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Editorial Sep. 2018

The Cycle of Change Begins?

Pakistan's elections always involved the promises of change and vision of a corruption free Pakistan. This has been going on since the 90s. First it was Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto who sought votes against each other with the promise of a better Pakistan under their tenure. Every time these promises were made the nation trusted them with the hope that they might have reformed, however, every time they came into power these promises proved to be nothing but web of lies. Corruption fast turned into the biggest problem plaguing Pakistan, one which was fuelling all other evils prevailing in Pakistan. Then Mr. Asif Ali Zardari took charge of the PPPP and Mr. Nawaz Sharif returned to Pakistan after an exile of over a decade. Democracy was restored in Pakistan after more than a decade and the people of this country expected change for the better instead they were subject to the worst form of corruption which ate away on the very fabric of this nation and also at the little system that was prevailing in the country at the time. PML-N and PPPP tenures were typical, as soon as they were elected they never addressed the real issues of Pakistan, instead they bashed the predecessor and promises which made no sense as they completely ignored macro-economic and strategic problems of Pakistan. Nation was losing hope in these self-proclaimed leaders very fast and change in Pakistan's political scenario seemed like an idealistic concept. However, Mr. Imran Khan and his party PTI emerged as a valid alternative to these old and corrupt faces. PTI's chairman Mr. Imran Khan was talking about all the right issues he was battling these corrupt individuals in the most outspoken manner and mostly his agenda was looking to the issues that were in the minds of the common man. His struggles put a lot of pressure on the government of PML-N and a cycle of change begun with the order of investigations against Nawaz Sharif on the charges of corruption, while finally resulted with the verdict that he is unfit to be the Prime Minister of Pakistan and he was arrested. Investigations of corruption charges against him are still underway and there are still cases that are going on against him and his family. Judiciary seems adamant on working against corruption and uprooting it altogether and now actions are being taken Mr. Asif Ali Zardari and his sister Ms. Faryal Talpur. These actions were made possible due to the new found awareness among the nation and it was this awareness that led to PTI winning general elections 2018 and Mr. Imran Khan being elected as the Prime Minister of Pakistan, as the nation believed that Mr. Imran Khan deserved a chance. His first speech as the Prime Minister of Pakistan further strengthened the belief that change for the better is coming as he talked about all the right matters. PM Imran Khan was open and upfront with the nation, he directly asked for the support and patience of the people of Pakistan while clearly mentioning that the corrupt will start protesting against his government due to the drive against corruption and the nation needs to prepare for it. He emphasized greatly on education and healthcare sector while highlighting the need for jobs and housing. He didn't cower away from talking about debt repayment or the fact that we need to take loans to operate currently but he was firm that significant steps will be taken for the repayment of debt. Perhaps his most hailed measure was the steps to cut down on government expenditures significantly which would result in significant savings on an annual basis. His speech addressed all factors including, economic, social and strategic matters and this is the reason that it stood apart from the predecessors. It was a serious speech from a man who

has a lot expectations riding on him and he is aware that if he doesn't deliver than the nation may not give him another chance. This empowerment of the nation and the state of awareness is the real positive change in Pakistan. His austerity drive is very much welcomed. The size of the delegations to foreign countries for some or the other business has significantly reduced. The expenses have cut down. The green Pakistan movement has been started to grow as much trees as possible to check the global warming to the extent possible for Pakistan. This also has been appreciated in the country and worldwide. Pakistan is looking for its interest even in foreign policy. USA attitude is becoming harsh and harsher but Pakistan has decided to search new grounds to engage USA and not ready to accept the DO MORE Mantra of America. The change apparently has been seen in some internal and external affairs.

Summarized News & Articles

Imran Khan sworn-in as 22nd Prime Minister of Pakistan

Islamabad (Aug 18, 2018) President Mamnoon Hussain administered the Oath to Imran Khan at the Aiwan-e-Sadr in Islamabad.

Talking to media, prominent personalities and political figures described today's transfer of power as a dawn of new era.

High-profile guests attending the ceremony included caretaker Prime Minister Justice (retd) Nasir-Ul-Mulk, the Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Qamar Javed Bajwa, the Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee Zubair Mahmood Hayat, the Chief of Air Staff Marshal Mujahid Anwar Khan, former Cricketers, Showbiz personalities, Imran Khan's wife Bushra Bibi, Naval Chief Admiral Zafar Mahmood Abbasi and other people belonging to all walks of life attended the swearing-in ceremony. Khan, who famously captained the national cricket team to World Cup glory in 1992, had also invited some of his former teammates to witness his formal ascension to the top ministerial job in the country.

Guard of Honour

As the ceremony concluded, Khan proceeded to the Prime Minister's Office, where he was presented a guard of honour.

The national anthem was played and a contingent of the three services presented him salute. Imran Khan inspected the guard of honour and was then introduced to the staff of the Prime Minister House.

325 newly elected members take oath during first session of 15th National Assembly
ISLAMABAD (AUGUST 13, 2018) : Outgoing NA speaker Ayaz Sadiq chaired the memorable session and managed vow to the MNAs-choose in the 342 members house. The session started with the MNAs-choose supporting the national song of praise and was trailed by the recitation of the Holy Quran. The speaker at that point read out the system for the race of the new speaker and representative speaker. He at that point managed promise to the MNAs-choose following which they marked the move of individuals in sequential order arrange.

Election for speakers, deputy speakers of National ,KP, Sindh, Punjab, Balochistan assemblies

National Assembly : Asad Qaiser of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf was elected as Speaker of the National Assembly, defeating Khursheed Shah of joint opposition front. Qaiser bagged 173 votes against Shah's 146 while eight votes were rejected.

Meanwhile, Qasim Suri has been elected as Deputy Speaker of the lower house.

Punjab Assembly : Joint candidate of PTI-led alliance Chaudhry Pervez Elahi has been elected as Speaker Punjab Assembly after securing 201 votes. His rival, PML-N's Chaudhry Iqbal, obtained 147 votes.

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's Dost Mazari has been elected as the Deputy Speaker of the Provincial Assembly of Punjab.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly: PTI member Mushtaq Ghani was elected Speaker of the Khyber Paktunkhwa Assembly by securing 81 votes.

His opponent Laiq Muhammad secured 27 votes. Mehmood Jan of the PTI was elected as Deputy **Speaker of the assembly.**

Sindh Assembly: Siraj Durrani have been elected speakers of the Sindh Assembly and Rehana Leghair as Deputy Speaker .

Following the result announcement, the successful candidates were administered oath.

Durrani secured 196 votes while his opponent from MQM Javed Hanif bagged 59.

Balochistan Assembly: Balochistan Awami Party leader Mir Abdul Quddus Bizenjo has been elected Speaker Balochistan Assembly. Bizenjo bagged 39 votes against Muhammad Nawaz, who secured only 20 votes.

PTI's Sardar Babar Musa Khel has been elected as the Deputy Speaker of the Provincial Assembly.

PM Imran Khan finalises names of 21-member cabinet

The Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf on Saturday announced that Prime Minister Imran Khan has finalised the names of his 21-member cabinet.

The announcement comes hours after Imran Khan took oath as the 22nd prime minister of Pakistan earlier in the day. According to a list issued by the party's central media department, out of the 21 names announced 16 have been given the portfolio of a minister while five others will perform their duties as advisers to the premier.

List of Ministers:

Law and Justice	Dr. Muhammad Farogh Naseem
States and Frontier Regions:	Chaudhary Tariq Bashir Cheema
Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony	Noorul Haq Qadri
Human Rights	Dr Shireen Mazari
Petroleum Division	Ghulam Sarwar Khan
Defence Production	Zubaida Jalal
Information and Broadcasting Division:.....	Fawad Chaudhry
National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination...	Aamir Mehmood Kiyani
Ministry of Foreign Affairs.....	Shah Mahmood Qureshi
Ministry of Defence:.....	Pervez Khattak
Finance, Revenue and Economic Affairs	Asad Umer
Ministry of Railways	Sheikh Rashid Ahmed
Inter-provincial Coordination	Fehmida Mirza
Information Technology and Telecom.....	Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui
Fed. Edu. & d Professional Training & Heritage Division..	Shafqat Mahmood
Water Resources Ministry.....	Makhdoom Khusro Bakhtiar

List of Advisers

Establishment Division.....	Mohammad Shehzad Arbab
Commerce, Textile, Industry & Production and Investment.	Abdul Razak Dawood
Institutional Reforms and Austerity.....	Ishrat Hussain
Climate Change	Amin Aslam
Parliamentary Affairs.....	Babar Awan

According to the 18th Constitution Amendment, the size of the federal cabinet should be not more than 11 per cent of the total strength of the National Assembly and Senate.

List of Current Provincial Chief Ministers

Province	Name	Party
Balochistan	Jam Kamal Khan	Balochistan Awami Party(BAP)
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	Mahmood Khan	Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)
Punjab	Sardar Usman Buzdar	Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)
Sindh	Murad Ali Shah	Pakistan People's Party (PPP)

Pakistan celebrates 72nd Independence Day

ISLAMABAD: (14th Aug. 2018) Pakistanis across the country and in other parts of the world celebrated the country's 72nd Independence Day on Tuesday 14 Aug, 2018, with traditional fervour and enthusiasm, as President Mamnoon Hussain emphasised on the "power of vote" in his address on the occasion.

CEREMONY: The main ceremony was hosted at Islamabad's Jinnah Convention Centre, where President Mamnoon Hussain hoisted the national flag. The ceremony was also attended by caretaker Prime Minister Nasirul Mulk, the three chiefs of the armed forces and other notable personalities and foreign dignitaries. Commandant Pakistan Naval Academy Commodore Waqar Muhammad was the chief guest at the ceremony.

SUPPORT FOR KASHMIRIS: Mamnoon paid tribute to the sacrifices of the sons and daughters of the soil in establishing peace in the country and reiterated Pakistan's unswerving political and moral support for Kashmiris in Indian-occupied valley. "Pakistan will continue to provide its political and moral support to resolve the Kashmir issue under United Nations resolutions," Mamnoon said. He called upon the international community to raise its voice to get the Kashmiri people their due rights.

PAKISTAN'S INDEPENDENCE CELEBRATED WORLDWIDE:

The Independence Day of Pakistan was celebrated with spirit and enthusiasm in India 'New Delhi', United States(US), High Commission in Dhaka, Embassy in France (Paris), Saudi Arabia (Jeddah, Embassy in China, High Commission in UK (London) where Pakistani flag hoisted .

Support for criteria based approach for NSG membership growing

Islamabad : August 2, 2018

Strategic Vision Institute has hailed government's pro-active diplomacy for successfully advocating criteria based approach for membership of Nuclear Suppliers Group and called for bolstering the country's candidature for admission into the multilateral export control regime.

The think tank, which specializes in nuclear deterrence and strategic stability issues, in a statement issued here underscored that Pakistan should focus on improving the narrative about its nuclear program and consider the steps that could further strengthen its NSG candidature.

SVI's recommendations were based on an in-house roundtable discussion that was attended by diplomats, experts and academia.

President SVI Dr Zafar Iqbal Cheema said: "The nuclear politics of NSG is a significant issue and it is important for Pakistan to find suitable policy alternatives for generating a viable international support its membership of the NSG".

It should be recalled that the stalemate on the admission of new members particularly the non-NPT states continued at the twenty-eighth Plenary Meeting of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) held in Jûrmala (Latvia) on 14 and 15 June 2018. The public statement issued after the meeting had said: "discussions were continuing on the requests for participation that had been submitted". These deliberations on membership for non-NPT states Pakistan and India had started in 2016 at the Seoul Plenary and have continued since then without any progress. Pakistan has during this period successfully lobbied for criteria based approach, while simultaneously exposing the loopholes in the separation plan committed by India and the anomalies in its safeguards agreement.

Speaking at the in-house roundtable, Mr Kamran Akhtar, director general at the Arms Control and Disarmament Division of the Foreign Office, said: "The support for this (criteria based approach) is growing and a good number of countries are now calling for developing criteria for admitting non-NPT states". He further pointed out that several international studies had also corroborated Pakistan's long held position that any exemption for India could undermine the regional strategic stability by helping it (India) expand its nuclear program. (Source: Agencies)

Miscreants vandalize, set ablaze 12 girls' schools in Chilas, Diamer district

CHILAS (Friday 3rd Aug. 2018) Unidentified assailants burned down at least 12 schools in Gilgit-Baltistan's Diamer district late on Thursday night and fled, causing panic among residents, locals and police said.

Local police officer Mohammad Bashir said the attacks on schools took place before dawn on Friday near Chilas, but there were no casualties as the schools were closed at the time.

The Diamer Youth Movement has called for a protest in Chilas, the district headquarters, against the targeting of education institutions in the district. This is not the first time schools have come under attack in Diamer. Girls' schools, in particular, were targeted, allegedly by extremists, in 2004 and 2011.

Brave army soldier Maqbool Hussain passes away in Attock

ISLAMABAD: (28 Aug. 2018) Maqbool Hussain, a soldier of the Pakistan Army who faced extreme torture in Indian prisons during his detention for 40 years, breathed his last at the Combined Military Hospital in Attock, according to a statement issued here on Tuesday by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR).

In a statement, Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa expressed his sorrow over the death of Maqbool Hussain, a resident of Tral Khal area of Azad Jammu Kashmir.

In 1965 war, the late soldier was taken as a prisoner by the Indian Army, but he was never given the status of a Prisoner of War (PoW), which provides him with certain rights and benefits. He vanished and was declared missing on August 20, 1965.

The Indians could never break Maqbool Hussain's resilience despite all sorts of mental and physical torture. The torture grew to such an extent that they cut off Maqbool's tongue, taking away his power to speak forever. After spending 40 years in Indian jails, Maqbool Hussain was released in 2005 during prisoner exchange at the Wagha border.

The man spent 40 years in the Indian jails, subject to inhumane torture and negate but he never said a word against his country – Pakistan. It is said that Maqbool Hussain, whenever he bled, wrote "Pakistan Zindabad!" on the walls with his blood.

When Maqbool Hussain was released, he had already lost his senses due to the brutal torture he had faced at the hands of the Indian Army during the four decades. When he was questioned about his identity, he kept replying by writing: "No 335139," which was his army bearing number.

He was awarded Sitara-i-Jurat on March 23, 2009. The Inter-Services Public Relations even co-produced a drama on Sipahi Maqbool Hussain's heart-wrenching but a patriotic story, directed by Haider Imam Rizvi.

Russia to supply radar for protecting nuclear power plant in Pakistan

The radar is set to control and protect the Karachi nuclear power plant's facilities

By : Grigoriy Sysoev

MOSCOW, August 30. /TASS/. Russia will supply a civilian radar station to Pakistan to protect facilities of the nuclear power plant in Karachi, the press office of RTI hi-tech company said. "A memorandum of cooperation in the field of organizing the delivery of the civilian radar Surok was signed at the Army-2018 international military and technical forum between RTI Group and the Pakistani company TechWin Enterprise. The radar is set to control and protect the Karachi NPP's facilities, and also some other installations of Pakistan's critically important infrastructure," the press office said.

Both sides also agreed on exploring the possibilities of implementing joint projects in radiolocation and information systems in the interests of various ministries and departments of Pakistan.

RTI Group also held negotiations at the Army-2018 forum with China Electronics Corporation (CEC). Both sides agreed on opening joint R&D and experimental design works for creating new products and technologies, and also modernizing the Russian equipment earlier supplied to China. "A delegation from Vietnam got interested in the RTI's competences and experience in situational

centers for creating national environmental crisis management centers in that country. The Indian partners were shown the possibilities of civilian projects in the field of information and communication technologies," the press office said.

Iranian foreign Javad Zarif minister arrives on two-day visit to Pakistan

Islamabad : 30 Aug. 2018: 'Pakistan stands with Iran in this hour of need': Qureshi on US withdrawal from nuclear accord.

Welcoming the dignitary, Qureshi noted the potential for "strengthening the already strong bilateral relationship" between Pakistan and Iran.

Foreign Ministers of Pakistan and Iran, and other officials meet in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Detailed discussions were also held on regional and global issues, including the situation in Afghanistan and the United States' decision to unilaterally withdraw from the 2015 Joint

Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) more commonly referred to as the Iran nuclear deal. Iran FM meets COAS

FM Zarif also called on Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Qamar Javed Bajwa at the General Headquarters in Rawalpindi. According to Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), regional security situation and other matters of mutual interest were discussed. The army's media wing said the visiting dignitary "acknowledged and appreciated Pakistan's contributions for conflict prevention in the region".

Iranian Fm meets to PM Imran Khan

Zarif delivered a message of Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, inviting the Prime Minister for the upcoming Asian Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) Summit in Iran. Welcoming the foreign minister, Khan thanked the Iranian Supreme Leader's support for Kashmiri's struggle for self-determination as well as for the manner in which Pakistan Independence Day was celebrated in Iran.

PM Khan said that Pakistan and Iran were connected by inseparable bonds of historic, religious and cultural affinities. He added that during his tenure, Pakistan would make all efforts to cement these relations in various areas to the benefit of both countries.

He also emphasized on restoring complete peace and stability in the region.

Brief News International

Rohingya Muslims mark 'black day' ; A year after fleeing Myanmar, Rohingya demand justice

By : AFP : Rohingya Muslims refugees on Saturday 25 Aug. 2018, marked the anniversary of a deadly military crackdown in their Myanmar homeland that drove 700,000 of the persecuted minority into Bangladesh, stateless and confronting a grim future.

Raids by Rohingya militants on August 25 last year across Myanmar's Rakhine state spurred an army crackdown which the United Nations has likened to "ethnic cleansing". Waves of Rohingya fled by foot or boat to Bangladesh in an exodus unprecedented in speed and scale. Rohingya activists in Bangladesh's refugee camps vowed to mark the "black day" with prayers, speeches and song. The latest influx has placed enormous pressure on Bangladesh's impoverished Cox's Bazar district, which quickly grew into the world's largest refugee settlement. The squalid camps already hosted generations of Rohingya expelled from Rakhine and the latest arrivals pushed numbers close to one million.

Buddhist-majority Myanmar says it is ready to take back those who fled. But it refuses to recognise the Rohingya as citizens, falsely labelling them "Bengali" illegal immigrants. A deal between Myanmar and Bangladesh to start sending them back has stalled. Fewer than 200 have been repatriated so far.

Myanmar's civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi this week said it was up to Bangladesh "to decide how quickly" repatriation can be done, while insisting the "terrorist threat" posed by Rohingya militants remains "real and present".

The Rohingya say they will not return without a guarantee of their safety, citizenship and compensation for homes and land torched. "We don't want to [go] back without justice and without our rights and a proper guarantee that we won't be driven out again," 18-year-old Aman Ullah told AFP in Cox's Bazar.

Thousands of refugees, from children to the elderly, marched, prayed and chanted slogans in events across the sprawling camps in southern Bangladesh. Many wore black ribbons to commemorate what they said was the start of the 'Rohingya genocide'.

"We prayed the morning prayers inside our house over the sound of bullets. We were so scared," said Aisha, 47, one of dozens of women at a gathering in the Kutupalong camp, recalling the outbreak of the conflict.

Things became worse from 2012. In June that year, some Rakhine people killed 10 Rohingya in a village called Toung Gu. Then we heard they and the government were involved in killing hundreds more Rohingya in other towns and districts, burning them alive and shooting them dead. Many women were gang-raped. Villages were burned down and Rohingya were arbitrarily arrested. Many died in jail. Four years later, when I was 26, nearly 300 villages were burned down by the Myanmar military. Mosques and Islamic schools were also set on fire. Uncountable numbers of Rohingya people were arrested and sentenced to prison, said Aisha.

I am a Rohingya refugee: We will become like animals if we stay in these camps. Despite everything, we want to go back to Myanmar, but only with citizenship and our rights 'Noor Ilyas in Jamtoli refugee camp, southern Bangladesh'

The UN and international rights groups say conditions are not ready for them to go back. "It may be decades until they can safely return to Myanmar, if ever," Medecins Sans Frontieres head of mission in Bangladesh, Pavlo Kolovos, said in a statement.

Taliban Assault on Ghazni, a Key Afghan City

Ghazni, a city of 280,000 people according to Afghan figures, sits astride the important Highway 1 linking Kabul and Kandahar, the second largest Afghan city, in the south. Provincial council member Nasir Ahmad Faqiri said fresh fighting erupted in the morning of August 12 near the police and spy agency headquarters, as well as the governor's palace. At least 80 members of Afghanistan's security forces have been killed in three days of fighting, according to Provincial council member Ahmad Faqiri.

The estimated number of civilian casualties is around 300, with verification ongoing.

The fighting in the city has reportedly ended and Afghan security forces are manning checkpoints throughout the city.

Both electricity and telecommunication services are reportedly operational again, however outages persist. A large number of solar power systems that residents relied on prior to the conflict have reportedly been damaged and are no longer functional.

Tawhid Abad and Pashtoon Abad neighbourhoods appear to be the most affected areas of the city, with an estimated 2,000 houses damaged to some extent during the recent fighting. There also reports of the conflict having damaged public infrastructure, including the water distribution system.

Source: 'UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs'

Kabul suicide bomber kills 48 in tuition centre attack

Forty-eight people have been killed and 67 injured in a bomb explosion at an education centre in Afghanistan's capital, Kabul, officials say. Police say a suicide bomber walked into the centre while teaching was under way and detonated his bomb belt. Many of those killed were teenagers who were getting extra tuition as they prepared for university entrance exams. In the northern province of Baghlan, an attack killed at least nine policemen and 35 soldiers, officials say. Taliban militants denied involvement in the Kabul attack, in a mostly Shia Muslim area. The Shia community in Afghanistan has been repeatedly targeted by Sunni Muslim extremists of the Islamic State group, which views the Shia practice of Islam as heretical.

ISIS Leader, Abu Sayeed Orakzai Killed By US Drone Strike In Afghanistan

The head of the Islamic State in Afghanistan, Abu Sayeed Orakzai, has been killed in a U.S. Strike, according to Afghan officials. The U.S. military said the strike took place Saturday in Nangarhar province, close to the Pakistan border. "I can confirm that U.S. forces conducted a counterterrorism strike ... which targeted a senior leader of a designated terrorist organization," Lt. Col. Martin O'Donnell, a spokesperson for U.S. forces in Afghanistan, said in a statement. O'Donnell also pointed to comments via Twitter by a deputy spokesperson of Afghan President Ashraf Ghani that Orakzai, described as the emir of ISIS in Afghanistan, had died in the strike. The U.S. has killed a succession of ISIS leaders in Afghanistan.

In July 2017, the Pentagon said a strike killed Abu Sayed — the heir to Abdul Hasib, who died three months earlier. A drone strike in July 2016 killed Hafiz Sayed Khan. Discussing the weekend operation, O'Donnell drew a distinction between counter-terrorism efforts against the Taliban and groups such as al-Qaida and ISIS-K, or ISIS-Khorasan, a name for the extremist group's outpost in Afghanistan.

Saudi coalition air strike in Yemen kills 50, including 29 school children

09 Aug 2018 | An airstrike by the Saudi-led coalition fighting Shiite rebels hit a bus driving in a busy market in northern Yemen, killing least 50 people including children and wounding 77, Yemen's rebel-run Al Masirah TV said citing rebel Health Ministry figures.

The Saudi-led coalition, meanwhile, said it targeted the rebels, known as Houthis, who had fired a missile at the kingdom's south on Wednesday, killing one person who was a Yemeni resident in the area. The attack took place in the Dahyan market in Saada province, a Houthi stronghold. The province lies along the border with Saudi Arabia. The bus was ferrying local civilians, including many children, according to Yemeni tribal leaders who spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisals.

Lombok Earthquake Kills 100, Strands Tourists on Indonesian Islands

August 6, 2018: The 6.9 magnitude earthquake was felt throughout neighboring islands like Bali. Just one week ago, a 6.4-magnitude earthquake struck the southeastern Indonesian island of Lombok, killing at least 16, injuring around 330, and stranding hikers across the island's Mount Rinjani volcano. Then on Sunday, the island was hit by an even deadlier 6.9-magnitude earthquake that has killed at least 100 so far, though officials expect the number to grow as rescue efforts continue. Lombok and the surrounding islands including Bali have felt more than 130 aftershocks, including one that registered as 5.4, The New York Times reports.

Italy bridge collapse 'leaves 35 dead'

14 Aug. 2018 : The Ponte Morandi A10 - in Genoa - has been destroyed in what a minister has described as "an immense tragedy". Around 35 people - including a 10-year-old boy - have died, and many more are fighting for their lives after a 200-metre long section of an Italian motorway bridge collapsed. Devastating footage shows the viaduct on the A10 motorway in Genoa disintegrating in the catastrophe at around 11.30am. Around 30 vehicles are believed to have been on the road when both carriageways fell away. There had been heavy rain during a violent storm before the incident and Italian media reported that the bridge had been struck by lightning.

Cost Of Syria War Destruction At \$388 Billion, Says UN

BEIRUT, LEBANON: Agence France-Presse | August 09, 2018

Seven years of relentless conflict in Syria have wreaked destruction that the United Nations said Wednesday had cost the country close to a whopping \$400 billion. The figure was released after a two-day meeting of more than 50 Syrian and international experts in neighbouring Lebanon, hosted by the UN's Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA).

ESCWA said the "volume of destruction in physical capital and its sectoral distribution" had been estimated at more than \$388 billion. It said the figure did not include "human losses resulting from deaths or the loss of human competences and skilled labour due to displacement, which were considered the most important enablers of the Syrian economy."

More than half of Syria's pre-war population has fled the country or been displaced internally over the past seven years. Russia's 2015 military intervention helped a spectacular recovery by government forces, which have regained significant ground in recent months. Terrorist and rebel forces remain in some pockets, but with the military balance hugely in the regime's favour, efforts have already been shifting toward reconstruction.

Major provocations using chemical weapons planned in Syria - Russia's Ministry of Defense

MOSCOW, August 26. /TASS/. Major provocations with the alleged use of chemical weapons are planned in Syria with the participation of foreign specialists, Russian Defense Ministry Spokesman Major General Igor Konashenkov told reporters. "According to the information that the Russian Reconciliation Center for Syria received today from the residents of the Idlib, foreign (English-speaking) experts arrived in the Hbit settlement located in the south of the Idlib zone of de-escalation for staging a 'chemical attack' using chlorine-loaded missiles," said he. "Thus, the interested extra-regional forces are once again preparing major provocations in Syria using poisonous substances to severely destabilize the situation and disrupt the steady dynamics of the ongoing peace process," Konashenkov noted.

Provocation with the use of ammunition with toxic substances will be conducted in Syria in the next two days with the participation of foreign special agents, Konashenkov told reporters.

"The strike on the settlement of Kafr Zayta from rocket launchers using poisonous substances is planned in the next two days," he said.

Iran test-fires ballistic missile for first time in 2018, officials say

EXCLUSIVE 11-Aug, 2018 | For the first time in more than a year, Iran test-fired a ballistic missile in a brazen display of defiance months after President Trump pulled the United States out of a landmark nuclear deal and days before his administration slapped new sanctions on the Islamic Republic, three U.S. officials with knowledge of the launch.

The test of an Iranian Fateh-110 short-range ballistic missile coincided with a large-scale naval exercise by Iran's Revolutionary Guard forces late last week involving over 50 small gunboats in the Strait of Hormuz to rehearse "swarm" tactics which could one day potentially shut down the vital waterway, through which 30 percent of the world's oil passes each year. While the U.S. military publicly acknowledged the naval activity, the missile test from an Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps base in Bandar-e-Jask in southeastern Iran has not been previously reported. The launch was detected by U.S. spy satellites.

According to the officials, the anti-ship Fateh-110 Mod 3 flew over 100 miles on a flight path over the Strait of Hormuz to a test range in the Iranian desert. "It was shore-to-shore," said one U.S. official describing the launch, who like the others requested anonymity to discuss sensitive information. There were no U.S. military assets nearby or in danger when Iran conducted the test, the official added. The guided-missile destroyer USS The Sullivans has been escorting vessels through the strait in recent days.

Iran unveils new domestic fighter jet 'Kowsar'

The fighter jet called Kowsar was fully domestic made, capable of carrying various weapons, and will be used for short aerial support missions. Images released by state media show President Hassan Rouhani sitting in the cockpit of the aircraft named Kowsar. Iran unveiled a new domestic fighter jet with President Hassan Rouhani saying Tehran's military strength was only designed to deter enemies and aimed at creating "lasting peace".

Images broadcast on state television showed Rouhani sitting in the cockpit of the new Kowsar fourth-generation fighter at the National Defence Industry exhibition in Tehran. State media said it had "advanced avionics" and multi-purpose radar, and it was "100-percent indigenously made" for the first time.

