Training Program

Report on Training Program Organized by Rabita Forum International

By Syed Haseeb Ali Shah (Trainee)

Training Program began with the Introduction of Strategic Studies on April 3, 2017. Introduction was given by Mr. Nusrat Mirza who is the chairman of Rabita Forum International (RFI). He briefed trainees regarding basics of the discipline strategic studies, role of nuclear weapons in global politics, Pakistan's nuclear program and current geo-strategic scenario in South Asia.

In the next day, Miss Bismah Mirza started the session with discussing qualities of an ideal employee. We came to know that it is the 'attitude' or 'personality' which fulfils 85% of the criteria to get the job. Right attitude and ability of proper communication can be major factors to get the desired job.

On 5th April, Commodore (R) Syed Obaidullah enlightened us about maritime potential of Pakistan. We got information about the significance of a coastal state and the leverage it has over the land-locked state in the sense of economy and military purposes. Capabilities of Pakistan's maritime sector and Pakistan's naval forces has grown rapidly. Pakistan Navy which is a four dimensional force, possesses the ability to strike with cruise missile having nuclear capability.

In the next session (on 9th April), Colonel (R) Riaz Ahmad informed us about strategic capabilities of Pakistan Army. He has been on a leading rank during wars fought with India. So he shared his personal experience of such wars.

On 10th April, Air Commodore (R) Jamal Hussain enlightened us about the history of Pakistan Air Force, US-Pakistan Military Alliance, Pakistan's role in Afghan war of 1979. Becoming an ally of US fulfilled strategic interests of Pakistan, but US-Pakistan relations has changed according to regional political scenario. 1965 War and Pakistan's nuclear program are the factors of disagreement between Pakistan and US.

On 11th April, Mr. Nusrat Mirza informed us about competing visions of different states and international organizations with the help of slides and reading material. He informed us about the vision of China particularly her vision behind the project One Belt One Road (OBOR), significance of CPEC which is a part of OBOR project.

Other visions included of India, Japan, Russia, Turkey and Iran, while international organizations like ASEAN and European Union were also discussed. Our session on 'peaceful uses of nuclear technology' will be held in the next week, in which special guests representing Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) will discuss about the peaceful uses of nuclear technology and Pakistan's achievements in this field.

RFI Training program was very helpful to understand Pakistan military capabilities, her nuclear program and Pakistan's role in global politics. We thank honorable Nusrat Mirza who provided us authentic information about different national and international political issues. He gave us different tasks in order to get our writing abilities improved. He also asked us to write an article on 'Pakistan's Second Strike Capability'.

Second strike capability

By Sikandar Ali Solangi

The year 1945 changed the strategic dimensions of the world. Nuclear weapons altered the world politics, which triggered the arm race between the big powers i.e. USA and USSR now Russia. After the adventure of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, world realized the consequences of use of Nuclear weapons.

Due to imaginations of destructive picture of Japan, USA and USSR were able to avoid nuclear war. During Cuban missile crisis both countries were at the brink of nuclear war however, fear of second strike capability deter them to act rationally, during this time there was not sophisticated technology, advanced and modernized nuclear weapons, ICBMs, and modernized Missile system as world have today. Today's nuclear weapons are 200 times more dangerous than that used in 1945.

South Asian region is one of the most volatile and a dangerous region of the world, where three nuclear weapons states possesses nuclear weapons. Since inception Pakistan and India are at war both countries have fought three major wars, even present time is full of tense and unwanted situations. Ever since, their Nuclearization, both India and Pakistan constantly looking in the arm race, Pakistan being cautious.

The ration between India and Pakistan is 3:1 in missile tests. Indian's launch of the nuclear capable ballistic missiles posing gruesome challenges country is continuously trying to upgrade its nuclear missile system via air, land and sea based avenues. Significant developments took place during 2017 the acquisition of sophisticated nuclear technologies, missile testing, the introduction of the new delivery system and improved payload, ranges, accuracy and reliability of missiles programs reflects the changing of nuclear policy and trends in south Asia. India's weapons build and modernization of its nuclear programs supported by west particularly US in order to accomplish the dream of hegemony in Indian Ocean and south Asia. China and Pakistan hinders this design.

India, has not only pursuing developing an active nuclear and missile development programs and Ballistic missile Defense (BMD) programs together with equipping and modernizing its conventional forces. From its conventional war fare doctrines to the development of Seas-based nuclear capability and its vague doctrine of No First Use policy, all these measures have destabilized regional strategic equilibrium again and again.

In order to ensure survival against Indian intentions and actions Pakistan has been left no choice except to counter India with credible minimum deterrence posture at all spectrums of any conflicts. In response to Indian naval nuclear capability, Pakistan's sea-based nuclear capability was inevitable. On January 9, 2018, Pakistan successfully conducted the test of Babur-3 a submarine Launched Cruise Missile (SLCM) with range of 450 kilometers, another significant development took place on April 14, 2018, Pakistan successfully conducted test of an enhanced range version of Babur Cruise missile.

Babur weapon system-1 (B) incorporated advance aerodynamics and avionics that could strike targets both at land and sea with high accuracy, at a range of 700 kilometers, ISPR told. The important aspect of this missile program is that it gives Pakistan an equal footing on sea-based nuclear second strike capability against India. Pakistan possesses six other delivery mechanisms which are capable of keeping credible minimum deterrence. Now Pakistan can carry second strike against India through sea water. The missile test ensures not only credible second strike capability but also restores strategic balance which was disturbed by Indian test fired nuclear capable K4 submarine Launched Ballistic Missile with range of 3000-3500 KMs, in March 2016. Moreover, India is also intends to develop three to six Arihant class nuclear submarine which can carry K-4 and K-5 SLBMS.

Both India and Pakistan have second strike capability which create deterrence against each other thus, both countries try to avoid full fledge war, for three decades no major war took place due to fear of second strike, however, India shows immaturity by developing and upgrading its nuclear program.

Further, India tried to bully Pakistan of seizing its nuclear weapons, nevertheless, this dream of India could not be materialized now because, Pakistan has also achieved sea-based nuclear capability which cannot be detected by any technology.

India's actions and upgrading of their nuclear program has been compelling and pushing Pakistan to modernize its nuclear program, thus, Indian ambitions has tried to trigger arm race in the region which can proved to be disastrous for the region of south Asia.

India always tried to disturb strategic stability in the region in order to maintain its hegemony and influence in the region. Still, India is aspiring to be the member of NSG which could disturb strategic balance of the region. In conclusion, Pakistan always believed in credible minimum deterrence however, Indian modernization and upgrading of its nuclear program compels Pakistan to modernize its nuclear program. Recently Pakistan also conducted sea-based nuclear submarine in response to Indian sea-based nuclear capability in order to restore strategic balance in the region and to ensure its second strike capability, this can intensified arm race in the region.

Therefore, we need to develop a mechanism in order to avoid arm race which can turn into nuclear war. For that India and Pakistan need to work on confidence building measures and have to shun nuclear arm race. Only through negotiation and mediation we can avoid any miscalculation and can avoid any accidental nuclear war.

Pakistan's second strike capability as the source of stability in the region

By Syed Haseeb Ali Shah

Nuclear weapons, since their invention, have been a major factor in the changing dynamics of global politics. Even it is considered as one of the indispensable reasons of emergence of the discipline 'Strategic Studies'. Although nuclear weapons caused severe destruction during Second World War, they have barred many nuclear weapon states from going to war. It is because political scholars, who have witnessed the destruction caused by nuclear weapons, came forward with certain concepts like nuclear deterrence. Under such concepts, it was believed that a state would not use nuclear weapons against another state after knowing that other state could also retaliate with its second strike capability. In other words, despite doing a successful first nuclear strike, one cannot eliminate others capability to retaliate.

United States acquired nuclear technology in 1945. It resulted into strategic disparity between US and its adversary Soviet Union. To eliminate this strategic disparity and to restore balance of power, Moscow also acquired nuclear technology in 1949. Although it instigated a new arms race between the two adversaries, fear of being punished with the second strike restricted both from attacking each other. Second strike capability played a vital role to avoid nuclear war between the two big powers.

Similarly, India's successful nuclear test in 1974 left no options for Pakistan but to acquire nuclear technology. Balance of power in South Asia got disturbed after India became a declared nuclear weapon state. India with its successful nuclear test in 1974 followed by a series of five tests at the Indian Army's Pokhran Test Range in May 1998 threatened Pakistan's security. Finally, Pakistan carried out its first successful nuclear test in May 1998 which ended strategic disparity in the region. India has always strived for having regional hegemony. It has always tried to have strategic superiority particularly over Pakistan in order to fulfil her dream to become a regional hegemonic power. Her actions has destabilized regional deterrence. It has completed its 'nuclear triad' which made her able to launch nuclear weapons from land, air and sea.

Moreover, it has gained second strike capability in 2016. In the response, Pakistan has also developed 'Credible Second Strike Capability' in January 2017, with the successful test of Submarine Launched Cruise Missile (SLCM) named as Babur III which have a range of 450 km. According to Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the media wing of the Pakistan Armed Forces, "Pakistan eyes this landmark development as a step towards reinforcing the policy of Credible Minimum Deterrence through indigenization and self-reliance."

Development of SLCM is a milestone which is significant to bring strategic stability in the region. It is, according to ISPR, "Pakistan's response to provocative nuclear strategies and posture being pursued in the neighborhoods". It is "capable of delivering various types of payloads" the ISPR added. SLCM cannot be easily detected through enemy radars and possesses the capability to launch nuclear missile with better accuracy causing maximum damage. Since, it is credible enough for the second strike, it can restrict India from using strategic nuclear weapons against Pakistan.

Moreover, India always takes such actions which promote the probability of war. Making more and more weapons can lead to the useless arms race. Currently, India is spending 55 billion USD annually in its military expenditure. It is one of the major importer of weapons. Additionally, India is working on Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) program. Such missile defense system can again disturb strategic stability in South Asia by accelerating the arms race between India and Pakistan. It will compel both to introduce more lethal and sophisticated weapons to outweigh each other. However, currently cruise missile Babur III will be enough to mitigate India's hegemonic ambitions.

Second strike capability a way to nuclear deterrence

By Gohar Zaidi

Second strike capability is a capability of a country to retaliate even after losing all its land and heavy casualty of human beings and then nuclear naval forces of attacked country surfaced by a nuclear attack through submarines. For this instance, the retaliation will usually be done by sea-based nuclear projectiles mounted on a submarine. Before going any further first let's clear one general misconception regarding deterrence that is deterrence is a greatly linked with defense which is certainly wrong. As Kenneth Waltz argues that; "Defense and deterrence are often confused. One frequently hears statements like this: 'a strong defense in Europe will deter a Russian attack'. What is meant by this is that a strong defense will dissuade Russian from attacking. Deterrence is achieved not through the ability to defend but through the ability to punish. Purely deterrent forces provide no defense. The message of a deterrent strategy is this: 'although we are defenseless, if you attack we will punish you to an extent that more than cancels your gains'. Second Strike nuclear forces serve that kind of strategy".

Now that the misconception is addressed we can take a further step in discussing on whether Second Strike capability be one major reason of Nuclear Deterrence! A theory during the Cold War between the United States and USSR was the idea that two hostile states both having the Nuclear strike capabilities wont risk to attack each other as the other state will be able to retaliate having second strike capability which will lead the world towards a Nuclear War.

This idea was seen to be correct during the Cold War when U.S and USSR were on a brink of Nuclear War over the Cuban Missile Crisis. United States has its nukes deployed in Turkey. As a response USSR moved its nuclear warheads in Cuba. There were some very tense moments between the two states but the idea of Nuclear War was neutralized after some diplomacy and agreements. This event illustrated that the ability of Second Strike by both hostile states was the reason in stopping both from attacking each other.

However, the critic to this idea argue that even after having second strike capability, it won't stop two hostile states in jumping into a war. It was also said that had USSR didn't lost a huge amount of lives in World War II, USSA would not have feared a nuclear attack and would have easily waged war over the Cuban Missile Crisis.

"The supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting" (Sun Tzu) In the contemporary world of nuclear deterrence, the possibility of conventional war has gone low because of the fear of a conventional war to escalate. The states with nuclear capabilities are threatening as well as deterring each other by making advancement in their nuclear weapons, whether it be ballistic or cruise missiles or other advancement in the technology.

The universally known three C's of deterrence i.e. capability, credibility and communication are enhanced and upgraded by the nuclear power states over the years including the South Asian states. Particularly Pakistan and India, both are strengthening their cruise missiles and short-range missiles catalogue in order to counter each other and neutralize any threat to their national security and defense.

There have been several wars between Pakistan and India since their independence. But both have not engaged in war with each other since their last war in 1971 which led to East-Pakistan split. But since then no conventional war has been fought between these two states. A reason of which is also nuclear attack capability. In 1998 after the successful test of nuclear bomb by Pakistan and India both states become nuclear which stopped both states in waging war.

On 8th Jan, 2017 Pakistan successfully tested its first nuclear missile Babur-3 submarine-launched cruise missile, which made Pakistan a Second Strike Capable state, making it easy for herself to deter to any Indian attempt of nuclear aggression. Both India and Pakistan are now second strike capable states and have been away from war since 1971 even after many years of animosity. This also might be taken as one of the benefit of the use of nuclear weapons in deterrence in order to create a peaceful and nuclear balanced international system. Still critics do not agree on this idea of nuclear deterrence, it is seen a very sound idea to many people even those of the realist school of thought.

Let's hope this nuclear deterrence works out well in stopping states to jump in wars with each other and let's hope second strike capability benefits in preventing the world from seeing a nuclear war.

Pakistan

Pakistan calls for making global non-proliferation regime fair, equitable

Pakistan's former ambassador to the UN Munir Akram speaks at the seminar
The Newspaper's Staff Reporter

Pakistan continues to remain engaged with global non-proliferation regime despite its politicisation and other defects and calls for making the regime fair and equitable. Speaking at a seminar at the Strategic Vision Institute (SVI) on Tuesday, retired Lt Gen Mazhar Jamil, who retired as the director general of the Strategic Plans Division (SPD) a few months ago, said: "There is a concern that the non-proliferation regime is becoming increasingly politicised and discriminatory. Despite these abnormalities in the nuclear order, Pakistan remains positively engaged."

The statement follows last week's meeting of the Nuclear Suppliers Group's consultative group that deliberated on the criteria for admitting non-NPT countries into the 48-member cartel controlling the international nuclear trade. Stalemate on the issue of admission of non-NPT countries persisted at the last meeting of the consultative group. The US is spearheading India's campaign for inclusion in the group and contends that after attaining membership of other multilateral export control regimes like Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), Australia Group, and Wassenaar Agreement Indian case is ripe for membership. However, a small albeit depleted group is holding out preventing consensus on new admissions.

Pakistan believes that key decisions at NSG, like admission of new members, are politicised. The decisions instead of following an equitable and non-discriminatory approach are motivated by geo-political considerations. Gen Mazhar Jamil said: "Pakistan does what it can, the non-proliferation regime should also do what it must to become equitable and rule-based."

He recalled that Pakistan had voluntarily committed itself to the ideals such as non-proliferation and prevention of arms race in outer space. "Pakistan is a responsible nuclear power and shall continue to exercise restraint and responsibility," he added. Speaking about the regional situation, he asked India to "shun belligerence and war-mongering and resolve disputes peacefully". Comparing the Indian strategic thinking with that of Pakistan, the former SPD chief said Pakistan's strategic culture, in contrast, "has always been characterised by restrained responses, pursuit of conflict resolution and closing the space for war".

SVI president Dr Zafar Iqbal Cheema, on the occasion, said Indian National Security Strategy (NSS) objective was to maintain an overwhelming conventional and nuclear weapons capability by developing strategic and conventional offensive capabilities for full spectrum of military conflicts. The main instruments of India's force posture were deterrence, coercion and coercive diplomacy, he said. The joint Indian armed forces doctrine contemplated the use of military force aimed at destruction, disruption and constraining its adversaries in South Asia, with specific concentration on Pakistan, he added.

Meanwhile, the Strategic Studies Institute Islamabad hosted a Public Talk on "The 2018 US Nuclear Posture Review (NPR): Global and Regional Security". Ambassador Munir Akram said that although South Asia had not been mentioned in the NPR, the region had been covered in the context of non-proliferation. The NPR, which endorses nuclear modernisation and sustenance programme of the US, he believed, would trigger arms race and also increase greater likelihood of use of weapons. He said the NPR would affect Iran and North Korea. Director General Strategic Studies Dr Shireen Mazari said Pakistan had increasingly become the target of US criticism, especially in the context of its nuclear weapon. She reiterated that Pakistan should remain wary of the US-India strategic partnership.

Dr. Jumma Marri Baloch - a rebel leader.....

By Shirin Naseer

In February this year, Russian Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov, while addressing a press conference with his Pakistani counterpart Khawaja Asif, said: "We have confirmed Russia's readiness to continue boosting Pakistan's counter-terrorism capacity, which is in the entire region's interests."

Russia and Pakistan also agreed to form a commission for military cooperation during Khawaja Asif's four-day trip to Moscow. This trip was of particular interest to New Delhi, especially since for many observers Moscow offering to help increase Pakistan's anti-terror capabilities meant it may now be providing arms to Islamabad a possibility that is likely to make India quite uncomfortable.

India's growing uneasiness with Pakistan-Russia closeness has been getting more and more apparent in recent months. It may have however worsened with Asif's trip. Earlier in February, Dr. Jumma Marri Baloch a rebel leader from the Baluchistan province of Pakistan who had been in exile in Moscow in an interview with the Russian media renounced his decades-long campaign against Pakistan. Marri Baloch in this interview instead blamed India for "hijacking the indigenous Baloch revolt".

He has for a long time now been one of the leading figures in the free-Baluchistan-from-Pakistan movement. In fact, according to reports Marri Baloch designed the flag for the "free Baluchistan" separatist movement. With the February interview, however it now seems as though he has switched sides.

Amidst these developments, it is important to take into consideration whether a realigning of India-Russia relations may be in order. After the US slapped economic sanctions on Russia, its economy has been struggling to maintain its stability. This is partly why Russia has been working to improve relations with China. Since the Russia-China border dispute settled in 2004, bilateral relations with a rising and much wealthier China have been steadily improving.

Meanwhile, India-China relations have not had the same luck. Not only is India incredibly wary of Chinese President Xi Jinping's flagship Belt and Road Initiatives (BRI) but India's relations with China are also affected by China's continued economic, diplomatic, and military support for Pakistan, India's arch rival.

It is then understandable how India may be tilting more in favor of strengthening its alliance with the US; Moscow may not be as dependable a partner in case India runs into problems with China. (True) Regardless, India and Russia have been consistent in their efforts to develop and improve bilateral trade ties. Unfortunately, one-way trade of armaments has been the only major economic activity between the two; Russia is the largest supplier of Indian arms in the world.

Recently however, Moscow has expressed its disappointment as India has taken steps to diversify and begun looking to the United States and Israel for the purchase of its weapons. Russia did show some willingness to compete with Europe and the US for Indian arms contracts back in 2010. During President Dmitry Medvedev visit to India, Medvedev was quoted as saying, "We are ready to compete. But it's important that all contracts are transparent and follow the rules."

Yet, some Russian officials have also chastised India for its procurement methods in the past. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, between the years 2012 and 2016, compared to the 14 percent of weapons imports from America and 8 percent from Israel, Russia supplied India with 68 percent of weapons imports. Consequently, despite competition from other states Russia continues to be the most important supplier of arms for India.

Moreover, progress on the co-development and production of the Sukhoi / HAL Fifth Generation Fighter Aircraft (FGFA), one of the most high-profile joint Indo-Russian defense projects, also has come to a halt due to New Delhi's concerns regarding the project, which have so far ranged from inadequate work share to lack of technology transfer. According to reports, the Indian Air Force (IAF) has labeled the project as simply too costly to continue with.

Irrespective of all these concerns New Delhi, while too far from becoming self-sufficient, is likely to remain the biggest market for Russian arms. Russia has played an important role in the success of the BrahMos cruise missile and nuclear submarines in India. It is important for New Delhi to perhaps reconsider its plans for expanding dependence on the US and more specifically, owing to President Trump's eccentricities and mercurial personality, the Trump administration, considering that a quick policy change could potentially put at risk India's defense preparedness in the future.

In case of Russia too it is important to take into account that China has been decreasing its imports of Russian arms; if the Indian market is lost to Russia, it will certainly hurt the Russian industry. Pakistan's much smaller and weaker economy can in no way fill the gap even if Islamabad were to consider buying more arms from Russia.

Dr. Jumma Marri Baloch a rebel leader from the Baluchistan province of Pakistan who had been in exile in Moscow in an interview with the Russian media renounced his decades-long campaign against Pakistan.

Pakistan's geo-strategic significance

Contrary to the common misconception, the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan posed a serious threat to the interests of global powers, more than it posed to Pakistan's existential survival. Pakistan was only used as a buffer state

By Shahbaz Tufail

The geo-strategic location of Pakistan plays a very significant role in influencing and shaping the dynamics of the region. It is due to this strategic backdrop that the neighbouring countries find themselves compelled to rely on Pakistan for their strategic interests.

Unfortunately, Pakistan's foreign policy has always lacked a coherent framework and vision to recognise this pre-designed and strategically cordial setup. Instead of turning its strategic location into an asset, Pakistan has turned its location into a curse that the foreign countries, especially the super powers, have exploited since the country's inception.

Since the creation of Pakistan, global powers have exploited the country, and the stakeholders of the state have always readily allowed them to exploit the country. In the long term, these follies of the state have resulted in national suffering. Not only the social fabric of the country has been badly affected, the economy has also suffered from serious damages.

Pakistan's geo-strategic importance can be best understood in the regional and global perspective. In geographical terms, it is surrounded by four countries. In one way or the other, the presence of Pakistan is vital for all neighbouring countries and this raises its international importance. Afghanistan, which is now the focus of world's attention, is generally regarded as the breeding ground of the global terrorism and opium production. International community, including the US, recognises the fact that no peace is possible in Afghanistan without an active support and cooperation of Pakistan.

The basic purpose of Soviet invasion in Afghanistan was to approach the hot waters of Arabian Sea. Contrary to common misconception, the invasion posed a serious threat to the interests of global powers, more than it posed to Pakistan's existential survival. Pakistan was only used as a buffer state. The unending involvement in Afghanistan as US' ally has plunged Pakistan into a crisis that keeps haunting the nation till date.

American and some other brother countries' involvement and interference also created very challenging situation for homeland. Relationships with United States (US) were more of transactional nature and Pakistan miscalculated its strategic relations with the US. The US interests in the past and even today in South Asia regions were totally contradict with the national interests of Pakistan. Pakistan must review its relationship with the US in view of own national interest.

We have had very bizarre relationship with the US. "We miss-calculated our relationship with the US as our strategic ally, which proved wrong throughout different historic events such as containment of Communism, Cold War and Now containment of China. All this was not in interest of Pakistan, but of the US as its regional interest. Building of India as regional power by US, isolation of Iran and containment of China are the major US interests in South Asia region. US can never our natural strategic ally, though, issues might of common nature, but the interests are totally different.

We need to revise our relationship with the US and should create space now. Pakistan should strengthen its relationship with China and Iran without compromising its position. Lack of policy and lack of confidence had put Pakistan on the back burner.

Mutual distrust, lack of convergence of interest and lack of mutual economic interest are major contributing factors of poor history the US-Pakistan relationship. Unfortunately, our foreign policy objectives were not pursued robustly. Lack of cohesion and lack of consistent policies are major reasons of poor and ineffective diplomacy. During last couple of years, we have lost our space in the US diplomacy. Pakistan should have achieved robust diplomacy. US approach and criticism towards CPEC and BRI is very much a lame excuse.

Pakistan's relationship with the US remained hostage throughout the history with fundamental differences. Until fundamental changes sought in our relations with the US, there cannot be the normalisation of

relationship. Pakistan must capitalise its geo-strategic importance and re-define its relationship with the US, India and with other neighbouring countries.

Pakistan should not be compromising its own national interest and continue to strengthen its relation with China and Afghanistan. The more influence of India in Afghanistan is more danger for us. Pakistan should not be hostage of the US interest as a number of peace talks were sabotage and destroyed by the US itself, which shows the US resolve to peace in the region. We need to sit together and well-coordinated response should be given to the US. We are living in an era of unpredictability, where sequence of events has changed frequently. South Asia as a region remains at the forefront of the United States' regional interests and concerns. Trump's administration has brought a mix of change and continuity in the country's foreign and security policies, including those in south Asia. Pakistan should continue to review its position with the changing scenario.

Political and economic stability can play a vital role in bringing Pakistan back to a strong position and to overcome major regional issues. These problems are directly or indirectly affecting Pakistan. Good relationship with its neighbouring countries is also very important. Currently Pakistan is busy on both eastern and western borders. That's why we need to build good working relationship, at least, with our western border countries. Otherwise CPEC and some other mega projects will not benefit us. In this way we can positively use our geo-strategic location.

The writer is currently working with SDPI as an advocacy assistant
'Courtesy Daily Times'.

Boao Economic Forum, April 8th to 11th 2018, at Hainan Province, China

Regional Connectivity, open trade key to promoting tolerance Ceasefire violation by India on LoC, moving towards a dangerous escalation'

Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi said regional connectivity, open trade and increased economic growth were the key to promote tolerance and deny space to extremism. Addressing the opening ceremony of the Boao economic forum in China's Hainan province, the Prime Minister said Sino Pakistan relations found no parallel in the annals of history.

"In every sense, we are iron brothers. In our region, our friendship is the bedrock of strategic stability," he said. Abbasi said Pakistan was partnering with China to usher in a new era of peace and prosperity through enhanced connectivity. "In Pakistan today, step by step, brick by brick, a brave new Asia is taking shape." He said the China Pakistan Economic Corridor, the flagship project of Belt and Road Initiative was fast reaching fruition and termed it an excellent example of an open, coordinated, and inclusive development paradigm that benefits all stakeholders.

He said the development of the deep seaport of Gwadar was proceeding at a fast track, at the southern tip of this Corridor. On completion, it would not only serve as a transit and transshipment hub, but become an economic nucleus. He said the China Pakistan Economic Corridor would provide shortest maritime and overland access to Western China, Central and South Asia and the Middle East. Speaking on the theme of "An Open and Innovative Asia for a World of greater Prosperity", he said as home to the majority of the world population, custodian of a large portion of its natural resources and a conduit for trade by land and sea, Asia continued to demonstrate its growing centrality to the economic order.

The Prime Minister said Boao Forum had emerged as a leading platform shaping international discourse on Asia and its place in the world. Abbasi said in 2017, nearly one-third of worldwide economic growth came from the Asia-Pacific region, the bulk of it from China. "As the Asian Century dawns, it is incumbent upon us to realize our real potential and rediscover the wisdom that resides within."

Prime Minister Shahid Abbasi said. Describing development and security as intrinsically indivisible, the Prime Minister said "only by spreading the dividends of open trade and shared innovation we will be able to promote tolerance and amity and deny space to extremism." The China-Pakistan-Afghanistan trilateral framework was aimed at achieving these very objectives, he added.

The Prime Minister said President Xi's historic Belt and Road Initiative had become a global public good, beneficial to all and was bringing equality to an unequal world.

"This visionary and futuristic initiative is a win-win proposition aimed at bringing shared prosperity for all."

Over four decades of reform, China has achieved enviable growth, lifted hundreds of millions out of poverty and transformed the face of the global economy. "We have already begun reaping dividends of CPEC rail, road and infrastructure projects. CPEC investment and its spin off effects have generated thousands of jobs. 10,000 MW have been added to our national grid, ameliorating our chronic energy shortages."

The Prime Minister said establishment of several Special Economic Zones (SEZs) along highways and motorways was integral to CPEC plans, adding Pakistan aimed to offer tailored incentive packages for the SEZs. "We are confident that these zones will catalyze the development of innovation-based industries in Pakistan." The Prime Minister said Pakistan's economy was growing at around 6 percent per annum, the highest in a decade.

"Our capital markets have lately been upgraded from Frontier to Emerging market status. Over the medium-term, our growth rates are expected to surpass global averages. And by 2050, we will be the world's fifteenth largest economy." He said Pakistan's population of 207 million reflected immense human resource potential besides a large consumer base. Gelled together, these two intrinsic strengths portend immense business opportunities.

Abbasi said Pakistan was home to 140 million cellular subscribers and added internet and broadband services had penetrated every nook and corner of the country and e-commerce was projected to grow into a multibillion dollar industry.

He extended heartiest felicitations to President Xi Jinping on the successful conclusion of the Two Sessions and his re-election as the President, adding "under his sagacious leadership, China, I am convinced, will continue

to march forward along the path of National Rejuvenation.” The Prime Minister concluded with a Chinese saying that, “The man who moves mountains begins by carrying away small stones.” It is time to lift stones; it is time to move mountains, he added. Earlier Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi was received by President of China Xi Jinping upon arrival.

Foreign Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif, Interior Minister Ahsan Iqbal, Ambassador Masood Khalid and senior officials attended the event.

'Dangerous escalation'

Separately, during a meeting with United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on the sidelines of the conference, Abbasi expressed concern over the deteriorating situation in Indian occupied Kashmir (IoK). He emphasised that the office of the UN Secretary-General must play its part in highlighting Indian atrocities being inflicted upon Kashmiris in the IoK.

The prime minister apprised that deliberate and unprovoked ceasefire violations by India along the Line of Control and the Working Boundary are resulting in the martyrdom of innocent civilians. Stressing on Pakistan's zero tolerance policy towards terrorism, PM Abbasi reiterated the country's sacrifices in the war against terrorism. The UN secretary-general acknowledged Pakistan's efforts towards counter-terrorism, humanitarian assistance to the Afghan refugees and the UN peacekeeping operations. He maintained that he had been advocating the need for a serious dialogue on the Kashmir issue.

Missing persons probe

Foreign spy agencies behind 'enforced disappearances' not ISI, MI (Nab Chief)

National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Chairman Justice (R) Javed Iqbal said on Monday 16 April, that foreign agencies illegally apprehend people and pin the blame on Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and Military Intelligence (MI). Briefing a meeting of National Assembly's Standing Committee for Human Rights, headed by Zahra Daud Fatima, Iqbal, who is also the head of a committee formed to probe missing persons, said that 70 per cent of the missing persons are found to be 'pro-military'. He said that often the kidnapped refrain from sharing details of the incident out of fear. A terrorist's family should not be labelled a terrorist, he argued, adding that "with the state rests the responsibility of the family of the missing persons."

Balochistan

The NAB chief said that statistics shared for the missing persons in Balochistan are contradictory to reality. "There have been several militant groups present in the province and many 'missing persons' have gone along with them," he said. Former CM Balochistan Aslam Raisani and Nasrullah Baloch had been tasked to provide with the list but to no avail, the NAB chief complained.

MQM

He said the Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) itself has no interest in their missing persons. Despite being in the government, and Ishrat-ul-Ibad's appointment as the Sindh governor, the party lacked the sincerity, seriousness and interest of recovering their own missing workers, he added. Iqbal also said that there was no contract between Pakistan and other countries regarding extradition of Pakistani citizens, hence they were secretly handed over to them in exchange for US dollars. Yet, no one will ask them how many dollars per person, he added.

Musharraf handed over 4,000 Pakistanis to foreign countries

"Former interior minister Aftab Sherpao claimed that 4,000 people were handed over to other countries. Pervez Musharraf, in his book, admitted that people were handed over to other countries, but parliament never bothered to ask who they are. Justice Iqbal said he had asked Mr Sherpao to provide details, but he said he was not made aware of it.

Parliament did nothing about missing persons: Justice Iqbal

Justice (retd) Javed Iqbal, mocked parliamentarians, saying he believed that they were the most powerful stakeholders of the state but failed to deliver. "Parliament had to find a solution but it did nothing. A report of the Judicial Commission headed by former Supreme Court judge Kamal Mansoor was released five years ago, but parliament did nothing," he regretted. 'Justice Iqbal told the meeting that he wanted to set the record straight as it was a fact that because of unemployment a large number of people joined firari (fugitive) camps and they were getting Rs. 40,000 as month salary, but they had been declared missing persons.'

Recovery

Justice (R) Iqbal said that the commission has received 4,929 cases of 'enforced disappearances'. The commission solved 3,219 cases from March 2011 to February 2018, he added. Presently, 1,710 cases of the missing persons are under investigation. In the past two years, the commission also received 368 cases from the United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, most of which belonged to Sindh, Iqbal added. "68 persons who had gone missing in August 2016, who were either imprisoned or had returned homes were followed," he said.

Justice (R) Iqbal further added that out of 368 missing person cases, 309 had been solved. 723 cases of the missing persons cases were registered against Pakistan in a UN working group meeting held in May 2017 in Geneva, out of which 505 have been solved. However, 218 cases are pending with the Commission, out of which 14 cases are of the Afghans who went missing in Pakistan from 1982-1986, he added. He informed the committee that the commission had disposed of 3,219 of 4,929 cases it had received as missing persons who had been recovered or their location was identified.

Foreign NGOs

Iqbal said that he was in favour of banning foreign Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), as they work in the interests of the other countries, and are funded by them. He said that if it were up to him, he would've

banned all foreign NGO's by now, but 'political reconciliation always gets in the way'. Justice Iqbal said, being NAB chairman, he would like to clarify that he never took dictation from anyone and the day someone tried to dictate to him he would quit.

Russian envoy to India defends country's growing ties with Pakistan

Ambassador Nikolay Kudashev's remarks, made at an event organised by the think tank Ananta Aspen Centre, come against the backdrop of growing pressure from the West, especially the US, on Pakistan to crack down on terrorists operating from its soil and to curb widespread terror financing.

Nikolay Kudashev's remarks come in the backdrop of growing pressure from the West, especially the US, on Pakistan to crack down on terrorists. Nikolay Kudashev's remarks come in the backdrop of growing pressure from the West, especially the US, on Pakistan to crack down on terrorists. Russia's envoy to India on Monday defended his country's burgeoning relationship with Pakistan, calling for a "realistic" approach to regional security and stability and saying Islamabad's "credibility" in the war on terror had increased.

Ambassador Nikolay Kudashev's remarks at an event organised by the think tank Ananta Aspen Centre, come against the backdrop of growing pressure from the West, especially the US, on Pakistan to crack down on terrorists operating from its soil and to curb widespread terror financing.

"In my take...after this country joined the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, after this country started to take serious measures to curb the financing of terror, the credibility of Pakistan is growing and there is no reason, no sense to deny its wish, its will to be a part of regional and global efforts to fight terror, to search for stability and to enhance economic integration," he said during the question and answer session.

Earlier in his speech, Kudashev said Russia is "open for contacts with every country" to ensure regional stability. Without naming Pakistan or the US, he also said "excessive pressure" on any of Afghanistan's neighbours would "just antagonise them and make numerous problems even more complicated". "The problems of Afghanistan are impossible to resolve without taking on board every neighbouring country," he said.

"There should be a realistic and comprehensive approach to the issues of common interest rather than a geopolitical one. We are open to contacts with every country, especially if it would help to ensure the regional stability, which, on the other hand, also remains largely dependent on constructive relationship between New Delhi and Islamabad," he added.

However, Kudashev said several times that Russia's ties with Pakistan could not be compared to the strategic partnership with India, which is one of the leading players in the Asia Pacific and Eurasia. Problems between India and Pakistan should be resolved diplomatically in line with the Simla Agreement and the Lahore Declaration, and Russia would support such a dialogue if requested by both sides, Kudashev said.

The envoy also stated Russia's support for a dialogue between the Afghan government and the Taliban, describing it as the "only way forward for the sake of lasting national reconciliation". The need for a unified approach towards the Taliban was guiding Russia's developing relations with Pakistan, he said. Though Russia remains the largest supplier of hardware to India's military, accounting for some 60% of the armament of the three services, New Delhi has kept a wary eye on the growing defence relations between Moscow and Islamabad. Pakistan recently received four Mi-35 gunship helicopters ordered from Russia under a \$153 million deal and the two countries have conducted joint military drills in the past two years.

Kudashev also spoke of the extensive cooperation between Russia and India, including defence cooperation that would last for many decades, the development of the hypersonic Brahmos Mark II cruise missile and collaboration on the Kudankulam nuclear power plant, for which Moscow has offered its latest reactors.

Civilian authorities in Pakistan maintain effective control over security forces

Says US govt. report

By Usman Kabir

Civilian authorities in Pakistan have managed to maintain effective control over security forces in the last few years as orderly transitions in top political and military leadership helped solidify the democratic process in the country, according to a recently released report on Human Rights Practices by the State Department of the United States.

The report released on Friday was severely critical of the condition of basic human rights in Pakistan over the past year, attributing widespread rights violations to terrorist violence and abuse by non-state actors within the country. The authors of the study concluded that a lack of government accountability, in which abusers often go unpunished, is responsible for festering a culture of impunity among perpetrators.

However, the findings praised Pakistan for sustained and significant operations against militant groups inside the country over the past twelve months which have contributed to a reduction in violence, as fatalities from terror-related incidents reduced from 1,803 in 2016 to 1,084. Legislative efforts and amnesty offers which aim to integrate rebellious or marginalised groups back within the national fold, particularly in Balochistan, were appreciated in the report.

HRCP slams 'burglary-style raid' on editor's house

According to the study published by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour at the US State Department, the most serious incidents related to abuses within Pakistan in 2017 were extra-judicial and targeted killings. In addition to these problems, corruption within the government and police, lack of criminal investigations or accountability for cases related to rape, ethnic and religious violence, and labour rights remained areas of considerable concern for the international community.

Extra-judicial or targeted killings

The report listed several cases of extra-judicial and targeted killings across the country, some of which have sparked outrage and protests in parts of Khyber - Paktunkhwa and Federally Administered Tribal Areas.

For example, it identified the Parachinar incident of 2017, in which firing on a local protest by law-enforcement authorities prompted a rare internal investigation, as well as the removal of a top official, by the government.

The study cited South Asia Terrorism Portal as reporting that at least 183 civilians were killed in terrorist attacks in Balochistan in 2017, compared to about 251 deaths to such incidents in 2016. Militants and terrorist groups killed hundreds and injured thousands with bombs, suicide attacks, and other violence during 2017, targeting police and security forces in particular, the report highlighted.

Enforced disappearances

The case of the missing bloggers has been listed as the most high-profile incident of enforced disappearances inside Pakistan during 2017. According to a government-constituted Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances, headed by Justice (retired) Javed Iqbal, 4,608 cases of missing persons or enforced disappearances were reported to the inquiry team between 2011 and 2017. The report stated that the government claimed 3,076 of these have now been closed, while 1532 remain open.

Outdated laws main hurdle

in speedy dispensation: CJP

Data obtained by the commission appeared to show that most of the missing persons were from the province of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (751), followed by Punjab (245), Balochistan (98), Sindh (50), Federally Administered Tribal Areas (48), the Islamabad (45), Azad Jammu and Kashmir (14), and Gilgit Baltistan (5).

Torture and state of prisoners

The report underlined that the Constitution of Pakistan does not provide legislative cover against torture of detainees by law-enforcement agencies, and a lack of complaint sections which deal with this issue exacerbated the problem. According to the Asian Human Rights Commission, police in Pakistan committed an excessive abuse of detainees in at least 114 cases in 2017, compared with more than 147 cases in 2016.

Cases of deaths and horrific injuries during detention often went unreported, the report noted. The US State Department appreciated amendments made to the tribal laws which exclude women, children and older people from collective punishment. The report gave a grim overview of prisons in Pakistan, as poor physical

facilities, torture, corrupt administrations and lack of independent monitors contribute to harsh and life-threatening conditions inside detentions centers.

Overcrowding, food and health facilities, prison security, treatment of prisoners belonging to a religious minority, treatment of women prisoners, and the corrupt practices of prison administrations are some of the problems highlighted in the report which require immediate attention of the provincial authorities in Pakistan, as they are primarily responsible for managing prisons.

In a startling revelation, the report cited the Society for Human Rights and Prisoners Aid in the country as estimating that the total number of prisoners in the country was more than 100,000, while the total capacity of prisons stood at just 36,000. Also, non-government organizations reported that the province of Balochistan had no separate prison for female detainees, although barracks in Quetta and Khuzdar temporarily compensated for the lack of it.

Religious and ethnic violence

Militant and terrorist activity was responsible for most of the religious and ethnic violence in Pakistan during 2017, the study by the US State Department underlined. There were a number of bomb and gun-attacks on civilians, journalists and security forces over the year based on ethnic or religious tensions.

International moot on Human Rights concludes

According to the South Asia Terrorism Portal, there were 15 sectarian attacks in 2017 reported across Pakistan which resulted in the death of 229 individuals, compared to 132 deaths in 31 such incidents in 2016.

Press and internet freedom

The report heaped lavish praise for the media in the country, stating that journalists were active and free to express their views on a wide variety of issues, including criticism of the government. The press reported on ethnic and religious violence, as well the persecution of minorities, but refrained from addressing other, more sensitive issues.

The government of Pakistan has been accused of implementing a systematic, nationwide content monitoring and filtering system to restrict or block unacceptable content on the internet. According to Freedom House, 200,000 websites were blocked in Pakistan in 2017, and the government also contacted international social media giants to obtain information about individuals posting content deemed inappropriate to the state in order to persecute them.

International non-governmental organizations and refugees

The report has lashed out the policies of the government in Islamabad which require international humanitarian organisations to obtain no-objection certificates for most of the projects they are working on, contending that the policy is responsible for the steady erosion of freedom for these charities to work for the welfare of communities across Pakistan.

Late last year, the government requested the closure of a number of international charities within 60 days, without citing reasons behind the move. The procedure for an appeal to circumvent this order is opaque, according to the report. On the topic of refugees in the country, the US State Department commended the decision of authorities in Pakistan to provide temporary legal status to almost 1.4 million Afghan refugees. But Afghans continued to face harassment at the hands of provincial governments and the police, the report noted.

Figures released by the United Nations indicated that there were 3,345 arrests and detentions of refugees during 2017. All those arrested were released later, 76 per cent without charges, often following the intervention of the UN.

Overseas Pakistanis 'Own' a \$587 Million Organization Called 'OPF'

By Irshad Salim

Pakistani expatriates collectively own a \$587 million+ organization back home but were unaware until the newly appointed Chairman Board of Governors of the Overseas Pakistan Foundation (OPF) broke the news at a town-hall-style meet of more than 500 Pakistanis at the embassy in Riyadh. More than 2.5 million Pakistanis are in the Kingdom the largest community among Pakistani Diaspora worldwide and last year they remitted close to \$5.6 billion (largest amount among the Diaspora).