Israel plans to land unmanned spacecraft on moon in February

YEHUD, Israel (Reuters) - By : Ari Rabinovitch

An Israeli non-profit group plans to land an unmanned spacecraft on the moon in February in the first landing of its kind since 2013. The craft, which is shaped like a round table with four carbon fiber legs, is set to blast off in December from Florida's Cape Canaveral aboard a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket, said Ido Anteby, chief executive of the SpaceIL non-profit.

It aims to transmit pictures and videos back to earth over two days after it lands on Feb. 13 as well as measuring magnetic fields. "Our spacecraft will be the smallest ever to land on the moon," said Anteby.

Since 1966, the United States and the former Soviet Union have put around 12 unmanned spacecraft on the moon using braking power to perform "soft" landings and China did so in 2013.

SpaceIL was founded in 2011 by a group of engineers with a budget of about \$90 million and they had to sacrifice size and operational capabilities for more efficient travel.

The craft, unveiled on Tuesday at state-owned defense contractor Israel Aerospace Industries, stands about 1.5 meters high and weighs 585 kg (1,290 lb). The spacecraft has four carbon fiber legs and fuel takes up two-thirds of its weight.

At 60,000 km (37,000 miles) above Earth the spacecraft will deploy. It will orbit Earth in expanding ellipses and, about two months later, cross into the moon's orbit. It will then slow and carry out a soft landing causing no damage to the craft.

China just tested a hypersonic weapon the US can't defend against

By : Steve Mollman :

Provided by Quartz An unarmed Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missile launches during an operational test at 2:10 a.m. Pacific Daylight Time at Vandenberg Air Force Base, California, U.S., August 2, 2017. China has successfully tested a new hypersonic aircraft that would likely make a mockery of US missile defense systems in battle. The experimental "waverider" vehicle, China's first, rides the shock waves generated during hypersonic flight. It could one day carry multiple nuclear warheads.

According to state media reports published, the test was in northwestern China. The Starry Sky 2 was first carried airborne by a solid-propellant rocket. After separation, it glided back to down to earth at speeds reaching 7,344 km per hour (4,563 mph), displaying a high degree of maneuverability along the way.

The US's existing missile defense systems, criticized for their high price and spotty track record, struggle to intercept more conventional projectiles, much less hypersonic aircraft, which travel in a less predictable manner and are hard to detect.

This is the first time China has officially confirmed its development of "wave rider" technology, though it has been working on hypersonic glide vehicles since 2014. China, Russia, and the US are the main contenders in the hypersonic arena, and are engaged what some see as a new arms race based on the technology.

NASA launches probe to go deep into Sun's scorching atmosphere

(Reuters)| The craft will endure extreme heat while zooming through the solar corona to study the Sun's outer atmosphere that gives rise to the solar winds. The Parker Solar Probe, a spacecraft the size of a small car, launched from Cape Canaveral in Florida about 3:30 a.m. Sunday, on a seven-year mission. It is set to fly into the Sun's corona within 3.8 million miles (6.1 million km) of the solar surface, seven times closer than any other spacecraft.

The corona gives rise to the solar wind, a continuous flow of charged particles that permeates the solar system and can cause havoc with communications technology on Earth. NASA hopes the findings will enable scientists to forecast changes in Earth's space environment.

The project, with a \$1.5 billion price tag, is the first major mission under NASA's Living With a Star program. The probe, named after American solar astrophysicist Eugene Newman Parker, will have to survive difficult heat and radiation conditions. It has been outfitted with a heat shield designed to keep its instruments at a tolerable 85 degrees Fahrenheit (29 degrees Celsius) even as the spacecraft faces temperatures reaching nearly 2,500 degrees Fahrenheit (1,370 degrees Celsius) at its closest pass.

An Air Force Stealth B-2 Spirit Just Test-Dropped a Nuclear Bomb

This is what it could do in battle.

by Kris Osborn : National Interest

The Air Force's B-2 Stealth bomber has test-dropped an upgraded, multi-function B61-12 nuclear bomb which improves accuracy, integrates various attack options into a single bomb and changes the strategic landscape with regard to nuclear weapons mission possibilities.

Earlier this summer, the Air Force dropped a B61-12 nuclear weapon from a B-2 at Nellis AFB, marking a new developmental flight test phase for the upgraded bomb, Air Force spokeswoman Capt. Hope Cronin told Warrior Maven. "The updated weapon will include improved safety, security and reliability," Cronin said.

The B61-12 adds substantial new levels of precision targeting and consolidates several different kinds of attack options into a single weapon. Instead of needing separate variants of the weapon for different functions, the B61-12 by itself allows for earth-penetrating attacks, low-yield strikes, high-yield attacks, above surface detonation and bunker-buster options.

"The main advantage of the B61-12 is that it packs all the gravity bomb capabilities against all the targeting scenarios into one bomb. That spans from very low-yield tactical "clean" use with low fallout to more dirty attacks against underground targets," Hans Kristensen, Director of the Nuclear Information Project, Federation of American Scientists, told Warrior Maven.

Air Force officials describe this, in part, by referring to the upgraded B61-12 as having an "All Up Round."

"The flight test accomplished dedicated B61-12 developmental test requirements and "All Up Round" system level integration testing on the B-2," Cronin said.

Washington shows greater trust in India

In terms of being accorded an exception to receive dual-use technologies that are highly restricted, India is now in a even higher category than long-term US ally Israel, and in Asia it joins Japan and South Korea. It can now import without seeking specific licenses around 90 per cent of the defense equipment and sophisticated technologies that the US may have. The manufacture of such equipment in India is also not ruled out, and that is a major spinoff.

Washington giving New Delhi this new status is thought to underline three key aspects of international security:

One, America is satisfied that India's credentials on proliferation are of the highest order and what is sold to India will not be leaked to any other country;

Two, India acquiring the most sophisticated American defense and technology wares will not cause regional instability (Israel is probably ruled out on this count);

Third, that the US is steadfast in its thinking India is fit to be a member of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), from which it has been kept out through assiduous Chinese exertion.

In Indian policy circles, it was thought America's relations with India weren't valued as much as it was under Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama. The placing of India on Strategic Trade Authorisation-1 now, pushing it up from STA-2, appears to negate that line of thought. New Delhi will no doubt want that its placement in the highest category is given effect to at the earliest by

Washington. Perhaps this will come through when US secretary of state Mike Pompeo and defense secretary Jim Mattis visit New Delhi in September for the “2+2” dialogue. India will do well to keep the focus on the new defence acquisitions it seeks from the United States.

Indications also became available that the US will not now sanction India over obtaining defence supplies from Russia, including the S-400 anti-missile system which earlier appeared to have upset the Americans. This is a good sign and admits of a better US appreciation of India's strategic concerns and its geostrategic sensitivities in a multi-polar world. It is desirable from the Indian perspective that American clarity of this order also applies to India's autonomy on obtaining energy supplies, including from Iran, with which America's relations have been tangled since the Shah of Iran was overthrown.

In the end, no country should be able to dictate who India's friends should be, and those who want India to not remain engaged with the US on compatible terms should also be given short shrift.

India to Raise Indigenous Content in Upcoming Nuclear Power Projects

By : ASIA & PACIFIC | The Indian government has made it clear that it has no proposal under consideration to allow private sector firms to set up nuclear power reactors in the country, but that the share of indigenous content in the upcoming nuclear power reactors, including that of foreign contributed projects, will be raised. The Narendra Modi-led government has announced that domestic private firms will be given a major share in all upcoming nuclear power plant projects in the country, thereby increasing the share of nationally made content in the nuclear reactors.

The government has already started outsourcing a major chunk of work to the private sector in two major projects the pressurized heavy water reactor (PHWR) and light water reactor projects. In the PHWR project, the private sector has been tasked with providing plant components, equipment, services in areas including construction, fabrication, and erection of equipment, piping, electrical, instrumentation, and consultancy, auxiliary and logistical services.

"In respect of Light Water Reactors (LWR) (2000 MW) set up with foreign cooperation, the Indian private sector is involved in the supply of some of the equipment and in the execution of works contracts. The indigenous content in LWRs is planned to be increased progressively," Jitendra Singh, the junior minister in the department of atomic energy informed the Parliament.

India's two fully operational nuclear power plant units at the Kudankulam have 20% local content. The overall indigenization of the power plant is expected to cross 50% with the commissioning of the fifth and the sixth units. Currently, the third and fourth units are being constructed at a cost of approximately \$6 billion, while the \$7.5 billion have been sanctioned for the fifth and sixth units. However, the government has made it clear that the private sector will not be allowed directly in the nuclear power generation business. "There is no proposal under consideration at present, to permit private sector in the area of nuclear power generation," Minister Jitendra Singh added. The clarification comes against the backdrop of arguments from various sectors that private enterprises should be allowed to participate in the business of nuclear power generation as the state-owned NPCIL lacks capital, which inhibits the growth potential the sector deserves.

India Successfully Tests Home-Grown Low Altitude Ballistic Missile Interceptor

New Delhi (Sputnik) | After almost 20 years of efforts, India's Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO) has developed both high-altitude and low-altitude missiles which can purportedly intercept medium-range ballistic missiles traveling at speeds of Mach 3 to 8. Advanced Air Defense (AAD) supersonic interceptor missile, designed to destroy incoming low-altitude ballistic missiles at a range of 15-25 kilometers. "This was the first time when the AAD missile was fired against multiple targets simulated electronically by the mission team. The missile attacked one after choosing it from a bunch of targets," the defense official said.

The missile was flight tested from Abdul Kalam Island, home to the Indian military's principal missile test facility, off the coast of Odisha in the Bay of Bengal at about 11.25 am (Indian Standard Time).

The missile is 24.6 feet long and is equipped with a state-of-the-art navigation system. It is a single-

stage, solid fuel, rocket-propelled guided missile that can track its target independently. Nirmala Sitharaman, India's Defense Minister, congratulated the defense scientists for this successful test-mission.

'Peace is never a perfect achievement'

Former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan Passed away

World leaders honour former UN chief and Nobel Peace Prize winner Kofi Annan.

He "passed away peacefully on Saturday 18 Aug. 2018, after a short illness at age 80", the Kofi Annan Foundation said. Current UN chief Antonio Guterres hailed him as "a guiding force for good". Mr Guterres led the tributes to his predecessor. "In many ways, Kofi Annan was the United Nations. He rose through the ranks to lead the organisation into the new millennium with matchless dignity and determination," he said in a statement.

The Ghanaian national served as UN chief from 1997 to 2006 and is the only black African ever to hold the post. Since then he has served as the UN special envoy for Syria, leading efforts to find a solution to the conflict. Even out of office, Annan never completely left the U.N. orbit. He returned in special roles, including as the U.N.-Arab League's special envoy to Syria in 2012. He remained a powerful advocate for global causes through his eponymous foundation.

Kofi Annan's most impactful quotes

"To live is to choose. But to choose well, you must know who you are and what you stand for, where you want to go and why you want to get there."

"Knowledge is power. Information is liberating. Education is the premise of progress, in every society, in every family."

Former Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee Passed away

The 93-year-old Vajpayee had battled poor health for years but his condition deteriorated sharply in recent days, with doctors placing him on life support. The sudden turn sparked a flurry of visits from top dignitaries, including Modi, who credited Vajpayee with laying the foundations for the meteoric rise of the right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) which rules India today.

His more than five-decade-long career peaked in the 1990s, when his masterful oratory attracted tens of thousands of people to his rallies across the country. He also became the first non-Congress leader since India's independence in 1947 to complete an entire term in office as head of a BJP-led ruling alliance between March 1998 and May 2004. In early 1999, he embarked on a historic bus ride to the Pakistani city of Lahore and met then-premier Nawaz Sharif in a bid to ease tensions.

Vetean US Senator John McCain dies of brain cancer, age81

Mr McCain died on Saturday 25 Aug. 2018 in Arizona. He was diagnosed with an aggressive brain tumour in July 2017 and had been undergoing medical treatment. The six-term senator for Arizona and 2008 Republican presidential nominee was diagnosed after doctors discovered his tumour during surgery to remove a blood clot from above his left eye last July.

In politics, he took a conservative line on many issues, including opposing abortion and advocating higher defence spending. He backed the 2003 invasion of Iraq and criticised President Obama for not intervening more in the Syrian civil war. Mr McCain criticised President Trump's hard-line rhetoric on illegal immigration and his attacks on the media.

Gaza protests: All the latest updates

Al Jazeera (31 Aug.) : Since protests began on March 30, Israeli forces have killed at least 166 Palestinians in the besieged coastal enclave. For more than four months, Palestinians in the Gaza Strip have protested along the fence with Israel demanding their right to return to the homes and land their families were expelled from 70 years ago.

The Great March of Return rallies culminated on May 15 to mark what Palestinians refer to as the Nakba, or Catastrophe - a reference to the forced removal of 750,000 Palestinians from their homes and villages to clear the way for Israel's establishment in 1948.

The mass demonstrations have since continued.

Since the protests began on March 30, Israeli forces have killed at least 166 Palestinians in the besieged coastal enclave and wounded more than 18,000 people, according to health officials in Gaza.

China Harbour builds new terminal south of Egypt's Suez Canal

Source:Xinhua | 30 Aug. 2018 | China Harbour Engineering Company (CHEC) started the main phase of the construction of a new terminal basin in Sokhna Port south of the Suez Canal northeast of Egypt. The project was assigned to CHEC by the Sokhna branch of the Emirati corporation DP World, the main investor and container operator in the port located at the Gulf of Suez. At a launching ceremony, CHEC said it will deliver the "Basin 2" project in fewer than 12 months ahead of the deadline.

"Today's event is to show our determination to finish the project quickly and with high quality," Chen Shuang, deputy director of CHEC marketing department, told Xinhua at the construction site. Sokhna Port is located within the Suez Canal Economic Zone (SCZone), a main economic region in Egypt whose development is one of the country's mega projects to attract foreign investments for further economic growth.

Body of Russian climber missing for 31 years found preserved in ice like a 'wax doll'

31 Aug, 2018 | Elena Bazykina reportedly looked like a "wax doll" as her body was pulled from Mount Elbrus in southern Russia.

The mountaineer was 36 when she died alongside another six of her friends after they were hit by an avalanche back in 1987.

The body of the woman was found encased in ice by a group of tourists at an altitude of about 4,000 meters (over 13,000 feet). Her USSR passport was found on the remains, as well as her Aeroflot air ticket from Moscow, dated 10 April 1987. Komsomolskaya Pravda newspaper reported that Bazykina who was unmarried and without children when she perished worked at the Moscow Scientific Institute. Mountains were "the biggest love of her life."

Both of Elena's parents have died, and a search for surviving loved ones was not looking promising, when her cousin saw the Komsomolskaya Pravda article and contacted the paper.

All this time, the family thought that maybe Elena was still alive, he said. "We have been waiting for Elena for 30 years."

"We tried to guess what could have happened to her and feared perhaps that she was kidnapped or kept hostage somewhere. It is such a dangerous region," he said.

Regular Articles

Summary of the Introductory Training Program

Organized by Rabita Forum International on Strategic Affairs of Pakistan

By Muhammad Javed Siddique

The first week of July begins with two weeks training program organized by Rabita Forum International (RFI), under the auspicious guidance and humble gratitude of RFI Chairman Mr. Nusrat Mirza. Participants were students of various departments of the University of Karachi, M.Phil and M.A cadre of the Departments of Political Science and International Relations.

The session begins with the recitation of the Holy Name of Allah Almighty. The first session was chaired by the Chairman of RFI Mr. Nusrat Mirza. After the introductory part, Mr. Nusrat Mirza discussed the core objectives of this program and comprehensively described the strategic issues and challenges confronting Pakistan today. He also suggested the remedial approaches by utilizing those Pakistan can achieve a core place in the strategic side regionally and internationally. He also briefed the participants on the technicalities of the strategic maneuvering and planning.

The next session was on grooming. This session chaired by Ms. Bismah Mirza, she focused on the personality development and character building. Through lectures and presentations, she provided know-how about the different aspects of professional and social life. She gave tips on how to prepare for job interviews, the pattern of impressive resume writing and future planning basics. Participants on the conclusion overwhelmingly appreciated this session as a stimulant one to boost their confidence level and motivational stair.

Mr. Nusrat Mirza again chaired a session, where he briefly discussed the strategic visions of the different regional and international powers, mainly, American vision, China's vision, Indian vision, Pakistan vision and Iran vision, respectively. He also emphasized it, that how Pakistan can gain weight at geopolitical, geo-economical and geo-strategic fronts. Pak-China long-lasting and China's One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative and CPEC were also discussed by him. He strongly emphasized that we should feel proud that we have acquired nuclear capability and we are first on who possess this among the Muslim states.

He also raised this point that our foes leaving no stone unturned to spoiled our nuclear program and doing throat cutting efforts to demoralize us as a nation but we are aware of their all suspicious tactics and in all front, we are capable to let down their vicious and conspired strategies. Our Nuclear assets are in safe possessions and we are not aiming to use it to deteriorate the peace of the world, rather our nuclear program is to maintain the peace of the world, he yelled. He said that the IAEA inspector also visited our nuclear sites and declared those safe in all aspects.

Another informative and comprehensive session chaired by Air Commodore (R) Jamal Hussain. Where, he highlighted the capabilities of Pakistan Air Force and its role in the ongoing operations of Pakistan Armed Forces, against terrorist and extremist outfits in Pakistan. He also discussed the challenges and the possible plans of Pakistan's foes and also disclosed how they are vexing to destabilize Pakistan and isolate it in the international arena. He comprehensively refined the minds of partakers over Pakistan's Missile programs, tactical weapons, air crafts capability and so on and on.

He ended the session with this note that we are not an aggressive power we are not having such intentions to wage wars against anyone and deteriorate the world peace but our nuclear capability is deterrent for those enemies who never tolerate seeing Pakistan as a progressive and prosperous country. After Air Commodore Jamal Hussain session, another great personality and Iconic Naval Officer, Commodore (R) Obaidullah came to augment the knowledge of participants over the naval proficiency of Pakistan and Maritime dimensions of the country.

He appreciated the initiative of RFI Chairman Mr. Nusrat Mirza of holding such kind of session across the country to provide an opportunity to our youngsters to meet expert of diverse fields and acquire up to date knowledge regarding of different national and international affairs. He also shared his experiences as a naval officer for almost thirty-five years in Pakistan Navy.

He also stressed, to learn about the Blue Economy which is a God gifted asset we are having but we are failed to harvest the benefits from it, instead of its an ignored aspect in our economic side. He comprehended that as we are having almost a coastal line of 1100 kilometer long but our government is not done anything praiseworthy to fully take benefit from it. The appropriate utilization of coast line would be a reason to boost up our economy and it could create more jobs to reduce the rate of unemployment in our country, he explained. At the end of the session, he appreciated the interactive discussion and question-answer competency of the participants and shows overjoyed expression at his endnote.

After informative and comprehensive sessions participants experienced another enlightening one delivered by Dr.Waqat from the Pakistan Atomic Commission (PAC). He discussed the role of PAC and its working mechanism. He moreover briefed the participants on Pakistan's nuclear assets and its safety measures. The role of PAC over energy production also discussed and the reservations over nuclear sites were too comprehensively highlighted and Dr.Waqat shed lights on it and assured that these sites are not hazardous for the local residents near the nuclear sites with proof evidence.

He said PAC is an institution and an asset of Pakistan which striving to boost Pakistan's Defence capacity and to reduce the energy deficit by its energy production. On a question he replied that our nuclear sites and reactors are designed fully safe and have the capability to tolerate any natural calamity if encountered in future, he assured. On an endnote, he appreciated the initiative taken by Mr. Nustar Mirza to enhance the competency of our youngsters.

In concluding session Mr. Iftikhar Ahmed and Mr. Sameer Khan delivered their speeches and presentation on Pakistan's different military arsenals, missiles programs, and the role of Pakistan's Strategic Plan Division in nation safeguarding and scientific researched base services to the Arm Forces. Mr. Iftikhar Ahmed additionally, gave brief note over the International Law and its role in international peacekeeping. The session concluded with gratitude and with this hope that the partaker learned anything will try to spread this knowledge all over their circle as a positive gesture and contribute their share to make Pakistan a great country.

Last but not least, RFI Chairman Mr. Nusrat Mirza on his endnote acknowledged all the guest speakers and participants. He also took the feedback from participants. The participants of the program emphasized that such kinds of programs are the platform for them to explore their talent and a source to gain practical knowledge with expert interactions. At last certificates and stipends distributed among participants and the training program concluded with this hope that we will contribute our share to make Pakistan a developed, peaceful and prosperous country.

The 2018 elections disconnect

By General Mirza Aslam Beg

There is a lot of hue and cry for rigging the fair and free elections, as confirmed by Saleem Safi, in his column "Eye Witness to Elections" of 1st August. Yet, the Election Commission as well as the institutions are being blamed for staging the 'soft coup', favouring Imran Khan, who led the agitation from D Chowk and the streets of Pakistan, creating the disconnect between the people and the Parliament the political power base of democracy.

The catchword "corruption" was repeated so vehemently, that it got ingrained into peoples' psyche for change. It worked and Imran Khan now is heading the leading political party of Pakistan. The opposition parties initially decided to give Imran the taste of his own recipe, by starting country wide agitation, similar to 1976 PNA agitation which brought down PM Zulfikar Ali Bhutto government, but the Peoples Party and PML(N), advised caution, suggesting that the parliament was the right forum for agitation seeking change democratically without fear of the Soft Coups turning into a hard nut.

No doubt this is a wise decision to correct the disconnect between the political dynamics and the democratic values of freedom for change, to occur from within the parliament. The defining feature of the change which now has occurred, is impacting national ideological identity and the democratic culture, presenting an interesting as well as a worrying picture.

The democratic culture

Our Democratic Culture, now has developed on the streets, spurred by the electronic media, in form and content, debasing politics as a way of life. Not only that the whole exercise was socially divisive, but also projected wrong images of our political culture.

It has also thrown-up some hard line religious parties, which themselves could win only a few seats, but did upset the political balance in some important areas, making it easy for Imran Khan's smooth sailing. Someone rightly said: "The Captain is holding a tainted trophy. All we know is that the crazy process of election related coincidences has created a royal mess, of the sort that will not get sorted out easily."

Ideological and cultural change

The emerging democratic era is going to be unique, with a veiled first lady, known for her spirituality and predictions. She has had tremendous impact on Imran Khan's electioneering, helping to build-up his spiritual support base. This phenomenon is described by a scholar, who has known the veiled first lady, too well:

"Bushra Khan's prophecies about Pakistan's general elections and Imran Khan becoming a Prime Minister have proved true. These sources claim that her prediction about Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party getting 116 seats made much before the elections, has also proved correct. She is very practical and advises her husband on religious, spiritual and political issues.

She was instrumental in getting Pir of Siyal Sharif, Pirs of Sultan Bahoo and even Pirs of Manki Sharif accommodated in the PTI ranks. She also won over the blessings of the Diwan (caretaker of Baba Fareed Shrine) of Pakistan, Moudeed Masood. The would-be First Lady holds sway in Barelvi and spiritual circles. She sought some sort of seat arrangement with Tehreek-e-Labaik.

It was through her advice and courtesy that Imran Khan had a three-hour marathon meeting with Mufti Muneeb-ur-Rehman, Chairman of the Ruayat-e-Hilal Committee to clear the air with Ahle-Sunnat-wal-Jamaat. Her presence has had a very positive effect on Banigala. Now Imran Khan, the would-be Prime Minister, says his prayers regularly for five times and feels purity around in the company of the newly-attained spiritual power."

No doubt, in the recent months, Imran Khan has undergone "a complex metamorphosis, dangerously accommodative of religious trends" of shrine and peer worship, with faith in Ganda and Taweez. These are the symptoms which appear to determine the shape of Imran Khan's Naya Pakistan. He is no more the same glamorous Captain of the victorious national cricket team. In fact his is in a state of complete transformation, seeking purity of the soul in the company of his new wife, who also has emerged as his political mentor.

Having won a respectable number of national assembly seats, Imran is clamouring to win majority by wooing odd and sorts parties and groups. He is ignoring the Peoples Party, which could give him clear majority. Distancing himself from the Peoples Party is his policy blunder, and perhaps having realized the mistake, they are now reaching-out Peoples Party. Now he will be facing a strong opposition in the Parliament, playing with a thin majority, as his biggest worry. He will be heading an unstable government, spending most of his time to retain his balance, while the Senate will retard his efforts to pass new laws.

An unstable government facing such myride problems, would be in real trouble, with a strong opposition in the house attempting to bring down the government, to prove the words that "democracy is the best revenge." The opposition has rightly decided to play the game within the assembly. They would allow Imran Khan to gain a thin majority, to get himself installed as the Prime Minister and also form his government in Punjab.

And then remaining out of the reach of the 'Khalai Makhlook' bring him down - the democratic coups de-grace. Thus it is going to be a different Ball Game from the one, Imran Khan's laid out the pitch at D Chowk, whereas the opposition has its pitch inside the parliament, to play not a T-20 or an ODI but a full fledged five days test match, under the gaze of the nation and not waiting for the Umpires finger. Such is the fate of Imran for making a grave policy blunder, unless his charismatic wife, succeeds to cause divine intervention, as the saving grace.

The risk in Imran Khan's Pakistan

Pakistan is on the verge of getting a new prime minister, the cricketer-turned-politician Imran Khan. Many of the social media accounts linked with the Pakistan Army are presenting the victory of Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) as a new era in the country's politics, outlined by the emergence of a non-dynastic leadership (similar to what was said about Narendra Modi's election in 2014) and the breaking up of the clout of the Bhuttos' Pakistan People's party (PPP) and Nawaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N).

Khan's victory is certainly not decisive since the PTI has not swept elections in either the Centre or in Punjab province, which represents the core of Pakistan's politics. The PTI has managed to get 116 seats in the National Assembly against 64 by PML-N and 43 by the PPP. In Punjab, the PTI is behind the PML-N (129) with 123 seats. Khan's victory comes amidst the uproar by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan and the European Union election observers that the polls were less fair than in 2013. It is worth mentioning that Khan had acrimoniously contested the last elections as being rigged in favour of the PML-N. Even the PPP and PML-N had claimed in 2013 that elections were rigged.

Khan will be sworn in at the Centre this week and the chances of his party forming a government in two other provinces (Punjab and KP) are bright. This is primarily because the Opposition parties are divided and under pressure from unseen quarters to let Khan lead the country. The PML-N under its new de facto leader, Shahbaz Sharif, is too weak to take a stand. The younger Sharif doesn't quite have the makings of a leader. He wouldn't be able to get other parties to agree with him, especially the PPP.

The Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari led PPP is not likely to cooperate with the PML-N to form a coalition government in either the Centre or Punjab. Its instinct will be to save its government in Sindh, where it has emerged as the largest party (74/130). A PTI government in Punjab would break the three-decade hold of the PML-N over the province. In many ways, history seems to be repeating itself. The evolving situation is a reminder of 1990 when the military's intelligence agencies had used resources to form the Islami Jamhoori Ittihad (IJI) led by Nawaz Sharif to break the PPP's hold over Punjab, the same way as may happen now.

Is this the beginning of a new Pakistan that has shunned dynastic politics? No, because the dynastic PPP has gained more seats than it did in 2013, and, as mentioned earlier, the PML-N has not been routed. This indicates that the problem lies less with dynastic politics but in the patronage structure of Pakistan's political system, in which various parties and even non-parliamentary institutions represent patron groups with their specific clientèle.

The patronage structure tends to encourage corruption, which is what Imran Khan claims he wants to fight. However, the question is whether he will be able to embark on this task given that he won these elections by including the "electables" a term used for candidates who have no ideology and keep shifting from one party to the other.

Despite the problems of the 2018 election, the results also offer the older parties an opportunity to re-think their political outreach strategy. The PML-N has suffered due to its decision-making and party political structure, which is centralised and revolves around the Sharif family. Its inability to reach the grass roots means that in the coming days, there will be less inclination of the lower and mid-level party management to protest in favour of Nawaz Sharif or challenge the government by coming out on the streets, especially if he is sentenced in other cases as well.

The inability to demonstrate leadership could also result in the party losing supporters to the PTI that still has to build its organisation in Punjab. The PPP, which is currently operating in the largest province on the basis of strong electables, will have to find its feet, which includes grooming a younger and promising leadership. Notwithstanding these issues, Khan has emerged as the hope for a younger Pakistan which believes that the country has a serious corruption and image problem.

The popular narrative is that a more determined and patriotic leadership that will not secretly negotiate with foreign powers like the US and India would be able to deliver the country from under-

development, poverty and global infamy. And a stronger leader could solve much of its geopolitical problems.