According to analysis, they will continue to hold the coveted spot for years to come thanks to the Saudi economy which despite oil price's see-saw and several worldwide institutional critics' tell-tale analyses, will continue to show not only resilience but a smooth sailing towards a “new normal” an economy without oil as per Vision 2030 and its National Transformation Plan 2020.

Dr. Amjad Malik, a British Human Rights lawyer of Pakistan origin who was recently selected by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to head the humongous outfit (it's worth more than the Karachi Stock Exchange whose 40% equity was recently bought for \$85 million by a consortium of Chinese Stock Exchanges), has been tasked to put it on track “make it a viable non-for-profit organization to benefit overseas Pakistanis and their families by engaging them effectively”, Dr. Malik said.

Speaking to PKonweb, the newly appointed OPF Chairman said besides facilitating inclusiveness of overseas Pakistanis socially, culturally and politically, the organization will also serve as a bridge and if and where needed shall provide collective platform for those overseas Pakistanis who would want to invest and reap the benefits of a growing enabling business and economic environment in the country after the success of the anti-terrorism National Action Plan and the ongoing \$56 billion China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

The China-Pakistan “Marshall Plan” in the region is considered a game-changer for Asia with shifting of the region's center of economic gravity to Pakistan the Kingdom is one of several friendly regional countries interested in participating in it. With this developing scenario and cognizant of Pakistani expats powerhouse in the Kingdom, the Prime Minister had announced a year back a \$1 billion Overseas Pakistanis' Investment Bond to fund the country's housing sector where returns are much higher than average, and expats have been traditionally investing the most, Mr. Malik told PKonweb.

The \$1 billion Bond idea was first floated in December 2013 by the writer at a community event in Riyadh (as reported then in Saudi Gazette) and was immediately welcomed by the ambassador and Islamabad, leading to the PM making an announcement in February 2014 during his visit to Karachi Stock Exchange. “We can definitely launch the Bond for the expats, if the PM gives us the go ahead,” Dr. Malik told SG when asked if OPF can sponsor it on its own or enable it through the Stock Exchange or on public-private partnership or on 100% OP's equity basis.

Established decades ago with the intent to act as a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) for the welfare of overseas Pakistanis (8.5 million as of 2016), the gigantic organization has OPs as its mandatory stakeholder (each OP pays almost \$69 prior to flying out in pursuit of greener pasture) an information which was long withheld from them wittingly or unwittingly until the young savvy British-Pakistani lawyer (himself an OP) handed to them their rights, duties, responsibilities, etc. to the shock and awe of many of the attendees of the embassy event.

“Theoretically, OPF is an outfit similar to any other not-for-profit organizations operating worldwide, but what makes it stand out is its enabling legal framework, operational capabilities and capacity building abilities,” said Mr. Khalid Rana, President of PML-N in Riyadh. “If all ducks are in the row and political will prevails, we can do wonders” Mr. Malik concurred. “...specially for the expats in the Kingdom.”

Ambassador Manzur ul Haq suggested launching special measures and conveniences for KSA-based expats because of their comparatively lesser disposal income \$2240/year individually on an average, but on aggregate, the highest amount (\$5.6bn) due to their largest population among Pakistanis overseas.

Attorney Malik wants to immediately engage the OP's going forward so he can execute the initiatives on a two-way street basis by digging into collective minds of the stakeholders and their knowledge-base, expertise, available resources and skills. Mr. Malik has announced forming for each region an Overseas Pakistanis Advisory Council (OPAC) with “members to be drawn from each region on merit and value-addition capabilities.” “It's a challenge but we will get there political will prevailing,” Mr. Malik said.

A version of the article also appeared in UAE-based Caravan Daily website and Saudi Gazette.

Beating the Indian Navy without going broke

By Shahid Raza

A brief look at the history of warfare is enough to establish the dominant role of a naval force in defining the outcome of a limited or full scale shooting war. All great powers throughout human history, relied heavily on their naval might, be it the Viking raiders, the Chinese, the Ottomans, the British, the Soviets, the Americans and others.

The Second World War saw intense naval combat and it defined the outcome of the war in all major theaters. This dynamic hasn't changed since, and all aspiring powers in the 21st century, India included are looking to build a very expensive but powerful 'blue water navy' to project their power well into the future.

Unfortunately for reasons I can't explore in this article, Pakistan will find itself at the receiving end of India's ambitious naval build up in the immediate future. The author is willing to acknowledge that it is simply impossible for Pakistan to be able to match the offensive power the Indian navy is projected to have in the coming decade, however there are smart counter strategies based on the concept of 'disruptive innovation' to ensure that while Pakistan won't be able to match the power projection capabilities of the Indian navy with its own, it can maintain a reliable and potent defensive naval strategy to keep its ports and Sea Lines of Communications (SLOCs) open during a limited or full scale three dimensional war with India. This article will therefore explore what Pakistan can do in the future to guarantee its defense from its most powerful enemy; the Indian Navy.

Kill the Carriers

The Indian navy plans to build up to 4 aircraft carriers in the coming decade, which will form the centerpiece of its 'Carrier Battle Groups'. The Indian naval carriers will be equipped with fighter aircraft, attack helicopters and Short Take off Vertical Landing (STOVL) aircraft to maintain operational flexibility.

The construction, armament, training and operational costs of Indian carriers will cost Indian taxpayers around \$30-50 billion eventually, which makes these carriers an asset, too expensive to lose and too important to fail during battle. The Indian carriers on one hand will form the crown jewel of the Indian navy but on the other hand, a prime target for Pakistan navy during a future conflict.

India, due to its complex geo-security dynamics cannot afford to field all of its carriers against Pakistan. Building a credible deterrence against the Indian carrier fleet would give Pakistan navy ample flexibility to realize its dream of eventually becoming a force to be reckoned with not just in the Arabian Sea but also in the Indian Ocean Region. At best the number of carriers deployed against Pakistan will be either one or two because at least one carrier will always be in the dry dock for maintenance and repairs at any given time and the remaining one or two carriers will have to be kept available for the Chinese navy which is expanding its influence in the Indian Ocean Region with Pakistan's help.

The Indian carriers will be absolutely indispensable to the survival of the Indian surface and submarine fleet deployed in the 'Carrier Battle Group', because without the carrier air wing, the surface and submarine assets will become easy targets and the CBG will lose its mission critical standoff attack capability. Having established the critical role of the aircraft carriers to the Indian naval operations against Pakistan in the future, it therefore becomes critical that Pakistan develops capabilities to effectively detect, target, damage, disable or destroy the Indian carriers during the first phase of the war.

The loss of carriers alone will not only deplete and deprive the Indian navy off of its offensive capabilities but will also make its surface and submerged fleet immensely demoralized and easier to destroy or neutralize. Losing a carrier will cost India, thousands of highly trained sailors, crew and billions of dollars in monetary terms.

The loss of a prized war fighting capability will make India much more exposed to its other rivals like China as the destruction of Indian carriers will result in a massive overnight gap in war fighting capabilities vis-à-vis Chinese navy. So now that we've established the Indian carriers as our prime target, I will address the question of how those carriers can be removed from the battle space.

Build a sensor network

The first step of developing a 'carrier killing capability' is to develop an advanced sensor network to collect strategic intelligence on the capabilities and deployments of the Indian carriers. To develop such a capability, existing resources and assets would have to be tuned for the job.

Such a sensor network will guarantee timely detection of enemy vessels, provide reliable all weather targeting capability and real time intelligence to the naval command for adapting its naval defense strategy under adverse circumstances. Here are some of the elements which will come into play for developing such a sensor network.

HUMINT: Human Intelligence has always been a critical part of Pakistan's war-fighting psychology and in this instance; it retains its central position in providing intelligence on India's carrier operations, technical intelligence (TECHINT), forecast and early warning. Pakistan maintains an extensive HUMINT network inside India which has proven its capabilities time and again. Such a HUMINT network will be critical in providing situational awareness.

IMINT: Pakistan has access to various surveillance satellites for procuring high definition imagery for analysis of enemy capabilities and installations. For ensuring the constant supply of Image Intelligence (IMINT) during war time, plans are being made to develop or acquire a native spy satellite. The IMINT will prove to be a reliable source of information on the Indian navy, thus helping to generate another layer of Strategic Intelligence.

AEW&C: Airborne Early Warning and Control assets will form another layer of providing Strategic Intelligence (STRATINT) against the Indian naval movements and deployments. Pakistan already possesses a handful of AEW&C assets to do just that, however as things move forward, it would be wise to add numbers and capabilities to the AEW&C fleet, especially by purchasing High Altitude, Long Endurance (HALE) Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) like the 'Divine Eagle' currently being developed by China. A small number of unmanned submarines, equipped with early warning and communication sensors would be a smart investment.

The Indian carriers on one hand will form the crown jewel of the Indian navy but on the other hand, a prime target for Pakistan navy during a future conflict. India, due to its complex geo-security dynamics cannot afford to field all of its carriers against Pakistan. **Coastal Surveillance Network:** Just like India has commissioned a large scale Coastal Surveillance Network in 2015, it is also imperative for Pakistan to slowly but steadily build up a sophisticated Coastal Surveillance Network with short to long range capabilities. Such a network ought to be geographically dispersed along the entire length of the Makran coast.

It might also be wise to diversify the Coastal Surveillance capabilities by deploying these sensors on littoral vessels as well as road mobile vehicles, to increase its survivability.

Build an anti-ship ballistic missile system

A modern frigate can cost anywhere close to \$500 million, but such an expensive vessel remains vulnerable to enemy surface warfare, airborne and submarine assets. The author acknowledges that an advanced fleet of surface vessels is absolutely critical for any navy and their role cannot be replaced by an Anti-Ship Ballistic Missile System (ASBMS), regardless of how advanced the later system is the surface fleet would have to be needed.

Pakistan navy is making efforts to acquire and build new surface vessels, however it still lacks the capability to attack and kill the Indian aircraft carriers. That job would have to be taken care of by the ASBMS. China developed its DF-21D ASBMS to counter the carrier threat from the US Navy; Pakistan will face the exact same threat from the Indian navy in the near term. Therefore it is logical for Pakistan to invest efforts and resources into developing an ASBMS based on its tried and tested Shaheen series of Ballistic Missiles, with a standoff range of between 1000 -1500km. That effective range would be sufficient to keep the Indian carriers far enough from Pakistan's coastline to ensure the survivability of our ports and Sea Lines of Communications (SLOCs) so Pakistan can keep its trade and energy routes open during the period of war.

Building such an ASBMS would also mean that the Indian carrier air-wing operating from a standoff ranges would require midair refueling if it attempted to attack the Pakistani coastal assets or our surface fleet, which is an unfeasible proposition unless India can establish total air-dominance over Pakistan, which is simply not going to happen. In simple terms, the Indian carrier borne jets would run out of combat worthy fuel before they even reach their intended targets close to or at the Pakistani coastline.

Building an ASBMS is economically and technologically feasible for Pakistan because such a system will be built upon existing and available technologies and the technological breakthroughs needed to develop such a

system are not significant as most of the technological parameters required to develop this system are either already available or in the development pipeline

According to the US Naval War College, the unit cost of the DF-21D is between \$5-10 million, which in layman terms means that Pakistan can develop and deploy a potent arsenal of 50 -100 Sensor Network Enabled, all terrain, road mobile ASBM systems with shoot and scoot capability in the cost of buying a new AAW Frigate. If we compare it to the cost and battlefield value of an Indian aircraft carrier, it certainly proves to be a very cost effective solution to a very powerful problem.

Developing such an ASBMS is a wiser move not only from the technological and economic stand point but it also emerges as 'strategic trump card' which can become an ultimate weapon of blackmail and deterrence against a much larger and more powerful adversary. Importantly there is no reliable countermeasure against such a system available to the Indian navy, nor is it likely to come anytime soon.

That effective range would be sufficient to keep the Indian carriers far enough from Pakistan's coastline to ensure the survivability of our ports and Sea Lines of Communications (SLOCs) so Pakistan can keep its trade and energy routes open during the period of war. During a war when a Pakistani ASBMS scores a carrier kill or succeeds in damaging and disabling one or potentially more Indian carriers including the helicopter carriers, thus sending them out of the battle space, it will mark an abrupt end to the Indian naval campaign against Pakistan because the rest of their surface and submerged fleet will also take heavy losses without the air wing of their carriers.

With the loss of their carriers, they will lose their eyes and ears, standoff interception capabilities, would suffer from a decline in combat morale, and would become vulnerable to attacks from Land, Surface, and Air and by Submarines. Thus it is established that developing an indigenous ASBMS meets the 'disruptive innovation' criteria and remains an attractive option for Pakistan's defense planners.

Build a cruise missile system architecture

Thanks to the foresight of its defense planners, Pakistan is fortunate to be among the select few countries in the world which possess the capability to research, develop, manufacture and deploy highly advanced, medium long range Cruise Missile systems. The Cruise Missiles can form a daunting deterrence against even the most powerful and well equipped adversaries like the Indian navy. Keeping this in view, Pakistan has already been developing a range of different Cruise Missile systems which are capable of keeping the Indian navy far away from our shores, despite all of its might and capabilities. Here is a brief introduction of Pakistan's Cruise Missile arsenal.

Babur-I Land Attack Variant: In the context of Coastal Defense, the Babur-1 LACM can be instrumental as a weapon of deterrence because India's major peripheral military ports from Gujrat to Mumbai fall within its operational range. In simple terms, Babur LACM can neutralize high value stationary targets located between the states of Gujrat and Maharashtra. These targets include military communications, ports, fuel, radars, runways and other high priority targets which would be essential for the Indian navy to mount an offensive campaign against Pakistan as well as for replenishments, repairs and supplies.

Babur-II Multi Role Variant: Pakistan possesses an advanced version of Babur-I LACM dubbed 'Babur Weapon System Version-2' which brings a very unique capability for Pakistan as this particular Cruise Missile system not only has upgraded avionics and guidance system but is also capable of targeting moving surface targets like aircraft carriers, frigates, destroyers and other naval surface assets.

Thus this system with its outstanding range and capabilities will form a credible deterrence against the fast growing Indian surface fleet, as well as against high value land based targets. **Babur-III Submarine Launched Variant:** Although Pakistan's Babur-III SLCM variant is meant for carrying out a second nuclear strike, it however can be used as a conventionally armed weapon to attack large surface vessels of the Indian navy.

Under such a scenario, Pakistan's air independent propulsion equipped submarines, armed with a conventional variant of the Babur-III can plausibly infiltrate close to the home ports of the Indian carriers and attack those carriers while they are still a long distance away from posing a threat to Pakistan. Similarly, the conventional version of Babur-III can also be deployed against high value coastal targets in India which do not fall within the range of Pakistan's Babur-I/II LACMs due to the long range of Pakistan's Submarines.

Harba Cruise Missile: Pakistan recently test fired a new variant of the Babur Cruise Missile called 'Harba' from the domestically developed Fast Attack Craft (Missile) PNS HIMMAT. This new missile system reportedly has a strike range of 700km, which is almost 3 times more than the strike range offered by the Harpoon and C-802

missiles, currently in service with Pakistan navy. Harba is also dual mode and is capable of attacking both surface and land targets which gives it a great operational flexibility.

The system is also considered to be quite survivable since it is mounted on a Fast Attack Craft which operates in littoral waters where radar clutter makes it hard to find and attack this system. So essentially, Harba gives Pakistan the capability to maintain effective area denial capability only if this system is produced in enough strong numbers to make a dent in the overall war-fighting strategy.

Developing such an ASBMS is a wiser move not only from the technological and economic stand point but it also emerges as 'strategic trump card' which can become an ultimate weapon of blackmail and deterrence against a much larger and more powerful adversary. Zarb Cruise Missile: The Zarb Cruise Missile System essentially is a locally produced version of the Chinese C-602A Coastal Defense System. This missile carries a very powerful 400kg warhead and is capable of destroying surface targets for up to 290km. Zarb is a Coastal Defense System which means it is similar to Boeing's Harpoon Coastal Defense system, which is designed to protect the coastline from enemy intruders or a marine landing.

Since it appears that Pakistan is producing this system locally, its further development of operational capability and range is expected and it will certainly make another potent layer of coastal defense for Pakistan's coastline. It is also worthy to note that Pakistan also possesses a sizeable arsenal of air, sea and submarine based Harpoon, Exocet and C-802 anti-Ship missiles which form another layer of Pakistan navy's defense strategy.

In this domain, Pakistan navy is doing fairly well as opposed to many regional navies because of its unique capability to acquire cutting edge Cruise Missile Systems, tailored for its own requirements without being limited by the international missile export standards as defined by MTCR.

Build a potent surface, air & submarine fleet

After having developed a powerful sensor network to detect enemy mobilization, a long range Anti-Ship Ballistic Missile System and a third layer of up to 8 different Cruise Missile systems to develop a credible attack capability, it becomes imperative to also build a strong fleet of new advanced Anti Air Warfare Frigates, Littoral Patrol Ships, a sizeable fleet of AIP Submarines, a Nuclear Powered SSBN for completing the nuclear triad and air-borne attack assets including fixed, rotary wing aircraft and unmanned systems.

The author acknowledges the limited budget available to the Navy; however the defense planners and the Govt must find a way to finance the acquisition or development of these assets for the navy in the future, because most of navy's surface, submerged and airborne assets are aging and some are due for retirement.

The new acquisitions have to be made under a broader strategy to not only transfer technology of these systems to Pakistani industry but they must also retain the capability to work with the existing sensor network as well as offering potential for future upgrades and integration with new sensors and weapons.

In the given context, the surface, submerged and airborne fleet of the navy will form the last line of defense against a massive Indian naval advance and therefore it must be carefully planned to narrow the capability gap vis-à-vis the Indian navy while keeping the budgetary limitations in mind.

Concluding thoughts

The Indian Aircraft carrier fleet will pose a balance of power altering challenge to Pakistan's overall defense strategy and not just to the Pakistan navy. Indian navy will almost certainly be deployed against Pakistan should the Indian 'Cold Start' doctrine turn hot in the future.

It has to be acknowledged that while able to defend Pakistan's naval frontiers for now, the Pakistan navy remains the weakest arm of the state's war fighting machine and it is becoming increasingly outnumbered and outgunned. It would not be wise for Pakistan to try and match the Indian naval might pound for pound because it will be a very expensive exercise which an economy like Pakistan can ill afford.

The author believes that Pakistan's naval strategy should be based on the concept of 'disruptive innovation' which can offset the Indian naval advantage while remaining inside our national spending and technological envelope and more importantly without relying heavily on foreign assistance, be it financial or technological. The author strongly believes that Pakistan ought to build further upon its inherent strengths, like it's rather potent capability to design, develop and manufacture highly advanced ballistic and cruise missile systems which will not only reduce cost but also reduce our dependence on foreign suppliers.

If Russia's Sarmat and Iskander missiles are an example to go by, it is not hard to understand that the future battlefield is likely to remain dominated by countries which can design, develop and manufacture advance ballistic and cruise missile systems as well as associated technologies like propulsion, target guidance like

radiation homing, flight control, mission computing and advance warheads like hypersonic glide vehicles and electromagnetic pulse (EMP).

Pakistan finds itself in a position to develop those cutting edge technologies which can overwhelm India's carrier fleet in a limited or full scale shooting war, at a very manageable cost; thus deterring a more powerful and aggressive adversary by neutralizing its tactical and strategic advantage from the battle space.

The author also believes that Pakistan can maintain its naval defenses while remaining inside its budgetary limitations by developing an indigenous capability to design, develop and manufacture unmanned aerial and submarine systems, artificial intelligence based guidance systems for its ballistic and cruise missiles as well as by building a sizeable number of littoral Fast Attack Crafts which are armed with long range weapons like Harba.

The unmanned systems will cut development, manufacturing and operational costs so they can also be deployed in strong numbers. Such unmanned systems can also be operated in high risk environments due to their long endurance and the capability to operate beyond the physical capabilities of human operators. Thus unmanned systems and other emerging technologies like the artificial intelligence can help maintain the naval balance of power without sending the national economy into crisis.

Pakistan must also muster its diplomatic muscle to acquire naval bases in friendly peripheral countries under collective security agreements, so the Pakistan navy has diverse options to deploy and disperse its forces as required during a naval war scenario with India. There are countries which are strategically located and will be sympathetic to Pakistan's security concerns while benefitting from the collective defense agreement with Pakistan.

The author believes that Pakistan will benefit immensely by opening a strategic dialogue with friendly countries like Maldives, Indonesia, Somalia, Yemen and Sudan to grant naval bases or rotation and replenishment rights from their own installations. Building a credible deterrence against the Indian carrier fleet would give Pakistan navy ample flexibility to realize its dream of eventually becoming a force to be reckoned with not just in the Arabian Sea but also in the Indian Ocean Region.

Shahid Raza is Assistant Editor (Strategic Affairs) with Global Village Space. He serves as the Director of Geopolitical Research at Command Eleven consulting. His area of expertise is the analysis of hybrid warfare strategies involving Pakistan, India, China, Russia, Central Asia and South Asia, North America and the Middle East.

Shahid frequently contributes to Moscow based, Radio Sputnik international, Katehon and the Geopolitical think tanks. He can be followed on twitter: @schaheid, schaheid@gmail.com the views expressed in this article are authors own and do not necessarily reflect the editorial policy of Global Village Space.

India and Pakistan are quietly making nuclear war more likely

Both countries are arming their submarines with nukes

By Tom Hundley

The Karachi Naval Dockyard, home port and strategic nerve center for Pakistan's fleet, sits on a sliver of land bracketed between Port Grand, a "family fun" pier that features kiddie rides and a panoramic view of warships at anchor, and Machar Colony, a sprawling slum where cattle graze on garbage and a million human inhabitants live in nearly unimaginable squalor.

It was here, during the quiet predawn of May 6, 2014, that four rogue naval officers walked up the gangway of the PNS Zulfiqar, a 4,000-ton frigate that was preparing to put to sea. A guard inspected their ID badges and saluted. Once on board, their plan was to join up with another group of six militants disguised in marine uniforms who were approaching the Zulfiqar in an inflatable dinghy. Together they hoped to hijack the ship and use it to attack a US Navy patrol in the Indian Ocean.

But an alert sailor on board the frigate noticed something was wrong. The men in the dinghy were armed with AK-47s not the standard weapons used by Pakistani marines. When he challenged the group in the dinghy, a gunfight quickly erupted. While the attackers fired automatic weapons and rocket-propelled grenades, the sailor shredded the dingy with an anti-aircraft gun, killing all six.

Hearing the commotion, navy commandos from another vessel rushed to the scene, but it still took several hours to regain control of the ship from the four rogue officers already on board. Eventually all of them were killed, the last one blowing himself up after he was cornered.

The audacity of a bloody attack inside one of the most heavily secured naval facilities in Pakistan was jarring enough. Even more jarring was the source of the attack: al-Qaeda, which claimed responsibility for the strike and praised the dead men as "martyrs." Five more naval officers implicated in the plot were later arrested, charged with mutiny, and sentenced to death.

The Zulfiqar incident is the most serious in a long string of deadly security breaches at Pakistani military installations, including attacks on nuclear facilities near Dera Ghazi Khan in 2003 and 2006 and a string of attacks on the air force bases at Sargodha and Kamra between 2007 and 2012 (the strikes were detailed in research by Ankit Panda and Christopher Clary, two leading scholars on the nuclear arms race between India and Pakistan). One of the most horrifying strikes was a gruesome 2014 attack on a school for the children of military officers in Peshawar that left more than 140 people dead, including 132 children.

But even if Pakistani bases have been hit before, the Zulfiqar strike is particularly alarming. That's because Pakistan is preparing to arm its submarines and possibly some of its surface ships with nuclear weapons which means terrorists who successfully fight their way into a Pakistani naval base in the future could potentially get their hands on some of the most dangerous weapons on earth.

The Pakistan navy is likely to soon place nuclear-tipped cruise missiles on up to three of its five French-built diesel-electric submarines. It has also reached a deal with China to buy eight more diesel-electric attack submarines that can be equipped with nuclear weapons. These are scheduled for delivery in 2028. Even more disturbing, Pakistani military authorities say they are considering the possibility of putting nuclear-tipped cruise missiles on surface vessels like the Zulfiqar.

Pakistan says its decision to add nuclear weapons to its navy is a direct response to India's August 2016 deployment of its first nuclear submarine, the Arihant. A second, even more advanced Indian nuclear submarine, the Arighat, began sea trials last November, and four more boats are scheduled to join the fleet by 2025. That will give India a complete "nuclear triad," which means the country will have the ability to deliver a nuclear strike by land-based missiles, by warplanes, and by submarines.

The submarine is the key component. It's considered the most "survivable" in the event of a devastating first strike by an enemy, and thus able to deliver a retaliatory second strike. In the theology of nuclear deterrence, the point of this unholy trinity is to make nuclear war unwinnable and, therefore, pointless.

When it comes to India and Pakistan, by contrast, the new generation of nuclear submarines could increase the risk of a devastating war between the two longstanding enemies, not make it less likely.

India and Pakistan have gone to war four times since 1947, when Britain partitioned what had been a single colony into Hindu-majority India and Muslim-majority Pakistan. They have been in a state of constant hostility

ever since, and for the past two decades, they have been locked in a frightening nuclear arms race on land. Pushing the contest into the Indian Ocean makes the situation even more dangerous by loosening the chain of command and control over the weapons, increasing the number of weapons, and placing them in an environment where things tend to go wrong.

“The nuclearization of the Indian Ocean has begun,” Zafar Jaspal, a nuclear security expert at Islamabad's Quaid-i-Azam University, told me. “Both states have now crossed the threshold.” This should be setting off alarms throughout the international community. Growing numbers of nuclear weapons will soon be deployed to submarines patrolling some of the most bitterly contested waters on earth and controlled by jittery and potentially paranoid officers on perpetual high alert about a surprise attack from the other side.

The result is a game of nuclear chicken every bit as dangerous as the “my button is bigger than yours” competition between Donald Trump and Kim Jong Un on the Korean Peninsula. The difference here is that this one is going almost completely unnoticed.

Putting nukes on submarines makes a nuclear war much more likely

The modern nuclear-powered, nuclear-armed submarine is arguably the most fearsome weapon ever conceived. The US Navy has 18 Ohio-class boats, four of which can carry 154 cruise missiles apiece. The submarines can travel beneath the sea for months, virtually undetectable, and their range is limited only by the crew's endurance and food supply.

When we talk about nuclear submarines, we talk about two different, but related, things: what powers the subs, and what kinds of weapons they carry. The US, Russia, the UK, France, and China have nuclear-powered submarines that are also armed with nuclear weapons. Israel is thought to have submarines that are armed with nuclear warheads, but they're powered by diesel-electric generators.

That matters because those types of submarines, unlike the nuclear-powered ones made by America and other major world powers, are noisy and thus easier to track and can generally stay underwater for only a week or two at most. India has spent billions of dollars to join that exclusive club and came close to disaster.

The \$2.9 billion Arihant nearly sank a few months after its commissioning when a hatch was left open and seawater flooded the propulsion compartment. The embarrassing mishap, blamed on “human error,” was hushed up by the ministry of defense. Even India's senior political leadership was kept in the dark. The boat has been undergoing extensive repairs since February 2017, according to a January 8 report in the newspaper the Hindu, which was the first to report the entire saga.

Meanwhile, India's “other” nuclear submarine, the INS Chakra an Akula-class submarine on loan from Russia primarily for training purposes is also in dry dock after an unspecified accident damaged its sensitive sonar equipment. In February, Russia sent India a \$20 million bill for repairs. Pakistan, for its part, announced last year that it had successfully test-fired a submarine-launched cruise missile capable of carrying a nuclear warhead. That was a clear indication that the country wanted to start arming its submarines with nukes. It had already signaled that it was willing to put nukes on some of its surface ships.

The problem is that putting nukes at sea significantly weakens the chain of command and control over the weapons, which means the risk of an accidental exchange of fire or full-on nuclear war between India and Pakistan will increase exponentially. Up until now, both Pakistan and India have implemented rigorous checks to keep their weapons safe and eliminate the possibility of inadvertent or rogue launches. In India, ultimate authority in the chain of command and control rests with the country's civilian political leadership.

In theory, Pakistan's nuclear trigger is also in civilian hands. A body called the National Command Authority, headed by the prime minister, must authorize any decision to use nuclear weapons. But in reality, it is the military, widely regarded as the most stable and disciplined institution in the country that controls all aspects of the country's nuclear program.

Equally important, both India and Pakistan have kept their warheads and delivery systems “de-mated” that is, the nuclear warhead is stored far away from the missile that would deliver it. Or in the case of India's bombs, the trigger or detonator is kept far from the fissile core. But at sea and especially when you go beneath the sea this is pretty much impossible. The warheads and missiles have already been assembled and stored in the same place, and individual submarine captains have significant freedom to decide whether to launch their nukes.

“The new danger for both countries is that the problem of command and control over the submarines becomes very tenuous,” said Pervez Hoodbhoy, a Pakistani nuclear physicist and frequent visiting scholar at Princeton University, where we spoke last summer. “With land-based weapons, the warhead is separated

from the delivery system. You can't do that with warheads on a submarine. When it leaves the port, it is already armed."

Hoodbhoy said that leaves military planners with two options: "Either you do not give the arming code to the captain ... or you give it to him before he leaves the port and he can, of his own accord, launch a nuclear missile."

In submarine warfare, the glaring weak link in the chain of command has always been communication between the sub beneath the sea and the central command. Normal radio waves cannot penetrate the ocean's depths. To communicate with a submerged submarine, very low frequency (VLF) and extremely low frequency (ELF) radio transmissions are necessary.

These frequencies cannot carry voice communications, only coded messages or at a snail's pace text messages. It's also difficult for the subs to receive communications of any kind if they're submerged too deeply. These communications are also strictly one-way; subs can hear what ground commanders are telling them but can't reply or ask questions. "Essentially the submarine is on its own," said Hoodbhoy, adding that "it can't communicate back" unless it sticks an antenna above the surface and potentially reveals its location.

Hiding beneath the ocean, almost impossible to detect, nuclear submarines have the great advantage of being able to survive a nuclear strike by an enemy nation and launch a devastating second-strike response. The same can't be said for the land-based VLF transmitters that give the subs their orders. These are impossible-to-hide sitting ducks, vulnerable to enemy attack in a first strike. Knock out these installations and the submarines are operating blind.

If you watch Denzel Washington and Gene Hackman fight it out in the underwater thriller *Crimson Tide*, you get a pretty accurate picture of how things can go south quickly in the extreme isolation of a nuclear submarine cut off from its centralized command.

Pakistan and India went to the nuclear brink during a 1999 war in the disputed territory Kashmir, coming closer to pulling the trigger than even the US and Soviet Union during the 1962 Cuban missile crisis. The Kashmir issue continues to roil both countries, so it's not hard to imagine a *Crimson Tide* scenario in which an Indian submarine commander, aware that his country is under attack, receives an incomplete or unclear order to launch. What does he do?

Here's another scenario: India knocks out Pakistan's only VLF transmitter in Karachi. The beleaguered commander of one of Pakistan's diesel-electric submarines lost in the fog of war, unable to communicate with the National Command Authority, and under attack by one of India's highly capable anti-submarine hunters launches a cruise missile. Is it armed with a conventional warhead or a nuclear warhead? Do Indian authorities wait until it hits a major population center to find out? Or do they order an immediate retaliatory attack?

Experts who have modeled an India-Pakistan nuclear exchange say that once the first nuke is launched, it would be nearly impossible for either side to deescalate. That means each side would likely attempt to unleash its entire arsenal of 100 or more nuclear weapons on the other side's population centers.

The ensuing firestorm would release a cloud of radioactive ash that would darken skies, cool temperatures, and disrupt agriculture around the globe for a decade or more. Millions would die, and millions more would be faced with displacement and starvation as we enter what scientists have termed nuclear winter.

In many ways, the power to start or prevent such devastation rests in the hands of individual submarine commanders. During the Cold War, US submarines had a "two-man rule" that required a commander (Hackman's character in *Crimson Tide*) and executive officer (the part played by Washington) to agree that a launch order was valid. As Cold War tensions eased, the two-man rule was replaced by a more rigorous system of checks that require the sub commander to utilize an externally provided code in order to launch.

India has not said how it will maintain control of its submarines. "There's a lot of confusion and not much clarity on this," said Yogesh Joshi, an analyst at Stanford University who is writing a book on India's nuclear submarine program. "They are acting as if this is something still in the future, something they can think about later."

The situation will become even more fraught if Pakistan follows through on its threat to arm its surface vessels with nuclear weapons. In that scenario, some ships will carry nuclear weapons and some won't. This ambiguity creates all kinds of new pathways for mistakes, misunderstandings, miscalculations, and mischief. If a missile is launched from one of these ships, how will India know whether it is a nuke or not? "That will lead us to Armageddon," warned Abhijit Singh, a former Indian naval officer and current senior fellow at the Observer Research Foundation, a New Delhi think tank.

The other big worry, especially with regard to Pakistan, is that nuclear weapons will somehow fall into the hands of terrorists. With Pakistan's existing land-based arsenal, the warheads and missiles are stored separately in a series of heavily guarded secret locations.

That can't be done with ships and submarines. The weapons will instead have to be handled and stored at the Naval Dockyard in Karachi or at the newer Ormara facility in Balochistan, according to Rifaat Hussein, a security expert at Pakistan's National University of Science and Technology, who recently toured the navy's Ormara facility.

Either way, terrorists will know exactly where they have to go to get what they want, and al-Qaeda has already shown a willingness and capability to hit those facilities. Naval Station Mehran, a sprawling base in Karachi that is headquarters for the navy's air fleet, is adjacent to the Pakistan air force's giant Faisal base, a likely repository of nuclear components. In 2011, a team of 15 to 20 heavily armed militants breached the security perimeter at Mehran, made their way to the heart of the base, and destroyed two P-3C Orion anti-submarine aircraft.

Pakistani commandos and security personnel spent nearly 18 hours fighting to retake the base, and at least 13 of them died in the effort. The Pakistani Taliban initially claimed responsibility, but later there were credible suggestions that al-Qaeda may have carried out the attack. Either way, the ease with which the attackers entered the base and their focus on destroying the most valuable military assets suggested they had inside help.

When the Mehran base came under attack, both Pakistan and India immediately put their nuclear assets on high alert because of its proximity to one of Pakistan's key nuclear stockpiles. The incident left both sides uneasy about the security of their most destructive weapons. "The Pakistan navy was always known to be a highly professional force. Now all of that seems to have changed," Singh, the former Indian naval officer, told me. "The systemic infiltration of the navy by these radicalized elements is shocking to us,"

Although these incidents are cause for alarm, most experts agree that Pakistan has done a good job safeguarding its nuclear weapons. Protecting the nukes from India, from homegrown terrorists, and from the US military, which has spent millions of dollars helping Pakistan secure its nuclear arsenal but still remains a suspect ally is Pakistan's highest priority.

The supervision of the nation's nuclear arsenal is managed by an elite agency within the military called the Strategic Plans Division. Rising above the morass of Pakistan's domestic politics, the SPD projects an image of calm professionalism. In Islamabad, I met with Brig. Gen. Zahir Kazmi, director of the SPD's arms control and disarmament branch, who made the case that Pakistan "is very much alive" to the dangers of managing nuclear weapons at sea. "We are confident but not complacent," he said.

Kazmi recognized the responsibility of safeguarding the weapons in the face of a challenging domestic security environment but bristled at any suggestion from an American that Pakistan's military might not be up to the task of protecting its most important assets. "Managing nuclear safety and security is not a white man's burden only," he said. "Pakistan is managing its responsibilities quite well. There is a deliberate tendency to forget that Pakistan's record is as good, if not better, than that of the US."

America's role in the growing numbers of nukes in the Indian Ocean has been one of muddled ambiguity. In 2008, the US signed a commercial agreement that allows India to share in most of the benefits of the Nuclear Suppliers Group even though India has never signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. This bending of the rules allows India to import uranium for civilian energy projects, freeing up domestic capacity for production of the highly enriched uranium (HEU) needed to fuel the reactors on its new submarines.

Last summer, the US signaled a sharper tilt toward India by conducting joint naval exercises in the Indian Ocean with India and Japan. This was meant as a warning to China, with its growing ambitions in the Indian Ocean, but it did little to calm anxieties in Pakistan. Meanwhile, in his very first tweet of 2018, President Trump abruptly and unexpectedly cut off military aid to Islamabad.

"The United States has foolishly given Pakistan more than 33 billion dollars in aid over the last 15 years, and they have given us nothing but lies & deceit," Trump tweeted on New Year's Day. "They give safe haven to the terrorists we hunt in Afghanistan, with little help. No More!"

Aside from the oddity of conducting foreign policy via Twitter, the public scolding was taken in Islamabad as a humiliating insult, further complicating ties with an admittedly difficult but necessary US ally in Washington's never-ending "war on terror."

The cold war between India and Pakistan seems to be heating up

As the Indian Ocean arms race accelerates, both India and Pakistan are rethinking when and how they might take the nightmare step of launching the doomsday weapons at each other. Their nuclear rivalry goes back to May 1998, when both countries shocked the world with a series of nuclear tests.

Five years later, India declared its “no first use” doctrine. India's political leadership has made clear that it views nukes as political weapons a way to project global power and perhaps win a seat on the United Nations Security Council not as war-fighting weapons. India's military, however, has been frustrated by Pakistan's tactic of allowing terror groups to fight a low-grade proxy war against India.

Pakistan calculates that it can use this tactic to hurt India without fear of retaliation because India would be afraid of provoking a nuclear response. The 2001 attack on India's parliament building and the 2008 Mumbai attack are the most notorious examples of this.

Both were carried out by Pakistan-based militants with well-established links to Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence agency, or ISI, the military's powerful spy agency. Terrorism is the classic underdog's tactic. Pakistan is clearly the underdog in any non-nuclear match up with India, but it is certainly the world's first nuclear-armed underdog to successfully apply the tactic against a nuclear rival. Infuriated by what it sees as a kind of blackmail, India's military is looking to develop strategies in which it could apply its superior conventional force to punish Pakistan without provoking a nuclear response.

Pakistan, meanwhile, has tweaked its nuclear doctrine from “credible minimum deterrence” to something it calls “full spectrum deterrence,” which apparently countenances the use of low-yield tactical battlefield nuclear weapons on its own territory in the event of an Indian incursion another unsettling first in the annals of nuclear deterrence.

During the Cold War, the dynamic that drove the US-Soviet arms race was MAD mutually assured destruction which saw both sides accumulate vast arsenals with tens of thousands of warheads. The logic was that each side possessed such overwhelming destructive power that neither would ever dare use it. Both sides understood that a nuclear war would be unwinnable and, therefore, unthinkable. A reverse and equally perverse dynamic propels the India-Pakistan rivalry. As India searches for ways to use its overwhelming conventional military advantage, a nervous Pakistan is forced to keep lowering the threshold for nuclear retaliation.

As a result, there have been recent signals that India is rethinking or reinterpreting its no-first-use doctrine. A 2016 book by Shivshankar Menon, a respected national security adviser in the previous government, caused a stir by declaring “a potential grey area as to when India would use nuclear weapons first.” Menon suggested India would be prepared to order a preemptive strike if it appeared Pakistan was about to use its nuclear weapons.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party floated a similar idea in 2014, urging a more flexible nuclear doctrine to deal with Pakistan. And while Modi himself says he remains committed to no first use, his previous defense minister, Manohar Parrikar, argued that India needed a less restrictive nuclear doctrine.

If nothing else, Indian generals are speaking much more aggressively since they completed the full nuclear triad, which gives them an assured way of hitting Pakistan even if India has been hit by a nuclear attack.

In January, Gen. Bipin Rawat, the army's new chief of staff, declared that India was prepared to test Pakistan's threat to use nuclear weapons if a new war broke out. “We will call their bluff,” Rawat said. “If given the task, we will not say we cannot cross the border because they have nuclear weapons.”

And that's why this all matters so much for the two countries and their hundreds of millions of citizens and the world as a whole. India and Pakistan are mortal enemies that have dozens of nuclear warheads aimed at each other. That was scary when those nukes were only on land. It's a much scarier situation now that those nukes have been put onto submarines that move deep underwater, holding the deadliest payloads imaginable. Tom Hundley is a senior editor at the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting.

This story has been updated to include links to the work of Ankit Panda and Christopher Clary, two experts on the nuclear arms race between India and Pakistan. Additionally, there were a string of attacks on Pakistani air force bases in Sargodha and Kamra between 2007 and 2012, not just two incidents. Finally, the US Navy has 18 Ohio-class submarines, but only four are configured to fire cruise missiles.

'Courtesy Vox'.

Weapons US & Russian nuclear arsenals set to be unchecked for first time since 1972

Arms control experts have signed a statement warning international constraints will expire in 2021 unless a new nuclear deal is reached

By Julian Borger

A Russian Topol M intercontinental ballistic missile launcher rolls along Red Square during the 2017 Victory Day military parade to celebrate 72 years since the defeat of Nazi Germany, in Moscow. A Russian Topol M intercontinental ballistic missile launcher rolls along Red Square during the 2017 Victory Day military parade in Moscow.

The US and Russian nuclear arsenals could soon be unconstrained by any binding arms control agreements for the first time since 1972, triggering an expensive and dangerous new arms race, a group of former officials and experts from the US, Europe and Russia has warned. In a statement to be published on Wednesday, the signatories point out that the 2010 New Start treaty limiting the deployed strategic warheads and delivery systems of the US and Russia, will expire in February 2021, unless urgent steps are taken to extend it.

Meanwhile, the Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) agreement is in danger of collapse, amid US accusations of Russian violations of the pact with the development of a new land-based cruise missile, and the Trump administration's threat to develop a similar weapon in response. Both Vladimir Putin, in recent statements, and Donald Trump, in his administration's nuclear posture review, have declared plans to modernize and upgrade their arsenals involving new nuclear weapons capabilities.

The threatened return to an arms race between the world's two biggest nuclear powers comes at a time of high tension in relations between Washington and Moscow, when US, Nato and Russian forces are operating in close proximity in eastern Europe and Syria. "Without a positive decision to extend New Start, and if the INF Treaty comes to an end, there would be no legally-binding limits on the world's two largest nuclear superpowers for the first time since 1972, and the risk of unconstrained US-Russian nuclear competition would grow," the statement warned.

The statement is signed by former senior arms negotiators from the US and Russia, a former Russian chief of staff, Gen Victor Esin, former UK defense minister Des Browne and retired US senator Richard Lugar.

The US and Russia have stuck to the terms of New Start, which was signed eight years ago by their then presidents, Barack Obama and Dmitry Medvedev. It has been an exception to Donald Trump's determination to erase his predecessor's foreign policy record. By the treaty's deadline of February this year, both countries declared they had met its limits of 1,550 deployed strategic warheads, and 700 fielded delivery platforms such as intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), submarine-launched ballistic missiles and nuclear-capable bombers.