This perception follows the path of the acclaimed Bajwa doctrine, ascribed to the current army chief. Imran Khan's offer to India in his victory speech to negotiate on Kashmir and willingness to trade is being seen in many quarters as a possible opening. But the door remains as shut, as it was in the past. Khan's team will have to work out the contours of negotiations with the military establishment that was resentful of trade in the past on the grounds that Nawaz Sharif was more keen to discuss trade than resolving the Kashmir issue. The only difference is that unlike Sharif, Khan would not be in a position or inclined to establish an independent line of communication with New Delhi.

The foreign policy contours under Khan will denote the status-quo greater inclination towards China than the US, except that the country's financial needs may make him want to open some door towards Washington unless someone offers a financial lease of life. A major issue in this regard will be dealing with terrorism and extremism, for which there are limited plans. Although the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT)-related Allah-u-Akbar Tehreek (AAT) party did not win any seats, such mainstreaming of violent extremists is a contentious issue as far as the US is concerned.

Khan will be inclined to present the AAT's defeat as a victory for peace and democracy. But would he be able to convince an equally egoist leader like Donald Trump? In any case, the fact that the various religious parties put together managed to bag about 4.6 million votes, the largest number yet in Punjab (1.8 million), says something about issues that the prime minister must concentrate on. The risk is that Khan's ambition to establish an Islamic welfare state might get muddled somewhere, like Bhutto's, and produce more religious agenda than welfare.

Pakistan's Middle Class awaits a miracle

Imran Khan and his PTI compare with any hyper-nationalist, politically ultra-conservative leadership of modern times, like Narendra Modi, Donald Trump, Benjamin Netanyahu or Kim Jong-un

By Ayesha Siddiq

So finally Pakistan gets its own Modi Imran Khan, a populist leader, determined and egoist, a product of constructed myths. Although the election results are still contested and all independent sources, from the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) to the team of European Union election observers, have said that the 2018 elections were comparatively less fair, Pakistan has taken its step towards a new leadership.

Interestingly, the Election Commission of Pakistan continues to struggle with finalizing the result due to massive errors in counting and possibly deliberately erroneous counting that has denied even a simple majority for the former cricketer and forced him to look for allies.

However, in the minds of millions of people, they have finally been vindicated. The era of corrupt leadership has come to an end. Their hero, who will turn the country around and change the fate of the people and who was stopped for at least a decade, has now arrived. The popular narrative supports Imran Khan. The fact of the matter is that in the minds of millions of Pakistani youth who grew up after 9/11, the search for a new leader that can turn Pakistan around has finally ended.

Khan brings hope to the minds of a fast urbanizing country, especially its extended middle class and aspiring elite. For these people, the details of rigging do not matter nor the fact that Nawaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League (PMLN) was not totally routed. The party trails behind in the National Assembly with approximately 64 seats but in the Punjab provincial assembly managed to get 108 seats as compared to Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) with 103. But as a man from North Punjab explained to me on the streets of London, "all educated people voted for Imran and all illiterates for Nawaz Sharif or Zardari".

The argument made by some that corruption is actually a fabricated problem is flawed. Firstly, corruption is not just about the unfair exchange of money but lost opportunities and resources. It is a real issue. Second, in a post-Cold War era devoid of any sound political ideology, anti-corruption matters and has turned into an ideology in itself. When political parties that are left of centre begin to look like those right of centre, and there remains little difference ideologically, issues like anti-corruption become centre-stage. Khan's charisma is built on the myth that he is the cleanest of all the leaders in the country and has no baggage.

Additionally, his charisma was carefully constructed. In a video recently pushed out by the powerful establishment, people in Pakistan were reminded yet again that the country has now got a leader who is not compromised like Nawaz Sharif. Moreover, it gives a list of names of different journalists, accusing them of working at the behest of foreign agencies to create doubts about Imran Khan's election.

Without doubt, Khan's charisma has been meticulously constructed. In fact, in the coming days and months, even before Khan manages to prove his worth, the narrative building machine will have gone on over-drive to emphasize how different he is from other leaders. While he represents a bit of Pervez Musharraf's character in terms of his brash nature, Imran Khan's voters expect him to be a bit like Ayatollah Khomeini too, someone who will be willing to publicly hang the corrupt or anyone presented by the narrative-building machine as a traitor.

If nothing else, the PTI has produced a generation of youth with a militaristic mindset known for being undisciplined, abusive and ready to shoot from the hip at anyone viewed as countering a sharply statist ideology. In this respect, Khan and his PTI compare with any hyper-nationalist, politically ultra-conservative leadership of modern times from Narendra Modi and Donald Trump to Benjamin Netanyahu and Kim Jong-un displacing humanism with stark nationalism and corroding the national psyche with brutality.

In Pakistan, Imran Khan has an advantage over his competitors which is that the military establishment, judiciary and other institutions are willing to work with him as long as he remembers to stay within certain limits. Notwithstanding the constructed myth that he is a maverick and will set civil-military relations in the right direction, Imran Khan is a leader who does not have roots deep enough in the polity to trouble the generals. The problem with Nawaz Sharif was that he had begun to emerge as a counter-weight.

Even if Khan thinks that he can emerge as an uncontested leader of the nation and tower above the military, he has to think twice. The newly elected parliament comprises a large opposition comprising of 64 PML-N members and 48 of Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP). They are likely to keep him on his toes. In any case, it would take him quite a while to muddle through the problems of settling down in his new position. There will be no time for him to even start thinking about harnessing the military.

Patronage remains

The other major issue for Khan's anti-corruption agenda is that his own electable legislators comprise people he poached from other parties in order to win the election. These are people grounded in the country's patronage politics. They and their constituents will continue to demand their pound of flesh. In the minds of the PTI followers, as their own leader explained, "You cannot win elections without electables and money".

However, Khan will soon realize that this is actually a strategic problem. Now it takes over Rs. 10 million to get elected to a provincial assembly seat and double the amount for the national assembly. The overall political system is too weak to ensure that financing is provided by the party. In the good old days, when Imran Khan stuck to the formula of getting new and untainted political blood, he failed to make a dent.

The changed strategy brought him to power but is likely to make his anti-corruption slogan difficult to achieve. Khan would have to work on improving systems along with changing hundreds of years of patronage culture. Or given the former cricketer's habit of taking u-turns, the country may have to muddle through new promises and then see them broken once again.

At a macro-level, and given Pakistan's negative current account balance, balance of trade and other economic indicators, Khan may have little room to play and no options other than to stick to the old formula of dependency relations with China. There is no one else out there to help him pick the threads and start building a Naya Pakistan. Re-setting regional relations will also be a challenge because the PTI will be bogged down in parliament in the face of a strong opposition, leaving little time for any outflanking of the military on the diplomatic front.

Perhaps the problem with Pakistan, like other nations, is the mediocrity of our age one that seems bereft of both revolutionary ideas and leaders. It is only a matter of time before the intoxication brought on by old wine bottled as new starts to wear off.

Half of loan package will go back to IMF

By Z. Ali

Pakistan is expecting to get \$12 billion bailout loan package from International Monetary Fund (IMF) while almost half of that sum would be spent to repay previous loan of the IMF, said caretaker Foreign Minister Abdullah Hussain Haroon on Friday. Speaking to media in Hyderabad he said “\$5 billion of that loan would go back to the IMF.”

He clarified that a wrong impression has been created by the US which registered objection to the fund against approving the loan, citing fears that Pakistan would repay Chinese loan through that bailout. “The US move to stop the IMF from issuing loan to Pakistan comes as a first. This reflects shamelessness of the US regime.”

CPEC won't be held hostage to third party agendas

He also clarified that the interim government has not approached IMF for the loan. The upcoming government would have to decide whether to opt for the loan or not, he added. Haroon pointed to the ongoing trade war between the US and China, saying the former wanted Pakistan to end its economic relationship with the latter. “The US has a bone to pick with China and we [Pakistan] are being dragged into this.”

The foreign minister said when Pakistan sought financial support recently from the US the country was told that the required funds were not available. “But recently the US has earmarked \$8 to \$9 billion for defence purchases of India. The Pakistani nation wants to know was our alliance with the US temporary.” He bewailed that the country is being subjected to various allegations by the West and which, as a consequence, are damaging Pakistan's reputation while also adversely affecting the economy.

“The US wants to bring us to the point where no Pakistani citizen is allowed to travel abroad and the country becomes totally paralysed.” “We sacrificed our 2 to 3 generations for the US led wars but we are being meted out such unfair treatment,” he bemoaned. He accused the US and the West for throwing Pakistan in the abyss of terrorism by making it a front line state earlier in their proxy war against the Soviets and later in the US led invasion of Afghanistan.

He recalled that following the Soviet Union dismemberment and its retreat from Afghanistan, Pakistan became an enemy of Russia. “But then the West suddenly withdrew its support for Pakistan,” he said. Haroon saw conspiracy in what he described as artificially ballooned exchange rate of dollar which touched as high as Rs135 per dollar. He said China helped Pakistan repay its foreign debts but it did not go well with the US.

Pompeo warns against IMF bailout that pays off Chinese lenders

He alleged that some leading political figures stash their ill-gotten money in the US banks and that their properties also exist in that country. “This is the reason they always agree to the US diktats.” “The disposition of the US and the West towards Pakistan is unbecoming of a reciprocal bilateral relation. But despite the fact powerful political figures in Pakistan pander to the US because their money and assets are stashed there.”

He suggested the people to question their democratically elected new leadership about the status of the country's relation with the West specifically the US. The US wields influence in the financial matters of the world but it has been strangulating Pakistan's throat, he complained. “If the West doesn't recognise our sacrifices, we will not cave into their sabre-rattling and threats anymore.”

Peaceful neighbourhood imperative for prosperity

By Dr. Zafar Nawaz Jaspal

Pakistan has unsettled borders with India and Afghanistan. Its relations with India are warlike and with Afghanistan full of mistrust. Islamabad and Tehran have normal relations. Presently, only China considers Pakistan a reliable neighbour and thereby both states have been developing China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

Pakistan's socio-economic prosperity needs peaceful neighbourhood not only economic cooperation with one neighbouring state and a mere normality with the other and conflicts with the remaining. Therefore, the new government's primary responsibility is to identify challenges and sincerely work for improving Islamabad's relations with the neighbouring states.

Imran Khan, the Prime Minister-in-waiting, promised to endeavour to improve the international community confidence in Pakistan and also make better bilateral relations with the neighbouring countries. He announced that the solution of conflicts with the neighbouring countries should be found through dialogue process.

Indeed, a dialogue is the best mean to resolve the conflicts. Are the neighbours prepared for a result-oriented dialogue process? Theoretically, sustainable peace between Pakistan and its neighbours seems possible. Practically, improving trust with both the Indian and Afghan leadership is a Herculean task.

Political and military competition with India remains the centrepiece of Pakistan's foreign and strategic policy. India has been using hybrid warfare tactics to bleed Pakistan economically and jeopardize its internal security. The challenge for the new government will be to engage India in a dialogue process to resolve the bilateral disputes. New Delhi seems not prepared to restart a sustainable dialogue process to resolve the mutual conflicts peacefully and prevent the escalation of border skirmishes into total war. Indeed, total war between the nuclear weapon states will be catastrophic for the entire region.

The positive development is that on July 30, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi telephoned Khan and congratulated him on his party's victory in the general election and conveyed him that India is ready to enter in a new era of relations with Pakistan and "to make progress on mutual matters both the countries should adopt a joint strategy." It sounds a mere diplomatic nicety. What is meant by joint strategy? Premier Modi has been using the military machine to quash the right of self-determination movement of the Kashmiris in the Indian Occupied Kashmir. He demands that either government of Pakistan talk with Kashmiri leaders or with his government. According to him, the Kashmiri leaders are terrorists. Hence, his offer to adopt a joint strategy is a nonstarter.

Being a neighboring state, Pakistan has a legitimate interest in Afghanistan's political stability. The continuity of civil war and the presence of transnational terrorist sanctuaries, such as Daesh, TTP, etc. have a devastating spillover impact on Pakistan.

Therefore, the new government ought to work for improving the situation in Afghanistan. President Ashraf Ghani showed interest in working with Khan. He tweeted on July 29, that both sides had also "agreed to overcome the past and to lay a new foundation for a prosperous political, social and economic future of both countries Afghanistan and Pakistan." The recent inauguration of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Action Plan for Peace and Solidarity (APAPPS) foster a hope for improving the trust between Kabul and Islamabad. The new government will ensure the execution of APAPPS. Pakistan-Iran relations have been transformed from cordial to normal since the mid-1970s to date.

This shift in relations was due to several reasons, such as, Iranians perception that their Revolution was Islamic as opposed to simply being Iranian; sectarian (shia-sunni) clashes in Pakistan; Islamabad's cordiality with Saudi Arab and United Arab Emirates; Indo-Iran geo-strategic convergence entailing to signing of defense pact in November 2003; Pakistan's strategic alliance with the United States; political competition in Afghanistan.

Though these factors often strain bilateral relations, yet neither country faces a real security threat from the other, nor did they suspend diplomatic relations. Since 2014, Islamabad has been maintaining a neutral position in the Middle Eastern and Persian/Arabian Gulf states' affairs. This approach has improved mutual trust between Iran and Pakistan. On August 4, 2018, Khan's meeting with the Iranian Ambassador Mehdi Honardoost was very promising. Khan told the Iranian Ambassador that his government will enhance cooperation in the regional development, and will also expand trade with Iran.

The best option for the new government will be to start the construction on Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project.

To conclude, though the work on the CPEC project has been progressing smoothly, yet without improving the internal and external security environment, attracting foreign investment in Pakistan is impossible. Hence, the peaceful neighbourhood is imperative for efficiently utilizing the geographical location of the country for the socio-economic prosperity of the people of Pakistan.

The writer is Associate Professor, School of Politics and International Relations, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad.

'Courtesy Pakistan observer'.

Indo - Pak's nuclear perils

It is riveting to read a book by a writer that includes all the masterful trickery that encompass the rules of diplomacy

By Muna Habib

Nuclear crisis management folk may ponder the advice given by the 66th United States Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, to India and Pakistan when trying to avert a nuclear crisis during the 2001-2002 military Standoff, "acknowledge the right of others to do what we had done in responding to the attacks on the twin towers (using military force) but also to convince them not to actually do it." It's a good line with a touch of gravitas and when confronting the escalating nuclear crisis between India and Pakistan it excuses the US for wading into Afghanistan after 9/11; forgives deadline-induced diplomatic talks, perspective and a balance of military powers required to prevent nuclear rivals going to war.

Book Name : Brokering peace in nuclear environments
Author : Moeed Yusuf
Publisher : Stanford University Press, 2018
Pages : 320 Pages

The line, used in Moeed Yusuf's new book, *Brokering Peace in Nuclear Environments*, an original historical account of the diplomatic dialogue used by the US with Pakistan and India to avert a nuclear crisis. The account is a complicated tale of counter-insurgency, high politics, military standoffs and duplicity. Played out between the regional rivals India and Pakistan.

Yusuf, an expert on US policy towards South Asia, is a deft guide through a maze and carefully structured account of a modern-day "Great Game" played out since the nascent powers first tested their nuclear weapons in 1988. A year after which, bickering between them over disputed territory in Kashmir sent a shock wave through the Western world still convalescing from the Cold War.

His range of sources is stunning. Footnotes reference interviews with US, Pakistan and Indian officials, as well as documents. Highly sensitive conversations are reported to add a rich context to the 300 page account. Pakistan's nuclear weapons are seen by the Western World as just as perilous as Pyongyang and Tehran's. Devised before Iran and North Korea, they remain a huge concern to the West.

Pakistan's chief nuclear scientist A.Q. Khan reportedly provided invaluable assistance to galvanize both Tehran and Pyongyang's nuclear programme and there were some suspicions Pakistani scientists assisted the Afghan Taliban and Al- Qaida.

Yusuf reflects on India and Pakistan's complex military operations, political stance and the Kashmir conflict. From the Kargil crisis, to the 2001- 2002 military standoff and the Mumbai crisis, he details the crucial role taken by the US as third-party mediators to step in, lead and "crisis -manage the situation." It is riveting to read a book by a writer that includes all the masterful trickery that encompasses the rules of diplomacy.

A detailed account of how the US averted a nuclear crisis between Pakistan and India; using clever diplomacy, manipulation and strategy to contain the increasingly fraught tensions expounded from both countries during the conflicts. The US commitment to resolving the three crisis is commendable: it included abandoning their own foreign policy objectives post 9/11 in Afghanistan; thus, acting as an imperative conduit, that without intervention would have seen the crisis deteriorate and an alternative history written.

Yusuf encourages a new era of Pakistani and Indian critical thinking, urging young scholars to devise new research strategies and models leading to alternative ways of thinking about regional conflicts. Heading international efforts to manage the 2001-2002 Military standoff, quoting the 65th United States Secretary of State, Colin Powell, hinting at the mood of the international community when managing the crisis Powell describes a duty roster "for who is going tomorrow to keep these clowns

from killing each other.” The US and the UK had devised a roster that in the event of crisis escalation, a high-ranking US, or British official could be deployed to the region at short notice.

Conversely “Despite the mischief perceived by each side behind their mutual woes,” both countries continued to respond to messaging delivered by the US Yusuf describes the unhealthy dependency developed on the US by both countries to resolve tensions, “India knew it had shifted the onus on extracting tangible results from Pakistan to Washington,” Yusuf writes. This “shift” to the US, Yusuf asserts, has stymied “dispute resolution” between India and Pakistan who remain uncommitted to resolve the two major issues of contention terrorism and Kashmir both conflicts he predicts, will eventually escalate into another nuclear crisis “with every future conflict threatening a more complicated crisis to manage.”

Moreover, “Pakistan has fared badly when you reflect on history,” looking back at the decades-old conflicts unlike “India that has gained international support and sympathy.” Yusuf argues there is little incentive now for India to dedicate themselves to conflict resolution, “we are more likely to see a more aggressive military strategy,” He argues.

Although, the book asserts the Western assessment of a nuclear crisis: as an exaggerated threat, manifesting from baggage carried over by the Cold War; the account failed to address the genuine trepidation felt by Western powers; that the region remained a crisis away from blundering into an accidental war that could escalate into an international nuclear crisis.

Richard Armitage is quoted as saying during the 2001-2002 standoffs, “the international community was frightened to death that we were on the verge of nuclear war.” Yusuf encourages a new era of Pakistani and Indian critical thinking, urging young scholars to devise new research strategies and models leading to alternative ways of thinking about nuclear deterrence and regional conflict. Consequently, Yusuf argues that if Pakistan wants to evolve from history, it must take responsibility for its role, not blame other entities but seek solutions to conflicts that will aid its progression into a credible regional power. The book is essential reading for young Pakistani scholars who want to shape the future international narrative of their country.

Yusuf’s account transcends the bickering and recriminations of the South Asian rivals to provide a refreshing strategic approach to conflict resolution. This book is an absolute must-read for all policy makers managing nuclear crises that hope to make a mark on conflict management strategies for their country.

Published in Daily Times, August 8th 2018.

CPEC projects financed through composite financing package, says official

By Mian Abrar

Pakistan on Tuesday reiterated its commitment to implement all projects linked to China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), stating that all state institutions support the multi-billion-dollar project which is key to the future of the country's socio-economic development.

In the backdrop of some negative media reports emerging in the international media, an official of Ministry of Planning and Development said that Pakistan has repeatedly stated that it is fully committed to CPEC which enjoys complete consensus among all institutions and political forces in Pakistan.

"It is a win-win project that is key to the future of Pakistan's socio-economic development. It is not surprising that detractors of Pakistan-China cooperation are presenting a negative image of CPEC and the benefits that it brings to the people of Pakistan. Their negativity cannot weaken our resolve and commitment to CPEC," said the official.

The official said that Pakistan offers attractive investment opportunities and Pakistan welcomes all countries to take advantage of this favourable environment and to invest in developmental projects in Pakistan instead of levelling unfounded criticism against a country that has stood by Pakistan at all times.

"We have noted recent media reports questioning the viability of CPEC, claiming that it would create an unbearable debt burden for Pakistan. Such media reports are often one-sided, distort facts, and are based on irresponsible statements by individuals who either have no understanding of CPEC or are driven by ulterior motives," said the official.

While constructive critiques and recommendations by experts and analysts are always welcomed, the official added, it is important that such critiques be informed by research based on factual information rather than mere partial opinion.

"It must be clarified that CPEC projects are financed through a composite financing package comprising long-term government-to-government concessional and preferential loans, as well as grants from the Government of China. Repayments on these loans would not commence in the immediate future," the official added.

The official was of the view that energy sector is a key priority area under CPEC's early-harvest phase and responds to our immediate energy needs. Chinese companies are investing in the energy sector in IPP mode and have raised funds from Chinese banks and investors. These do not constitute any debt obligation on the Government of Pakistan.

"It is because of the favourable financing arrangements that Pakistan opted for Chinese investment under CPEC. China stepped forward to support Pakistan's development at a time when foreign investment had dried up, and economic activity was being crippled by energy shortages and infrastructure gaps".

The official said the CPEC has provided enormous opportunities for Pakistan to grow economically. "It is an engine for economic growth and will increase Pakistan's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) up by two per cent to three per cent. CPEC has also facilitated in overcoming crucial energy, transport infrastructure and supply chain bottlenecks," the official added.

Under CPEC, the official said, development of Gwadar would ensure the strengthening of maritime sector particularly the coastal tourism and local fishery industry thereby benefitting the local communities.

Pakistan will add as many as 60,000 troops to boost its patrols along its disputed border

By Tariq Mahmood

Pakistan will add as many as 60,000 troops to boost its patrols along its disputed border with in an effort to curb the flow of insurgents passing between the two nations, according to military officials familiar with the matter. Forty percent of the troops have already been recruited in the exercise, which is expected to take two years, the officials said, asking not to be identified so they could discuss sensitive troop movements.

About 13 percent of a fence planned along the 1,456 mile-long disputed border has also been completed, they said. The armed force's media department didn't respond to a request for comment. The move will consolidate Pakistan's border operations, which have been beefed-up in recent years after widespread insecurity wracked the country following the US invasion of Afghanistan.

Domestic terror-related violence is now at its lowest in more than a decade. The army, which has 661,000 regular and paramilitary troops, have previously been more focused on the country's eastern border with arch-rival neighbor India, with which it's fought three wars against since British India's partition in 1947. The two continue to contest the disputed region of Kashmir.

Pakistan has come under increasing pressure to act against the Afghan Taliban and the affiliated Haqqani network since President Donald Trump accused Islamabad of allowing them safe haven. In January, Trump suspended military aid to the nuclear-armed nation and accused Pakistan of giving "lies and deceit" in return for years of US funding.

Both Pakistan and Afghanistan have denounced the other for harboring insurgents, prompting relations to drastically sour in the past year. Afghan President Ashraf Ghani has said Pakistan is waging an "undeclared war of aggression" against his nation and has threatened armed confrontation over the fence construction across the disputed Durand Line, which divided the largely ethnic Pashtun communities in the region during British colonial rule.

"I don't think this will satisfy the US," said Rashid Ahmed Khan, the head of international relations at University of Central Punjab in Lahore. "It's one of the most porous borders in the world -- if one side continues to oppose it, then this can't be that effective."

Pakistani officials have said the fence across the mountainous border is needed to stop the flow of militants crossing into both countries. Islamabad has often blamed Afghan nationals and refugees for bombings and attacks in Pakistan. More than 2 million refugees live in Pakistan and the government has said those camps are breeding grounds for insurgency. The border is porous and has 235 crossing points, some frequently used by militants and drug traffickers, of which 18 can be accessed by vehicles, according to a report by the Afghanistan Analysts Network research group in October.

Lawless Border

"It may not stop every terrorist, but it will deter them," said Ikram Sehgal, a former military officer and chairman of Pathfinder Group, Pakistan's largest private security company. "If you are serious about no encroachment, this is necessary." However, the AAN report said the Taliban can move with ease between the two countries in the often lawless border lands and are usually waved through by Pakistan security forces. Pakistan's military has long denied supporting militant groups.

After winning last month's national election, incoming Prime Minister Imran Khan promised to work for peace in Afghanistan and told Ghani in a call after his victory that he would visit Kabul at an unspecified time. "If there is peace in Afghanistan, there will be peace in Pakistan," said Khan in a televised victory speech from Islamabad last month.

Military Policy

However, there are questions as to how much influence he will have over foreign policy, which has long been the domain of the military. Pakistan's generals are accused of supporting the Afghan Taliban to counter its fears of Indian encirclement and influence in Afghanistan. Pakistan's forces have directly ruled the nation for almost half of its 71-year history and has defined the nation's role

in world affairs for decades. It continues to assert its authority on the civilian government and the run-up to the election this year was tarred by widespread allegations of military manipulation. Analysts also see Khan as a pliant prime minister who won't challenge the army's hold over foreign and national security policies. Both Khan and the army have denied the allegations.

Russia & Pakistan Partnership for strategic stability

On Thursday, August 9, the Valdai Club hosted an expert discussion on strategic stability in South Asia with participation of General Zubair Mahmood Hayat, Chairman Joint Chief of Staff Committee, Pakistan. The discussion was held in line with the Chatham House Rule, which contributed to openness of debate.

The meeting participants discussed three fundamental sets of issues: the strategic balance in South Asia, the peace process in Afghanistan, and the Russian-Pakistani relations. South Asia is a region where one-fifth of the Earth's population lives and which include two nuclear powers with tense relations between each other.

A civil war has been ravaging in Afghanistan for decades, contributing to instability on its borders. It was noted during the discussion that Pakistan will not tolerate hegemony of any country in the region and believes that the notions of counterweight and containment are dangerous. Islamabad is not against growth and rise of any country, but they must not be at its expense.

The military build-up in the region, in particular, India's development of ballistic missile defenses, was paid a special attention to. Pakistan's position is that BMD undermines strategic stability, propelling great power competition. The issue of Washington's withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal was also touched upon. Discussion participants from both Russia and Pakistan believe that this move has made the security situation in the region even more fragile.

The situation in Afghanistan is a key element of the strategic balance in South Asia. Pakistan's position is that peace in the country can only be achieved through political process. In Afghanistan, there is always a force and a counter-force, no matter what it is called, and this has been true for the past century, one of the discussion participants said, explaining why dialogue with the Taliban in Afghanistan is necessary.

The country has never had a strong central power and peace can only achieved by power-sharing and taking the opposing force into the mainstream. It was noted that the United States was in touch with the Taliban even after 9/11: its operation in Afghanistan was directed at Al-Qaida, not the Taliban.

The issue of Russian-Pakistani relations had a special prominence during the discussion. Pakistan has traditionally had close relations with the United States and China, but over the past five years its ties with Moscow have gained importance. There is a growing political interaction, in particular, in the format of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

In 2017, Pakistan (as well as India) became a full-fledged member of the bloc and considers it a multi-domain regional platform. Military-technological cooperation between Moscow and Islamabad is on the rise with joint military exercises Druzhba (Friendship) held annually.

Pakistan's nuclear safety and security

At the moment, there is no viable security system for the prevention of nuclear terrorism, even though the UN Security Council and the IAEA did introduce multilateral nuclear security initiatives and Pakistan also actively contributed in all such international nuclear security efforts

By Sonia Naz

In their research titled “Nuclear Security Briefing Book”, Wyn Bowen and Matthew Cottee state that nuclear terrorism involves the acquisition and detonation of an intact nuclear weapon from any state arsenal. The world has not experienced any act of nuclear terrorism yet, but it is not for a lack of trying. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has observed many incidents of lost, theft and unauthorized control of nuclear material.

The increased use of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes has intensified the threat that terrorist can target these places for acquiring nuclear materials. They cannot build a nuclear weapon because production would require a technological infrastructure. However, even if they struggle to make an actual nuclear bomb; they can build a dirty bomb instead. A dirty bomb is not like a nuclear bomb. A nuclear bomb spreads radiation over hundreds of square miles, while a dirty bomb causes destruction in a small area alone. While conventional bombs might be a better option when loss of life is concerned, dirty bombs do have the advantage of creating psychological terror. At the moment, there is no viable security system for the prevention of nuclear terrorism. The UN Security Council and the IAEA did introduce multilateral nuclear security initiatives and Pakistan also actively contributed in all international nuclear security efforts.

An example of this can be seen when former US president Barak Obama introduced the Nuclear Security Summit (NSS) in 2009 to mitigate the threat of nuclear terrorism by securing nuclear materials throughout the world within four years. Pakistan welcomed this initiative and fulfilled its commitments to the cause. They established a Centre of Excellence (COEs) on nuclear security while the country is also a signatory of the UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1540 to whom they submit regular reports explaining the various measures being taken for radiological security and control of sensitive nuclear materials.