The US navy test-fires a nuclear-capable Trident II missile from the submerged submarine USS Tennessee in the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of Florida. The US navy test-fires a nuclear-capable Trident II missile from the submerged submarine USS Tennessee in the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of Florida. The treaty allows a five-year extension by mutual consent. Moscow has said it was open to discussion on the issue, and in an interview in March, Putin voiced interest in an extension or even possible further cuts in warhead numbers.

When he called to congratulate Putin on his re-election in March, Trump invited Putin to a summit "in the not too distant future to discuss the arms race, which is getting out of control". The Trump administration had put off any consideration of extending New Start until its nuclear posture review was complete and Russian met its treaty obligations by the February deadline.

With those milestones reached, the top Pentagon official for nuclear and missile policy, Rob Soofer told the Senate on 11 April, "we're going to begin a whole of government review of the pros and cons of extending that treaty."

Trump's new national security adviser, John Bolton, has been a persistent critic of the INF treaty and New Start, which he has derided as "unilateral disarmament". Republican hawks in the Senate, like Tom Cotton, have also declared their intention to pull the US out of the treaties.

Trump and Putin have declared themselves open to negotiation, but also sought to emphasise the size and capabilities of their nuclear arsenals in an overt and unprecedented manner. Frictions over Russian meddling in western elections, the ongoing investigation into the Trump's campaign's possible collusion with those efforts in 2016, and Moscow's military intervention in Ukraine and Syria, are all complicating the prospects of keeping a bilateral arms control regime in place.

Failure to agree on an extension in time could trigger a relatively rapid increase in arsenals, Daryl Kimball, the head of the Arms Control Association, said. "Each side has significant 'upload potential'. That means they have enough delivery systems and enough reserve nuclear warheads, to increase the number of deployed strategic warheads very rapidly, if they so choose," Kimball said.

Afghanistan

A new approach to Afghanistan

The Afghan war has cost the United States a little over a trillion dollars, even by modest estimates, that is about \$58 billion per year

By Imran Jan

Let me clarify at the outset that this is not about the Nash equilibrium in game theory. I could assure you that Donald Trump doesn't know about game theory or the Nash equilibrium and I can guarantee this that he wouldn't even understand it if one tried to teach him. Having that said, I think there may be a kids' version of the Nash strategy that Trump's short attention span can tolerate and one that he can employ to end the Afghan war.

John Nash's life has been depicted in the movie 'A Beautiful Mind', played impeccably by Russell Crowe. In the movie, there is a scene where Nash is playing pool with his friends at a bar. A pretty young lady tries to get Nash's attention. Nash approaches and sits next to the lady. An awkward situation ensues because Nash doesn't utter a word.

The lady takes the initiative and reminds him that perhaps he may be interested in buying her a drink. Nash finally breaks his silence and asks the lady "if she could assume that he has said all that is required of him before he can take her to bed and that could they just straight go to bed?"

While that scene ends with a slap in the face of Nash, President Trump can prevent the longest war from becoming even longer if he employs that same strategy. So far, the Afghan war has cost the United States a little over a trillion dollars even by modest estimates. That is about \$58 billion per year. Barnett Rubin, a leading Afghanistan and South Asia expert and currently a Senior Fellow and Director at the Centre on International Cooperation at New York University recently tweeted: "The US is spending \$45 billion on the war in Afghanistan this year, more than twice Afghanistan's estimated GDP of \$19.5 billion. In what sense, then, can decisions about ending that war be Afghan 'owned' and 'led'?"

Instead of spending billions of dollars every year with no solution to the Afghan war in sight, Trump should 'Nashify' if you will, and tell the Afghan government that the US would do all it is required to do before realising that it really is the other approach that would work.

President Trump should take the bold and unusual step of promising the Afghan leadership that the US would continue to spend the same amount every year on infrastructure, education, healthcare, law, justice, public safety, and so forth for the next decade or so.

That the US would recognise the Taliban as a legitimate party to participate in elections and hold political power in Afghanistan, respect Pakistan's concerns about Indian presence in Afghanistan; that the State Department should be at the forefront instead of the Pentagon and the CIA; that dialogue and settlement would replace the strategy of belligerence and hubris, and more importantly, all of this should be done now instead of a decade later.

There is no doubt in my mind that Afghanistan would lose the potential to be a breeding ground for terrorism and its soil wouldn't be used to plan attacks against the interest of the United States.

Washington needs to demonstrate to Kabul that the country has played its part and it's ready to withdraw its troops from the country instead of staying for one more decade which won't bring any respite to Afghanistan. If followed through successfully, I am very confident there wouldn't be any slap in the face of Washington's policymakers.

After all, the exit of the 'occupiers' is the ultimate aim of the Taliban.

'Courtesy Daily Times'.

Middle East

Seymour herseh says Hillary approved sending Libya's Sarin to Syrian rebels

By Eric Zuesse

The great investigative journalist Seymour Hersh, in two previous articles in the London Review of Books (and «The Red Line and the Rat Line») has reported that the Obama Administration falsely blamed the government of Syria's Bashar al-Assad for the sarin gas attack that Obama was trying to use as an excuse to invade Syria; and Hersh pointed to a report from British intelligence saying that the sarin that was used didn't come from Assad's stockpiles.

Hersh also said that a secret agreement in 2012 was reached between the Obama Administration and the leaders of Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar, to set up a sarin gas attack and blame it on Assad so that the US could invade and overthrow Assad. By the terms of the agreement, funding came from Turkey, as well as Saudi Arabia and Qatar; the CIA, with the support of MI6, was responsible for getting arms from Gaddafi's arsenals into Syria.

Hersh didn't say whether these «arms» included the precursor chemicals for making sarin which were stockpiled in Libya, but there have been multiple independent reports that Libya's Gaddafi possessed such stockpiles, and also that the US Consulate in Benghazi Libya was operating a rat line for Gaddafi's captured weapons into Syria through Turkey.

So, Hersh isn't the only reporter who has been covering this. Indeed, the investigative journalist Christoph Lehmann headlined on 7 October 2013, Top US and Saudi Officials responsible for Chemical Weapons in Syria and reported, on the basis of very different sources than Hersh used, that «Evidence leads directly to the White House, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Martin Dempsey, CIA Director John Brennan, Saudi Intelligence Chief Prince Bandar, and Saudi Arabia's Interior Ministry.

And, as if that weren't enough, even the definitive analysis of the evidence that was performed by two leading US analysts, the Lloyd-Postal report, concluded that, «The US Government's Interpretation of the Technical Intelligence It Gathered Prior to and After the August 21 Attack cannot possibly be correct. Obama has clearly been lying.

However, now, for the first time, Hersh has implicated Hillary Clinton directly in this «rat line». In an interview with alternet.org, Hersh was asked about the then-US-Secretary-of-State's role in the Benghazi Libya US consulate's operation to collect weapons from Libyan stockpiles and send them through Turkey into Syria for a set-up sarin-gas attack, to be blamed on Assad in order to 'justify' the US invading Syria, as the US had invaded Libya to eliminate Gaddafi.

Hersh said: «That ambassador who was killed, he was known as a guy, from what I understand, as somebody, who would not get in the way of the CIA. As I wrote, on the day of the mission he was meeting with the CIA base chief and the shipping company.

He was certainly involved, aware and witting of everything that was going on. And there's no way somebody in that sensitive of a position is not talking to the boss, by some channel. This was, in fact, the Syrian part of the State Department's Libyan operation, Obama's operation to set up an excuse for the US doing in Syria what they had already done in Libya.

The interviewer then asked: «In the book Hersh's The Killing of Osama bin Laden, just out you quote a former intelligence official as saying that the White House rejected 35 target sets for the planned US invasion of Syria] provided by the Joint Chiefs as being insufficiently painful to the Assad regime. (You note that the original targets included military sites only nothing by way of civilian infrastructure.) Later the White House proposed a target list that included civilian infrastructure. What would the toll to civilians have been if the White House's proposed strike had been carried out?

Hersh responded by saying that the US tradition in that regard has long been to ignore civilian casualties; i.e., collateral damage of US attacks is okay or even desired (so as to terrorize the population into surrender) not an 'issue', except, perhaps, for the PR people. The interviewer asked why Obama is so obsessed to replace Assad in Syria, since «The power vacuum that would ensue would open Syria up to all kinds of jihadi groups»; and Hersh replied that not only he, but the Joint Chiefs of Staff, nobody could figure out why.

He said, «Our policy has always been against him Assad. Period. This has actually been the case not only since the Party that Assad leads, the Ba'ath Party, was the subject of a shelved CIA coup-plot in 1957 to overthrow and replace it; but, actually, the CIA's first coup had been not just planned but was carried out in 1949 in Syria,

overthrowing there a democratically elected leader, in order to enable a pipeline for the Saudis' oil to become built through Syria into the largest oil market, Europe; and, construction of the pipeline started the following year.

But, there were then a succession of Syrian coups (domestic instead of by foreign powers 1954, 1963, 1966, and, finally, in 1970), concluding in the accession to power of Hafez al-Assad during the 1970 coup. And, the Saudis' long-planned Trans-Arabia Pipeline has still not been built. The Saudi royal family, who own the world's largest oil company, Aramco, don't want to wait any longer.

Obama is the first US President to have seriously tried to carry out their long-desired «regime change» in Syria, so as to enable not only the Saudis' Trans-Arabian Pipeline to be built, but also to build through Syria the Qatar-Turkey Gas Pipeline that the Thani royal family (friends of the Saudis) who own Qatar want also to be built there. The US is allied with the Saud family (and with their friends, the royal families of Qatar, Kuwait, UAE, Bahrain, and Oman).

Russia is allied with the leaders of Syria as Russia had earlier been allied with Mossadegh in Iran, Arbenz in Guatemala, Allende in Chile, Hussein in Iraq, Gaddafi in Libya, and Yanukovych in Ukraine (all of whom except Syria's Ba'ath Party, the US has successfully overthrown). Hersh was wrong to say that «nobody could figure out why» Obama is obsessed with overthrowing Assad and his Ba'ath Party, even if nobody that he spoke with was willing to say why. They have all been hired to do a job, which didn't change even when the Soviet Union ended and the Warsaw Pact was disbanded; and, anyone who has been at this job for as long as those people have, can pretty well figure out what the job actually is even if Hersh can't.

Hersh then said that Obama wanted to fill Syria with foreign jihadists to serve as the necessary ground forces for his planned aerial bombardment there, and, «if you wanted to go there and fight there in 2011-2013, 'Go, go, go... overthrow Bashar!' So, they actually pushed a lot of people jihadists to go. I don't think they were paying for them but they certainly gave visas.

However, it's not actually part of America's deal with its allies the fundamentalist-Sunni Arabic royal families and the fundamentalist Sunni Erdogan of Turkey, for the US to supply the salaries (to be paying for them, as Hersh put it there) to those fundamentalist Sunni jihadists that's instead the function of the Saudis and of their friends, the other Arab royals, and their friends, to do.

Those are the people who finance the terrorists to perpetrate attacks in the US, Europe, Russia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, India, Nigeria, etc. i.e., anywhere except in their own countries. And, Erdogan in Turkey mainly gives their jihadists just safe passage into Syria, and he takes part of the proceeds from the jihadists' sales of stolen Syrian and Iraqi oil.

But, they all work together as a team (with the jihadists sometimes killing each other in the process that's even part of the plan) though each national leader has PR problems at home in order to fool his respective public into thinking that they're against terrorists, and that only the 'enemy' is to blame. (Meanwhile, the aristocrats who supply the «salaries» of the jihadists, walk off with all the money.)

This way, US oil and gas companies will refine, and pipeline into Europe, the Saudis' oil and the Thanis' gas, and not only will Russia's major oil-and-gas market become squeezed away by that, but Obama's economic sanctions against Russia, plus the yet-further isolation of Russia (as well as of China and the rest of the BRICS countries) by excluding them from Obama's three mega trade deals (TTIP, TPP & TISA), will place the US aristocracy firmly in control of the world, to dominate the 21st Century, as it has dominated ever since the end of WW II.

Then, came this question from Hersh: «Why does America do what it does? Why do we not say to the Russians, Let's work together? His interviewer immediately seconded that by repeating it, «So why don't we work closer with Russia? It seems so rational». Hersh replied simply: «I don't know». He didn't venture so much as a guess not even an educated one.

But, when journalists who are as knowledgeable as he, don't present some credible explanation, to challenge the obvious lies (which make no sense that accords with the blatantly contrary evidence those journalists know of against those lies) that come from people such as Barack Obama, aren't they thereby though passively participating in the fraud, instead of contradicting and challenging it?

Or, is the underlying assumption, there: The general public is going to be as deeply immersed in the background information here as I am, so that they don't need me to bring it all together for them into a coherent (and fully documented) whole, which does make sense? Is that the underlying assumption? Because: if it is, it's false.

Hersh's journalism is among the best (after all: he went so far as to say, of Christopher Stephens, regarding Hillary Clinton, «there's no way somebody in that sensitive of a position is not talking to the boss, by some channel»), but it's certainly not good enough.

However, it's too good to be published any longer in places like the New Yorker. And the reporting by Christof Lehmann was better, and it was issued even earlier than Hersh's; and it is good enough, because it named names, and it explained motivations, in an honest and forthright way, which is why Lehmann's piece was published only on a Montenegrin site, and only online, not in a Western print medium, such as the New Yorker.

The sites that are owned by members of the Western aristocracy don't issue reports like that journalism that's good enough. They won't inform the public when a US Secretary of State, and her boss the US President, are the persons actually behind a sarin gas attack they're blaming on a foreign leader the US aristocrats and their allied foreign aristocrats are determined to topple and replace.

Is this really a democracy?

'Courtesy strategic culture Foundation'.

Sinister machinations of a rogue nation

The more sinister mantle of the 'core of all evil' definitely rests on the shoulders of Israel in its current form

By Tariq A. Al Maeena

Syria, Iran and North Korea quickly pop up on the front pages of western media when the term “axis of evil” comes up. The brutality or the nefarious designs of their regimes command headlines in the media. But when another evil around the corner does its dirty work in full view of the public, it barely finds mention in the inside pages of the same media outlets. The silence is deafening.

In the past two weeks 1,297 Palestinians have been shot and wounded by Israeli soldiers and snipers and the numbers are rising. The Palestinians were marching en masse in a peaceful protest to decry Israeli brutality against the lawful residents of the land. An additional 1,554 Gaza residents have been treated for tear gas inhalation or injuries by rubber-coated steel pellets.

Additionally, 33 Palestinians have been killed during this period, including 26 in border demonstrations. In typical fashion, the Israeli military has disputed the Gaza count of the dead and wounded, saying that at the most dozens were struck by Israeli fire.

But it has not offered any evidence to refute the charges. This indiscriminate target shooting against unarmed civilians has drawn the ire of many rights groups who charge that the Israeli military's orders to open fire on unarmed Palestinians approaching the border fence are unlawful.

The protests by the Palestinians are not without cause. They have been fuelled by widespread hopelessness and despair from within the territory's two million people. For the past 25 years, Israel has tightened restrictions on the movement of people and goods to and from the Gaza Strip in ways that far exceed any conceivable requirement of Israeli security.

These restrictions affect nearly every aspect of everyday life separating families, restricting access to medical care and educational and economic opportunities, and perpetuating unemployment and poverty. It has been more than 50 years of Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. These are Palestinian lands that the Israelis control through repression, institutionalised discrimination and systematic abuse of Palestinian rights. Human rights organisations have periodically highlighted major violations of international human rights law and humanitarian law that illustrate the occupation: Unlawful killings; forced displacements; abusive detentions; the closure of the Gaza Strip and other unjustified restrictions on movement; and the development of colonies, along with the accompanying discriminatory policies that greatly disadvantage Palestinians.

Israel always explains away its abusive practices in the name of security. “Whether it's a child imprisoned by a military court or shot unjustifiably, or a house demolished for lack of an elusive permit, or checkpoints through which only colonists are allowed to pass, few Palestinians have escaped serious rights abuses during this 50-year occupation,” said Sarah Leah Whitson, Middle East director at Human Rights Watch.

“Israel today maintains an entrenched system of institutionalised discrimination against Palestinians in the Occupied Territory repression that extends far beyond any security rationale.” The Israelis have killed more than close to 3000 Palestinian civilians in the last three Gaza conflicts (2008-09, 2012, 2014) alone. Mind you, these were civilians whose only crime was living peacefully on their land.

In the West Bank, the Israelis routinely use excessive force in policing situations, killing or grievously wounding thousands of demonstrators, rock-throwers, suspected assailants, and others with live ammunition when lesser means could have averted a threat or maintained order.

Since 1967, the Israeli government has been sanctioning the illegal colonies that have sprouted on Palestinian lands in occupied West Bank, including occupied East Jerusalem, in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Israel provides colonists with infrastructure, services and subsidies that it denies to Palestinians, creating and sustaining a separate and unequal system of law, rules and services.

Over the years, Israeli authorities have illegally expropriated thousands of acres of Palestinian land for colonies. For decades, Israeli authorities have demolished homes on the grounds that they lacked permits, even though the law of occupation prohibits destruction of property except for military necessity, or punitively as collective punishment against families of Palestinians suspected of attacking Israelis. “The Israelis routinely use excessive force in policing, killing or grievously wounding thousands of Palestinian demonstrators.”

Israel has also arbitrarily restricted hundreds of thousands of Palestinians of their ability to live in and travel from the West Bank and Gaza. Israel also revoked the residency of more than 130,000 Palestinians in the West Bank and 14,565 in occupied East Jerusalem since 1967, largely on the basis that they had been away for too long.

Israeli authorities have imprisoned hundreds of thousands of Palestinians since 1967, the majority after trials in military courts, where the verdict is known before the trial even begins, and conviction is the order of the day! In recent times, Palestinian children, some not more than 10 years old, have become tragic targets on a daily basis of armed Israeli colonists who have shown no remorse in killing the children in cold blood. It is said that this philosophy of targeting defenceless Palestinian women and children is to break the will of the resistance to their occupation.

The "axis of evil" may revolve around the previously mentioned nations, but the more sinister mantle of the 'core of all evil' definitely rests on the shoulders of Israel in its current form. This is the mother of all rogue nations, make no mistake about that.

Tariq A. Al Maena is a Saudi socio-political commentator. He lives in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

'Courtesy Gulf News'.

Trump opens a Pandora's box in Middle East

By M K Bhadrakumar

There is no triumphalism in the US, Britain or France over the missile strike in Syria on Friday. The mood is rather defensive. Indeed, evidence is still lacking on the alleged chemical attacks in Douma, which was the alibi for the missile strike. There are no tall claims, either, as regards the effectiveness of the missile strike in military terms.

On the contrary, Damascus is in upbeat mood. April 14 has been declared a day of celebrations. After all, the Syrian forces single-handedly faced the Western assault. The Russian reports underscore that the Syrian air defence system was highly effective. The Defence Ministry said in Moscow on Saturday that there haven't been any Syrian casualties. Moscow attests that the Syrians shot down as many as 71 missiles out of the total 103 fired by the US, UK and France. Neither Washington nor London or Paris has so far contradicted the Russian assessment.

President Donald Trump is the solitary voice crowing about the missile attack. He tweeted bombastically: So proud of our great Military which will soon be, after the spending of fully approved dollars, the finest that our Country has ever had. There won't be anything, or anyone, even close! But Trump was grandstanding in front of the domestic audience and avoided making any specific claims about the success of the strike by his "smart" missiles. In sum, this has been a theatrical show.

The military balance in Syria now comes into play. For the Syrian regime, this is baptism under fire. Only recently, the Syrians had shot down an Israeli jet. Now they have scored a 70% hit on Friday. The Syrians are equipped with Soviet-era air defence systems developed in the 1960s. What if the Russians upgrade the systems? This is exactly what the head of Russian General Staff's Main Operations Directorate Colonel-General Sergei Rudskoi hinted in Moscow on Saturday:

"A few years ago, taking into account a pressing request from some of our partners, we abandoned the supplies of the S-300 missile systems to Syria. Considering the latest developments, we deem it possible to get back to discussing this issue, not only in relation to Syria, but to other countries as well." No doubt, it will be a game changer if Russia equips the Syrian army with deterrent power to inflict unaffordable costs on potential aggressors. Iran has shown how such a strategy can work when it helped Hezbollah in Lebanon to acquire deterrence against Israel.

In fact, the Jerusalem Post newspaper has highlighted the Russian general's remark. The paper notes that if Moscow carries out the threat, "Israel's air superiority is at risk of being challenged in one of its most difficult arenas... And it could be just a matter of time before an Israeli pilot is killed." The JP report adds, Syrian air defenses are largely Soviet-era systems, comprised of SA-2s, SA-5s and SA-6s, as well as more sophisticated tactical surface-to-air missiles such as the SA-17 and SA-22 systems. The most up-to-date system that Moscow has supplied to the Syrian regime is the short range Pantsir S-1, which has shot down drones and missiles that have flown over Syria.

The advanced S-300 would be a major upgrade to Syrian air defenses and pose a threat to Israeli jets as the long-range missile defense system can track objects like aircraft and ballistic missiles over a range of 300 kilometers. The system's engagement radar, which can guide up to 12 missiles simultaneously, helps guide the missiles toward the target. With two missiles per target, each launcher vehicle can engage up to six targets at once.