Pakistan established a Centre of Excellence on nuclear security, while the country is also a signatory of the UN Security Council Resolution-1540 to whom they submit regular reports explaining the various measures being taken for the security of sensitive nuclear materials. Pakistan went on to ratify the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material (CPPNM) in 2016 and is also a member of the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism (GICNT). It can be rightly inferred that Pakistan is not only contributing to all international nuclear security instruments, but has also taken multiple effective measures at the national level.

Pakistan created the National Command Authority (NCA) to manage and safeguard nuclear assets and related infrastructures. The Strategic Plan Division (SPD) is also playing a very important role in managing Pakistan's nuclear assets, along with the Pakistan Nuclear Regulatory Authority (PNRA) which was established in 2001. Later in 2014, the National Institute of Safety and Security (NISAS) was created that works under the jurisdiction of the PNRA. Pakistan has also adopted the Export Control Act to strengthen its nuclear exports and the SPD has formulated a standard functioning procedure to regulate the conduct of strategic organizations as well.

In his research “Thinking about Pakistan's Nuclear Security in Peacetime”, Christopher Clary points out that Pakistan's nuclear arsenal is equipped with Permissive Action Links (PALs) for increasing their security, while, according to Pakistan's former nuclear scientist Samar Mubarakmand, every Pakistani nuclear arsenal is now fitted with a code-lock device. Nonetheless, nuclear terrorism is a global concern as terrorist organizations can target civilian nuclear facilities in order to steal nuclear material, and even more stringent nuclear security systems are required to eradicate this threat.

Western media and international commentators often propagate that Pakistan's nuclear arsenal might fall in to the wrong hands, but they do not highlight the efforts the country has made in

ensuring the safety of its nuclear weapons and material. It is time Pakistan is lauded for its commendable efforts to ensure nuclear security.
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'Courtesy Daily Times'.

Game changer or not?

A year of Trump's Afghan plan

A year since President Donald Trump unveiled his strategy for Afghanistan, a fresh wave of violence and bloodshed has assailed the war-torn nation and overshadowed some small glimmers of progress. Each successful attack represents a massive setback not just for the Afghanistan government, which is pushing for peace talks with the Taliban, but also for the Pentagon, where officials insist things are finally improving.

In just the last few days, the Taliban and the Islamic State group have unleashed a series of deadly operations where civilians have borne the brunt of the bloodshed, including an IS attack inside a school that killed dozens of students. Before that, Taliban militants launched a high-profile attack on the strategic city of Ghazni, forcing US-backed security forces to struggle for days to repel them, and challenging the Pentagon narrative that the Taliban is struggling to effectively target larger cities.

"We're exploring all avenues for dialogue in close coordination with the Afghan government, and we're going to continue to do that," Such headlines are surely not what Trump envisioned when on August 21 last year he announced that despite his instinct to pull out he was doubling down on the US commitment to Afghanistan and indefinitely prolonging America's longest war.

Fed up with President Barack Obama's notion that America could somehow pull out of Afghanistan without leaving a security vacuum, military brass welcomed Trump's decision to deploy thousands of additional US troops, loosen rules of engagement and cancel the promise of a time tabled withdrawal.

"The consequences of a rapid exit are both predictable and unacceptable," Trump said as he revealed his strategy, which also sought to pressure Pakistan to do more to tackle the Taliban.

Looking Bleak

Just months later, the top US commander in Afghanistan, General John Nicholson, claimed the war had "turned the corner" and predicted the Afghan security forces would expand government control of the population from about 64 percent now to 80 percent over two years. But according to a US government watchdog, the percentage of people under government control has only risen to 65 percent, with insurgent groups holding steady.

"We've turned so many corners in Afghanistan that we've probably made multiple circles," Bill Roggio, an Afghanistan expert and senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, told AFP. "Things look pretty bleak," he said. "Without a US presence in Afghanistan you would quickly see large areas of the country fall under the control of the Taliban," he added, pointing to the horrendous casualty rates and other problems that have beset the Afghan security forces.

"Many of the Taliban now see that they can't win on the ground militarily. That's very deeply connected to President Trump's strategy," A core part of Trump's Afghanistan plan was to force the Taliban to the negotiating table and to support peace talks between Kabul and the insurgents. An unprecedented country-wide ceasefire between the Taliban and government forces in June gave some relief to civilians and sparked hopes the truce could clear the way for talks to end the war.

Game Changer

Alice Wells, the senior official for the State Department's Bureau of South and Central Asia Affairs, reportedly met with Taliban officials last month in Qatar. And on a visit to Kabul last month, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said there was no hope for peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban. "Many of the Taliban now see that they can't win on the ground militarily. That's very deeply connected to President Trump's strategy," Pompeo said.

US-backed Afghan President Ashraf Ghani hailed Trump's strategy as a "game changer." However, the recent attacks have led many to question how such negotiations could move ahead. Observers have suggested the Taliban may be trying to strengthen their position before any potential talks.

"This is what we've seen before (in) insurgencies, when there's going to be a negotiation or a ceasefire, trying to up the ante," Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said Thursday. White House spokeswoman Sarah Sanders said the US remains committed to finding a political solution to end the Afghanistan

conflict. "We're exploring all avenues for dialogue in close coordination with the Afghan government, and we're going to continue to do that," she said.

Still, amid the chaos, one sign of progress is that the Taliban have been unable to hold cities they've invaded for more than just a few days at a stretch. But signs are emerging that Trump is growing frustrated with the pace of progress in Afghanistan, where the US taxpayer has already spent more than \$1 trillion and American soldiers are still dying.

NBC News reported Friday the president is showing fresh interest in a proposal by Eric Prince, the former head of a controversial private military firm once known as Blackwater. His idea, loathed by the Pentagon, would essentially privatize the Afghan war by replacing most US troops there with private contractors. Currently, about 14,000 US troops are in Afghanistan, providing the main component of the NATO mission to support and train local forces.

Army's role for peaceful polls gets a salute Commanders satisfied over military-level engagement with Afghanistan,

Gen Bajwa orders consolidating gains of anti-terror fight

The top brass of the Pakistan Army on Wednesday expressed satisfaction on military-level engagement with Afghanistan. "The Corps Commander forum expressed satisfaction on progress of military level engagements with Afghanistan for regional peace especially through Afghanistan Pakistan Action Plan for Peace and Stability (APAPPS)", a statement issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said.

The 212th Corps Commanders Conference held in the chair of Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa in Rawalpindi reviewed geo-strategic environment, regional peace and internal security situation of the country. Pakistan and Afghanistan have established the APAPPS to enhance bilateral relations and cooperation. In this regard, various groups including military have been set up under the APAPPS.

Both Islamabad and Kabul are engaged to take steps to tackle common challenges including fighting terrorism and extremism through intelligence-sharing and through effective border management. On its part, Pakistan is fencing its side of the border with Afghanistan to prevent cross border movement of terrorists which has forced various Afghan Taliban groups to move their bases inside Afghanistan.

Consequently, the Afghan government has also stepped up efforts to track down terrorists belonging to defunct Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) which led to killing of TTP Chief Mullah Fazlullah recently. Major challenge of terrorism remains as Pakistan's Balochistan province has recently seen a couple of major terrorist attacks and so had happened in Afghanistan.

Both the countries are struggling to tighten their noose around terrorists and have committed that their respective soils are not used by any terrorist group. As a goodwill gesture, the Afghan government also sealed its side of the border with Pakistan on the eve of general elections. In this respect, the Afghan President had telephoned to Pakistani caretaker Prime Minister as well as the COAS and assured them of cooperation. Though terrorists targeted tried to sabotage the electoral process especially in Balochistan, the security forces successfully managed to help the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) in executing its plans to hold free, fair and transparent elections across the country.

The ISPR statement further said that the COAS has directed corps commanders to continue consolidating gains of efforts against terrorism and militancy. The conference also appreciated Army Elections Support Centre and field formations for assisting Election Commission of Pakistan for conduct of the general election.

The meeting paid tribute to martyrs and injured who sacrificed their blood during the process. The Forum also thanked brave people of Pakistan for their participation and wholehearted support for the armed forces during performance of their duty towards the national cause.

The Afghan quagmire gets deeper, denser and bloodier

By Brian Cloughley

In April 1971 John Kerry, who served gallantly in Vietnam and was later Secretary of State, stood in front of a US Senate Committee and asked “How do you ask a man to be the last man to die in Vietnam? How do you ask a man to be the last man to die for a mistake?”

Today, we could do with a John Kerry to ask the same question about the war in Afghanistan. On August 5 it was reported that “a suicide bomber has killed three Czech NATO soldiers in an attack in eastern Afghanistan. The victims were targeted while on a routine foot patrol alongside Afghan forces, NATO officials said in a statement. A US soldier and two Afghan soldiers were wounded in the attack in Charikar, the capital of Parwan province.”

Just what is being achieved by Czech soldiers on fighting patrols 5,000 kilometres from home is not explained by any of the authorities responsible for their deployment and thus for placing them in jeopardy of their lives but the usual nauseating platitudes were promptly mouthed by some of them.

The Czech Prime Minister, Andrej Babis, declared that the dead soldiers were “heroes who fought against terrorism so far from home.” Well, he should know about operating far from home. Forbes lists him as being worth four billion dollars and owning “a Michelin-starred restaurant, La Paloma, in the French Riviera” which is no doubt some consolation to the relatives and friends of the men who were killed.

Babis, of course, sent his “deepest condolences to their families,” as did the ever-ready General John Nicholson, the sixteenth commander in Washington's seventeen years of war, who, never at a loss for futile banality, babbled that “Their sacrifice will endure in both our hearts and history and further strengthen our resolve.” What utter garbage.

The “sacrifice” of these Czech soldiers won't be felt by any hearts other than those of their grieving families, and it is insulting to claim that it will. And their deaths won't get even the tiniest footnote in history. As to “strengthening our resolve” resolve to do what? To carry on mouthing phoney inanities about the utter chaos in Afghanistan?

This tawdry exhibition of fake emotion sticks in the gullet but it's not as sickening as the observation in The Economist that the war's “current cost roughly \$45 billion and around a dozen lives a year is modest enough to invite little interest from Congress or the media. That suggests Mr. Trump's strategy is sustainable.”

The talented intellectuals of The Economist think that the deaths of a dozen American soldiers every year in the unwinnable Afghan War indicate that the policies of Trump and the Pentagon can be maintained indefinitely. What's a dozen lives, after all? Well, listen to me, you clever little intellectuals and you swaggering military strategists, because I'm going to tell you a few home truths.

The soldiers who have died and those who are going to die have relatives who love them. They have parents, brothers, sisters, wives, partners, children, all of whom suffer when the lives of their nearest and dearest are sacrificed by a bunch of no-hopers as part of a “modest” cost in a supposedly “sustainable strategy” in a country that is ungovernable.

The Costs of War Project at Brown University estimates that more than 100,000 people have died in the war in Afghanistan. They weren't all soldiers, of course, because in conflicts like this, the civilian population always suffers from action by both militants and the armed forces involved. In July, the UN reported that 1,692 Afghan civilians were killed, and 3,430 injured in the first six months of 2018, which is the record for that period in the seventeen years of this catastrophe.

But let's get back to the soldiers who are dying. On August 9 it was finally acknowledged by the Kabul government that over twenty Afghan soldiers had been killed in an insurgent attack on August

3 in Uruzgan province. There were no US-NATO troops involved, so there has been little reporting of the disaster by the western media, and no mention of it whatever by NATO headquarters, but it is the most serious setback suffered by the Afghan Army for several months.

Consider what happens to the dependant families of dead Afghan soldiers: the widows are entitled to pensions, of course but Afghanistan is the third most corrupt country in the world. Do you imagine for a moment that these anguished women receive a fraction of the tiny amount to which they are entitled? Of course they don't. Usually, they don't get a bean, because the money is stolen by crooked and heartless government officials. What have you to say to that, General Nicholson? Does it strengthen your resolve to do anything?

As reported by the Japan Times, "Help for Afghan Heroes, an Afghan non-profit organization supporting 5,000 families of wounded or dead security forces, said corruption is a key reason many women do not receive assistance." Nasreen Sharar, special projects officer for the group, said that "they are asked to pay a bribe to get the application processed and they often don't have the money." Of course they don't have the money. They are just tiny inconsequential and stricken blobs in a "sustainable strategy" that costs \$45 billion and "around a dozen lives a year."

Hashratullah Ahmadzai, spokesman for Kabul's Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled, told Arab News "We are in a state of war. The number of women who become widows is increasing. Those who fight on the government side and those on the side of the Taliban and the militants have wives and mothers too. People on both sides suffer and women on all sides are affected more than anyone in this war."

But what about the Czech army soldiers who were killed in Afghanistan? The western media carried the 130 word Reuter's report about their deaths, and then forgot all about them, which makes a sick joke of Nicholson's pompous pronouncement that "Their sacrifice will endure in both our hearts and history."

They were Staff Sergeant Martin Marcin, 36, and Corporals Kamil Benes, 28, and Patrik Stepanek, 25, about whose deaths the Czech Defence Minister Lubomir Metnar declared that "We have witnessed a tragedy that can hardly be prevented when you serve in the army." I would really like to be able to put that grubby politician on a patrol in Afghanistan, along with the intellectuals of The Economist and all the other smart-assed commentators to whom soldiers' lives and grieving widows mean nothing.

Not that the Czech government told us much about the widows or other relatives of the soldiers Mr. Metnar sent to die in Afghanistan. All that was reported by Czech Radio was "One leaves behind a widow and a three-month-old baby."

At least, she'll probably be paid her pension, unlike so many widows of Afghan Army soldiers who also died for... What? In all the years of useless conflict in Afghanistan the western media has never listed the names of Afghan Army soldiers killed in action, because these soldiers don't matter in the greater scheme of things the "sustainable strategy" in which they are but inconsequential pawns, as are all the civilians who are killed by bombing, whether on the ground by the Taliban, or from the sky by Afghan-US-NATO airstrikes.

The BBC reports that "Since President Trump announced his Afghanistan strategy . . . the number of bombs dropped by the US Air Force has surged dramatically. New rules of engagement have made it easier for US forces to carry out strikes against the Taliban" and this surge in aerial blitzing has certainly had an effect.

In the first six months of 2018 the UN documented "353 civilian casualties (149 deaths and 204 injured) from aerial attacks, a 52 per cent increase from the same period in 2017. The mission attributed 52 per cent of all civilian casualties from aerial attacks to the Afghan Air Force, 45 per cent to international military forces, and the remaining three per cent to unidentified Pro-Government Forces."

While Afghan and foreign air forces blitz the country, and the Taliban and other militants wreak havoc with their constant attacks, all that happens politically is that corruption thrives and the murderously criminal vice-president, Abdurrashid Dostum, returns from self-imposed exile to create

further chaos. The place is ungovernable, and the foreigners should get out, now. As John Kerry said, almost fifty years ago: “How do you ask a man to be the last man to die for a mistake?”
Brian Cloughley is a British and Australian armies' veteran, former deputy head of the UN military mission in Kashmir and Australian defense attaché in Pakistan.

US eases export controls for high-technology product sales to India

In a major boost to India, the US today eased export controls for high-technology product sales to it by designating it as a Strategic Trade Authorization-1 (STA-1) country, the only South Asian nation to be on the list.

Responding to a question at the first Indo-Pacific Business Forum organised by the US Chambers of Commerce Wilbur Ross said the STA-1 designation “acknowledges” the India - US security and economic relationship. The granting of STA-1 status to India comes after the US recognised India as a “Major Defence Partner” in 2016, a designation that allows India to buy more advanced and sensitive technologies from America at par with that of the US' closest allies.

The designation authorises the export, re-export and transfer (in-country) of specified items on the Commerce Control List (CCL) to destinations posing a low risk of un-authorized or impermissible uses. Currently there are 36 countries on STA-1 list.

India is the only South Asian country to be on the list. Other Asian countries designated as STA-1 are Japan and South Korea. Till recently India was designated as STA-2 countries along with seven others.

Ross said that India has partnered with the US to improve its own export control regimes and has met most of the export control rules which the US thinks are useful. STA-1 status, Ross said, provides India with greater supply chain conditions for defence and other high-tech products. It increases the integrity with the US systems and reduces time and resources needed to get licenses approved, the Commerce Secretary said.

According to the Department of Commerce, items that are eligible for export to STA1 destinations or nationals include items that are subject to control for: national security (NS), chemical or biological weapons (CB), nuclear non-proliferation (NP), regional stability (RS), crime control (CC) and significant items (SI). The status can free \$2.1 billion in trade, make US exporters more competitive in the global marketplace, help provide India more advanced US technology.

“This is a significant step. This is an important thing that I'm glad has happened,” Ben Schwartz of the US India Business Council told PTI. This is a recognition that the US government put real trust in the Indian government in a way that hasn't been the case before

Ben Schwartz, US India Business Council

Over the past few years, Schwartz said India has basically build robust export control procedures that the US government is competent in terms of their security and the fact that when things are exported there they'll remain controlled and not be diverted to alternative users.

One of the reasons to grant STA-1 status was to cut the amount of licenses that are required under the current number of exports that are coming from US to India by half, he said.

This also comes following India's admittance into pretty much all the major non-proliferation regimes, the only one being Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG). “I think everyone recognises that India has made a good faith effort to join the NSG and that it is not the Indian government that controls the outcome,” he said.

Minuteman III missile test terminated

mid - flight in California

An unarmed US Air Force Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) test - launch was aborted

By Jack Phillips

An unarmed US Air Force Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) test-launch was aborted after an anomaly was discovered, the military stated. The Air Force Global Strike Command confirmed the missile flight was safely terminated over the Pacific Ocean at 4:42 a.m. on July 31, according to the Santa Maria Times.

The US military frequently tests the Minuteman reliability and accuracy with regularly scheduled launches over the Pacific Ocean. They launch from Vandenberg Air Force base in Southern California

and fly 4,200 miles to the Kwajalein Atoll of the Marshall Islands. The Air Force said that an anomaly is any unexpected event that takes place during a missile test.

“Since anomalies may arise from many factors relating to the operational platform itself, or the test equipment, careful analysis is needed to identify the cause,” Air Force Global Strike Command said in a statement to the Santa Maria Times. “A Launch Analysis Group is forming to investigate the cause. The LAG will include representatives from Air Force Global Strike Command, the 576th Flight Test Squadron, 30th Space Wing Safety Office and Air Force Nuclear Weapons Center, among other organizations.”

399 Minuteman missiles

The current American force consists of 399 Minuteman III missiles as of September 2017. The missiles are deployed in missile silos in Montana, North Dakota, and Wyoming. The system is a component of the US nuclear triad, with the other two parts of the triad being nuclear weapons carried by long-range strategic bombers and Trident submarine-launched ballistic missiles. According to an analysis from Stanford University, since its “development during the Cold War, the United States' 'nuclear triad' has retained the important role of bolstering US national security.”

“This multi-faceted approach effectively diversifies the risk involved with a potential first-strike nuclear attack and increases the ability of an offensive second-strike attack. While the government remains confident in the reliability of the triad as a nuclear deterrent, new dialogue has been established regarding the relevance and feasibility of maintaining specific legs of the triad in the 21st century,” reads a synopsis on the university's website.

Trump scores an own-goal in the game against Iran

The final whistle is a long way off for the four-decade-old Islamic regime in Tehran, which has been playing patiently against all the odds

The Israeli press is awash with reports that US President Donald Trump is faithfully executing a containment strategy against Iran that was scripted in Tel Aviv by none other than Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. This swagger is accompanied by the triumphalist forecast that Iran is wilting and the end is in sight for the four-decade-old Islamic regime in Tehran. Of course, Israel has a record of churning out baloney, but this must be the mother of all fabrications.

Top of form

Perhaps, there could be some substance in the claim that Netanyahu influenced Trump. But even here, in the final analysis, Trump weighs in on any issue from one angle: how it may affect his re-election bid in the 2020 election. The developing situation indeed has some similarities with the run-up to the 1980 election in the US. Trump cannot be unaware of it. This is one thing.

Iran is denying Trump the privilege of a summit meeting. Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif already forecast a month ahead that Tehran does not intend to have meetings with their US counterparts on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly Session in New York not with Trump or his Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. Zarif's explanation is simple:

"The Americans lack honesty." Now, how does Pompeo prove that his president is indeed an honest man when Americans themselves have divided opinions on this? As time passes, Trump will hate to realize that he looks a wimp in comparison with Barack Obama.

Obama and history

Obama had a sense of history. His outreach speech in Cairo University within months of becoming president was an extraordinary gesture of atonement for America's past sins against the Muslim world, which persuaded Tehran that constructive engagement might be one of his core foreign-policy objectives. Thus began the back-channel conversation, which culminated in the 2015 deal. Of course, Obama commanded respect and, importantly, his policies enjoyed legitimacy under international law. But Trump hopes to make up for Obama's erudition with crass bullying tactics.

North Korea was keen to break out of 'isolation,' especially with China and Russia cooperating with Trump. The Trump-Kim meet followed. But Iran does not face isolation. A gentle reminder: Only two months through the brouhaha over Trump's walkout from the 2015 nuclear deal, Iran and the 10-member Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) signed a friendship agreement in Singapore on August 2, which is expected to lead to an expansion of economic relations between the two.

Simply put, the 'Asian Tigers' have gently signaled with characteristic Oriental modesty that they don't give two hoots for Trump's Iran sanctions. Again, just this Sunday, Iran and Russia successfully navigated a historic pact on the Caspian Sea. Actually, the present international situation favors Iran. Trump's collision course with China, the New Cold War conditions in US-Russia relations, the weakening of the transatlantic alliance and least of all, Trump's abysmally poor record as a statesman in world perceptions.

However, as history shows, Iran will not depend on any friendly country to safeguard its core interests. Tehran seldom fails to take advantage of favorable factors, but they do not determine its core policies, either. In this case, Tehran's missile development program is a non-negotiable deterrent and its regional policies provide the firewall in the prevailing regional environment.

A recap on the past

Besides, is Iran responsible for the destruction of Syria and Iraq, two unique secular states in the Muslim Middle East? Or, look at the horrific war crime in Yemen last weekend killing dozens of schoolchildren returning from a picnic. Did Iran perpetrate it?

Some recap of history is useful to anticipate Iran's moves in the months ahead. For a start, US sanctions have been a geopolitical reality ever since the Islamic Revolution in 1979. The Western world largely complied with American wishes and refrained from having normal relations with Iran.

Russia was in a shambles and China far from the superpower it is today. Iran's Sunni neighborhood was unfriendly because the authoritarian Arab regimes felt threatened by Iran's 'Islamic democracy' or were kowtowing to American rules. Under the sanctions, Iran was even forced to fight a 7-year war with Iraq as Saddam Hussein enjoyed substantial American backing. Iran still won that war. Iran's reconstruction through the 1990s was also almost entirely its own achievement.

Meanwhile, terrorism was a tool freely used to destabilize the Iranian regime. By the way, it was in one such terrorist attack in the afternoon of June 27, 1981, in Tehran that Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's present Supreme Leader, barely survived although his right arm wouldn't move thereafter. The terrorist organization responsible for most of the terrorist activities is the MKO with which Trump's lawyer Rudi Guiliani is openly associated today.

To be sure, there are poignant memories deeply etched in the Iranian consciousness. The first big 'break' came for Iran with the foolish decision by George W. Bush to invade Iraq, which led to the empowerment of the majority Shi'ite community. In fact, this has been a recurring feature Iran's success in turning fortuitous circumstances to its advantage.

Unwavering core interests

Through this difficult 40-year period, Iran's 'friends' often took advantage of its travails Russia, China, India etc but its self-confidence in its capability to secure its core interests was unwavering. We should not expect any different behavior today. In fact, the Islamic Republic's comprehensive national power is at its highest level today.

Of course, there is discontent in Iranian society. Isn't there discontent in Israel and the United States? Surely, Netanyahu would know that the recent demonstrations in Iran were not a patch on the 2011 Israeli social justice protests involving hundreds of thousands of protesters from a variety of socio-economic and religious backgrounds opposing the continuing rise in the cost of living particularly housing and the deterioration of public services such as health and education.

A common rallying cry at the demonstrations was the chant "The people demand social justice!" Yet Netanyahu survived. The good thing about Israel or Iran is that such protests are allowed to take place. That can only happen under an elected leadership which enjoys a democratic mandate. Make no mistake, state formation in Iran has been a rock-solid achievement of the 1979 Iranian revolution. There is no question of a meltdown.

The myth of Iran's impending collapse is an ancient fairy tale laden with wishful thinking. The new kids on the block must read up on history. Obama did. He knew he was dealing with a country which was deeply nationalist and a nation-state which was more like a civilization.

When Netanyahu tossed the ball to Trump, the latter probably didn't know he was being encouraged to score an own-goal. The Iran question will inexorably expose the impotence of the Trump presidency. And it will have grave consequences for Israel's security too, whose larger-than-life regional role so far has been riveted on American power.

The great paradox still is that Iran is not demanding much. It can be summed up as a craving to be integrated with the international community, especially the Western world. Obama should not have left behind such unfinished business. The next logical thing after the 2015 deal should have been the normalization of US-Iranian relations and the commencement of a comprehensive engagement without pride and prejudice. Such an opening again may now have to wait for the departure of Trump.

US-Turkish alliance reaches the point of no return

The sense of indignation among Turks should not be underestimated, which makes this an exceptional rupture

The Turkish lira fell 22% on Friday before recovering to 17% on the backdrop of the Trump administration's announcement to double the tariffs on imports of Turkish steel and aluminum. The tariffs affect Turkish exports worth more than \$1 billion in trade with the United States. The US was the top destination for Turkish steel exports in 2017. Turkey came in sixth place among the countries the US imported steel from last year, while the share of Turkish steel was 7% of total US steel imports.

More to the point, President Trump brazenly hinted that this was a political decision and he tauntingly noted that he also kept an eye on the Turkish lira's exchange rate. Trump tweeted: "I have just authorized a doubling of Tariffs on Steel and Aluminum with respect to Turkey as their currency, the Turkish Lira, slides rapidly downward against our very strong Dollar! Aluminum will now be 20% and Steel 50%. Our relations with Turkey are not good at this time!"

Trump's tweet has been the proximate cause of the market mayhem hitting the Turkish lira. This comes on top of foreign investors pulling back money in recent months from the Turkish market even as the US Federal Reserve raised interest rates and cut back on asset holdings from quantitative easing. Unsurprisingly, the dollar has sharply increased in value and the lira has lost value and Turkish bond yields have risen.

Turkey traditionally resorted to external borrowing in foreign currency to bridge current account deficits. External funds were lured to the Turkish economy due to the higher yields, fueling growth in the Turkish economy, especially in the construction sector. With the pullback of money from the Turkish market in recent months, Turkish companies and banks, which took out loans in dollars or euros, are staring at a potential crisis in repaying their debts. In sum, the currency exchange rate volatility is turning into a debt and liquidity crisis.

The financial crisis means that many Turkish companies may have to file for bankruptcy, which will hit the banks. Meanwhile, a cycle is forming as investor confidence dips despite Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's economic policy of low interest rates. At such moments, psychological factors inevitably play a big part. Indeed, the Trump administration increasingly prefers to wage economic wars than deploying military force to exert "maximum pressure" in pursuit of foreign policy objectives. Russia, China, Venezuela, Iran, etc are glaring examples. Turkey now joins the rogues' gallery.

Erdogan too has become a marked man due to his independent foreign policies that are undermining American regional strategies. Trump's tweet virtually brags about his pressure tactic. Trump's agenda is unmistakably to bring Erdogan down on his knees. Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party traditionally drew support from the "bazaar" and the so-called "Anatolian Tigers," who form Erdogan's core constituency and are the worst affected in this crisis. The intervention by credit agencies Merrill Lynch and Standard & Poor's at critical junctures to rubbish Turkey's credit rating was an early warning of an impending economic conflict. Erdogan's dilemma is two-fold. He could approach the International Monetary Fund for a bail-out, which is what Wall Street and Trump expect him to do. But if he does that, Turkish policies will be subject to tight US scrutiny. And Erdogan will not capitulate.

The alternative is that Erdogan takes help from elsewhere. In an op-ed in the New York Times last week, Erdogan sternly warned Trump: "Before it is too late, Washington must give up the misguided notion that our relationship can be asymmetrical and come to terms with the fact that Turkey has alternatives. Failure to reverse this trend of unilateralism and disrespect will require us to start looking for new friends and allies."

However, Trump has now snubbed him by promptly doubling the tariffs on Turkish steel and aluminum. Erdogan is furious. He said on Sunday: "I declare that we have seen your plot and we are challenging it. There is no economic reason for the present [currency plunge] situation. This a plot to

force Turkey to surrender in every field from finance to politics, to make Turkey and its people kneel down.”

The sense of indignation among Turks should not be underestimated, which makes this an exceptional rupture in what has been all along a problematic relationship through the past seven decades. Erdogan on Tuesday said he would enforce an embargo on all American electronic products including the iPhone famously used to FaceTime CNN Turk the fateful night of the failed coup attempt two years ago.

Alienating Turkey to this extent will be a risky foreign-policy venture on Trump's part. The US cannot have an effective Middle East policy while antagonizing both Turkey and Iran. The wider regional geopolitical ramifications are yet to sink in. Turkey is a “swing” state and its policies cast shadows on several regions from the Balkans, Caucasus and Central Asia to the Middle East and North Africa and the Mediterranean.

Iran has vastly gained in strategic depth. Tehran has expressed strong solidarity with Erdogan. A special envoy from Tehran visited Ankara and met with Erdogan on the weekend. Erdogan expressed a desire for an early meeting with Iranian President Hassan Rouhani. Statements from Berlin and Rome already convey a growing sense of exasperation over Trump's unwarranted sanctions against Turkey. In tackling the migrant or refugee crisis, Erdogan is a crucial partner for the EU. Turkey also has a Customs Union agreement with the EU.

The astonishing part is that all this is unfolding at a time when the US and NATO are raring to redraw the strategic map of the Black Sea to challenge Russia and when the US military presence in Iraq and Syria is facing growing local opposition. Erdogan said on Sunday that Turkey is considering other markets and political alternatives to its “strategic partnership” with Washington. No doubt, China will be the big winner. China prioritizes Turkey as a key partner in its Belt and Road Initiative.

Trump is seriously underestimating the potency of Turkish nationalism, which is rising to a crescendo. In his Art of the Deal, nationalism has no place business goes to the highest bidder. The Turkish opinion is hardening that the US was behind the 2016 July failed coup attempt in a concerted strategy to take control of Turkish policies, and the “economic war” is its latest manifestation.

Why US' sanctions “bill from hell” on Russia should worry India

By M K Bhadrakumar

A fortnight after the Helsinki summit on July 16, US - Russia relations are set to take a turn for the worse. In an unprecedented move, White House fielded a joint media briefing by America's top national security team on Thursday to highlight that Russia is continuing to make pervasive attempts to interfere in the upcoming mid-term elections in the US in November.

One of the top security czars who gave the briefing, National Intelligence Agency director Dan Coats said starkly, “We acknowledge the threat, it is real, it is continuing, and we're doing everything we can to have a legitimate election. It is pervasive, it is ongoing, with the intent to ... drive a wedge and undermine our democratic values.” Importantly, Coats alleged that the Kremlin was involved in the meddling effort reached into the Kremlin itself.

He said, “Russia has used numerous ways in which they want to influence, through media, social media, through bots, through actors that they hire, through proxies all of the above, and potentially more. We also know the Russians tried to hack into and steal information from candidates and government officials alike.” The briefing served three purposes: one, to reject the denials of meddling that Russian President Vladimir Putin to President Trump at Helsinki; two, to neutralize the public criticism in the US that Trump has not been unequivocal on the issue; and, three, to give warning to Moscow.

The briefing coincided with a 'bipartisan' legislation that was introduced into the US Congress on Thursday to impose stiff new sanctions on Russia and combat cyber crime. The bill includes restrictions on new Russian sovereign debt transactions, energy and oil projects and Russian uranium imports, and new sanctions on Russian political figures and oligarchs. Interestingly, the proposed legislation underscores strong support for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and expressly forbids the Administration from taking the US out of the alliance without two-thirds of the US Senate voting in favor of any such effort.

The senators who tabled the legislation said in a statement that the proposed new sanctions would target “political figures, oligarchs, and family members and other persons that facilitate illicit and corrupt activities, directly or indirectly, on behalf of Vladimir Putin.” According to some reports, the bill would also require a report to be assembled on the personal net worth and assets of Putin. Quite obviously, Putin himself is in the crosshairs.

Putin's spirited defence of Trump at their joint press conference in Helsinki on the Russia collusion inquiry has provoked this furious backlash from America's political class. In such a backdrop, another summit between Trump and Putin in a near future seems highly improbable. A visit by Putin to the White House in the autumn is simply out of the question. The US-Russia ties will remain very tense, too. On the other hand, in a deceptive show of flexibility that will be keenly noted in New Delhi, US Congress has approved a legislation empowering the president to waive penalties against countries that buy weapons from Russia provided, of course, Washington is convinced that such countries are seeking closer ties with the US.

The US Defence Secretary James Mattis had pleaded with the US Congress for such Russia-sanction-waiver authority that would help countries such as India, which had traditional defence relations with Russia but are now trying to “pull away from the Russian orbit,” (as he put it.) Evidently, the legislation on waiver is a self-serving move, enabling US arms manufacturers to continue to expand business opportunities in the Indian market. Under the new legislation, the president must nonetheless certify that India is both reducing arms imports from Russia and is expanding defense cooperation with the US, thereby making itself eligible for the waiver from sanctions. In effect, it becomes a tool for Washington to insert itself into the India-Russia defence cooperation as an interested party and to incrementally leverage Indian decisions with a view to atrophy the longstanding cooperation.

Clearly, the US interference in the India-Russia relationship is poised to intensify in the period ahead. If the proposed new sanctions “bill from hell” (tabled on Thursday) gets passed by the US Congress,

which is to be expected, energy cooperation between India and Russia will also come under American scanner. There is a strong business dimension to these US moves insofar as arms exports and energy cooperation also happen to be two thrust areas of export to India. Simply put, Washington hopes to roll back India's defence and energy cooperation with Russia and seize the resultant business opportunities to boost its own exports to the Indian market.

In strategic terms, the US intention is to undermine the so-called "special privileged strategic partnership" between Russia and India, which would in turn erode the latter's strategic autonomy and incrementally draw India into the American orbit as an ally.

71 Years of Pakistan Achievements & Challenges

On 11th August 2018 in Hotel Regent Plaza, Karachi

The seminar had three Sessions:

- (1) General
- (2) Economic
- (3) Strategic & Foreign Affairs

First Session Chaired by, Nusrat Mirza

Chairman Rabita Forum International

Speakers were:

1. Muhammad Javed

Dept. Of Political Science - Karachi University.

2. Ambassador[®] Hasan Habib

Dept. Of Center of Policy and Area Studies.

3. Prof. Dr. Shujaat Hussain

Dept. Of mass Communication - Karachi University

Mr. Nusrat Mirza, Chairman Rabita Forum International, view was that Pakistan's has made progress in all fields and our defense is strong enough to meet any challenge internal or external. Pakistan is the only country and its armed force in the only one that defeated the internal external terrorism.

Second Session

Chaired by Brig. Haris Nawaz

Advisor of Govt. Of Sindh

Prof. Dr. Shaiha Wizarat

Chairperson, Research Institute of business Management.

Pro. Dr. Shahida Wizarat emphasized that Pakistan economy could become sold should the looted money of 350 billion dollar is brought back to the country.

Dr. Seema Naaz Siddiqi

Chairperson, Dept of Geology,

Federal Urdu University of Arts, Science & Technology,

Karachi.

Dr. Seema Naaz Siddiqi describing the issues of water and environment blamed nation and rulers as a whole.

Ayubul ul Hassan

(Retg) Central Banker

Banker Ayubul Hasan mentioned that Pakistan's economic condition is due to corrupt rulers.

Third session

Chaired by Amb. Najmuddin Shaikh

Former foreign secretary, and former Pakistani ambassador to the US, Canada, Iran and Germany. He currently heads the Global and Regional Studies Centre at IoBM, Karachi.

Speakers were:

Dr. Prof. Tanweer Khalid

Professor Pristion University - Karachi.

Prof. Dr. Mahboob Muqadam

Dept. Of Political Science - University of karachi.

Prof. Dr. Huma Baqai

Associate Dean IBA (Faculty of business Administration)

Pakistan's Foreign Policy

Presentation in Rabita Forum International Seminar held on 11th August, 2018

By Prof Dr Tanweer Khalid

Pakistan's founding father Quaid e Adam Mohammed Ali Jinnah wished to build friendly and cooperative relations with its neighbors. Idealistic yet inspirational, the nascent state had to face the realities of the challenge to peaceful co-existence in view of the regional hegemony of the Cold War. Pakistan began to look outward for friends and allies to safeguard its Independence, strengthen its security and improve its economic situation.

Jinnah's concept of Pakistan as a Muslim, liberal, democratic and modern nation-state predisposed him in favour of close relations with democratic countries. (1) Jinnah played special tribute to USA for inspiring nations striving for Independence from foreign rule as well as extending warm praise for French ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity.

But Pakistan was not motivated by the ideals of the Cold War and it developed friendly relations with People's Republic of China disregarding the pressures of the military alliances of its partners led by the United States.

The foreign policy of Pakistan after partition was to be moulded in the crucible of its interaction with its neighbor India.(2)and the vision of the Quaid ,who was a man of integrity, having a modern intellect, committed to the principles of peace, faith and confidence in human capacity to resolve differences through law and logic.

His deputy, Liaqat Ali Khan believed in a progressive, democratic polity founded on Islamic principles of social welfare. So the state started without any narrow and special commitments in the international sphere.(3)

Pakistan's Foreign Policy in the initial years revolved around security, Independence, cooperation and collaboration but all of it could only be a vision without goodwill, accommodation and statesmanship.

So the focus and concerns centered primarily on India-Pakistan relations and Kashmir, regional neighbors Iran and Afghanistan, distant friends China, security alliance CENTO and SEATO, relations with Muslim countries and partnerships of the Transatlantic region.

The departing British colonial administration headed by Lord Mountbatten did not play a helpful neutral role to ensure a peaceful partition of India and his attitude was a mixture of cynicism and unprincipled self-interest. (4)

The dawn of Independence threw Punjab and some other regions into a state of turmoil, communal massacres and unparalleled exodus of refugees.

India-Pakistan Relations and Kashmir

Officially the Indian National Congress accepted the partition of India but three days before the 3rd June plan Gandhi declared that even if the whole of India burns, we shall not conceive Pakistan. (5)

Having been born in these circumstances Pakistan developed a 'siege mentality' and India's uncalled-for aggressive stance aggravated the misgivings between the two countries and deepened the threat perception. Actions of Indian government in annexation of Junagarh, Manavadar, Goa, Sikkim, Hyderabad and its defiance in the UN for such a forcible occupation, denied to Pakistan negotiations for a peaceful solution on Kashmir.

The UN took a principled position for Kashmiri people to vote in an impartial plebiscite but India unilaterally insists to this day that Kashmir is its integral part and so its internal matter. Bilateral talks at various levels have produced no results and India opposes good offices role of even friendly countries as well as international mediation.

This is paradoxical and even iconic for a country which is sworn by its leader Mahatima Gandhi, the exponent of the philosophy of non-violence. Pakistan fought two wars with India I 1965 and 1971 and lost half of its territory while Indian position on Kashmir remained the same.

The breakup of Pakistan and separation of East Pakistan resulted in a change in the geo-strategic position of Pakistan because its Linkage with S.E. Asia was gone and it became more a part of the Middle East and Central Asia.

Alliances

Pakistan looked for alliances for its security and economic cooperation having India as a neighbor who lost no opportunity in maligning Pakistan always hoping to occupy it as it had done with its other smaller neighbor's. So Pakistan entered into four security alliances:

1. Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement 1954 with the US to fight totalitarian concepts and to promote freedom and democracy.

2. SEATO. 1954.

Pakistan was invited by US to join so that south Asian countries could provide a military backing. Pakistan was dejected from the beginning because it did not provide sufficient financial assistance of the US which was conditional being specific to communist aggression and excluded involvement in India-Pakistan dispute.

The 1965 war with India and the 1971 military intervention in Pakistan were not considered to be within the purview of the treaty. Pakistan withdrew from the pact in 1972.

3. Turkey and Iraq laid the foundation of the Baghdad Pact in 1955 for security and defense (later called Cento) which Pakistan was not very keen to join because it did not see eye to eye with Washington and London on Middle East issues.

Pakistan was historically supportive of the Palestinian cause, friendly with Iran and even sympathetic towards Egypt despite its emphasis on Arab Nationalism, it enjoyed close relations with Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Iraq.

4. Bilateral Defense cooperation Agreement 1959.

In this United States pledged to assist Pakistan in case of armed aggression in preservation of national Independence and promotion of economic development.

Pakistan regarded this alliance with the US as 'the sheet anchor of Pakistan's Foreign Policy', but when it developed friendly relations with China, United States decided to provide military aid to India and USSR abused its veto in the security council to prevent adoption of every resolution on Kashmir.

This was because USSR was outraged by Pakistan's decisions to allow US spy aircraft to fly from Peshawar for high altitude surveillance on Soviet territory.

Pakistan's multilateral diplomacy

Pakistan-US Relations were under a strain since 1962 onwards because Pakistan had achieved a kind of parity in its relations with the US, China and USSR. When it quit SEATO and Cento it was able to join NAM (non-aligned movement) thereby filling the gap in its international profile. Absence from NAM was a stigma on Pakistan's Foreign Policy and had led the field open for Indian manipulations.

Though NAM's membership has not been worthwhile as it has been rather 'tall on rhetoric and short on substance' (6) it has been outspoken on political issues of the third world like anti-colonialism and racial discrimination. Though the dimensions of East and West are no more, still, even in a unipolar world the issues of the third world remain.

Relations with the Islamic world

Apart from the perennial antagonistic relations with India another dimension of Pakistan's Foreign Policy is having close ties with the Islamic world not only because of its ideology but by its constitution as well.

It has provided enthusiastic support to liberation struggle of many Muslim countries in Africa, namely Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Libya, Sudan and Somalia. It has supported Indonesia, Muslims in Bosnia, Chechnya and Kosovo.

It has remained unwavering in its support to Palestine and the Arab cause. It stands for the status of the holy city of Jerusalem against Zionist and US approach antagonizing both as well as the western media.

Pakistan has very strong and growing bonds with Turkey collaborating in economic bonds in ECO. It is successfully extending its ties with Central Asian states after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Saudi Arabia is a country perhaps closest to Pakistan's heart having a tremendous emotional and religious attachment.

Both countries have stood by each other on most political issues. Pakistan has provided security support to S. Arabia in its defense against Israel and S. Arabia supports Pakistan on the Kashmir dispute. But after the Islamic revolution in Iran the threat perception to Saudis has changed and it was this threat perception which propelled Saudis to support Iraq in the 8year war ending in 1988.

Iranian influence is visible in Pakistan's language and culture and there is tremendous goodwill for Iran amongst the Pakistani people. It is also a strategic necessity for Pakistan because of Indian hostilities.

There were some differences between the two countries when relations became lukewarm after the revolution. Pakistan was viewed as pro-west and its old links with the shah aroused some suspicion. Also communal leanings between Shia and Sunni population of Pakistan brought some discomfort. Presently ties between the two countries have stabilized in view of economic and strategic demands. Libya, Egypt and Palestine have all fared well in Pakistan's foreign policy with a few ups and downs. Gulf States have been a priority area for Pakistan and it has received substantial economic aid from UAE.

African Muslim countries have been ignored by Pakistan's policy makers to some extent but it has been outspoken in the cause of their liberation from colonial masters. Muslim countries from S.E. Asia like Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam have goodwill for Pakistan.

Relations with China

Pakistan and China have drawn closer since Pakistan has shown the courage to resist the economic and political pressures of America breaching the ring which USA, USSR and India had built around China.

A unique feature of China's policy towards Pakistan was to give respect to Pakistan's sovereignty and when Pakistan went forward to improve its relations with the Soviet Union in 1960, China did not hold Pakistan back. Relations between them have continued to deepen and the result of this all-weather friendship is the CPEC.

Relations with Afghanistan

Few countries are closer in culture and history as Pakistan and Afghanistan. Soviet intervention in Afghanistan provoked a deep sense of insecurity and alarm in Pakistan but it exercised prudence in deciding its policy. Not ready to pitch itself against a super power it hitched its diplomacy to the hope of a political situation to the Soviet intervention through the UN.

Pakistan's expectations of friendly relations with Afghanistan and later its Islamic government under the Taliban was dashed because of the proxy wars of major powers engaged in the new Great Game. According to the UN Secretary General foreign military assistance continued unabated throughout 1997 in blatant violation of UN General Assembly and Security Council.

A sinister legacy of the Afghan crisis for Pakistan was spillover of extremism and weapons, influx of refugees and narcotics. Pakistan's interest lay in an end to the Afghan civil war and formation of a unity government so that the burden on its economy by hosting Afghan refugees can be over.

US and the West had better resources to deal with the Taliban but Washington put the blame on Pakistan and covered its own error by imposing sanctions and walking away. Since then Pakistan is putting an effort for maintaining relations with Afghanistan based on mutual goodwill as a focus of its foreign policy for peace in the region.

Security Concerns

Like any other country Pakistan also keeps security as a focus of its foreign policy. Its Nuclear development programme has made steady progress since 1980's in view of India's aggressive postures and recurrent plans for air strikes on Kahuta which is disheartening but not surprising.

Pakistan has not signed the CTBT because India has not assuring the world that its nuclear programme is for deterrence against India and that it is willing to refrain from weaponisation and deployment of missiles provided India does the same. The nuclear dimensions of the security environment of both the countries adds to their responsibility for avoiding a conflict, remove tensions and find solutions to the causes of the conflict.

In the aftermath of September 11, 2001, Pakistan was dragged to be a part of the War on Terror by the United States and was asked to do more all the time while indirectly favouring India all the time. Afghanistan and India matter the most in Pakistan's foreign policy for peace in the region and economic development.

This entails good relations with both. Peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan is a priority issue revolving around border stability, transit facilities for trade, apportionment of water in the Kabul river basin and law and order.

Pakistan's relations with India have darkened and dangers of an armed conflict cannot be averted. There has been a stalemate on disputes and dialogues and rise of Hindutva and indifference of the Modi government on killing sprees of its vigilantes has fuel to the fire.

Liberation efforts of Kashmiris have led to their brutal suppression by the Indian forces but Pakistan continues to support the freedom struggle of the Kashmiris through an impartial plebiscite. Pakistan's foreign policy has remained constant as the father of the nation had outlined and whatever policy adjustments were made it was because of the policies of the Great Powers in S Asia. Our western leanings were because of strategic compulsions and economic constraints. Having a futuristic approach we must promote proactive diplomacy, exercise caution and restrain, learn from our mistakes and review our policies.

When the new government is fully installed in power and the varied perspective given by the prime minister -in-waiting is put into effect, the much needed cordiality in relations with the US, Afghanistan and India will take form which appears to be pragmatic and goal oriented but based on integrity and self-respect of the nation.

Abdul Sattar. Pakistan's Foreign Policy 1947-2016. A concise history 4th ed Oxford University Press. Paper backs 2017. P13

Ibid

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4. Shahid M Amin. Pakistan's Foreign Policy. A reappraisal 2nd ed. Oxford University Press. Paperbacks 2010

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Russian threat 'is real,' Trump officials say, vowing to protect US elections

By Michael D. Shear and Michael Wines

Top national security officials vowed to defend American elections against what they called real threats from Russia only weeks after President Trump seemed to accept President Vladimir V. Putin's denials of interference during a summit meeting in Finland.

After the meeting, Mr. Trump said he had not meant to endorse Mr. Putin's denial of election meddling, but insisted that the culprit behind the intrusion "could be other people." A few days later, he asserted that the idea of any meddling by Russia was "all a big hoax."

But the men and women charged with detecting and defending against any threats to the American political process showed no such ambivalence. They bluntly said that Russia was behind a "pervasive" campaign to weaken America's democracy and influence the 2018 election.

They also sought to reassure voters that federal, state and local governments were taking steps to guard against what Christopher A. Wray, the FBI director, described as a "24-7 365-days-a-year" effort by Russia to sow division as Americans head to the polls in the fall.

"Russia attempted to interfere with the last election," Mr. Wray told reporters in the White House briefing room, "and continues to engage in malign influence operations to this day. This is a threat we need to take extremely seriously and to tackle and respond to with fierce determination and focus."

Dan Coats, the director of national intelligence, echoed that assessment, saying that "Russians are looking for every opportunity, regardless of party, regardless of whether or not it applies to the election, to continue their pervasive efforts to undermine our fundamental values."

Mr. Wray and Mr. Coats were joined at the briefing by Kirstjen Nielsen, the secretary of homeland security, John R. Bolton, the president's national security adviser, and Gen. Paul M. Nakasone, the head of the National Security Agency. Officials at the briefing did not describe specific threats to the coming elections, and they were vague about how the government was responding to what they called Russia's interference campaign. But they said Mr. Trump had directed them in a National Security Council meeting last week to aggressively confront the threats.

"Our democracy itself is in the cross hairs," Ms. Nielsen told reporters. "The progress we have made is real, and the nation's elections are more resilient today because of the work we are all doing. But we must continue to ensure that our democracy is protected." Ms. Nielsen said the government had "seen a willingness and a capability on the part of the Russians" to hack into the American election infrastructure, including voter rolls and voting machines. In addition to helping states and local governments prevent that hacking, she said her department was working to ensure that methods were available to validate the vote if a cyber attack occurred.

Senator Mark Warner, the top Democrat on the Senate Intelligence Committee, welcomed Thursday's pledges of action from Trump administration officials, even as he chided the president for failing to take the lead in confronting Russian election-year aggression.

"Glad to see the White House finally do something about election security even if it's only a news conference," Mr. Warner said on Twitter shortly after the briefing. "Now if only it was actually backed up by anything the President has said or done on Russia."

Election experts say voting security has vastly improved since 2016, even if much remains to be done. "All the states realize that securing their election systems both administrative systems and voting machines is a high priority," said Charles Stewart III, a leading expert on election administration at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

He said computer systems and voting machines were now probably the most secure part of the election infrastructure, thanks in part to a stepped-up effort by Homeland Security officials. The greatest vulnerabilities, Mr. Stewart said, lie in individual political campaigns, few of which have come to terms with the threat posed by foreign actors like Russia.

Barely a week ago, Senator Claire McCaskill, a Missouri Democrat, confirmed reports that Russian hackers had sought, apparently unsuccessfully, to break in to her computer network in the Senate, and at least one other campaign is known to have been attacked as well.

Despite Mr. Trump's public comments playing down the threat from Russia, his security officials did not hesitate in directly blaming the Russian government as the primary culprit behind the interference campaign. "We acknowledge the threat. It is real. It is continuing," Mr. Coats said. "We are doing everything we can to have a legitimate election that everyone can have trust in."

Mr. Bolton said the president did raise the issue of meddling with Mr. Putin at their meeting in Helsinki, and defended what he said had been Mr. Trump's intense focus on the issue since he took office. "I think the president has made it abundantly clear to everybody" in the government who oversees election security. Mr. Bolton said that Mr. Trump "cares deeply about it and that he expects them to do their jobs."

The intelligence agencies do not believe that Russian efforts to interfere in the 2018 elections have reached the same level as in the 2016 presidential campaign, Mr. Wray said. But he said the government was braced for the possibility that Russia could ramp up its efforts overnight, requiring a more forceful response from the United States. "Any moment is just a moment before the dial can be turned up," Mr. Wray said.

In the meantime, Mr. Wray said that the Russian efforts to inject divisive misinformation into American social media were continuing daily, even when elections are not on the horizon. Earlier this week, Facebook reported that it had identified a political influence campaign targeting the midterm elections and had removed 32 pages and fake accounts. Facebook did not link the campaign to Russia. The company has been criticized for not having done more to detect and remove the fake accounts created by Russians during the 2016 presidential campaign.

On Wednesday, Republicans in the Senate voted down an amendment to an appropriations bill that would have allotted \$250 million to states to improve election security before the midterms. Only one Republican, Senator Bob Corker of Tennessee, voted for the measure. Others argued that Congress had already allotted \$380 million for security improvements earlier in the year, and that more funds were not needed.

Experts on election administration took issue with that. "There's no finish line in election security," said David J. Becker, the director of the Center for Election Innovation and Research, a Washington-based organization centered on improving voting technology and security. "There needs to be a consistent funding stream probably in all critical areas, but particularly in elections to secure those systems from attack."

But Mr. Becker and others also said that states and localities needed to make quick and often cheap basic fixes to their systems, such as giving security training to workers and toughening passwords, and plan carefully before spending millions on new equipment.

Mr. Becker compared the state of election security to trying to prevent burglaries: The two best ways to stop burglars, he said, are to secure a house against break-ins and to deter burglars from even attempting them. In election security, "We're doing a pretty good job of protecting the house," he said. "But where are the consequences against the criminal? That can only be done by the executive branch. The big question is, where is the president?"

Russian peace talks raise specter of shifting influence

By Kathy Gannon

Vladimir Putin's Russia appears to have emerged as a player in Afghanistan after 17 years of Western involvement that has left the country no closer to peace than before. To some, Russia's offer to host talks next month might contain at least the seeds of a positive pivot if the Taliban are coaxed to the table at a time when they have been more aggressive on the battlefield than in recent years, causing much mayhem in Kabul and other cities.

But the move may be stuck before it even begins. The Afghan government has said it will not attend, unable to agree on a coherent strategy because of divisions within the government that many see as a function of personal and ethnic rivalries, and calling for the Taliban to first agree to direct talks with Kabul. The insurgents have consistently refused, instead demanding direct talks with the United States.

The U.S., for its part, seems displeased by the maneuver, even though Washington has been trying to find a reasonable exit strategy for years in vain. On the ground in Afghanistan, the situation has given rise to boundless cynicism about the various players and almost no hope for a quick improvement in the violent, corruption-plagued nature of daily life.

Analysts say the wrangling over a meeting to talk peace offers a window into the enormity of the task of actually reaching a peace pact in a region of competing influences. Pakistan, Iran, Russia and China have a growing influence even as the United States spends billions of dollars covering much of the \$6.5 billion spent annually to support the Afghan National Security Forces who are struggling to contain an energized Taliban.

Specialists who have tracked Afghanistan's four decades of war say navigating the road to peace in this poor nation of 32 million people is like walking through a minefield. Michael Kugelman, deputy director of the Asia Program at the US - based Wilson Center, said the situation is explosive. "In Afghanistan you have not just the US and Russia in competition, but also China, Iran, and Pakistan," said Kugelman. "And none of these countries have warm relations with the US It's a real powder keg, to say the least."

Pakistan, considered key to a lasting peace in Afghanistan, has a new prime minister who says he is ready to be a partner in peace with Washington, but will no longer partner in war. There has been no indication that the Afghan Taliban, who are known to move between Pakistan and Afghanistan with an ease that varies often depending on Islamabad's relationship with Washington, will be asked to leave. Yet Prime Minister Imran Khan was quick to condemn last Tuesday's rocket attack in Kabul, accusing the perpetrators of "cowardly thinking."

Still, relations between Pakistan and the United States are prickly and even a simple phone call from US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to Khan on Thursday turned into a confrontation as the two countries disagreed over its content.

Pakistan is now demanding an apology, saying Pompeo said nothing of terrorists in Pakistan, contrary to the State Department's reading of the call, which said: "Pompeo raised the importance of Pakistan taking decisive action against all terrorists operating in Pakistan and its vital role in promoting the Afghan peace process."

But Afghanistan's neighbors and competing world powers are only part of the problem of bringing peace to Afghanistan, say analysts, who point to a deeply corrupt and fractious Afghan government and deepening ethnic divisions within the US - crafted Unity government. Last year, Transparency International ranked Afghanistan 177 out of 180 countries, only slightly better than the world's worst Syria, South Sudan and Somalia. Since the US - crafted Unity Government took power four years ago, ethnic divisions that have always troubled Afghanistan have deepened.

During a recent interview in the Afghan capital Kabul, political analyst Haroon Mir said international pressure is all that holds Afghanistan's squabbling politicians together. He said the government is deeply divided along ethnic lines and warned that a withdrawal of international forces would set one ethnic group against another, led by the warlords-cum-politicians, who dominate Afghanistan's

government and whose militias are heavily armed. "Kabul will be destroyed because every different faction in the government wants to get control," he said. "This time it would be ethnic fighting that destroys Kabul."

Internal rivalries within the Afghan government have made it impossible to develop a counterinsurgency strategy, said Kugelman. "So long as the Afghan government remains consumed by personality, disputes and other internal dysfunction, Kabul won't be in any shape to craft an effective counterinsurgency strategy, no matter how much help it may get from the US and other key partners," he said.