Col.-Gen. Rudskoi chose his words carefully by hinting that Russia could also supply countries other than Syria (eg., Venezuela, North Korea, Lebanon, Iraq, etc.) The remark stems from President Vladimir Putin's hugely significant statement on Saturday regarding US attack on Syria when he said, inter alia: "The current escalation around Syria is destructive for the entire system of international relations. History will set things right..."

Trump's impetuosity to attack Syria is in defiance of the international system and it may open a Pandora's box. Ironically, Israel, as "frontline state", has the highest stakes if the unwritten understanding between the US and Russia unravels. (Moscow had collaborated with the Barack Obama administration and Israel to slow down the supply of S-300 missiles to Iran.) Equally, Turkey will have to think twice before venturing into further land grab in Syria if Damascus regains control of its air space.

China's maritime Silk Road

Strategic and Economic Implications for the Indo-Pacific Region

By Michael J. Green

China unveiled the concept for the Twenty-First Century Maritime Silk Road (MSR) in 2013 as a development strategy to boost infrastructure connectivity throughout Southeast Asia, Oceania, the Indian Ocean, and East Africa. The MSR is the maritime complement to the Silk Road Economic Belt, which focuses on infrastructure development across Central Asia. Together these initiatives form the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) initiative designed to enhance China's influence across Asia.

There is a shortage of infrastructure investment to meet the needs of developing nations across the Indo-Asia-Pacific region and most nations have welcomed the opportunity to bid for Chinese funding. At the same time, there are growing questions about the economic viability and the geopolitical intentions behind China's proposals. Thus far MSR initiatives have mainly been concentrated in the littoral states of the Indo-Pacific region, especially port-development projects, which is raising questions about whether these investments are economic or military in nature. These large-scale investments are also structured in ways that invite questions about the potential for China to exert undue leverage over the domestic and foreign policies of heavily indebted recipient countries.

To shed light on some of these themes, CSIS has commissioned seven experts to unpack the economic and geo-strategic implications of China's infrastructure development across the Indo-Pacific region under the MSR. Their research is presented in this volume. The essays begin with analysis of four infrastructure projects, three by China under MSR and one by India as a counter to MSR. These are: Kyaukpyu (Myanmar), Hambantota (Sri Lanka), Gwadar (Pakistan), and Chabahar (Iran): Kyaukpyu: Greg Poling explains the economic and strategic rationale behind China's investments in Kyaukpyu, a coastal town along the Bay of Bengal in Myanmar's western-most state of Rakhine. China recently won contracts to develop a deep-sea port at Kyaukpyu and an industrial area in a special economic zone (SEZ) nearby.

Kyaukpyu is also the terminus for an oil pipeline and a parallel natural gas pipeline running to Kunming, capital of southwestern China's Yunnan Province. Those projects reflect a strategic effort by Beijing to reduce its reliance on oil and gas imports through the Strait of Malacca, and a deep-sea port at Kyaukpyu could similarly help China in its drive to develop its inland provinces.

Poling references regional concerns about the potential that China would leverage a port at Kyaukpyu for military purposes but concludes that at present the overriding fear within Myanmar is China's potential economic leverage via debt financing. Hambantota: Jonathan Hillman examines China's development of the Hambantota port in Sri Lanka and questions the economic rationale of this project given existing capacity and expansion plans at Colombo port, fueling concerns that Hambantota could become a Chinese naval facility.

This case also highlights the potential risks of becoming a debt trap as Sri Lanka handed the port over to China in December 2017 with a controlling equity stake and a 99-year lease eerily similar to the imperial strategies Britain imposed on Qing China with Hong Kong in the Nineteenth Century. Hillman suggests the Hambantota case reveals the need for recipient countries to tie infrastructure projects to larger development strategies in order to better monitor debt levels, and for the international community to expand alternatives to Chinese infrastructure financing.

Gwadar: Gurmeet Kanwal highlights the development of Gwadar port as a key element in the larger China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) initiative. Though CPEC is branded as a symbol of strong bilateral ties between China and Pakistan, Kanwal argues that both sides have misgivings about the project, including China's concern about the safety of its workers and fears in Pakistan about increased indebtedness resulting from the project, that could increase tensions. Kanwal also addresses the security implications of China's potential naval access to Gwadar as a gateway to the Indo-Pacific, and concludes by examining the potential from the revived quadrilateral framework of security dialogue and cooperation among India, Japan, Australia, and the United States as a way to counter China's strategic outreach.

Chabahar: Harsh Pant notes that China is not the only country playing the great game through infrastructure investment. India's efforts to help develop Iran's Chabahar Port reflect Delhi's own ambitions as a driver of infrastructure development and improved regional connectivity, particularly with Afghanistan. Close to the Chinese-backed, Pakistani port of Gwadar, the Chabahar project is also seen as a strategic play to limit the

influence China seeks to gain and wield through its Belt and Road Initiative and MSR. Pant concludes by identifying complications in India's strategy stemming from Iran's openness to Chinese and Pakistani participation in the development of Chabahar.

These four infrastructure case studies are followed by two essays addressing the broader economic and military implications of China's MSR initiative: Economic Implications: Matthew Funaiolo and Jonathan Hillman begin their chapter by framing the larger economic significance of the Indo-Pacific region, noting for example that each of the 10 busiest container ports in the world are along the shores of either the Pacific or the Indian Ocean, and more than half of the world's maritime trade in petroleum transits the Indian Ocean alone.

In order to begin addressing whether China's infrastructure investments serve economic or strategic purposes or both the authors introduce three criteria for assessing the economic viability of infrastructure development projects: proximity to shipping lanes; proximity to existing ports; and hinterland connectivity, or the degree to which port projects are connected to larger development strategies inland (though some ports can arguably serve meaningful economic purposes as hubs for cargo transshipment). In their view, all three of the Chinese infrastructure projects examined in this volume are somewhat misaligned with economic objectives, particularly with respect to the third criterion of connectivity. Military Implications: Zack Cooper posits that China's increased military presence in the Indian Ocean should not come as a surprise. China is following in the traditional path of other rising powers; it is expanding its military operations to match its interests abroad.

The Chinese economy is highly reliant on trade routes that pass through the Indian Ocean, which serves as a vital pathway, particularly for energy supplies, and it is therefore natural for the Chinese government to seek to protect its interests along these sea lines of communication. In his view, the security implications of China's push into the Indian Ocean are mixed. In peacetime, these efforts will certainly expand Chinese influence in the region, possibly through access to port facilities to refuel or resupply naval vessels and in terms of anti-piracy operations and familiarization with other regional militaries. At the same time, however, China's Indian Ocean presence will likely create as many vulnerabilities as opportunities in terms of protecting trade routes, bases, and ships particularly in wartime.

Nevertheless, Beijing's political, economic, and military influence is likely to expand in future years and will remain a concern for strategists focused on the Indian Ocean, which has long been seen by the United States and Australia as a critical transit point from the Pacific to the Middle East and critical for maritime defense in depth to manage any threats to the critical chokepoints of the Gulf of Hormuz and the Strait of Malacca.

These concerns are increasingly on Japan's radar and India has also grown concerned that China's so-called "string of pearls" in the Indian Ocean would give Beijing new options to horizontally escalate beyond long-standing Sino-Indian competition in the Himalayas. The series concludes by examining how the maritime democracies of the United States, Japan, India, and Australia might respond to the uncertainties posed by the MSR through the newly reconstituted "Quad."

Quad Response: Jesse Barker Gale and Andrew Shearer review the history of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, or "Quad," which began when Australia, Japan, India, and the United States first came together to provide humanitarian assistance after the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami. In subsequent years, the four governments failed to formalize the construct because of differences within each capital about China's possible reaction. Fast-forward a decade, and the four countries have now reestablished the Quad in what the authors consider a response to China's unexpected economic and military assertiveness in the region. They argue that with increasing convergence among the four maritime democracies on the need to coordinate on a broader strategy to ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific region, the "Quad 2.0" has potential to shape China's strategy in a more benign direction, but remains underutilized and under-operationalized.

This study builds on prior work at CSIS on the geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific, including: the Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative; Reconnecting Asia; China Power; and Countering Coercion in Maritime Asia. The idea for a focused examination of China's Maritime Silk Road grew out of discussions with senior leadership on Japan's National Security Council staff, who then provided some funding for a conference on the subject. As with our other research on maritime Asia, we have endeavored to integrate political, military, economic, and historical considerations. The analysis and prescriptions are entirely those of the authors and do not represent the official positions of any government in the region. The overall conclusion is mixed. China's MSR projects are neither purely military nor purely commercial. Moreover, China's overall approach is probably evolving. It is our hope that this study will help the United States and like-minded states refine their own response to

MSRhedging or deterring where necessary, but also working to encourage a more transparent and economically viable approach from Beijing.

I am grateful to the authors for their expertise and careful work and to Nick Szechenyi for leading the project and pulling together the essays for this study.

CHINA

Xi Jinping and the Boao Forum

Boao 2018 will have a tremendous impact on the region as well as the world, because it was reiterated by the hosts that with the future in mind, they will uphold inclusiveness and seek harmony without uniformity

By S. M. Hali

The 2018 edition of the Boao Forum for Asia (BFA), was held in the southern Chinese province of Hainan from April 8 to 11. The theme for the event was “An Open and Innovative Asia for a World of Greater Prosperity”. This event garnered significant international attention, which can be attributed to the ongoing trade friction between the United States (US) and China.

The US actions pertaining to its adoption of trade restrictive measures amounted to a confrontation of unilateralism against multilateralism and protectionism against free trade. Its measures target everyone and the interests of all, not just China.

This year marks the 40th anniversary of China's landmark economic reforms, which opened the country to the world. President Xi Jinping delivered a landmark address, which focused on building consensus in Asia, encouraging cooperation, promoting economic globalisation and advancing the building of a community with a shared future for humankind.

He reminded the participants of the Boao forum that over the last four decades, the Chinese people have significantly unleashed and enhanced productivity in China through hard work with an unyielding spirit. He stated that Heavens reward those who work hard, and flowers in spring come to fruition in autumn. The focused endeavour in national development and unwavering commitment to reform and opening-up of the Chinese people have brought enormous changes to the country.

China has grown into the world's second largest economy, the largest industrial producer, the largest trader of goods, and the holder of the largest foreign exchange reserves. Over the past 40 years, China's GDP has averaged an annual growth rate of around 9.5 percent in comparable prices and its foreign trade has registered an annual growth of 14.5 percent in the US dollar.

The Chinese people have emerged from a life of shortages and poverty, and are now enjoying abundant supply and a moderately prosperous life. According to current UN standards, more than 700 million Chinese people have been lifted out of poverty, accounting for more than 70 percent of the global total over the same period.

'The Chinese people have emerged from a life of shortages and poverty, and are now enjoying abundant supply and a moderately prosperous life'.

Xi reminded the world that Chinese people have blazed a path of “socialism with Chinese characteristics” through determined exploration with a pioneering spirit. The Chinese people have both a keen awareness of national realities and a global vision. They champion independence and self-reliance, while embracing openness and win-win cooperation.

It was a stark reminder that the reforms have been a successful process that have seen China and the world achieve development and progress together. The Chinese people have made opening-up to the world a fundamental national policy; and as a consequence have pursued development with an open door, and accomplished a great transition from seclusion and semi-seclusion to all-round openness.

In this process, China has lived up to its responsibility as a major country. From 'bringing in' to 'going global', from WTO accession to the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China has made significant contribution to mitigating the Asian financial crisis and the global financial crisis. Contributing over 30 percent of global growth in recent years, China has become a key anchor and driver for the world economy and a positive force in advancing the noble cause of global peace and development.

The Chinese President reminded that “With the future in mind, we need to treat each other with respect and as equals. We should uphold the five principles of peaceful coexistence, respect the social system and development path chosen by each country, respect each other's core interests and major concerns, and follow

a new approach to state-to-state relations featuring dialogue rather than confrontation, and partnership instead of alliance.

We must refrain from seeking dominance and reject zero-sum games. We must refrain from begging neighbours and reject power politics and pursuit of hegemony with the strong bullying the weak. Instead, we must properly manage differences and work together for enduring peace.”

He was clearly alluding to President Trump's confrontationalist attitude and its implications on the world. Boao 2018 will have a tremendous impact on the region as well as the world, because it was reiterated by the hosts that with the future in mind, they will uphold inclusiveness and seek harmony without uniformity.

The economic giants must strengthen bilateral and multilateral cooperation in culture, education, tourism, youth, media, health, poverty reduction and other fields. There is a dire need to promote mutual learning among civilizations as it will help build bridges of friendship, drive social progress, and safeguard peace for the region and beyond.

With a vow to jointly meet challenges in climate change, environment protection, energy conservation and emission reduction, it was assured that further progress along the path of sustainable development featuring increased production, higher living standards and healthy ecosystems will benefit future generations.

The reiteration of significantly broadening market access; creating a more attractive investment environment; strengthening protection of intellectual property rights (IPR); taking the initiative to expand imports will pay rich dividends.

The writer is a retired Group Captain of PAF. He is a columnist, analyst and TV talk show host, who has authored six books on current affairs, including three on China.

'Courtesy Daily Times'.

Empire strikes back

By Munir Akram

In a little over a year, US President Donald Trump's 'America First' posture has been translated into an extensive and aggressive agenda to reclaim US global pre-eminence: the strategic containment of China and Russia; the denuclearisation of North Korea; the regional and nuclear reversal of Iran; a stabilised occupation of Afghanistan; a pliant Pakistan; an extended 'war' against 'radical Islam' and the acceptance, by allies and adversaries across Asia, Europe and the Americas, of US economic supremacy.

Threats, coercion and force are the preferred modus operandi to achieve these ambitious goals. Such behaviour is a throwback to an earlier era; before international law, reflected in the UN Charter, prohibited the use or threat of force in interstate relations (except in self-defence or when authorised by the UN Security Council) and prescribed cooperation as the means to promote peace and prosperity.

In the past year, US air strikes have been conducted in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Somalia, Libya, Afghanistan and Pakistan's border regions. US ground forces are engaged in military operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and the Sahel. North Korea and Iran have been threatened with pre-emptive strikes. There are five areas where America's current postures could lead to disastrous consequences.

First, the strategic contest with China. This involves three dimensions. Trade is the simplest among them. Trump's tariffs are meant mainly to appease his rust belt constituency. Washington knows that the trade 'imbalance' is unlikely to be corrected through tariffs and restrictions. The US and Chinese economies are closely intertwined and interdependent. Higher tariffs will hurt American consumers; Chinese retaliation will hurt US farmers, workers and investors. The tariffs so far announced by Trump will affect only around five per cent of Chinese exports to the US. China's response is also carefully calibrated.

The core of the Sino-US contest for future economic and military leadership involves access to and utilisation of advanced technologies. China was technologically far behind the US; but it is catching up rapidly. The US is specifically attempting to restrict China's access to and development of those advanced technologies which Beijing has targeted in its 2030 vision plan. This is likely to be a long and complex contest.

The most dangerous dimension of the Sino-US 'contest' is the prospect of a US challenge to China's claims in the South China Sea and, even more seriously, the possibility that Washington may reopen the 'One China Policy'. As President Xi recently reiterated, China will use all its capabilities to defend its 'territorial integrity'. US miscalculation could lead to conflict.

Second, the strategic resurgence of Russia. Despite their economic disparity, Russia is keeping pace with the US in the modernisation of nuclear weapons, missile and anti-missile systems and conventional armaments. In Europe, there is now a military stand-off between a weakened NATO and a confident Russia. The US and Russia are also competitively engaged in several other countries and regions: Ukraine, Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Turkey, Pakistan, Central and Northeast Asia. Furthermore, Russia has formed a strategic partnership with China that spans Eurasia.

Third, the North Korean challenge. The young Kim Jong-un has displayed strategic and diplomatic adroitness. Trump has accepted his proposal to discuss denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula in a US-North Korea summit. The odds are against success. Kim is likely to propose a staggered process of denuclearisation accompanied by reciprocal removal of US and UN sanctions, US military withdrawal from Korea and guarantees for North Korea's security. An impatient Trump will find it difficult to accept such a process and could revert to coercion and threats, reviving the danger of war.

Fourth, the confrontation with Iran. This perhaps poses the most proximate danger of a conflict. Trump and his principal advisers are now unanimous in their opposition to the Iran nuclear deal and Tehran's expanding role and influence in the Middle East and beyond. Mattis reportedly nurses a grudge for the 1983 Beirut bombing that killed over 200 US marines. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is urging renunciation of the nuclear deal, elimination of Iran's military presence in Syria and military strikes if Iran revives its nuclear programme. Saudi Arabia and its GCC allies are of similar mind.

Matters may come to a head soon. Trump has reportedly threatened to denounce the nuclear deal in May unless America's European allies secure an indefinite extension of the 15-year restraints on Iran's nuclear programme and a halt in the development of its long-range missiles. Iran has rejected these demands.

Fifth, the Afghan quagmire. Trump was reportedly convinced by his previous national security adviser, Gen H.R. McMaster, and the Pentagon to undertake another mini-surge to bludgeon the Afghan Taliban into accepting a political settlement. Expanded air strikes, special operations and Taliban retaliation have resulted in an increase in Afghan civilian and military casualties. Afghan President Ashraf Ghani has offered a "dignified dialogue" to the Taliban who, however, want to talk only to the Americans. Nor is it clear if the proffered political settlement would be designed to facilitate a US withdrawal or merely to ease its indefinite stay in Afghanistan. The war continues by default.

There is considerable concern that Trump's domestic troubles the alleged 'electoral collusion with Russia' and myriad sex scandals and the appointment of uber-hawks, Mike Pompeo and John Bolton, may propel the US president into an external conflict. Pompeo is an anti-Muslim, anti-Iran, tea party Republican.

Bolton is an ultra-nationalist; but not an ideologue. (In our first meeting at the UN in 2005, Bolton demanded deletion of the reference to the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty in a UN document under negotiation. I agreed, but asked just as adamantly for removal of the reference to the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty. He agreed. After that, we got along famously!)

Bolton is an experienced and a strong-willed bureaucrat and is likely to play a central role in policy formulation and execution. He is aware of the danger of destabilising Pakistan ("Iran on steroids"). He may not be as committed as the US generals to an unending and expensive war in Afghanistan. It may be timely for Pakistan's diplomacy to explore a mutually acceptable solution in Afghanistan with the new Trump team.

The writer is a former Pakistan ambassador to the UN.

'Courtesy Daily Dawn'

Getting ready for Nuclear War

By Brian Cloughley

John Bolton is to assume the appointment as President Trump's National Security Adviser on April 9. On February 28 he wrote in the Wall Street Journal that "it is perfectly legitimate for the United States to respond to the current 'necessity' posed by North Korea's nuclear weapons by striking first," which would undoubtedly lead to explosion of at least one nuclear device by whoever might remain alive in the Pyongyang regime after the US attack.

In a macabre echo of the alleged link between Iraq and Al Qaeda before the US invasion, Bolton said on March 23 that "Little is known, at least publicly, about longstanding Iranian-North Korean cooperation on nuclear and ballistic-missile technology. It is foolish to play down Tehran's threat because of Pyongyang's provocations."

Link and bomb, and get ready for yet more war

On August 9, 2017 President Trump tweeted "My first order as President was to renovate and modernize our nuclear arsenal. It is now far stronger and more powerful than ever before." This declaration of US achievement and nuclear policy was apparently intended to intimidate the leader of North Korea, Kim Jong Un, who tested a nuclear-capable ballistic missile three months later, following which the US president issued an insulting tweet that referred to him as "Little Rocket Man."

The level of international dialogue and diplomacy sank to yet a new low which was enthusiastically reciprocated by Kim, but Trump gave a rare exhibition of common sense on November 11, 2017 by asking "When will all the haters and fools out there realize that having a good relationship with Russia is a good thing, not a bad thing. There [meaning they're] always playing politics bad for our country . . ."

How very true, and how much better for the world had such a positive attitude been allowed to flourish along with dialogue. But then everything went screaming downhill. Along came Washington's aggressive Nuclear Posture Review which emphasized enlargement of nuclear weapons' capabilities and followed from the US National Defence Strategy which strongly advocates massive military expansion, naming Russia specifically no less than 127 times, compared with 62 references to North Korea, 47 to China and 39 to Iran.

The bulging muscles of the US military-industrial complex have been nourished by the circus of the "Russiagate" investigations in Washington which attempted to prove that Moscow had organized the 2016 election results by persuading countless millions of people on social media sites that red was blue and Democratic donkeys were really Republican elephants. Or the other way round. It was all rubbish, but the US-European anti-Russia campaign was then given enormous impetus by the collapse in England from apparent poisoning of a retired, BMW-driving British spy, a former Russian citizen.

The poisoning was effected by a chemical agent, and blame for the event was immediately laid at Russia's door. The British foreign minister Boris Johnson is a sad joke, but he's politically powerful and a threat to the prime minister, Theresa May, so he continues in his post and makes statements such as "Russia is the only country known to have developed this type of agent. I'm afraid the evidence is overwhelming that it is Russia." The fact that there is no evidence whatever that Russia was involved is ignored, because the western world has been convinced that Russia is guilty of this poisoning and of countless other things.

The heightened anti-Russia feeling is most welcome to the US-NATO military alliance, which has been energetic in developing its 'Enhanced Forward Presence' along Russia's borders. Its belligerent posture has been hardening since NATO began to expand in 1997, which was entirely contrary to what had been agreed seven years previously. As recorded by the Los Angeles Times, "In early February 1990, US leaders made the Soviets an offer.