But perhaps even worse for the US, which has lost hundreds of lives in Afghanistan and spent billions of dollars on the conflict, Western countries have come to be seen in very jaded ways, with a variety of outlandish theories enjoying surprising currency. One widely spread theory is that Washington is secretly aiding the Taliban to foment violence as an excuse to keep its troops in Afghanistan to counter Iran, Russia and China.

The Taliban, meanwhile, have ramped up their diplomatic forays, having traveled to Uzbekistan and Indonesia to meet the foreign ministers there. They also said they would travel to China and Pakistan before next month's Moscow meeting.

On the battlefield this month they have carried out spectacular attacks in central Ghazni, where they resisted Afghan security forces backed by US military advisers and aerial support for nearly five days, and in northern Faryab province, where more than 100 Afghan soldiers who ran out of ammunition and food eventually surrendered to the insurgents.

But analysts say the Taliban's control and influence while far-reaching is limited to rural areas and they do not have the capacity to take control and keep a city in Afghanistan. They also face divisions within their ranks and need to show their foot soldiers they are strong militarily before they enter peace talks.

Still, Brian Glyn Williams, professor of Islamic History at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, called the September meeting in Moscow a "fascinating and potentially important/historic development."

Taliban Surge Routs ISIS in Northern Afghanistan

By Najim Rahim & Rod Nordland

More than 200 Islamic State fighters and their two top commanders surrendered to the Afghan government on Wednesday to avoid capture by Taliban insurgents, after a two-day battle that was a decisive victory for the Taliban, participants on all sides confirmed.

One of the Islamic State commanders, Mufti Nemat, was reached by cellphone after his surrender, and he confirmed that he and 200 to 250 of his fighters had turned themselves in to the government after the battle in northern Afghanistan, in which 40 of his insurgents had been killed by the Taliban. "It was a dark night, a pell-mell situation," he said. "For two to three nights, we have been unable to sleep; we are very exhausted."

The spokesman for Afghanistan's commando forces, Maj. Ahmad Jawid Salim, said in a post on his Facebook page that the surrenders marked the end of the Islamic State in northern Afghanistan. "After the surrender of more than 200 Daeshis in Darzab District last night, the Daeshis have been wiped out of the north," he said, using an alternative name for Islamic State members.

Zabihullah Mujahid, spokesman for the Taliban, who was also reached by cellphone, said that after the attack on the Islamic State group, the Taliban had taken 128 fighters prisoner, with the rest fleeing to government positions in the area. "There will be investigations, and our military courts will decide on their fates," he said. "Let's see what happens."

The Taliban and the Islamic State are bitter enemies in Afghanistan, attacking each other wherever they can. The Islamic State's main concentration is in the south of Nangarhar Province, in eastern Afghanistan, but they had another major group in the Northern Province of Jowzjan, particularly in Darzab, the district that was Mr. Nemat's stronghold.

Mr. Nemat refused to give details of the fight against the Taliban or to reveal why he had decided to surrender. He was critical of the government, however, saying that the Afghan National Army had promised to send helicopters to evacuate him and his followers, who included 30 women. "It was an emergency situation," he said. "We were promised choppers around 9 p.m. last night to evacuate us, but unfortunately nothing came."

Instead, the Islamic State fighters fled on foot to government lines, but more could have escaped the Taliban pursuit, Mr. Nemat said. "We lost contact with the others last night. I think they contacted the Taliban or went somewhere else." Among his followers, he said, were about 25 to 30 foreigners, mostly from Central Asian countries, but also two Frenchmen, known only by Arabic pseudonyms, Abu Mohammad and Abu Mariam.

In addition to Mr. Nemat, who is also known as Mufti Nematullah Qaweem, the other Islamic State military commander, Maulavi Habib ul-Rahman, surrendered to the Afghan government forces, according to Abdul Hafiz Khashi, the deputy police chief of Jowzjan Province. The two leaders are brothers-in-law.

"The areas the Daeshis controlled were taken by the Taliban," Mr. Khashi said. The police chief of Darzab, Capt. Mohammad Ismail Mubarez, said the Taliban had forced the Islamic State fighters to surrender to the government side. "Two hundred of them surrendered," he said. "They came at four in the morning with their weapons."

The defeat was the latest in a series of setbacks for the Islamic State in Khorasan, as the group's affiliate in Afghanistan calls itself. Since last year, their positions in southern Nangarhar Province have been battered by American airstrikes and ground attacks from American and Afghan Special Forces. The group has reacted in Nangarhar Province by concentrating its attacks on civilian "soft targets," most recently on Tuesday, with an attack on a refugee agency. The Afghan government responded to that assault by declaring that the army would take charge of security in Jalalabad, the capital of Nangarhar Province, from Wednesday.

In northern Afghanistan, Mr. Nemat was a former Taliban leader who had switched sides to the government in a deal brokered by the country's first vice president, Gen. Abdul Rashid Dostum. Last

year, Mr. Nemat switched sides again, this time to the Islamic State. Initially, he was successful, overrunning government positions in Darzab, and the group gained traction elsewhere in the north as well.

In April, however, the American military said that it had killed the overall Islamic State commander in the north, Qari Hekmatullah, in an airstrike. According to Maulavi Abdulhai Hayat, head of the Jowzjan provincial council's security committee, about 2,000 Taliban militants recently gathered in Jowzjan from as far away as Helmand Province in the south, with the aim of destroying the Islamic State. While both the government and the Taliban wanted to stop the Islamic State in the north, there was little sign of cooperation between them in the recent battle, he said.

After a month of heavy fighting in the area, the Islamic State fighters suffered 100 fatalities and were pinned down to two villages in Darzab, and when the final battle began two days ago, those militants offered to surrender to the government, Mr. Hayat said. To facilitate that, government forces then bombed Taliban positions to prevent them from capturing all of the Islamic State fighters themselves, he added.

Mr. Nemat suggested in the interview on Wednesday that he might be ready to switch sides again. "If you'll remember," he said, "in the past I brought 200 of my men and joined the government." For the time being, however, Afghan officials said that Mr. Nemat and his followers were prisoners, not allies. After switching allegiance to the Islamic State, many of them boasted of engaging in acts of extreme barbarism that are that organization's calling card, such as beheadings and the use of child soldiers.

Residents of Darzab traveled to the Jowzjan provincial capital, Sheberghan, to petition the governor to punish the Islamic State prisoners for the crimes they committed while in control of their area, according to local officials.

China is 'building a training camp in Afghanistan' to fight terrorism

Beijing said to be fully funding the base in isolated Wakhan Corridor and may send hundreds of troops there

By Minnie Chan

China has started building a training camp for Afghan troops in a narrow corridor that connects the two countries a project Beijing is fully funding to help its neighbour improve counter terrorism efforts, sources close to the military said. Once the camp is completed, the People's Liberation Army is likely to send hundreds of military personnel, or at least one battalion, to Afghanistan's isolated Wakhan Corridor, one of the sources who is familiar with the matter told the South China Morning Post.

The corridor is a narrow strip of inhospitable and barely accessible land extending about 350km (220 miles) from the northern Afghan province of Badakhshan to China's Muslim region of Xinjiang, where Chinese authorities have carried out sweeping crackdowns on the Uygur ethnic minority group in recent months. It will be the first time in modern history for China to have a military presence in Afghanistan, which is known as the "graveyard of empires" for being notoriously difficult to conquer and govern.

But the war-torn Central Asian country has become increasingly important for China's own security as well as President Xi Jinping's new Silk Road trade and infrastructure plan. China set up its first overseas military base last year in Djibouti, a facility Beijing describes as a military logistics outpost for resupplying Chinese vessels on peacekeeping and humanitarian missions in the Indian Ocean.

The sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the PLA had sent more than one battalion to Djibouti, many of them engineers and builders who are working on a multipurpose wharf, with very few combat troops to conduct live-fire drills. A battalion usually has more than 500 troops. They also said the Afghanistan base would have a different role than the one in Djibouti because the training camp is located close to Xinjiang, which Beijing sees as the main source of the "three forces" separatism, terrorism and extremism behind a series of violent attacks in the region in recent years. "Construction of the base has started, and China will send at least one battalion of troops, along with weapons and equipment, to be stationed there and provide training to their Afghan counterparts," one of the sources said. He said that it was unclear when the PLA planned to open the base and that it was considered a "costly but worthwhile project". Russian news agency Ferghana News reported in January that Beijing would finance a new military base in Badakhshan after defence ministers from the two countries agreed last year to work together to fight terrorism, citing General Davlat Vaziri from Afghanistan's defence ministry.

At the time, China's defence ministry denied it had a plan to build a "military base" in Afghanistan, but said Beijing had provided aid and support to its neighbour as part of security cooperation efforts, including counterterrorism operations. Beijing-based military expert Li Jie said that China had ramped up its anti-terrorism measures but that it also needed to work with other countries in Central Asia and the Middle East.

"If they're going to eliminate the so-called three forces, they need to go to their power bases and take them down," Li said. "But since the PLA is not familiar with the terrain, and with life in Afghanistan, bilateral cooperation is the best way to get win-win results." China has extended more than US\$70 million in military aid to Afghanistan in the last three years, researcher Ahmad Bilal Khalil, from the Centre for Strategic and Regional Studies in Kabul, said in February. He added that Beijing feared that instability in the neighbouring country could threaten its growing economic interests across the region.

Song Zhongping, a military analyst in Hong Kong, said the camp would benefit both the Chinese military and its Afghan counterparts. "A key function of the training base will be to strengthen anti-terrorism cooperation and military exchanges between Beijing and Kabul, which is also part of their efforts to stop separatists from infiltrating Xinjiang," said Song, a military commentator for Phoenix Television.

"Afghanistan is very weak on counterterrorism, and the authorities there are worried about a Taliban resurgence, but they can't do anything about it without help from the US, China and other countries." Song added that China and Afghanistan had agreed to work together to fight terrorism because of concerns about the East Turkestan Islamic Movement joining forces with the Taliban.

Beijing has blamed the ETIM a separatist group founded by militant Uygurs for violent attacks in Xinjiang. Li Wei, a counterterrorism specialist at the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations, said that in addition to providing military support, Beijing had also increased economic cooperation with Afghanistan, which is rich in natural resources, with more than 1,400 mineral deposits.

"Defence and economic development have always been the basis for mutual benefit," Li Wei said. "That's because if both sides just focus on security cooperation, it won't be a sustainable relationship." Afghanistan has been an observer member of the China-led regional security bloc the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) since 2012.

'Courtesy South China Morning Post'.

The seven years of China & the US

"When I sat in the seat of a Chinese stadium and enjoyed the magical performances of thousands of Chinese dancers, drummers, singers, and acrobats on stilts, I could not but recall the past seven years. Different experiences in the United States and China

By Thomas Friedman

China has been busy with various infrastructure projects, and we are busy dealing with al-Qaeda (terrorists); they have been building better stadiums, subways, airports, roads and parks, and we have been working on the construction of better metal detectors, Hummer military vehicles and drones...

Differences have begun to show. You can compare the dirty old LaGuardia Airport in New York and the beautifully shaped international airport in Shanghai. When you drive to Manhattan, you will find out how dilapidated the infrastructure is along the way. Experience Shanghai's maglev train at speeds of up to 220 miles per hour. It uses electromagnetic propulsion instead of ordinary steel wheels and tracks. You have already arrived in Shanghai. Then ask yourself: Who is living in a third world country?

I think: As a modern country, China has accepted the main concepts of modern national sovereignty and human rights. However, the various qualities of Chinese civilization make it unique. One of the characteristics of China's development model is that the scale effect of learning + innovation + huge population affects China and the world. Many foreign companies investing in China have a slogan. If they can achieve the first in China, they will be able to achieve the world's best.

With the rise of China, this trend is beginning to expand into more and more areas such as tourism, aviation, film and television, sports, education, new energy, modernization models, and high-speed rail. Some of us are more envious of the lives of small countries and small people, in fact, the difficulties of small and small countries. Small countries can't afford storms, while big countries face waves and have much more room for manoeuvre.

Chile is a comparatively more-developed developing country. However, in a major earthquake in 2010, GDP fell a large chunk, and the entire economy could not breathe for two years. Even if China encounters such a large-scale natural disaster as the Wenchuan earthquake, the entire country's economy remains unaffected.

For most countries, industrial upgrading often means that the industry migrates to foreign countries, and China can carry out large-scale industrial gradient transfer within itself, which extends the life cycle of Chinese manufacturing. Culture - The collision of Chinese and Western cultures over the past thirty years has not caused most Chinese people to lose their cultural confidence.

The Chinese people today embrace Confucius's heat, Lao Tzu's heat, reciting hot, calligraphy and painting fever, tea ceremony heat, old house heat, cultural relics, Chinese medicine fever, and heat of health, all reflect the revival of Chinese traditional culture.

The food culture, health culture, and leisure culture derived from Chinese culture are also incomparable to other cultures. Street restaurants in any part of China can make 30 to 40 dishes. In the vast majority of American restaurants, there are only hamburgers and potato chips. There are three or four dishes that are good. European restaurants have more dishes but rarely more than seven or eight varieties.

Some of us are always worried that Chinese people lack religious feelings. In fact, anyone who is a little familiar with the history of the world knows that religious conflicts in human history have led to countless wars. The conflict between various Christian denominations and between Christianity and Islam has had a history of thousands of years, resulting in human tragedies in which countless lives were brutally murdered. Therefore, our people do not have to believe in religion.

Economics--China's traditional economics, strictly speaking, is not "market economics" but "humanistic economics." In the long history of China, if a government fails to develop its economy and improve people's livelihood, it cannot handle disasters and disasters. It will lose support from the people and lose its "destiny" and will eventually be overthrown by the people.

Today's political party in China is a continuation of the historically unified Confucian ruling group tradition, rather than a Western party that competes on behalf of different interest groups. Many people in the West only agree with the legitimacy of the regime resulting from multi-party competition. This is a very shallow political concept.

I once met an American scholar who questioned the legitimacy of the Chinese regime. I asked him why he did not first question the legitimacy of his own country: You took the land of others and passed colonial, immigration, extermination of Indians, and formed the United States today. . I asked him to explain to me where the legitimacy and legitimacy of such a country lies. In the end, he can only tell me that this is history.

Can we doubt the source of the legitimacy of Western regimes by using the concept of "selecting and selecting talents" in China? Xiao (Small) "Junior" Bush's rule brought an economic downturn to the United States in eight years and brought disaster to Iraq. Bringing financial tsunami is an example.

The most important feature of China's historical legitimacy is the "political tradition of selecting the able and capable people and governing the country with the support of the people". In the political culture of China, the concept of "one game at a time", "hardship on one side, support from all sides", and other cultures cannot be produced.

I once discussed the Chinese model with Indian scholars. They said that on the face of it, China is centralized, but every reform in China actually has strong local characteristics. They compete and complement each other. Therefore, the Chinese system is better than India's. The system is more dynamic.

They have studied the West and have established a powerful modern government system. At the same time, they have their own unique political and cultural resources. The combination of the two makes it easier for us to overcome the populism, short-sightedness, and legalism that plagued Western democracy today. And other issues.

At the political level, many people in the West also take it for granted that China will accept the political model of confrontation with the West as the Chinese middle class grows. However, they also discovered today that the Chinese middle class today seems to value China's political stability more than any other class. They understand that the "democratization" of the West has brought chaos and turmoil to many countries.

Understanding their hard-earned wealth accumulation has actually benefited from more than 30 years of political stability in China. Frankly speaking, what China has demonstrated today is definitely not an oversimplified or even simple concept of "advanced" and "backwardness," "democracy," "autocracy," "high human rights," and "low human rights."

This is the article written by Thomas Friedman, an American columnist, *Seven Years of China and the United States."

China stands its ground after Trump amps up tariff threats

By Ben Blanchard & Susan Heavey

China vowed on Thursday to retaliate if the United States acted on a threat to raise tariffs on the Asian nation's exports, fuelling fears in financial markets that the trade war between the world's two biggest economies would escalate. US President Donald Trump on Wednesday instructed his trade officials to look at increasing tariffs to 25 percent from 10 percent on \$200 billion in Chinese imports into the United States.

Trump, who has accused China and others of exploiting the United States in global trade, has demanded that Beijing make a host of concessions to avoid the new duties, which could be imposed in the weeks after a comment period closes on Sept. 5.

China's government, however, shows no sign of bending to Washington's pressure. "We hope that those directly involved in the United States' trade policies can calm down, carefully listen to the voices of US consumers ... and hear the collective call of the international community," Wang Yi, the Chinese government's top diplomat and a member of the country's state council, or cabinet, said in Singapore.

So far, the United States has imposed duties on \$34 billion (26.10 billion pounds) of imports from China as part of a first tranche of sanctions on \$50 billion of goods. It wants China to stop stealing US corporate secrets, abandon plans to boost its high-tech industries at America's expense and stop subsidizing Chinese companies with cheap loans that enable them to compete unfairly.

China says the United States is trying to stop the rise of a competitor and it has imposed its own tariffs on U.S. goods. The rising tensions between the two nations have weighed on stock and currency markets, with the Chinese yuan falling against the dollar. Benchmark US government bond yields edged lower on Thursday as investors sought safe-haven debt while the dollar . DXY rose against a basket of currencies.

Mounting tariff bill

Trump set his sights on China during the 2016 presidential campaign and has followed through during his presidency with a protectionist strategy that he says is aimed at strengthening US companies and boosting jobs at home. The United States has imposed tariffs on other nations too, including Canada and Mexico, Washington's partners in the North American Free Trade Agreement. If Trump imposes the new duties on China as well as a threatened third set of tariffs on another \$200 billion of imports, effectively all of the Asian nation's US exports would be impacted. Washington touted its initial tariffs as being carefully constructed to avoid having a big impact on U.S. consumers and companies, but the expansion of the tariff lists has drawn in more goods that cannot be imported from outside China.

The bill has started to mount, with the US government dipping into its coffers to find \$12 billion to aid farmers who have been hit by Chinese retaliation. American companies have started to feel the pinch as well from global steel and aluminium tariffs and the first tranche of China-specific duties that cover just \$34 billion of imports.

General Electric (GE.N) estimated the new tariffs on its imports from China could raise its costs by \$300 million to \$400 million overall, before steps to lessen the impact while General Motors Co (GM.N), Ford Motor Co (F.N) and Fiat Chrysler Automobiles NV (FCHA.MI) (FCAU.N) have lowered their full-year profit forecasts.

US Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross downplayed the impact of the tariffs on the American economy. "Well, let's put it into arithmetic perspective. 25 percent on \$200 billion, if it comes to pass, is \$50 billion a year," Ross said of the proposed hike in tariffs in an interview with Fox Business News, adding that the impact would not "be cataclysmic."

No substantial talks so far

The initial set of tariffs and reprisals led to talks between Washington and Beijing, and Trump and his administration touted a deal that they said would lead to hundreds of billions of dollars' worth of additional US exports to China. That fell apart shortly after it was announced by US officials and amid acrimony in the negotiating team sent to Beijing due to disagreements over the concessions that would be made to China. Since then there have been no meaningful contacts between the two sides. China's Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang reiterated at a regular news briefing in Beijing that the United States' efforts at "blackmail" would fail. "We would advise the United States to correct its attitude and not try to engage in blackmail. This won't work on China," Geng said.

Two Trump administration officials told reporters on a conference call that the US president remains open to communications with Beijing and that through informal conversations the two countries are discussing whether a "fruitful negotiation" is possible.

Reporting by Ben Blanchard, Ryan Woo and Susan Heavey; Writing by Michael Martina and David Chance; Editing by Richard Borsuk and Paul Simao.

Russia, China nearing alliance conditions

Russia, China nearing alliance conditions The Chinese Communist Party Politburo member Yang Jiechi is visiting Moscow on August 14-17 at the invitation of the secretary of the Russian national security council, Nikolai Patrushev to participate in the 14 th round of Russian-Chinese consultations on strategic stability. The forthcoming event in Moscow will be closely watched since the two countries are fast nearing a situation of confronting a common 'enemy'.

This is a new experience for both since the halcyon days of the Sino-Soviet alliance in the 1950s. The mainstream opinion has been that the Sino-Russian comprehensive partnership and cooperation is more the stuff of geopolitical signaling than a strategic alliance. The Western opinion has also been notably skeptical whether such partnership between Russia and China will be sustainable over time due to the growing asymmetry in the two countries' comprehensive national power.

Both premises may be getting outdated by the sheer force of developments. Curiously, another body of opinion is steadily forming lately whether Russia and China could be actually on the verge of reaching alliance conditions in the rapidly changing global situation characterized by growing tensions in their respective relations with the United States.

An essay in the Financial Times this week titled China and Russia's dangerous liaison authored by the daily's Asia editor (who used to be the Beijing bureau chief previously), Jamil Anderlini, forcefully makes this point. The writer argues that it is an intelligence blunder of historic proportions that the West is making by "dismissing the anti-western, anti-US alliance that is now forming between Moscow and Beijing." Anderlini writes:

This idea that Russia and China can never really be friends is just as wrong and dangerous as the cold war dogma that portrayed global communism as an unshakeable monolith... Their tightening embrace is as much about antipathy towards the US and the US-dominated global order as their rapidly growing common interests... Thanks to its continued rise and obvious ambition to supplant the US, China is a far bigger long-term challenge for America than Russia.

No less a figure than Henry Kissinger the architect of that reconciliation with China in 1972 has reportedly counselled Donald Trump to pursue a "reverse Nixon-China strategy" by seeking to befriend Moscow and isolate Beijing. However, the chances of a "reverse Nixon-China strategy" by the US are virtually zero.

Even if President Trump is inclined in that direction, the 'Deep State' simply won't allow him a free hand. It is after much effort that NATO has cast Russia in an 'enemy' image and anchored a whole new purposive agenda on that platform. Unshackling it can lead to the unraveling of the western alliance system itself. The New York Times today reported that the Washington establishment connived with the US' NATO allies to present a fait accompli at the recent summit meeting of the alliance in Brussels.

In fact, the Trump administration has just announced plans to create a new Space Force as the sixth branch of its military to prepare for "the next battlefield" to counter Russia and China, which are "aggressively" working to develop anti satellite capabilities. Announcing this at the Pentagon on August 9, US Vice-President Mike Pence said, China and Russia have been conducting highly sophisticated on-orbit activities that could enable them to maneuver their satellites into close proximity of ours, posing unprecedented new dangers to our space systems...

We must have American dominance in space, and so we will. President Trump promptly tweeted, "Space Force all the way!" And this comes soon after the announcement by Washington that it would impose extensive new sanctions against Moscow by August 22, including bans on a wide range of exports, by the end of the month as punishment for the alleged nerve agent attack on former Russian agent Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia in Britain in March.

The State Department has further threatened another wave of sanctions in 3 months' time, including a lowering of the diplomatic relations with Russia. Without doubt, within a month of the Helsinki summit, US-Russia relations are in free fall once again. Moscow has strongly reacted. PM Dmitry

Medvedev warned on Friday that tightening up of economic sanctions against Russia may be treated as a declaration of economic war, to which Russia will respond with all economic, political and other means possible.

Similarly, China and the US are embroiled in an escalating trade war. On Wednesday, Beijing unveiled a list of US\$16 billion worth of American goods it plans to hit with tariffs. This is response to Washington's announcement the previous day that it would impose 25 per cent tariffs on an equivalent value of Chinese exports.

An editorial in the government owned China Daily on Thursday flagged that “the possibility that the two countries are heading for a prolonged trade conflict has to be faced.” Clearly, a closer coordination between Russia and China in a concerted strategy to push back at the US will be a key topic at the consultations in Moscow next week.

The point is, the quasi-alliance between Russia and China cannot be belittled as 'geopolitical signaling' anymore. Just short of a formal military alliance, the two countries are intensifying their cooperation and coordination. In an unusual gesture, Moscow announced well in advance that President Vladimir Putin will be receiving Yang, signaling the high importance that the Kremlin attaches to the strategic consultations with China.

The bottom line is, despite the attempts by American analysts to create dissension in the Sino-Russian relations by propagating that China poses demographic threat to the Russian Far East; that China is conspiring to militarily seize the Siberian Lebensraum; that China is overshadowing Russia in the Central Asian region, etc. the attraction of China is only increasing in Moscow's strategic calculus, thanks to China's formidable economic firepower (with its nominal GDP set to overtake the Eurozone's by the end of this year) and China's rapidly developing technological sophistication.

Of course, Moscow realizes that no significant improvement in the Russian-American relations can be expected either so long as Trump remains in power. To be sure, new directions of Russia-China cooperation will be identified at the talks in Moscow.

Read a commentary, here, by a leading Chinese pundit who envisions the Northern Sea Route (which is a key template of Moscow's Arctic strategies) as an “important component” of China's Belt and Road initiative, and could be considered as “part of an ambitious strategy to change China's land and sea connections to Europe and the world.”

The G-3 global order is a 'pipe-dream' until US has its leadership mission Catharsis

Professor Michael Klare has penned a long piece arguing that Trump's 2016 campaign speeches, though not explicitly mentioning the notion, nonetheless somehow lean towards the prospect of a world managed by the three major powers: the US, China and Russia in some sort of jostling and elbowing way, but one short of war.

Klare notes that: "the proof that Trump sought such an international system can be found in his 2016 campaign speeches and interviews. While he repeatedly denounced China for its unfair trade practices and complained about Russia's nuclear-weapons buildup, he never described those countries as mortal enemies.

They were rivals or competitors with whose leaders he could communicate; and, when advantageous, cooperate. On the other hand, he denounced NATO as a drain on America's prosperity and its ability to maneuver successfully in the world. Indeed, he saw that alliance as eminently dispensable if its members were unwilling to support his idea of how to promote America's best interests in a highly competitive world."

This argument has a certain plausibility, and a number of writers have developed this line into the notion that in 2016 Trump was loosely imagining a grand strategic bargain that would be the foundation for global peace.

Maybe he was then. But I would suggest such a thesis has not been borne out well by events since Trump's Art of the Deal geo-strategy, as we now see, is predicated on US leverage and threat: forcing the capitulation of the counter-party. This tactic does not mesh with hopes for some sort of concert between three esteemed, peer powers. There is just no 'esteem' to Trump's methodology just a push, by any means possible, to secure US ascendancy.

Or, possibly (and perhaps over-generously), Trump's 2016 thinking simply was ahead of its time, and has need to be modified by the bruising encounter with the nature of US governance. In the latter case then, any genuine G3 partnership is unlikely to emerge before America undergoes some sort of deep catharsis. Since, as one US Senator has remarked, his constituents simply cannot (culturally) begin to entertain the notion of not being 'first in the world'.

Professor Russell-Mead has echoed this observation, writing that Trump's '8 May metamorphosis' (the exit from JCPOA), constituted a step-change of direction: one that reflected "Trump's instincts telling him that most Americans are anything but eager for a "post-American" world. Mr. Trump's supporters don't want long wars, "but neither are they amenable to a stoic acceptance of national decline".

It is notable that Russell-Mead firmly links Trump's qualitative shift very precisely to Trump's '8 May metamorphosis' which is to say, to the moment when the US president definitively took the Israeli 'line': exiting from the Iranian nuclear accord, deciding to sanction and to lay siege to Iran's economy, and when he endorsed the (old, never materialized) idea of a Sunni 'Arab NATO', led by Riyadh, that would confront Shi'a Iran.

With passing time, it is possible that Trump may reminisce and conclude that Russell-Mead had been right that this particular decision, indeed, was pivotal in his Presidency; that this decision effectively foreclosed on any grand bargain, struck with Russia or China.

And that, at that precise moment, he lost the option because of Netanyahu's herding of the White House into confrontation with Iran. Of course, the sedition being hatched by the politicized intelligence services of the UK and the US attenuated Trump's political room for manoeuvre, but this was never a factor, per se, for Russia and China not to contemplate a grand bargain with Trump. Iran is, however.

Why? Prof Klare, paradoxically, spells out exactly why there will be no G3 new global order: It is because at the heart of the joint Russian and Chinese strategic partnership was, and continues to be, "a condemnation of global hegemony the drive by any single nation to dominate world affairs along with a call for the establishment of a multipolar international order." It also espouses other key precepts, including unqualified respect for state sovereignty, non-interference in the domestic affairs of other states, and the pursuit of mutual economic advantage.

When Trump unreservedly took the Israeli (or, more accurately the Netanyahu) 'line', he assumed to himself all 'the baggage' that comes with it, too. The 1996 Clean Break document, prepared by a study group led by Richard Perle for Benjamin Netanyahu meshed the Israeli and US neocon camps into one. And they are still umbilically linked. 'Team Trump' now is filled neocons who are unreserved Iran-haters. And Sheldon Adelson (a major Trump donor, a patron of Netanyahu, and the instigator for the US embassy move to Jerusalem), consequently has been able to implant his ally, John Bolton (an arch neocon) as Trump's chief foreign policy advisor.

The Art of the Deal has effectively been neocon-ised into a tool for enlarging American power, rather than for adjusting the global economic order in any way acceptable to the Russia-China axis and there is nothing of 'mutual economic advantage' to be heard of, or seen, these days.

With the Netanyahu 'line', Trump has adopted a policy of regime change for Iran (or, at least the behaviour change on the part of Iran that would amount to its leaders recanting the Iranian Revolution). And with 'Israel first' Trump must acquiesce too, to the necklace of US military bases infusing the Gulf ('containing Iran'), and to arming the hoary old Arab NATO project.

And, with Israel first, Trump (unsurprisingly) is finding obstacles to withdrawing US troops from Syria and Afghanistan (where the Iran as 'malign actor to be contained' argument hinders Trump's campaign commitment to withdraw from the Middle East). Aside from the material fact that Iran is a strategic ally of both China and Russia occupying the pole position in both China's BRI, and Russia's 'heartland strategy' the 'Israel first' strategy, runs a horse and carriage through all that, for which these two states stood, and still stand:

The unilateral US exit from an international agreement without cause; disregard for international law; the unilateral insistence to lay siege to the Iranian economy; disrespect for the sovereignty of another state; interference in the domestic affairs of another state (by fostering MEK dissidence inside Iran); the hegemonic bullying of other states (to enforce secondary sanctions on others), and disdain for mutual economic advantage.

Trump has crossed every boundary. Why would they trust him? The 'sea is always the sea', and, it seems, America is always well America. It doesn't change. Is it the case that Trump had little choice; that the Iran policy was somehow forced on him? That Iran was the price that he needed to pay to have the neocons inside the WH 'tent', rather than outside, in order to somehow inoculate Trump against the John Brennan Robert Mueller cabal? Or, that he needs the 'big' campaign contributions for 2020? And that only unreserved support for Israel can bring it in?

Or, was his alignment with Israel (and the concomitant 'war' on Iran), driven by his obsessive desire to 'undo Obama' in all ways possible? Or, was it never a strategic choice at all, but merely a visceral emanation: a reflection of 'this long-held thing' which Trump has against Iran and for Israel?

History will be the judge; but here is the rub. The motives are beside the point, what matters is this: In the Middle East, his policies will fail. The Iranian people will never capitulate. Trump has painted himself into a tight corner, thanks to Bibi. And the 'deal of the century' for Israel either will not gain the Arab leaders' support, that initially seemed possible; or Trump will impose the plan in the face of no Palestinian support and no consent, in which case, it may prove, ultimately, to be Pyrrhic in a way very damaging to the US.

It is now, a full year later, and still the Deal remains unpublished. The Arab mood is changing: MbZ and MbS have lost their celebrity status; the Palestinian 'file' has been yanked from MbS; and the war in Yemen is eating away Saudi Arabia's regional potentia the war in Yemen simply is corroding away Saudi's power to impose anything at all.

Reports credible reports suggest that John Bolton "thinks that he has the Iranians right where he wants them. He believes that we the US could fight a maritime campaign in the Gulf with next to no losses; and that if necessary [the US] can bomb the Iranian people into unleashing their economic deprivation wrath against the mullahs.

Pompeo agrees with him. He is trying to keep the president buttered up, while pursuing his shared goals with Bolton both cleverly and surreptitiously."

“Iran is not Iraq”, Emile Nakhleh, the former CIA resident Middle East expert, has written adding laconically: “Trump and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo by now should have been briefed about the differences between the two countries”... Iran is a credible military power with regional reach.

Its geographic proximity to Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and other pro-American Gulf Cooperation Council countries make these countries exceedingly vulnerable to Iranian military retaliation in case of an American attack. It's very difficult for Saudi Arabia and its neighbors, despite the American-provided Patriot anti-missile batteries, to protect their oil and water infrastructure.”

Perhaps Mike Pompeo has been briefed about the Shi'a too, and their history of extraordinary endurance in the face of a millennium of repression. Iran is the 'mother ship' for Shi'a everywhere. They constitute possibly 40% of the population of the Middle East (and not the 10%, as generally believed).

They are masters at asymmetric warfare. And if Trump does decide to engage militarily with Iran, then Nakhleh repeats the warning that he gave to US policy-makers before the Iraq war:

“A foreign 'liberation' of a country from its regime very quickly morphs into 'occupation' no matter how much a foreign 'liberator' tries to sugar coat the 'moral' imperatives of its action.

When I briefed a very senior US policymaker on the eve of the Iraq war about the possible reaction from the Iraqi people to the impending America-led war, he dismissively retorted, “You people referring to Nakhleh's agency the CIA must understand that we are liberators not occupiers. We are saving the Iraqi people from that tyrant.”

I told him that the so-called liberation would be short-lived, and that the Islamic world would not support a US war against Iraq, viewing it as yet another “Christian Crusader” war against a Muslim country.”

Trump's '8 May decision' and the 'metamorphosis' of the President's zeitgeist which it necessarily entailed, leaves the US President bereft of anything worthwhile now to offer Putin (except 'best friends' talk, and a little 'here and there' on Syria) and he has nothing (not even mock-ups of Korean beachfront condos as Trump tried with Jong Un), that might raise the slightest interest amongst the Iranians.

This will not change until the US passes through some catharsis, be it financial or political, sufficient to purge this utopian vision of America's unique mission to redeem the world in its own image. Until then, we will continue in our global order of disorder and in grave danger.

Iran's leader bans talks with US

Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei underlined that Iran would not sit to the negotiating table with Washington, and declared a strong ban on talks with the US. "Recently, the US officials have been talking blatantly about us. Beside sanctions, they talk about war and negotiations. They talk about a spirit of war to frighten the cowards," Ayatollah Khamenei said, addressing a large number of Iranian people from all walks of life in Tehran on Monday.

"In the matter of negotiations, they play a poor game. One of them says, negotiations with preconditions, another one says, negotiations without preconditions. Let me address the people on the matter in a few words: There will be no war, nor will we negotiate with the US. This is the gist of the word that all the Iranian people should know. The US has now suggested negotiations; this is not new. This has existed since the beginning of the revolution," he underlined.

Ayatollah Khamenei explained to the audience why Iran has decided not to negotiate with the United States, and asserted, "Why won't we negotiate? The US negotiations formula is this; because the Americans rely on money and power, they consider negotiations as a commercial exchange; when the US wants to negotiate with a party, they determine their main goals, and then they won't retreat even a step away from these goals; they demand the other party to pay a privilege immediately; and if the other party refuses to comply with them, they start to make a fuss, so the other party would surrender; the US itself does not pay anything in exchange for what it takes from the other party; the US only makes strong promises in order to enchant the other party with mere promises; in the final stage, after receiving all the immediate advantages, the US breach their own promises."

"This is the method of the American negotiations. Now should we negotiate with such a fraudulent government? The JCPOA was a clear example of this," Ayatollah Khamenei said, and added, "Even if we ever - impossible as it is - negotiated with the US, it would never ever be with the current US administration."

Ayatollah Khamenei banned any negotiations with the US, saying, "The Islamic Republic can negotiate with the US only when it reaches the power and sovereignty that would nullify US's pressures and domineering efforts; when those efforts have no effect on Iran. Today this is not the case. Thus, I will ban negotiations with the US just as Imam (Khomeini) did."

The Leader of the Islamic Revolution slammed US rhetoric towards Iran, and stated, "The US has become more blatant and ruder in their rhetoric over the past few months. Previously they were not so observant of diplomatic etiquette in their speech either; however, they have become ruder towards all nations."

Ayatollah Khamenei drew an example of US's blatancy in actions and rhetoric, and said, "The example of it is that during the last week, the Saudis committed two crimes: attacking a hospital and attacking a school bus with 40 or 50 innocent children on board. Do you have 8 or 9 year-olds at home? This is a dramatic tragedy. It truly breaks one's heart. The news shook the global conscience. But how did the US react? Instead of condemning the crime, the US said, "We have strategic relations with Saudi Arabia." Is this not shamelessness? What the US president did to two or three thousand children by separating them from their parents, putting them in cages because they were immigrants is an unprecedented crime in history." Ayatollah Khamenei also addressed the recent economic problems of the country, calling "internal factors" as the source of the crisis.

"Scholars and many officials believe that the problem is internal. The problem of gold coin and foreign currency unfolded due to negligence and mismanagement," he said. Ayatollah Khamenei stressed that sanctions may play a role in creating the current economic situation, but that domestic factors are stronger role players on the matter.

"Not that sanctions are not playing a role, but the main reasons lie in the measures taken within the country. If actions are taken more efficiently, more prudently, more swiftly and more firmly, sanctions cannot have much effect and they can be resisted."

"A stupid man tells the Iranian nation that our government spends our money on Syria. This is while his boss - the US president - has admitted that he has spent 7 trillion dollars in the Middle East without gaining anything in return," he said. The Iranian leader further dismissed any chance for war between Tehran and Washington, saying, "No war will occur as, like before, we will never initiate a war; the US won't launch a war either because they know that it would certainly end to their detriment; this is because the Islamic Republic and Iranian nation have proved that any transgressor will be stricken a bigger blow.

Even Reagan, the then President of the US - who was more powerful than the recent presidents - secretly sent McFarlane to Tehran for negotiations but he had to return after 24 hours without any outcome." Ayatollah Khamenei on Saturday agreed to a request by Iran's Judiciary Chief Sadeq Amoli Larijani and ordered special courts to be set up to swiftly deal with financial crimes in the country.

In a letter to Ayatollah Khamenei, Amoli Larijani had called for permission to set up the tribunals in the face of the current special economic conditions which he described as "an economic war". The Supreme Leader accepted the proposal, and said, "The purpose (of the courts) should be to punish corrupt financial criminals swiftly and fairly." Ayatollah Khamenei also urged the judiciary to ensure the courts' accuracy of their rulings.

Amoli Larijani had proposed in his letter that new tribunals be set up for two years and be directed to hand down maximum sentences to those "disrupting and corrupting the economy".

US decreasing military build-up in Persian Gulf

The US has deployed no aircraft carriers in the Persian Gulf region for over five months now and has also reduced the number of its warships in regional waters, information and data available on the US vessels' navigation and remarks by the American officials shows. The US Navy announced on March 27 that USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN-71) aircraft carrier had left the Persian Gulf for the Pacific Ocean.

The US Navy has had no aircraft carrier in the region since March. US defense officials told VOA that the guided-missile destroyer USS The Sullivans was inside the Persian Gulf, and that several ships were stationed at Bahrain, though.

According to data and information available on the US warships' navigation, after Roosevelt carrier and its accompanying destroyers left the Persian Gulf, the Harry S. Truman Carrier Strike Group was headed to the US Navy's 6th Fleet's area of operation to be finally deployed in the Persian Gulf.

The fleet, including Truman and her guided-missile escorts — the cruiser Normandy and destroyers Arleigh Burke and Forrest Sherman — were due to support the NATO forces in the Mediterranean for a while and then head to the Persian Gulf after passing through the Suez Canal. But only three months later, July 17, the US army announced that Truman has returned to Norfolk in Virginia, to be the first US carrier in the past decade which has been sent to Western Asia but not deployed in the Persian Gulf.

Seven-month carrier tours had become routine, but in written statements to the House Armed Services Committee in February and April, Defense Secretary James Mattis and Marine Gen. Joe Dunford, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told lawmakers they wanted to implement what's become known as their "Dynamic Force Employment" concept.

It calls on Navy warships and other military units to become more agile and less predictable in their global deployments, leaving potential foes uncertain about troop movements while reassuring allies that America's armed forces will continue to patrol potential hotspots.

"The National Defense Strategy directs us to be operationally unpredictable while remaining strategically predictable. As such, select units from the USS Harry S. Truman Carrier Strike Group will return to Norfolk, Virginia, this week," said Adm. Christopher Grady, commander of Norfolk-based US Fleet Forces, in a press release in July.

Even, the US amphibious warship USS Iwo Jima (LHD-7) which had been deployed in the Persian Gulf on June 14 to compensate for the absence of carriers left the region several weeks ago and berthed in Mayport on Friday. These developments mean that the US for the first time in the past few years has not deployed any carriers in the Persian Gulf for five months and limited its naval presence in the region to deployment of destroyers and missile-launching warships.

Last week, Admiral John Richardson, chief of naval operations, confirmed the issue in an interview with the VOA. The decrease in the US naval presence in the Persian Gulf is not limited to the carriers and the number of warships and destroyers have also reduced in the region.

The latest information (August 6) about the US naval deployment shows that at present 13 warships are stationed in the US navy fifth fleet's zone of mission which includes the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea, the Arab Sea and a part of the Pacific Ocean.

This is while 19 warships were deployed in the region on March 19, one week before Roosevelt left the Persian Gulf. Also, data indicates that 20 to 25 warships were deployed in the region in the past two years.

The US officials have not explained about their decision to decrease deployment in the Persian Gulf but the US naval forces' performance shows that they have changed their behavior in the region in the past few months despite US President Donald Trump's harsh positions. It seems that the decrease has lowered the cases of unprofessional behavior by the US naval forces and their zero confrontation against the Iranian forces in the Persian Gulf is

'Courtesy FARS news agency'.

Riding on Qatari wings, multi-polarity arrives in the Middle East

The unscheduled arrival of Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, Qatar's emir, in the Turkish capital Ankara throws a new light on regional links

Trust Turkey's Recep Erdogan to have had a game plan when he challenged the Trump administration and promised that the latter will regret its "unilateralist" policies. Some pundits thought Russia and China have been inciting him and are lurking in the shadows to escort Erdogan to a brave new world.

Others fancied that the Eurasian integration processes would now take a great leap forward as Turkey embraced Russia, while a few forecast that Turkey would now sell itself cheap for Chinese money.

And then, there is the ubiquitous prediction in such situations that whoever defied the lone super power would come a cropper and Turkey's fate is going to be miserable. All these apocalyptic predictions overlooked the fact that Turkey may have a 'third way' forward by strengthening even further its strategic autonomy and optimally exploiting its foreign policy options.

This path opened dramatically on Wednesday with the unscheduled arrival of Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, Qatar's emir, in the Turkish capital Ankara.

Economic projects, investments, deposits

Qatar's royal court has announced in a statement that Al-Thani "issued directives that will see the State of Qatar to provide a host of economic projects, investments and deposits" worth \$15 billion to support the Turkish economy. A government source in Ankara told Reuters that the investments would be channeled into Turkish banks and financial markets.

Al-Thani confirmed the direct investment plans in Turkey, which he described as having a "productive, strong and solid economy." He tweeted: "We are together with Turkey and our brothers there, who stand by Qatar and problems of the Ummah."

Erdogan responded, saying his meeting with al-Thani was "very productive and positive." Erdogan thanked the emir and Qatari people for standing with Turkey. "Our relations with friendly and brotherly country Qatar will continue to strengthen in many areas," he tweeted.

At its most obvious level, we may locate the historic Qatari gesture toward Turkey in the matrix of the strong convergence that has accrued in their relationship in recent years in the backdrop of the emergent power dynamic in the Middle East. The axis works on many planes.

On the ideological plane, importantly, the ruling elites in both countries share a unique affinity toward Islamism and in visualizing the Muslim Brotherhood as the vehicle for the democratic transformation of the region. As a result, both have been targeted by Saudi Arabia and the UAE and Egypt.

Joint military exercises

Until the retreat of Qatar from the Syrian killing fields in recent years, it was collaborating closely with Turkey in the failed project to overthrow the Assad regime. Of course, both countries are strong supporters of Hamas, too.

Turkey keeps a military base in Qatar, which may seem symbolic in comparison with the Western bases, but turned out to be an important lifeline for Doha for pushing back at Saudi Arabia and the UAE in the past couple of years. Turkey and Qatar are also planning to hold joint military exercises this year.

Riyadh and Abu Dhabi resent Erdogan's projection of power through Qatar into the GCC territory, which they regard as their playpen. The Turks in turn suspect that Emiratis had a hand in the failed coup attempt against Erdogan in July 2016. Meanwhile, there is great complementarity in the economic sphere between Turkey and Qatar. Turkey has a dynamic export industry and an economy that has registered impressive growth in the last decade, while Qatar has a huge surplus of capital for investment.

One consideration for Doha will be that the Turkish construction industry, which is affected by the present financial crisis in Turkey, is involved in preparing the infrastructure for the FIFA World Cup 2022, which Qatar is hosting.

Fundamentally, therefore, the planned Qatari investment in the Turkish economy holds big resonance for the geopolitics of the Middle East. No doubt, it proclaims the adulthood of the Turkish-Qatari axis. Regional states ranging from Iran to Israel will carefully take note that Al-Thani has come to Erdogan's help at a critical moment.

Some spice in a heady brew

Yet, the Qatar-Turkey axis will not project itself as a strategic defiance of the United States although the Qatari emir is well aware of Erdogan's face-off with the Trump administration. Nonetheless, what adds some spice to this heady brew is that the Trump administration has been unabashedly partial toward the Saudi-Emirati line-up in the Gulf region. A recent American report even claimed that former US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson lost his job because he stood in the way of a Saudi-Emirati plan to attack Qatar.

At any rate, the apt description for the Turkish-Qatari axis is that it is a manifestation of the arrival of multi-polarity in the politics of the Middle East. Both Turkey and Qatar have good relations with Iran. Although US Central Command is headquartered in Doha, Al-Thani also has a warm relationship with Russian President Vladimir Putin, too.

In the power dynamic of the Middle East, the trend toward multipolarity is poised to accelerate. As time passes, conceivably, even Saudi Arabia and the UAE will see the attraction in strengthening their strategic autonomy.

It will be a fallacy, therefore, to continue viewing the Middle East through the Cold War prism, as most US analysts do, as an area of contestation between the big powers as if the regional states don't have a mind of their own or multiple options in developing their policies.

Simply put, Turkey or Iran may lean toward Russia, but can never forge a strategic alliance with Moscow. With a view to pushing back at US pressure, they may lean decidedly toward Moscow from time to time, but they have no intentions of surrendering their strategic autonomy.

But to caricature these countries as passive participants in Russia's Eurasian integration processes will be delusional. Russia understands this complicated reality, which is not surprising, given Moscow's historical memory of its highly problematic relationships with Turkey and Iran through centuries in its imperial history.

Thus, the Russian policy is not unduly demanding and is willing to accept their nationalist mindset. On the other hand, the failure of the US policies lies in Washington's inability to accept equal relationships and its obsession, 'You're either with us, or are against us.'

Make no mistake, the European capitals watch with exasperation the Trump administration's handling of Erdogan although he is by no means an easy customer to handle. The point is, European countries are closer to Russia in their appreciation of the complexities of the Middle East. Nor are European countries inclined to view Turkey through the Israeli prism.

Therefore, a concerted Western strategy toward Erdogan under US leadership will remain elusive. Germany's decision to lift its sanctions against Turkey can be seen in this light. Equally, Erdogan is due to pay a state visit to Germany in September.

Changing the status quo in Kashmir

The consistent application of human rights standards would allow a just and peaceful resolution of this 71 year-old issue

Dr. Ghulam Nabi Fai

India is celebrating its 72nd Independence Day to commemorate its freedom from colonial British Raj. We extend our warm greetings to the people of India on their Independence Day celebration. India certainly has the right to celebrate this historic day within its legal boundary. But the world's largest "democracy" had no such democratic intentions for Kashmir.

It was India which brought the issue of Kashmir to the United Nations in January 1948. The Security Council adopted resolutions on Kashmir, which were agreed upon by both India and Pakistan. The substance of these resolutions was to create the Ceasefire Line, which was to end the war, stave off further conflict between India and Pakistan and pave the way for a plebiscite in which the people of Jammu and Kashmir could decide for themselves whether they wished to join India or Pakistan, or be free to chart their own course as an independent state.

Later, India defied these resolutions because she knew Kashmiris will never vote in her favour. Therefore, India persists in allying itself with a position that has no legal, moral or constitutional authority to celebrate this auspicious Day in Kashmir which is not the integral part of its territory. In fact under international law, today, Kashmir does not belong to any member country of the United Nations.

It is recognized by the United Nations as a disputed territory whose future is yet to be decided by its people. The issue of Kashmir is by no definition a border dispute between India and Pakistan, nor a struggle between theocracy and secularism, nor a fight between Hindus and Muslims.

It is about honouring the political and human rights of the 22 million Kashmiri people in accordance with international law, justice and morality. It is a fact that India's intransigence and the world's hesitation to fulfil its commitment drove the people of Kashmir to be more assertive in their struggle.

In the thirty years of the latest phase of their struggle, since 1990 alone, Kashmir is have suffered the loss of more than 100,000 civilians ? men, women and children, and have borne the perpetration of countless atrocities by almost 700,000 armed and paramilitary forces concentrated in Kashmir as an army of occupation. Since 1990 alone, Kashmiris have lost more than 100,000 civilians.

Men, women and children and have borne the perpetration of countless atrocities the 700,000-strong military and paramilitary forces occupying Kashmir. It is evident that maintaining the status quo is not conducive to a peaceful settlement of the conflict. Tensions on both sides continue to spiral upward and the introduction of nuclear weapons into the equation has raised the stakes considerably.

For addressing the human rights violations in Kashmir and bringing India to the negotiating table, the international community lacks neither the carrot nor the stick. The stick is nothing but the reverse side of the coin that signifies the carrot. And India badly needs the carrot. We believe that the consistent application of human rights standards would allow a just and peaceful resolution of the seventy-one year old issue.

It would directly help India to extricate itself from the quagmire of international conflicts and accumulation of weaponry, to realize its economic and technological potential and truly rise to the stature of a great power. It would also release Pakistan from a crippling burden. It would thus bring the lasting credit to the foreign policy of the world powers in the region of South Asia.

It is ironic that the United Nations still hopes that the dispute could be settled through bilateral peaceful talks between India and Pakistan. Bilateral talks and negotiations over Kashmir between parties have proven sterile for 70 years, and nothing in that dismal equation has changed. We have had the litany of failed bilateral efforts.

Now is the time to acknowledge that trilateral talks between India, Pakistan and the Kashmiris, are the only way to resolve the Kashmir dispute. We urge the world powers to resist the temptation to jettison its traditional foreign policy championing democracy and human rights in the case of Kashmir, in the name of big power politics or economic opportunities in India. Down that road lies a troublesome blow to international law and amity. A promising first step towards a just and peaceful settlement of the Kashmir tragedy would be the recognition by the world powers, of the Kashmiri leadership as the genuine partner in the negotiations along with India and Pakistan.

We call on the United Nations to persuade both India and Pakistan to accede to international law in Kashmir, to cooperate in holding a referendum administered by a neutral agency, and to welcome third party intervention to solve any prickly details. With good will and long-headed statesmanship the de-escalation initiatives in Kashmir by the Governments of India and Pakistan will flower into a peace with justice and charity for all.

The writer is the Secretary General of World Kashmir Awareness Forum and can be reached at gnfai2003@yahoo.com.

'Courtesy Daily Times'.

IAF control of combat aircraft development at HAL Is that a good thing?

By Bharat Karnad

The Rafale deal has gone into a death spiral. With BJP stalwart leaders Yashwant Sinha and Arun Shourie making a cogent case about things going awry with the purchase of 36 Rafale combat aircraft from France and fueling charges of corruption and crony capitalism (re: the choice of Anil Ambani's Reliance Defence as offsets partner chosen by Dassault Avions), and Rahul Gandhi piling on with accusations along the same lines, especially overjoyed that his Congress Party has finally 'Rafale' to tar Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party with.

This means that in popular discourse, Rafale will soon resonate in the same negative way with voters as 'Bofors' did, and still does. These developments have followed the script I had outlined soon after the PM announced the Rafale buy in Paris in April 2015. [Look up my posts on Rafale from that time.] The Indian Air Force brass and the Nirmala Sitharaman-headed MOD realize they are in a mess not of their immediate making. Sitharaman's brandishing of supposed contract papers in Parliament sidestepped the fact that these documents do indeed provide for secrecy but only related to the "commercial" terms of the deal, not for what it will all cost a sum that will have to be intimated one way or the other to Parliament, CAG, etc and will come into the public domain.

In any case, Vayu Bhavan, should be aware, as Dassault and the French government of Emmanuel Macron, perhaps, are that the slight chance of the 36 Rafales being the proverbial "wedge in the door" that will open to a still richer contract for 100 additional Rafales with the full complement of the exorbitantly priced A2A Meteor and A2G Scalp missiles and spares holdings for 72% serviceability, etc., has evaporated.

Worse, no one hereafter in the political class or MOD will for a long time touch Dassault-related goods with a barge pole any more than they will agree, for instance, to the HDW 214 conventional diesel submarine offered by the Marine Division of Thyssen-Krupp Company of Germany for the Indian Navy for its Project 75i.

This is because of the payoffs & commissions scandal that accompanied the contract for six HDW 209 submarines (which along with deal for the Bofors gun) marked the tenure of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in the 1980s. That's the inevitable fate of any high value defence contract skirting procedures in any way, or otherwise failing to "manage" the perceptions of the reality of "corruption".

The Modi government may be trying to divert attention from the political kerfuffle over Rafale by its decision to hand over control of HAL, B'lore, to the Indian Air Force in order, it is reported, to minimize time and cost overruns on the Tejas light combat aircraft production programme, particularly its upgraded Mk-2 variant.

Indian newspapers seems to be willing carriers of a lot defence-related "fake news" fake, in the sense, that their reporters are rarely knowledgeable to separate the chaff from the grain and usually regurgitate whatever is told them by MOD, and the PR offices of Armed Services HQrs without ever cross-checking for the truth.

Thus, in an early Aug story, one particular daily wrote of the huge delays in the LCA programme initiated in 1983, and in securing the Final Operational Clearance for the aircraft, without mentioning that the real funding of the project began only in 1999 and the fact that ADA had a prototype flying by 2006 was a commendable achievement, and that the FOC problems are as much a function, as stated repeatedly in my posts on this blog, of the IAF insisting on a battle-ready fighter plane with fully integrated weapons and the avionics suite working tickety-boo even as every other major air force, including the US Air Force, allows for the operational fine tuning of a new combat aircraft in parallel with its induction, so FOC follows induction, not the other way around per IAF's modus operandi.

Moreover, none of these newspapers have reported that on a comparable basis the Rs 8,000 odd-crores invested in the LCA so far and the 18-odd years it has taken for the Tejas to come into its own outcores by far the record of Lockheed Martin and the US Government which have spent in excess

of one trillion US Dollars and taken over 20 years to field the latest combat aircraft for use by the three US military Services the F-35, which has turned out to be such a bad aircraft and so ineffective as to be a laughing stock of the aviation world!

And to think that F-35 is parented by Lockheed, which over the last 100 years has designed literally hundreds of combat aircraft. Now juxtapose the F-35 development by Lockheed with the extraordinary performance of the LCA project, and what do you get a consistent display of bad faith by IAF's not believing in Indian talent and not trusting indigenous combat aircraft.

And, despite the heinous history of the IAF deliberately and in cold blood, as I have written, killing off the indigenous multi-role HF-73 designed by the gifted designer Dr. Raj Mahindra, the successor to Dr. Kurt Tank's Marut HF-24 (which decades after its killing and because it is safe to do so, is now praised by IAF chiefs such as ACM Krishnaswamy in my new book 'Staggering Forward: Narendra Modi and India's Global Ambition' to be released in market Aug 15, as an extraordinary low level strike aircraft in its time that was also able to achieve super-cruise without afterburners), in favour of the British Jaguar in the mid-1970s that could do neither!

The IAF's preferring the Jaguar wiped out the painstakingly built-up Marut technological and R&D base and, more significantly, two entire generations of Indian aircraft designers and developers at HAL, forcing the ADA and the LCA project in 1983 to start out anew, from zero technology and design and development base.

Which last brings us to the core of this post: the IAF's control of HAL and combat aircraft programme in the country. What motivated the Modi regime to do this is not known because the country has experience of long years of the IAF brass running the HAL, an experience that should have been salutary and warned against letting foxes guard the hen house! Consider the disastrous record of HAL under several IAF officers, including a couple of CASs and senior Air Marshals, to get an idea of what may be in store.

Air Chief Marshals PC Lal, OP Mehra and LM Katre were chairman, HAL, in 1966-69, 1971-73 and in the early Eighties respectively. In between the tenures of Mehra and Katre, the post was occupied by Group Captain Baljit K. Kapur (whose claim to fame is that he seeded a milieu of corruption in HAL, spawning the most notorious arms agent, Sudhir Choudhrie his nephew, that the country has known, who acquired deep pockets and exploited his even deeper connections in the military, the political class, and the bureaucracy, to forge multi-billion dollar defence deals and then escaped trouble by bribing his way out of two CBI investigations.