According to transcripts of meetings in Moscow on February 9, then-Secretary of State James Baker suggested that in exchange for cooperation on Germany, the US could make "iron-clad guarantees" that NATO would not expand "one inch eastward." Less than a week later, Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev agreed to begin reunification talks. No formal deal was struck, but from all the evidence, the quid pro quo was clear: Gorbachev acceded to Germany's western alignment and the US would limit NATO's expansion.

Nevertheless, great powers rarely tie their own hands. In internal memorandums and notes, US policymakers soon realized that ruling out NATO's expansion might not be in the best interests of the United States. By late February, Bush and his advisers had decided to leave the door open."

The door towards Russia's borders opened on to a welcoming galaxy of nations anxious to enjoy all the financial benefits that would descend upon them from the deep and generous pockets of the Washington-Brussels military machine. The US and other NATO members rolled forward with missile-armed ships in the Baltic and the Black Sea, with electronic surveillance and command aircraft flying as close as they could to Russian airspace, along with deployment of nuclear-capable combat aircraft and more ground troops in expansion of the Enhanced Forward Presence.

The recent surge in anti-Russia news and comment in almost all US and UK media is a boon and a blessing for the rickety and incompetent NATO alliance, but in responsible circles there is concern about its nuclear posture and especially that of the United States. On February 19 Bolton wrote that "Putin's global aspirations are not friendly to America, and the sooner he knows we know it, the better. It is not enough, however, to file criminal charges against Russian citizens, nor are economic sanctions anywhere near sufficient to prove our displeasure. We need to create structures of deterrence in cyberspace, as we did with nuclear weapons, to prevent future Russian attacks or attacks by others who threaten our interests."

One of the most disturbing developments is the attitude to the Nuclear Posture Review of many nuclear experts in the West. As reported by Defence News, "Rebecca Heinrichs, a nuclear analyst with the Hudson Institute, thinks the Pentagon is on the right path, noting that "if the Russians have a weapon delivery option, they're putting a nuke on it" at the moment. "Clearly the Russians believe that they could possibly pop off a low yield nuke and we would not have an appropriate response, and our only option would essentially be to end the war rather than go all-in with strategic nuclear weapons. . . "

It may be because I have had some association with nuclear delivery systems and their hideous effects that I take offence at clever little analysts referring to dispatch and detonation of nuclear weapons as "popping off." The weapon that would be "popped off" whatever it might be would kill hundreds, perhaps thousands of people, and would contaminate vast areas of land. A "low yield nuke" as it is so lightly dismissed, is not an inconsequential weapon.

A long time ago in Germany I commanded a troop of rocket launchers that were tasked to fire "low yield" Honest John missiles in the event of war in Europe. We knew these things would cause immense damage because the W7 warhead had a yield of up to 20 kilotonnes just about that of the Nagasaki bomb that killed about 75,000 human beings. Sure, our warheads might only have been a fraction of that (we'll never know), but even then I object to intellectuals saying they might have been "popped off" like modern-day "low-yield nukes," because we would have died within a few minutes of firing these things, not long after we had killed our thousands of victims, most likely from retaliation but also because the maximum range of our rockets was about 25 kilometers and the fall-out effects would have been pretty swift.

Then you read the pronouncements of such important people as Air Force General John Hyten, the senior US nuclear deliveryman, commanding US Strategic Command, who said on February 28 that "Russia is the most significant threat just because they pose the only existential threat to the country right now. So we have to look at that from that perspective."

Further, ""By the way, our submarines, they do not know where they are, and they have the ability to decimate their country . . ." Fleshing out that part of the Nuclear Triad came Rear Admiral John Tammen, Director, Undersea Warfare Division, who told Congress on March 26 that his conventional submarines were henceforth going to be carrying nuclear weapons. Fox News reported Admiral Tammen as stating that "The Virginia [Class] submarines can currently fire Tomahawk missiles and torpedoes but by adding nuclear weapons, it would give combatant commanders new options and expand its mission."

He should get together with Rebecca Heinrichs, General Hyten and John Bolton. They could discuss where and how to pop off a weapon that would lead to world destruction. They are all getting ready for nuclear war, and the threat to the world looms large. 'Courtesy Counterpunch'

Brian Cloughley writes about foreign policy and military affairs. He lives in Voutenay sur Cure, France.

Trump might give Iran an incalculable windfall

President Trump said the United States would be withdrawing forces from Syria “very soon” at an event last week in Richfield, Ohio

By Max Boot

“We’re on the two-yard line. We could literally fall into the end zone. We’re that close to total victory, to wiping out the ISIS caliphate in Syria,” a U.S. Special Forces officer in Syria told NBC News last week. But President Trump seems determined to turn over the ball on the goal line, setting up the geopolitical version of the 2015 Super Bowl that the Seattle Seahawks lost with a last-minute interception.

On Thursday, Trump said, “We’ll be coming out of Syria, like, very soon. Let the other people take care of it now.” He then froze the paltry \$200 million the United States had pledged to help rebuild areas liberated from the Islamic State. If Trump follows through — always a big if with him — he will be reversing a decision he made late last year at the urging of Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and then-Secretary of State Rex Tillerson.

Staying in Syria appears to be another one of those moves like not abandoning the Iran nuclear deal or not imposing tariffs — that was forced on Trump by his advisers and that he is reversing now that he has decided to stop listening to people who know what they are talking about. The “very stable genius” prefers to follow his own instincts — you know, the ones that led him into six corporate bankruptcies.

The Trump foreign policy can be characterized as violent isolationism. And, yes, it’s as incoherent as it sounds. His philosophy is: Bombs away, then bye-bye. The United States has dropped a lot of munitions in Syria — mostly on the Islamic State but also, a year ago, on one of Bashar al-Assad’s airfields. But Trump is as allergic to lasting obligations in foreign affairs as he is in his “Stormy” private life.

The problem is that the United States has almost never achieved its objectives without a prolonged intervention. The United States left Europe after World War I, and the result, 21 years later, was World War II. We stayed in Europe after 1945, and the result is unprecedented peace and prosperity.

Want more examples? The United States intervened in Somalia in 1992 and exited in 1994, leaving behind chaos that allowed the rise of the Islamist extremists known as al-Shabab. The United States helped to topple Moammar Gaddafi in 2011, but did nothing to stabilize Libya afterward, allowing that country to become another playground for Islamist extremists. Washington is now trying to limit the damage by launching drone strikes against al-Qaeda leaders in Libya.

Finally, Iraq. The George W. Bush administration did next to nothing to prepare for stabilization operations after Saddam Hussein’s downfall in 2003, creating the conditions for an insurgency that cost the United States 4,497 dead and 32,252 wounded. The 2007-2008 surge restored calm, but President Barack Obama’s pullout of U.S. forces in 2011 made possible the rise of the Islamic State. Republicans blasted Obama’s decision, yet are silent today when Trump looks set to make the same mistake in Syria.

Granted, some of these interventions were mistakes to begin with and should not have been continued in perpetuity. But the United States was right to send military advisers to Syria, and the stakes remain high even with the defeat of the Islamic State in sight.

Withdrawing the 2,000 or so U.S. troops might allow the Islamic State, which today controls less than 7 percent of Syria’s territory, to rise again. It would almost certainly allow Iran to gain control of eastern Syria, creating a land bridge from Tehran to Damascus and Beirut that would increase the danger to Israel. As Josh Rogin notes, instead of taking the terrorists’ oil, Trump appears ready to hand it to the mullahs.

Perhaps the most morally troubling consequence of a pullout — meaning that it will not trouble this president in the slightest — is that it would represent a betrayal of the Kurds and Arabs in the Syrian Democratic Forces who have fought alongside U.S. troops against the Islamic State.

The SDF fighters are the most moderate and reliable allies that the United States has in Syria. “They trusted our first forces on the ground,” U.S. Army Brig. Gen. Jonathan Braga told NBC, “and we trusted them.”

The right way to repay their trust is to help the SDF establish an autonomous zone in the one-third of Syria that it controls. This would protect at least a portion of Syrian territory from Russian and Iranian domination and give the United States a strong say in that country’s future.

But Trump seems determined to betray the SDF as the United States betrayed the South Vietnamese in the 1970s, the Afghans in the 1990s, and the Iraqis after 2011. How long before Trump starts reconsidering the

commitment to Afghanistan that he only halfheartedly supported? And what will happen in Iraq if “Fox & Friends” informs Trump that the United States still has 5,000 troops there?
If the United States leaves both Syria and Iraq, it will be an incalculable windfall for Iran, a rogue state that Trump claims to hate but not as much as he seems to hate long-term commitments.
Courtesy Washington Post.

Analysing current American geo-strategy

The US is accustomed to leading the world order it has engineered since WWII

By Zahid Mehmood Zahid

It is safe to say that no country is more distressed by today's dynamic global landscape and the tectonic shift in global strategic power than the US. This is why it seems to be in such a hurry to adjust itself against the backdrop of rising China and bellicose Russia.

These adjustments include shifting focus from the Atlantic to the Indo-Pacific region, creating a trade war against China, rejuvenating US relations with NATO countries, adopting a conditions based hard-core realist approach in Afghanistan, relocating focus from the Middle East to the South China Sea, and above all, brining Australia, Japan, and India aboard against the much hyped multi trillion dollar Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which the US perceives as a geopolitical device against its interests.

Indeed, US power has not slipped at all; but there are still anxieties which need to be contemplated. It is accustomed to leading the world order it has engineered since WWII. Self-assumed security responsibility and its adventurist military approach in handling world affairs has caused serious economic decline and undermined prestige and influence in the last two decades. On the other hand, China has claimed no international responsibility and its rapid economic growth has raised its stature to the level of second largest economy with defence expenditure second only to the US.

Twentieth century history recognizes that containment has always been the preferred US choice when dealing with powerful enemy states. This strategy is borne out of its leadership's fear of huge military cost and nuclear war. Perceiving the Chinese challenge, Trump's predecessor Obama, in 2011, introduced a half-backed containment strategy with an unprovocative brand rebalancing strategy which never worked. China kept rising at the expense of waning US influence all over the world.

Now, with Trump in office, after having the war cabinet completed and pentagon aboard, new national security and defence strategies herald the era of the new cold war, and containment against both China and Russia. "By shrewdly getting Chinese support for UN Resolution 2375, which asks for imposing an oil embargo on North Korea and punitive actions against those ships who defy the mandatory inspection, the US pressed Kim against the wall".

Super power rivalry is always global in scale and scope. But, this piece will discuss only two developments: one, the recent thaw between North-South Korean nations and the coming détente between the US and North Korea; two, Indo-Pak diplomatic signalling.

After the successful onset of Olympic diplomacy between South and North Korea in February this year, there emerged a story line about the upcoming meeting between Donald Trump and Kim Jong Un in May where denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula though a nonstarter will be the agenda to start with. Let us not be dubious about the naïve optimism surrounding the said agenda. But, the question arises, how did it happen? Even North South Korean rapprochement was not that simple, as it was made to look like; given the heated exchange of fury and Twitter rage between Trump and Kim earlier this year.

Still, the principle of fair judgement guides one to conclude that, the said developments are not spontaneous and isolated without the anchoring for a grand design. Two great geo-strategists Z. Brzezinski and Robert Kaplan advised the US, "Don't push a small state contagious with a great power too hard lest it should join the other camp". Rightly so, by shrewdly getting the Chinese support for UN Resolution 2375, that asks for imposing an oil embargo on North Korea and punitive actions against those ships who defy the mandatory inspection, the US squeezed Kim against the wall, and then offered a deal he [Kim] could not decline.

The question is, why would Kim accept dehumanisation beyond denuclearisation? For sure, denuclearisation is not on the cards for North Korea but, Kim can save his regime, end his diplomatic isolation, and better economy, in return for undergoing US tutelage against China. China and North Korea were not on good terms in recent years and UN resolution further frustrated Kim, to the extent he considered the otherwise inconceivable option openness to South Korea and the US.

This development has caused serious apprehensions among Chinese leaders. They interpret this phenomenon as 'being bypassed by North Korea and Trump', and a collusion against Chinese interests because China vies as a North Korea a buffer that distances it from South Korea the home of approximately 29,000 US troops.

Realising the need to befriend its fading ally, China did not waste time and invited Kim to Beijing, where both countries emphasised on the continuity and longevity of bilateral relations between the two countries. Objectively, there can be multiple interpretations of this episode taking place in the Pacific. For instance, the US wants to co-opt nuclear capable North Korea to supplement her containment efforts against China. For that cherished purpose, it is ready to compromise on its human rights and democratic principles, by allowing an authoritarian Kim to prolong his rule and nuclear aspirations.

Exactly, the way it allowed General Zia and the nuclear program of Pakistan in 1980s, as Pakistan was leading the final battle against the Soviets and Communism in Afghanistan. Conversely, to keep the US-Japan-South Korean nexus on their toes, China would like to see North Korea as a buffer under non-compliant Kim. A US sponsored regime-change or war against North Korea will be disastrous for China's security interests in the region.

The indispensable Kim is cleverly playing power against power. This move will not only strengthen his position against the US and South Korea, but also ease his economic squeeze. Furthermore, he also eyes to consolidate his grip at home and end his political isolation in the international arena. In Pakistan's case, evidently, FATF grey-listing drove it further into the Chinese camp. After realizing the strategic significance of uncompromising Pakistan, US did not push Pakistan to the point of divorce.

It is also not a coincidence that amid simmering tension on the issue of Pakistani diplomatic staff harassment in New Delhi, in an unprecedented move, India sent a minister of state, Gajendra Shekhawat to observe the Pakistan day military parade in Islamabad. Pakistan received this friendly gesture from India, a US ally against China in the Indo-Pacific region: exactly similar to the one extended by US ally South Korea to North Korea.

This was inconceivable without the tacit approval of the US, because many Indian politicians and diplomats; Mani Shankar Aiyar and alike, had long been persuading India not to press Pakistan against the wall. This shift is guided by the assumption that the tougher you get on Pakistan, the more it will align itself with China at the expense of US and Indian interests. Although Pakistan a tough nut to crack that has no second thoughts about China but, keeping options open for Pakistan could serve the Washington-New Delhi camp's purposes. In that case, even Pakistan would gain leverage in its economic negotiations vis-à-vis China.

China is lucky to have its nuclear shield, North Korea as a buffer in the East; and, Pakistan a counterweight against India in the West. Both countries are important for the 'Chinese dream', and the country's 'rejuvenation'. If Beijing is to counter US provocations in the Pacific Ocean; it must ensure energy security through Pakistan, and realise that the 'Westwards March' strategy by securing over land silk roads when maritime silk routes in Indian and Pacific oceans are almost under US controls. Conclusively, guided by zero-sum belief, the US, the sole super power, intends to shape the international order to its own suiting by preventing the rise of its peer competitor China. This is where geostrategy transcends geo-economics, and containment remains the last resort under the dictums of offensive realism.

The writer is a PhD candidate at National Defence University Islamabad.

'Courtesy Daily Times'

US hybrid war arrives to replace Cold War

By Dmitri Trenin

It would be too far-fetched to compare the recent US-Russian standoff in Syria with the 1962 US-Soviet Cuban missile crisis. Then, a nuclear war between the two was highly probable, and the existence of humanity was in question. This time, there was a moderate possibility of a local clash between the American and Russian forces in the area, which might have escalated to a higher level, only then putting global security in danger.

But whereas the dramatic confrontation of more than half a century ago stimulated strategic de-escalation between the two superpowers of the day, this month's US missile attacks against Russia's ally Syria are another step in ratcheting up tensions between Washington and Moscow. There is more to come. The new hybrid war is different from the Cold War. An analysis of the most recent spike in tensions leads to the following conclusions:

US President Donald Trump's administration is fully determined to use military force to discipline challengers and reassert US global primacy. Syria, which was first hit by the Trump government exactly a year ago, in many ways is an easy target. Other countries should pay attention, primarily Iran and North Korea. The looming refusal by the White House to certify Tehran's compliance with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action agreement concluded in 2015 could lead to US strikes against Iranian targets, from nuclear facilities and missile bases within Iran to Iranian assets in Syria to pro-Iranian groups across the Middle East. The Iranians are clearly seeing that danger and are bracing for a possible US attack.

In North Korea, for now, Trump has decided to play the peace card. He must hope that Kim Jong-un, whom he is due to meet within six weeks or so, will give up North Korea's nuclear and missile programs, and agree to "denuclearize." Pyongyang's concept of denuclearization, however, is very different from Washington's. It is anything but surrendering the country's crude deterrence capability, its only guarantee of survival, for US verbal promises, which can be withdrawn at will. Kim certainly does not want to share the fate of Muammar Gaddafi. When Trump realizes that, he might well shift gears, and a peace overture could lead to a war.

Another takeaway from Syria, but also from the Skripal poisoning case in Salisbury, is that the Trump administration has rediscovered the political value of US allies. Having nearly dismissed allies in its America First approach, the White House is now busy consolidating political and military coalitions of Western countries against those whom it has designated as its rivals and adversaries: Russia and China. For now, most pressure is applied to Russia as the apparently weaker foe, but China is clearly viewed as the principal challenger to the US-led order. What happens over North Korea, but also the South China Sea and possibly Taiwan will determine not only the parameters of the Sino-US strategic relationship, but also the future of the global order. Russia's relations with its European neighbors are different from China's with the rest of Asia, but in both cases the US will seek to isolate their rivals in their own neighborhoods. Both the Skripal poisoning and the alleged chemical weapons attack in Douma have led to immediate US-led action, even before investigations were carried out and conclusions reached. In the current psychological environment, public accusations by the US and its allies serve as a verdict. Evidence, or lack thereof, is no longer an issue: Trust in the US and its allies is. This has important implications for international organizations, from the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to the United Nations. The US is mobilizing coalitions of its allies and partners which are expected to follow the leader. Questioning the wisdom of Washington's policy on key geopolitical and strategic issues is regarded as apostasy. During the Cold War, the US protected its allies from domestic and external threats. In the hybrid war, the time has come for those who were then protected, to pay back.

Yet, some of the key lessons of the Cold War are not being totally discarded. The US military in Syria took utmost care not to hit Russian targets. The warning of retaliation against the US in case Russian citizens were hurt issued well before the Syria attack by General Valery Gerasimov, chief of the Russian General Staff, was well heeded. Neither the Pentagon nor the White House intends to provoke a nuclear exchange with US strategic rivals. Given the US' unique military superiority over other great powers, the hybrid war foresees military action, but escalation to really dangerous levels should be avoided. The idea is to break the will of rival leaderships or, failing that, put the cost of their policies so high as to precipitate domestic dissent and lead to a policy correction under new leadership more willing to accept the rules laid down by the US.

Those who disagree with those rules and envisage a different kind of world order are also coming closer together. The One World of Pax Americana that has existed since the end of the Cold War is already history. US global dominance is still in place, but the peace - "pax" - has been shattered again. The new era is not a replay of the 20th century contest. It may be equally dangerous, but in its own way. Beijing and Moscow, while staying clear of creating an alliance, appear to assess the risks, identify credible objectives and build a strategy in coordination with each other and other like-minded nations. Major power rivalry is set to intensify. The author is director of the Carnegie Moscow.

'Courtesy Global Times'.

CIA chief's meeting with Kim Jong-un is latest step in winding path to talks

By Austin Ramzy & Emily Cochrane April

Mike Pompeo, the C.I.A. director and nominee to be the next secretary of state, traveled to North Korea and met with its leader, Kim Jong-un, the strongest indicator to date that plans for direct talks between Mr. Kim and President Trump are moving ahead. If talks between Mr. Trump and Mr. Kim do happen, they would be the highest-level meeting between the two countries. No sitting president has ever met or even spoken on the phone with a North Korean leader.

Here's a look at previous attempts at dialogue and how the possible summit meeting between Mr. Trump and Mr. Kim came about.

1994

The Brink of War and an Agreement

Jimmy Carter met Kim Il-sung, North Korea's founder, in 1994. Against the wishes of Bill Clinton, then the president, Mr. Carter traveled to North Korea's capital, Pyongyang, after American intelligence agencies said they believed the North was processing plutonium for use in nuclear weapons.

Mr. Carter's meeting with Mr. Kim, who died three weeks later, set in motion the resumption of talks that led to what was called the Agreed Framework. Under that agreement, North Korea halted the construction of two reactors that could be used to produce fuel for nuclear weapons in exchange for oil and the promise of two light-water nuclear reactors that could produce energy but not weapons fuel.

President Clinton would later agree to the deal, but Congress often delayed the oil shipments and refused to immediately lift sanctions, and the light-water reactors were never built.

2000

North and South Korea Hold Talks

The talks ushered in an unprecedented rapprochement and various joint projects including a factory park in the North Korean town of Kaesong. But the credibility of Kim Dae-jung's so-called Sunshine Policy was damaged after an investigation revealed that the South Korean government had funneled \$450 million to the North shortly before the talks.

Madeleine Albright Visits the North

Kim Jong-il invited President Clinton to North Korea in 2000. Madeleine K. Albright, the secretary of state, went instead. She traveled to Pyongyang in an effort to expand the Agreed Framework to include ballistic missiles, which North Korea was developing and selling abroad. Clinton administration officials said a deal was close, but nothing was concluded by the time President George W. Bush took office in 2001.

2002 - 2006

A Nuclear Bomb Test

The United Nations Security Council meeting in New York in October 2006 after North Korea's first nuclear test. The Agreed Framework collapsed in 2002 after the United States confronted North Korea over its secret program to enrich uranium using equipment from Pakistan. The United States stopped oil shipments to North Korea and Pyongyang restarted its nuclear weapons program.

The so-called Six-Party Talks continued fitfully between representatives of North and South Korea, China, Russia, Japan and the United States. The North said in 2005 that it would give up nuclear weapons and its existing nuclear programs in return for security guarantees. North Korea carried out its first nuclear test in 2006.

2007 - 2011

Six-Party Talks Collapse

In 2007, Kim Jong-il and South Korea's president at the time, Roh Moo-hyun, held the second summit meeting between the two sides. The meeting produced an agreement aimed at expanding inter-Korean ties and easing military tensions along the disputed maritime border on the west coast of the Korean Peninsula. But the deal came at the end of Mr. Roh's five-year administration and his conservative successor quickly scrapped it.

The Six-Party Talks eventually collapsed in 2009, largely over the question of allowing international inspectors into North Korean sites. That same year, Mr. Clinton traveled to North Korea and met with Kim Jong-il to secure the release of two American journalists, Euna Lee and Laura Ling.

Kim Jong-il died in 2011 and his youngest son, Kim Jong-un, took over control of North Korea.

2012

President Obama Pursues 'Strategic Patience'

The Obama administration pursued a strategy of escalating sanctions it described as strategic patience, although meetings between diplomats from the two sides continued. An agreement appeared to be reached on Feb. 29, 2012, under which the North would allow the return of weapons inspectors, and halt its long-range missile and nuclear weapons programs in return for American food aid.

However, the deal died soon after when North Korea launched a rocket to put a satellite in orbit, which the United States considered part of its efforts to develop long-range ballistic missiles.

2016 - 2017

Trump Signals Willingness to Talk

During the 2016 presidential campaign, Mr. Trump said he would be willing to hold direct negotiations with Mr. Kim as part of efforts to halt North Korea's nuclear program. He later pushed back against criticism over his willingness to speak with the North Korean leader. "Who the hell cares? I'll speak to anybody. Who knows?" Mr. Trump said. "There's a 10 percent or a 20 percent chance that I can talk him out of those damn nukes because who the hell wants him to have nukes? And there's a chance I'm only gonna make a good deal for us."

After the death of Otto F. Warmbier, a University of Virginia honors student who spent 17 months in North Korean captivity, Mr. Trump condemned the "brutal regime" in North Korea.

Stronger Missiles and More Powerful Nukes

During the first year of Mr. Trump's presidency, North Korea tested ballistic missiles with increasingly longer ranges that put the United States within reach. The North also carried out its sixth and most powerful nuclear detonation, which the regime claimed was a hydrogen device.

Mr. Trump threatened to assail North Korea with "fire and fury" if the country endangered the United States. Undeterred, North Korea announced it was considering a strike against Guam, where the United States maintains a critical air base, that would create "an enveloping fire" around the Pacific island.

Trump and Kim's War of Words

In his inaugural speech to the United Nations General Assembly, Mr. Trump vowed to "totally destroy" North Korea if it threatened the United States or its allies. "If the righteous many don't confront the wicked few, then evil will triumph," he said. "Rocket man is on a suicide mission for himself," he said of Mr. Kim in September, having debuted the nickname on Twitter earlier that month. Mr. Kim later called Mr. Trump "a dotard." Mr. Trump's United Nations speech came just days after North Korea fired a ballistic missile over Japan.

2018

An Olympic Overture

Two days into 2018, Mr. Trump said American and international sanctions on North Korea prompted talks between North and South Korea a prospect raised during a speech made by Mr. Kim on New Year's Day. Mr. Kim boasted of having a button on his desk from which he could order a strike against the mainland United States. Mr. Trump responded on Twitter that he possessed a "much bigger & more powerful" nuclear button.

Later that month, during his inaugural State of the Union speech, Mr. Trump vowed he would not repeat "the mistakes of past administrations that got us into this dangerous position." North Korea agreed to send a delegation to South Korea for the Winter Olympics in February. The move helped ease tensions between the two sides. Kim Yo-jong, Mr. Kim's sister, went to Pyeongchang, South Korea, for the opening ceremony.

Ivanka Trump, the president's daughter and a senior White House adviser, traveled to South Korea to attend the closing ceremony. Her appearance came after a failed attempt by South Korean officials to coordinate a meeting between Kim Yo-jong and Vice President Mike Pence at the outset of the Games. Two top South Korean officials, Chung Eui-yong, national security adviser, and Suh Hoon, the director of National Intelligence Service, traveled to North Korea last month to meet with Mr. Kim and set the groundwork for the overture to Mr. Trump.

Russia

'We are not the Soviet Union but we are capable of deterrence'

By Maliha Nasir

The Council of Foreign Affairs Karachi and Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO) hosted an interactive session on the 'Current Stage of International Relations and Information Policy in context of Russia and United States' on Thursday 5th April 2018, in which diplomats discussed the tricky relationship between the two countries.

MGIMO Vice-Rector Evgeny Michailovich Kozhokin was invited to present his views before the council and later the floor was opened for questions and answers. "Presenting before the Council of Foreign Affairs of Karachi is a great pleasure. We are thinking of the possibilities to develop relations between the students at our universities and the students here in Karachi," he told the audience.

Moving on to discussing the thrust of US-Russia relations, Kozhokin gave a brief historical overview of the post-Soviet Union outlook on relations between the US and Russia. Speaking about the turf between the Cold War rivals, he said, "Some issues are well known, whereas some are not highlighted as much." He went on to say that "In the middle of the 19th century, some of the most populated countries were in Europe Spain, Italy, France and Germany," he said, adding that by the 20th century it was only Germany and now, the demographics have changed altogether.

"Ethnic balances have drifted because people from Arab countries settled in Europe. Now in California the white Anglo Saxon population is a minority, Latinos, African Americans and South Americans are the majority," he remarked. "The US is a great country, it is a superpower and there is certainly some admiration we Russians owe to the superpower in the field of military and economy but a problem for the US is rising China," said Kozhokin.

Talking about the recent trade war between the US and China, the vice-rector said that the low-profile Chinese economy is by some estimates bigger than the American economy. He added that China is entering the markets of the rest of Asia, South America and Africa. "Initially, South America was the backyard of the US but now China is tapping into those markets," he said. "At the same time, the Chinese military budget is also increased, standing at \$700 billion worth of military expenditure. We divert \$156 billion to military funds. It is comparable to India," he added.

Speaking about the domestic politics of Russia, Kozhokin said, "We have political stability. Our leader is an absolute majority leader." In so far as influence of sanctions on our economy goes, our industries have thrived despite heavy US sanctions, he added. "We are not the Soviet Union and we know that but we are still adept at developing strategic depth. We are still capable of deterrence," he warned. The vice-rector drew the council's attention towards the initial aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union. He contended that US aggression and alienation towards Russia precedes the Crimean crisis and the mysterious case of double agents like Sergei Skripal.

Building on the discussion of the trade wars, council member and representative of the Russian Federation Mustafa Kamal Qazi asked Kozhokin about what steps Russia plans to take in order to minimise the exorbitant privilege enjoyed by the US on account of its high value currency. "Russia is the largest exporter of oil and gas, whereas China is the largest importer of oil and gas. Can the fossil fuel magnates not save the world from US sanctions and false fly operations like the Salsbury attack?"

Kozhokin replied saying that "in principle it is possible, but in reality it is not easy because the US dominates by cultivating other economies." A former diplomat asked about what the future holds for the bilateral relations between Russia and Pakistan and how the potential will be realised. "We are already initiating student exchange programmes and a second delegation will soon be reaching Karachi from the city of St Petersburg in Russia," replied the vice-rector. "We are looking for cooperation in different spheres and we want to strike a balance of good relations with both Pakistan and India." Kozhokin made clear that while Russia would not compromise on its good relations with India, it will also not miss any opportunity to harbor new avenues for cooperation between Pakistan and China. A former diplomat, Hasan Habib asked how Russia preempts the future of smaller states, given the context of advanced nuclear capabilities and the global strike strategy paradigm. In response, Kozhokin said, "Let us talk about your country. You are a nuclear power and this

differentiates you from other countries. It must be noted that many countries are outnumbered in terms of nuclear capabilities.”

INDIA

Rape, murder of minor Kashmiri girl triggers outrage in India, IHK

- * Mehbooba Mufti promises there will be no obstruction of justice
- * Indian apex court decides to itself examine the case
- * Congress targets Modi for his 'silence' over the issue
- * Streets protests on the cards as religious tensions heighten in India

The brutal gang rape and murder of an eight-year-old Muslim Kashmiri girl in India has triggered nationwide outrage, inflamed communal tensions and shone a fresh critical light on the prevalence of sexual crimes. The killing has sent out the sort of shockwaves that shook the country after the equally horrific gang rape of a Delhi student on a bus in 2012 that made headlines around the world. That case saw India Gate in New Delhi become the focus of massive public protests, and opposition leader Rahul Gandhi led a candlelight march to the same monument midnight Thursday to highlight what he called the 'unimaginable brutality' of the latest killing. The young girl, whose identity was protected by a court order Friday, was murdered in January in Indian-held Kashmir.

According to the police charge sheet, she was abducted by a school dropout, a minor, and an accomplice who forced her to take sedatives while keeping her captive in a shed and then a Hindu temple for five days. While in captivity, she was repeatedly raped by the juvenile and different men, including a police constable. She was finally strangled and beaten with a stone, and her body was discovered out in the open in a wooded area. Eight persons mastermind Sanji Ram, 60, a former revenue official; his nephew, a juvenile; son Vishal Jangotra, pursuing a BSc in Agriculture a Mirapur, UP, college; special police officers (SPOs) Deepak Khajuria and Surinder Kumar; Ram's friend Parvesh Kumar; as well as head constable Tilak Raj and sub-inspector Anand Dutta, who allegedly took Rs 4 lakh from Ram to destroy crucial evidence have been arrested in the case.

They have been charged with abduction, rape and murder of a girl from the 'Bakerwal' (nomadic) community in Kathua's Rassana village in January. The victim was from a nomadic Muslim family and all the eight people arrested in the case so far are Hindus. Amid mounting outrage over the brutal rape and murder of the eight-year-old girl, Union Minister VK Singh perhaps best summed up the mood of shame and mortification when he said, "We have failed her as humans". Singh, who belongs to the ruling BJP and had earlier served as the Indian army chief, took to Twitter to express his exasperation, but at the same time, he insisted that the girl will get justice. "But she will not be denied justice.

Singh's condemnation of the crime came on a day Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti promised that there will be no obstruction of justice while the Congress targeted Prime Minister Narendra Modi on his 'silence' over the issue. "The law will not be obstructed by the irresponsible actions and statements of a group of people. Proper procedures are being followed, investigations are on fast track and justice will be delivered," the chief minister said. Her tweet follows protest by the Jammu Bar Association against the handling of the case by the Jammu and Kashmir Crime Branch and demand for a CBI probe into it. The lawyers have been accused of trying to prevent the police from filing the chargesheet in the case.

Congress President Rahul Gandhi asked "how could anyone protect the culprits" and deplored letting politics interfere in such "unimaginable brutality". "How can anyone protect the culprits of such evil? What happened to the girl at Kathua is a crime against humanity. It cannot go unpunished," he tweeted. "Like millions of Indians my heart hurts tonight," Gandhi said at a midnight rally. "India simply cannot continue to treat its women the way it does," he said. Congress leader Kapil Sibal attacked Modi on his silence over the issue and said he should speak up over violence against women in states where the BJP is in power. "Prime Minister is silent over the incidents of rape in Unnao (in Uttar Pradesh) and Kathua," Sibal said. Family members of the girl have abandoned their home in Rassana village out of fear. Police says that the victim's father, along with his wife, two children and livestock, left their house without telling anyone. They have reportedly shifted to the house of his brother in Samba district.

The Supreme Court of India has taken notice of the incident and decided to examine it of its own accord, according to Times of India. The country's apex court has also sent a notice to Indian-held Kashmir's bar council for trying to stop the filing of charge sheet against the accused. The case has fuelled the sharp

communal divide in the region, with Muslim activists condemning what they see as a crime against their community and some Hindu groups arguing that the accused had been unfairly charged.

High profile names from the world of cinema and cricket have also voiced outrage over the crime in a country where nearly 40,000 rape cases are reported every year, according to official figures. "What is happening to the world we live in???" Bollywood star Anushka Sharma, who is married to Indian cricket captain Virat Kohli, wrote on Twitter. "These people should be given the most severe punishment there is! Where are we heading as humanity? Shaken to my core," she said.

Cricketer Gautam Gambhir blamed India's 'stinking systems' for what some have described as a rape epidemic. "Come on 'Mr. System', show us if you have the balls to punish the perpetrators, I challenge you," he tweeted. Citizen groups are planning further protests in New Delhi, Hyderabad, Chennai and Kolkata over the next two days, while thousands of people have taken to social media to seek justice for the victims. Nearly 35,000 rape cases were reported to Indian police and 7,000 convictions were made in 2015, both increasing by about 40 per cent from three years earlier, according to government data.

CPEC and the Global Scenario

By Mirza Kashif Baig

In order to hinder CPEC and its development US is trying to create global issues. CPEC is part of a global initiative referred to as One belt one road (OBOR) and it is being led by China while supported by Russia. This is viewed by America as China's initiative to enhance its influence globally to challenge American supremacy. In order to contain China, America is looking to take any and all steps necessary without a shred of regret for the moral repercussions of their actions. In the global scenario America is feared and is fast being recognized as a bully who is hell bent on shedding innocent blood to maintain its global primacy, so all in all America is playing the role of a tyrant and merciless inhuman way. In line with their plan to form greater Israel, they have to break any regional power that may someday challenge Israel and pose a threat to it. America has been supported by Israel and their close ally, India have embarked on a journey to shed as much blood as possible without the slightest bit of remorse. The Afghanistan invasion which was started on a lie that Afghanistan may have taken part in 9/11 episode, followed by Iraq invasion again based on the same lie was all part of a two pronged agenda simply to keep America on top by waging war, as it's a war driven economy, secondly to facilitate the creation of greater Israel. These wars allowed America to gain access to Iraq's resources and to destroy the Afghani form of government which was based on the Islamic principles and America wanted to raise it to the ground before the world realized that a better alternate system existed. Furthermore, Afghanistan granted them access to South Asia and brought them closer to their Israeli allies and provided them a path to encircle countries like Pakistan, China, Iran and Russia. The conquest of Iraq ripped the country apart and started a wave of terror which destroyed the nation completely. In line with its future America created ISIS to malign Muslim countries and their faith ISLAM. ISIS wreaked havoc in the region and started to reach out to Syria where it established a strong footing. In the meantime, the Arab spring was fueled by the US which affected Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, Yemen, Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco and Oman. These movements weakened Arab countries, destroyed whatever form of order that was prevailing and set in place a set up which favored United States of America. Where ever, governments were weakening ISIS started to take over in certain areas particularly in Iraq and Syria. However, US plan backfired when Iran and Russia jumped in to protect their interests in Syria and started fighting against American backed rebels and ISIS while supporting the government of Syria. ISIS and the rebels faced tremendous backlash and were driven back but that did not suit America very well and whenever a cease fire was reached they would start air strikes on Syrian government forces. In the meantime, Kurd fighters started contesting for a separate country and started attacks on Turkey; Turkey and Russia, after an unfortunate mistake which was acknowledged by Turkey, joined hands in battling the situation in Syria to protect their interests. This part of American plan failed as Russia and Turkey were supposed to go at war so that Turkey could be broken up alongside Syria and Iraq, eventually Pakistan and the Gulf States would have met with the same fate. Russia showed flexibility without any aggressive tone. Meanwhile, CPEC was rolled out and China started to emerge very quickly as a global power capable of supporting the global economy and protecting its interests. In order to contain China US enhanced its cooperation with India and started supporting India to form a challenge for Pakistan and China. Consequently, a new arm race was started in the region especially between Pakistan and India. India is tasked with keeping China and Pakistan in check and to do everything that can be done to stop CPEC. America is sitting in Afghanistan and sponsoring terrorism into Pakistan. United States of America has constructed nine underground military bases in Afghanistan itself just to maintain its supremacy and keep an eye on CPEC, Pakistan's Nuclear Arsenals and activities of China, Russia and central Asian countries. America has airlifted ISIS terrorist from Syria and other places to Afghanistan through un identified aero planes to destabilize Pakistan and Afghanistan. Meanwhile, India is making war threats, sponsoring terrorism in Pakistan through East and west borders and inflicting the worst form state sponsored terrorism in Kashmir in order to infuriate Pakistan to do something rash. While Pakistan is exercising excellent control over Law and Order situation in Pakistan and giving befitting response to India and US. While India is trying to balance between Russia and USA through Arms purchase but keeping away from Russian Arms dependence as does Pakistan with USA. Further Iran's role in the matter with reference to CPEC is also not clear as the Iranians are trying to benefit

from both India and China by leveraging Chabahar port. It would to bridge two double rivals Pakistan & India and USA and Russia which may put in trouble. Iran has to understand the greater game that is at play and should refrain from trying to please both sides in the interest of its own survival. Iran if joins Pakistan, China and Russia and Turkey, it will be its trump card.

In this entire situation one thing is clear America and its western allies have lost their right to lead morally. Biggest example of this is the attack on Syria by America, UK and France on 13th April 2018. These attacks were unprovoked aggression cloaked as a heroic gesture against alleged chemical attacks carried out by Syrian government on the Syrian rebels. One interesting fact is that this US led attack was carried out when an investigative international mission was supposed to visit Syria and determine who carried out the chemical attacks also Russians and the Assad regime apprehended a few MI6 agents from Syria who may have carried out these chemical attacks to justify American intervention, also it has been confirmed now by the UN investigative team that the chemical attacks were in fact carried out by the US supported rebels against Syrian government and civilians. The truth is that America, Britain and their allies are still brewing up the same web of lies which they used to invade Iraq and Afghanistan except this time the world is on to them. This not only strips them of their moral authority but it seems that the people they have been portraying as tyrants, are the ones fighting tyranny, as in this case Russia and Iran seem to fighting for the right cause. Also, China seems to be playing a better role in supporting the global economy as through their measures all stakeholders benefits whereas in case of US, all economic cooperation led to covert operations and complete disrespect of the sovereignty of other countries.

Book Review

My views on reviews

By Shafique Ahmed Shafique

Name of book : Balkoni May Baithi Aurat
Author's name: Roomana Roomi
Pages : 176
Price : Rs. 500 (50 US dollar)

Right from the beginning there is a long list of women story writers. Women are writing short stories, novels, articles poems and dramas. Though they are less in number but are writing shoulder to shoulder of male writers. Women have been registering their existence of creativity very significantly. At present they are not less in number and are very prominent in Pakistan, India, Middle East, Europe and America. These women writers are seriously busy in literary works. So, females are not writing only short stories but are busy in writing novels, articles composing verses and plays for TVs. Female writers also are in journalism and rendering valuable services.

Roomana Roomi is one of those women writers who is very seriously involve in rendering precious short stories. She is not only a short story writer but also composes verses. She has two anthologies of poetry which consist of nazms and ghazals. Her poetic books "Sahil Dekhai Day" (دے دک پھانسی ساحل) and "Dil Aik Musafir" (مسافر ایک دل) had come out in 2007 and 2015 respectively.

The book "Balkony May Khari Aurat" (عورت کے پھڑی میں بال کونہی) is her first collection of short stories has come out recently (2018). The collection contains 30 stories in its skirt. Each and every piece is evident of her deep feelings which she has for human beings, specially, for women.

The short stories of the book "Aathwaan Derwaza," "Saleeb Per Latki Soch," "Khahish-e-Naatamaam," "Jeeti Jagti lasweer," "Shimmi," "Not For Sale" and "Fitrat" are related to the same gender's issues. It may be mentioned here that the technique of the first story "Aathwaan Derwaza," is not new but subject matter is to some extent fresh and contemporary. This authoress adopting the technique of Kirshan Chander which he applied in his short fiction "Khirkian" (کھڑک یان) successfully mirrored the all kinds of injustices which are prevailing in the present time too. Kirshan Chander had selected "Windows" but the authoress of the book under discussion has used "Doors" in place of windows.

There are seven "Doors" in this short story (Aathwaan Derwaza) and every door opens with horrible scenes. This story is impressive one. Women are, since the ancient ages suffering from all kinds of injustices, oppressions and suppressions. The pages of history are witness that females have been playing like toys in the hands of males. It may be mentioned here that a book was produced under the title of "History of Woman Suffrage" by three writers: Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Matilda Joslyn Gage and Ida Husted Harper.

That book published in six volumes from 1881 to 1922, it is a history of the women's suffrage movement, primarily in the United States. In this book for the first time the right of voting in elections for female was demanded. Before that time women were being counted among animal-like creature. Before Islam man in Arab also did not like female. That is the reason the novelist Marlin French in her book written under the name of "Women's room" said about males: "They rape us with their eyes, their laws, and their codes."

Even in the present modern and developed age the fate of women to some extent still not changed. Rumana Roomi's aims and objects of creativity are to depict realities of our society. She wants to expose those very exploitations of women-folk which are still going on. Other stories such as 'Bermuda Angle' 'Yahaan Kawway Bohot Hain' and 'Zameer' are also good stories which are in view of style, narration situation and expression of sentiment of characters are good pieces of short fiction. The stories 'Apnoon Kay Dermian', 'Visiting Card', 'Durvesh' are not so much impressive like the above referred short stories. These stories may be called popular literature.

Rumana Roomi is a serious writer and is busy to create poems and short stories continuously. Her writings are coming out several notable literary journals and being appreciated by readers and writers.