Lal and Mehra were centrally at HAL controls when the HF-24 was being produced, and which aircraft was so callously treated by the air force that brand new Maruts were actually flown out of HAL assembly line and straight into junk yards! Messrs Lal, Mehra, Kapur and Katre were all aware of Dr Mahindra designing the HF-73 and did less than nothing to promote it with the Service that the three (minus Kapur) went on to head or had led as CAS.

Air Marshal SJ Dastur was chairman and known for decisiveness but, like his fellow GDPs, did little to push indigenous effort, or to create a sustainable aviation industry in India but like all these characters was content to have HAL screwdriving imported aircraft under license manufacture schemes. Indeed, these airmen may be seen to have been complicit, even guilty owing to their acts of omission and commission, to do away with the indigenous capability altogether over time in conspiracy with the Vayu Bhavans.

Had any Indian PM after Jawaharlal Nehru, who nursed the Marut programme and imported Kurt Tank of Focke-Wulf fame for the purpose, been strategic visioned and utterly nationalist, or had there been a nationalist-minded IAF chief or a self-sufficiency driven chairman in HAL cockpit, and taken on himself the onus of building on the base that Tank had erected in Bangalore, Indian combat aviation industry would have been two decades ahead of China today.

Think of it. And then think of all the excuses a succession of Indian prime ministers, Chiefs of Air Staff, and chairmen of HAL have since given to explain why the country is in the pits, and one begins to understand the problem that is at hand, but one that is amenable to a solution by strong-willed leadership.

A nationalist-minded air chief determined to see India become self-sufficient in combat aircraft would have ensured that with or without the Indian government's help the IAF prioritised fighter aircraft design and development in-country and, as a self-respecting chairman, HAL, accelerated their production. Then again, IAF has never had a true nationalist at its apex.

It has thus transpired that India, which started out with a bang by designing, developing, manufacturing and flying the HF-24 the first supersonic aircraft fully crafted nose to tail outside of Europe and North America, was reduced in slow stages to a country that meets all its aircraft needs from abroad and an IAF to a minor, tactical-level force without the professional nous to even appreciate the need for a strategic bomber in the fleet and, therefore, without one and also without a genuine strategic capability and, hardware requirements-wise, a full-blown foreign dependency!

So, what gives Prime Minister Modi the confidence that an HAL with an IAF officer in-charge will fare any better than with a DRDO / HAL time-server in the chair? Because theatre commands are prized as are the top posts in the air hierarchy in Delhi, some sodden fool of an Air Marshal will be hoisted with the charge of HAL where he will do Vayu Bhavan's bidding which is to pave the way for buying more aircraft from the West!!

To suggest as some have done that all aspects of combat aircraft production, including design and development, be brought under the IAF would be to risk the Tejas Mk-2 and the successor Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft programme being run into the ground, the better for Air HQrs to then make the case to the government in the future that IAF needs to import more aircraft!

The answer is to de-bureaucratize the aerospace sector, compel ADA to transfer Tejas technologies with source codes the know why and know how to the private sector so that credible, hard driving, profit-generating, private sector aircraft producers that get into foreign sales from get-go, and emerge from the present morass to offer competition to the DPSUs, which will the latter a lot of good in making them sharper, more efficient, and for India to rise as a consequential all round air power that doesn't have an air force operating at the sufferance of numerous vendor states.

Partition of Punjab

Excerpts from 'disastrous twilight A personal record of the partition of India

By Major General Shahid Hamid

A Personal Record of the Partition of India' by Major-General Shahid Hamid was published in 1986 by Leo Cooper. The author was Private Secretary, 1946-47, to Field Marshal Claude Auchinleck who was the last Commander-in-Chief in British India from 20th Oct 1943 to 26th Sept 1947. Shahid Hamid saw the unfolding of critical events from close quarters as the C-in-C's office was privy to all matters, military, political or administrative. He kept a record of all important happenings, which is valuable material for history on all vital aspects of the Partition. It includes Mountbatten's role in the events that led to the carnage of Muslims.

Author's Introduction in his own words. I had never met Field Marshal Sir Claude Auchinleck before I was selected to be his first Indian Private Secretary. Why I was selected for the post I do not know... I was fortunate to witness many historic events, and also to meet the men who made them possible. This gave me a unique insight into the character of the leaders and their approach to the national problems that were facing them. I was able to record their opinions, expressed both privately and in the open... I saw small men entrusted with great jobs, playing with the destiny of millions. This book has been written incorporating the diary I kept diligently in those days. It is not just a record of events, but includes my reactions to what I saw, what I heard and what came across my desk. [p. vii]

I have come to the conclusion that someday I may publish my diaries as a book; for in it there will be certain facts brought to light of which few people have knowledge. [p. 240] The Sikhs' Reaction to the Partition Plan.4 June: When Mountbatten announced his (June 3) Plan, the Sikhs promptly perfected their plan for revenge. Led by their warrior class and assisted by their leaders, they have organized themselves into 'Jathas' (gangs). They have adopted force and terror tactics. They are now preparing their followers physically and psychologically for the brutalities to be inflicted on the Muslims. The Congress High Command is encouraging them and calls them the 'sword arm of the Congress'.

Mountbatten at no stage encouraged the Sikhs to come to a settlement with the Muslim League which would have partially avoided the massacre. In fact he encouraged them to stay with the Congress. When the Sikhs became violent he arrested none. [p.180,181]

Radcliffe's Appointment.28 June 1947: It had been decided to ask Sir Cyril Radcliffe to be the head of the Punjab and Bengal Boundary Commissions. I think that it is a great mistake as he can be influenced by Mountbatten. It would have been far better to have selected a man from a country outside the Commonwealth. [P.194] Boundary Commission.22 July: The Boundary Commission has been set up and has started its deliberations. [P.208] 24 July: The Punjab Boundary Force has been positioned. It is too small a force to be effective. The Sikhs have decided to ignore it and put their plan of vengeance into operation. There have been riots in Dehra Dun, Meerut, Pilibhit, Alwar and Bharatpur. Many Muslims are being massacred [p.209,210].

Efforts to Influence the Boundary Commission.21 July 1947: Baldev Singh* has asked Major Short** to fly out to India and use his influence to get the Boundary Line drawn as much to the West as possible. [p. 208] * A top Sikh leader; Mountbatten knew Baldev Singh was the treasurer of a fund that the Sikhs were collecting for buying arms.[p.163] **Major Short, an old officer of XI Sikh Regiment and a great Sikh enthusiast; arrived on 28 July, stayed with Baldev, attached to Mountbatten's staff and was their unofficial adviser on Sikh affairs.[p.211]. Short had been introduced to Mountbatten by Cripps as the authority on Sikh affairs. [p.180]

Hindus also for Killing Muslims.4 August:Evan Jenkins, the Governor of Punjab, says that when the Hindus mention that ruthless action must be taken to restore law and order they mean that every Muslim should be killed. [P.219] Boundary Award Delayed. 9 August 1947: Everyone is talking about the impending Boundary Award. On many occasions Radcliffe, supported by his secretary, Beaumont, had said that the Muslim Majority Tehsils of Ferozpur which include the Canal

Headworks, Zehra and Moga, will form part of Pakistan. It is said that yesterday (8 August) Radcliffe had finalised the Award. He has now submitted it to Mountbatten, who is trying to keep it a closely guarded secret. Many of its salient points have already leaked out through the staff of the Boundary Commission and through his own staff.

A copy of the Award, unwittingly, and unknown to Mountbatten, has been sent by George Abell* to the Secretary of the Governor of Punjab and is known to many. It is common talk that Mountbatten is busy changing it giving India a corridor to Kashmir through Gurdaspur as well as the Ferozpur Headworks. The Muslims are very jittery. Radcliffe originally said that he would require one to two years to establish the Boundary Line but Mountbatten has over-ruled him. He wants him to base it on the 'rule of thumb'. There is continuous consultation between the Congress, the Sikhs, the Princes and Mountbatten. Something is cooking. Nobody knows the date of the announcement of the Award. It is up to Mountbatten.

Governor of Punjab has been asked by Mountbatten for advice as to the date of announcement. It is also said that the Viceroy will not be issuing the Award in the form of a communiqué from the Viceroy's House. It will be published as a Gazette Extraordinary under the instructions of the Boundary Commission. Mountbatten wants to give the impression to the world that he had nothing to do with it. [P.222] *George Abell entered the ICS in 1928; Private Secretary to the Viceroy 1945-47. Rioting by Sikhs.9 August 1947: Rioting by Sikhs has started. This is in accordance with their plan. [P.223] C-in-C Pakistan Army on the Delay in the Award.11 August: General Frank Messervy is of the opinion that the postponement of the Boundary Commission Award is causing uncertainty and immense bloodshed. [p.224]

Shocking Report of the Boundary Force.11 August: A report has been received from the Punjab Boundary Force which says that:

v The refugee problem, mainly from Eastern Punjab to Western Punjab is becoming increasingly difficult.

v The disturbances are producing an average of two hundred to five hundred killings a day. Raids are organized and usually carried out by well-armed gangs of Sikhs.

v Derailment of trains is a common occurrence. The Maharajah of Faridkot himself is known to be organizing the operations.

v On arrival in Amritsar to take over their duties, the non-Muslim Police disarmed the Muslim members of the Police Force. [p.224]

Messervy's Alarming Report.11 August: General Messervy has also reported that the situation in Punjab is really bad. The Sikhs are operating large numbers of gangs and timely information about their movement is impossible. The situation in Amritsar is fast deteriorating as a result of the disarming of the Muslim Police by the Hindu Superintendent of Police. [p.224]

The Sikhs' Ghastly Behaviour. 13 August: In a conference in Lahore, Jenkins, the Governor, and Pete Rees, Commander of the Boundary Force, gave their views on the prevailing situation. They painted a very gloomy picture. They said that the Sikhs were behaving with 'pre-medieval ferocity', and felt the worst had still to come.

The C-in-C made a note. 'The delay in announcing the Award of the Boundary Commission is having a most disturbing and harmful effect.' [P.225] Late Announcement of Award led to the Storm of Killings.16 August: There was a meeting of the Joint Defence Council under the chairmanship of Mountbatten. It was attended by Nehru, Vallabhai Patel, Baldev Singh and Liaquat Ali Khan. Auchinleck gave his views on what he had seen in the last few days and on the discussion he had with Governor Jenkins and Major-General Thomas Rees. He emphasized that the delay in announcing the Award of the Boundary Commission had resulted in the wildest rumours, even to the extent, for example, that Lahore will be part of India. This has given fresh impetus to the killings by the Sikhs. The Award should have been announced on 9 August, as Jenkins had suggested earlier. Patel said rioting at Rawalpindi started a chain reaction. He admitted that Tara Singh had made indiscreet and inflammable speeches, which had added fuel to the fire. Liaquat openly said that the whole thing had been carefully engineered by the Sikhs under the guidance of Baldev. Nehru sat

depressed and in a daze. He asked whether there was a military escort on every train. If so, why did the massacres take place? He was told that the gangs got on to the train with their arms concealed. Once on, they then attacked suddenly.

Mountbatten tried to humour everyone and admitted that he hoped he had not made too big a mistake by not announcing the Award on 9 August. He said that the storm was not unexpected, but its extent could not have been anticipated. He said he now realized that if he had rounded up the Sikh trouble-makers, including Tara Singh, he would not have had to face this day. [p.234]

Mountbatten's Underhand Alterations. 16 August: The Award has been shown to the leaders. It is a black day for Pakistan. All the rumours were true about Mountbatten amending the findings, and that he has destroyed the proof. What he did not realize was that, by mistake, a copy was sent to the Secretary of the Governor of Punjab which Jenkins gave to his successor, Francis Mudie, who handed it over to Liaquat. This has horrified Mountbatten. The amendments Mountbatten made were common knowledge. The Canal Headworks at Ferozepore have been awarded to India on the instigation of his great friend, the Maharajah of Bikaner who, on 11 August, sent his Prime Minister, Sirdar Pannikar, and his Chief Engineer, Kanwar Sain, to see him. It has convinced the Muslims that Mountbatten altered the Award. Finally, Nehru was instrumental in getting the Award altered. A corridor has been provided to Kashmir. [p.235]

The Treacherous Alterations in the Boundary Award. The Pakistan Times, 18 August 1947, reported, 'In the Punjab the notional division had been unfair but the final Award has gone much further and hacked off some of our richest tracts of land. The blow has been the hardest in Gurdaspur where the two Muslim Tehsils of Gurdaspur and Batala with a Muslim majority have been thrown into Hindustan along with the Pathankot Tehsil, taking away from Pakistan the rich Muslim industrial area of Batala. A part of Lahore has been broken off. Radcliffe has gone to the trouble of drawing a village to village boundary but the Ajnala Tehsil of Amritsar District with a 60 per cent Muslim majority and contiguous to the District of Lahore has been completely forgotten. The Tehsils of Zehra and Ferozepore with a clear Muslim majority have been dismissed with talk of "disruption of communication".' [p.236]

Mountbatten Lied about the Alterations. 16 August: Mountbatten says that he received the Award on 13 August and signed it on the 15th. Everyone knows this is not correct. The late announcement has caused havoc because of the uncertainty of which areas would finally belong where. Mountbatten wanted the bloodbath to happen when the two Governments had been established so that the responsibility would not be his. [p.235] Award Published. 17 August: The Boundary Award was published today. [P.236] Sikhs on the Rampage. 17 August: A meeting of the Joint Defence Council has been held in Ambala. Rees told the meeting that without the Punjab Boundary Force the slaughter would have been far greater. The Sikhs are burning the country from Lahore to Julundhur and turning it into a battlefield.

Percy Howard wrote in The Sunday Express, 'It was really the movement of the Sikh community out of the new Pakistan which sparked off the great killings in the Punjab and they acted like savages.' [P.236] Sikhs' Private Army. 19 August: Situation in the Punjab, especially Amritsar, is bad. Sikh personnel of the (disbanded) Indian National Army (of Subhas Chandra Bose) have formed a Private army for the slaughter of the Muslims. They want to ensure the elimination of Muslims from the Sikh areas of the Punjab. The Indian Government is incapable of controlling the Sikhs. Trains to Pakistan are being looted each day and their occupants slaughtered. [p.237]

Appalling Situation in Delhi. 5 September: Situation in Delhi is extremely critical. Muslims are being hunted and butchered in the streets, and the bodies lie rotting. Arson and looting are the order of the day. [P.246] Bloodshed was Pre-Planned. 8 September: Sikhs in Simla have been slaughtering the Muslims according to a pre-arranged plan. The civil administration in east Punjab is practically non-existent. There too the Muslims are being slaughtered according to a concerted plan [p.246].

Ban on 'Kirpans' Withdrawn. 13 September: (From letter to Mountbatten by Auchinleck). "I feel I must tell you of my fears about the present situation. I see in today's newspaper that the ban placed on 'Kirpans' has been virtually withdrawn. The general public, here and all over India, can place one

interpretation only on this action, which is that the Government does not really mean to grasp this problem of asserting its authority over the forces of disorder. The inference is that it is afraid to deal with the Sikhs as they should be dealt with.”[p.249]

Governor Jenkins' Official Records were burnt. Once when I met Jenkins and pressed him to write his memoirs, he replied that, 'It is not in the interest of the Commonwealth.' It is known that at the time of his departure from India he was warned by Mountbatten not to speak out. He was ordered to burn all his official papers, which included many connected with the Boundary affair, but still a few papers including the original sketch map demarcating the boundaries between the two Dominions before it was altered by Mountbatten fell into the hands of Francis Mudie, the Governor, who gave them to Liaquat. [P.300].

India must act alone in Asia's new great game

By Padma Rao Sundarji

The United States is showering goodies on India and it's not even Christmas yet. The frosty vibes of the Indira Gandhi-Richard Nixon/Henry Kissinger era of the 1970s and the indecisiveness of bilateral ties under latter-day coalitions in New Delhi seem like yesterday's news now. India has been exempted from the heat of the American sanctions on Russia. There's an even bigger deal Washington granting New Delhi the coveted Strategic Trade Authorization (STA-1) status, allowing it hassle-free access to American defence technology. That's a multiple snub to China. India, and not the United States' largest trading partner China, will join Japan and South Korea as only the third Asian nation with STA-1 status. India is a member of three out of four export control regimes whose members alone hold STA-1. Giving it to India now implies that India is worthy of membership of the fourth the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), where China has been blocking India's entry.

There's also significant progress on trade tariffs. And finally, there's determined movement from the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, or the "Quad" the grouping of the US, Japan, Australia and India on its chief goal of containing an aggressively ambitious China. The United States will set aside \$113 million for its Indo-Pacific Economic Vision. Australia and Japan too have announced investments. US secretary of state Mike Pompeo calls it a "strategic partnership, not dominance". But it's an obvious move to check China's controversial Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Gloomy commentators in New Delhi have written off the Quad's plans by comparing the meagre sum with the reported Chinese investment of over \$1 trillion on BRI. But this is shallow reasoning. The other Quad members are yet to quantify their investments, while history is full of examples of the United States upping or downing its tranches to suit its immediate strategic interests.

And of course, there's the small matter of India being the world's fastest-growing economy today and the only Quad member with deep cultural ties in Asia, especially in its immediate neighbourhood. But the Quad states each have their share of baggage across the Indo-Pacific region and South Asia, with the US carrying the heaviest load in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Sectarian conflict, deep-rooted suspicion of America, terrorist anarchy and China's strategic stranglehold through its Belt and Road Initiative investments mean that it won't be easy to link US-led projects to China's BRI merely in the spirit of a new "partnership". There will be no Indian backroom service providers either. Justifiably, New Delhi will not talk to Islamabad as long as the latter supports terror. India has also taken strong objection to the Pakistan leg of China's BRI, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), cutting through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. Quad or not, India is hardly going to help along any "partnerships" with China that benefit the latter's close ally Pakistan in any way whatsoever.

But what has made it so seemingly easy for China to invest and reap rich dividends across Asia? Its steely-eyed indifference to "human rights violations" and domestic tussles, for one. Its speed at executing projects, for another. While international control regimes continue to red-flag Islamabad, China supports Pakistan's ballistic missiles and nuclear programmes, ignores Islamabad's terror factories, and has steam rolled ahead with investment and development. It's the same across the whole of South Asia. Nepal is now a part of BRI, while Kathmandu's relations with India are at their lowest level in decades. Will India show "partnership, not dominance", for instance, by helping cut an eight-lane highway from Nepal's Indian border to its Chinese one to connect with a BRI road or railway line in the name of "partnership"?

That looks hardly likely. Since the Doklam standoff last year made it clear that China was heightening its surveillance on India's border troops, New Delhi is hardly going to roll out the tarmac to aid the PLA's arrival on its doorstep. Bangladesh is also a part of the BRI since 2016. Deals worth \$21.5 billion have been signed and China has its eye on a deep-water port in the country. Bhutan may not have formal diplomatic relations with China but there is a significant thaw since China's deputy foreign minister visited Thimphu last month. In Sri Lanka, the public euphoria over China's

investments may have turned into anger over the stifling external debt that it has caused. But few Sri Lankans have forgotten that while India dithered and the United States led the world in attacking Colombo for “human rights violations” during the end of its long civil war, China and Pakistan sent weapons and supported Colombo in international forums.

In the Maldives, China has supported dictator-President Abdullah Yameen and been rewarded with an entire atoll and plenty of projects. To stress the closeness between the United States and India, Mr Pompeo pointed out that the US consulate in Kolkata (of 1792 vintage) was the oldest in India. But Princeton University scholar Richard Sambasivam in an essay traces US-India ties even farther back in time. Ten years before the opening of the consulate, Washington had supported “India” by backing the princely state of Mysore against the British. More than 200 years later, the players have changed but the game remains the same. China is the new British East India Company and its stranglehold diplomacy over much of developing Asia means that if push comes to shove in those countries, Beijing will ultimately call the shots. The United States will challenge that by upping own stakes. And invariably, economic confrontation will have larger political implications for the entire region. Unless it really has a strategy for a victory beneficial to itself, India should pull out of such a joust and set up its own game board elsewhere.

The writer is a senior foreign correspondent and the author of Sri Lanka: The New Country.

'Courtesy The Asian Age'.

UK government review backs subsidies for mini nuclear plants

By Susanna Twidale

Britain should offer developers of mini nuclear plants subsidies similar to those made available to the offshore wind industry, an independent review commissioned by the government said.

Britain needs to invest in new power generating capacity to replace aging coal and nuclear plants that are due to close in the 2020s, and is seeking more low carbon options to help meet its emission reduction targets.

The government has been investigating whether mini nuclear plants so called small modular reactors (SMR) could offer a solution, and whether the industry could help boost much needed exports as Britain leaves the European Union.

The government “should establish an advanced manufacturing supply chain initiative (as it did with offshore wind) to bring forward existing and new manufacturing capability,” said the report by the Expert Finance Working Group on Small Nuclear Reactors.

Government support for offshore wind has enabled that industry to drive down costs, and reduce subsidies. The report also said the nascent SMR industry could provide a boost for British manufacturing and exports. “There is a real short-term opportunity for the UK as supply chains are yet to be established for small nuclear projects (unlike large nuclear with established supply chains largely outside the UK),” the report said.

Rolls Royce (RR.L) which hopes to build SMRs in Britain as part of a consortium, said the export market could be worth as much as 400 billion pounds.

Rolls-Royce Holdings PLC1051.5

Rr. London Stock Exchange

-32.50(-3.00%)

RR.L

FLR.N

SMRs use existing or new nuclear technology scaled down to a fraction of the size of larger plants and would be able to produce around a tenth of the electricity created by large-scale projects.

The mini plants, which could be deployed by 2030 according to the review, would be made in factories, with parts small enough to be transported on trucks and barges where they could be assembled much more quickly than their large-scale counterparts. Britain's nuclear energy minister Richard Harrington said the government would consider the review's findings.

The review “recognises the opportunity presented by small nuclear reactors and shows the potential for how investors, industry and Government can work together to make small nuclear reactors a reality,” he said in a statement.

Rolls-Royce has launched a bid to build SMRs as part of a UK consortium with Amec Foster Wheeler AMFW.L, Nuvia, Arup and Laing O'Rourke, with the Nuclear Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre. Another group to express an interest is NuScale, majority owned by US group Fluor Corp (FLR.N).

Reporting by Susanna Twidale; Editing by Mark Potter

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You might soon see this Chinese fighter all over Africa & Latin America

Especially in Africa and Latin America

By Sebastien Roblin

Lying a high-performance jet fighter is a physically and mentally demanding skill that requires a lot of practice but each hour flying a warplane can cost tens of thousands of dollars in fuel and maintenance expenses. That's why air forces employ lighter, easier-handling Lead-In Fighter Trainers (LIFTs) to give pilots a chance to accumulate real-life experience with supersonic flight, air combat maneuvers, and weapons launch before they take the stick of a possibly finicky high-performance jet fighter.

The thing is advanced jet trainers like South Korea's T-50 Golden Eagle are quite capable of basic combat duties short of high-intensity conflict while costing half or a third as much as a brand new warplane. For example, Filipino FA-50s and Nigerian Alpha Jet trainers have played a major role in combating brutal insurgencies in 2017, though both were involved in tragic friendly fire incidents.

The U.S. Air Force is looking to purchase 350 new LIFT jets following its T-X competition and is evaluating several designs costing between \$30 and \$40 million per airframe. However, China has already been phasing into service its own very slick and speedy LIFT, costing the equivalent of only \$10 to \$15 million, which has attracted interest in Africa and Latin America.

Built by Hongdu in Nanchang, China, the L-15 Falcon resembles an adorably abbreviated Super Hornet or F-16. The Falcon's two Ukrainian-built AL-222 turbofans afford the trainee and instructor a backup should one engine fail, while multi-function displays in the 'glass cockpit' and the hands-on-throttle-and-stick controls give trainees a chance to work with the kinds of instruments typical to fourth-generation fighters.

The Falcon's leading edge extensions on the front of its wings and a high G-load tolerance of 8.5 allow it to perform tight maneuvers and achieve high angles of attack up to 30 degrees above the vector of the plane. Quadruple-redundant fly-by-wire controls on three axes allow for precise maneuvers. These traits are used to prepare pilots for the diverse family of famously super maneuverable twin-engine jets operated by China's People's Liberation Army Air Force and Navy.

The L-15 prototypes first flew in March 2006 and entered service in limited numbers in 2013 as a subsonic Advanced Jet Trainer designated the JL-10. This basic model boasts six hard points to carry bombs, rockets and short-range air-to-air missiles, but lacks a radar to target long-range munitions. However, Hongdu later exhibited a supersonic L-15B model with afterburning turbofans, allowing the Falcon to attain speeds of up to Mach 1.4.

The L-15B also has a lengthened nose to accommodate a Passive Electronically Scanned Array radar with a reported detection range of seven or seventy miles (sources differ) which can scan both air and surface targets. A Radar Warning Receiver added in the tail gives it a fighting chance to dodge missile attacks, while an IFF antenna could help avoid friendly fire incidents. The L-15B also has its payload capacity beefed up to nearly four tons of weapons loaded on nine hard points: six underwing, one belly pylon and two wingtip rails. The instructor's seat can instead be used by a Weapon Systems Officer to manage guided weapons.

One photo depicts an L-15 lugging 23-millimeter cannon in a belly pod, PL-5E heat-seeking air-to-air missiles (distantly related to the AA-2 and Sidewinder), LT-2 laser-guided bombs, and LS-6 GPS - guided bombs with fold-out wings that allow it to glide to targets up to thirty-seven miles away. Reportedly, more modern PL-10 and PL-12 beyond-visual-range radar-guided missiles (range sixty-two miles) could also be carried as well as other air-to-ground munitions.

The L-15B can even lug jamming pods to serve as a cut-price electronic warfare jet. However, while the jet can theoretically fly up to 52,000 feet high and over distances of up to 1,900 miles, when fully combat-loaded its effective radius is reduced to just 350 miles.

Of course, the diminutive L-15B doesn't boast the speed, defenses, sensors and heavy payload of a full-fledged fourth-generation multi-role fighter like the F-16 or Su-35 . But for developing countries that don't expect to fight a major military power, jets like the Falcon could perform basic air defense and precision ground-attack missions, all on a platform that will be cheaper, easier to maintain, and used for training pilots.

The Zambian Air Force so far has acquired six L-15Zs for its No. 15 squadron for \$100 million, plus simulators and various guided weapons. In 2015, Venezuelan Admiral Carmen Mirandez announced plans to acquire one or two dozen L-15s to help pilots transition to Su-30MK2 and F-16 fighters.

However, cash-strapped Caracas has put the deal on hold. The Uruguayan Air Force has also expressed interest in acquiring eight L-15s to replace its A-37B Dragonflies, one of which suffered an accident in 2016. Pakistan, a close ally of China, is another potential operator of the L-15B, but the jet would conflict with plans to acquire two-seat JF-17B jets, which are a Pakistani-Chinese collaboration.

The L-15 also has a rival supersonic domestic jet trainer, the Guizhou JL-9. A heavily modified two-seat derivative of the legendary MiG-21 with cranked delta wings, the turbojet-powered JL-9 is less sophisticated and has only five weapons hardpoints, but is cheaper at \$8.5 million each and the basic model comes with afterburners, an Italian pulse-doppler radar and a built-in 23-millimeter cannon.

JL-9s and carrier-landing capable JL-9Hs serve with the People's Liberation Army and PLA Naval Air Force (PLANAF), and six export models called the FTC-2000 Shanying ("Mountain Eagle") were delivered to Sudan in May 2018. Sudan is infamous for using its warplanes to bombard villages in rebel-held territory, and Russia and China are amongst of the few major arms exporters from which Khartoum can obtain modern weapons.

Meanwhile, China operates between 130 and 150 L-15s in nine squadrons, presumably mostly the subsonic L-15A. In general, Chinese fighter pilots fly a decent number of hours annually but lack adequate training under realistic combat conditions; presumably, weapons-capable and radar-equipped jet trainers could help address that deficiency.

Intriguingly, an L-15 was photographed in 2018 with PLANAF markings (it has been dubbed the JL-10H) suggesting a possible JL-10 variant for training carrier-based pilots. However, some in the Chinese media have expressed doubt that the Falcon's rear fuselage is strong enough to mount a tail hook to practice carrier landings.

The market for trainer/light attack planes is relatively crowded with competitors such as the Russian Yak-130, Italian MB.346, China's subsonic K-8, T-50 Golden Eagle or possibly Boeing's T-X. It is too early to tell whether L-15 and JL-9 will prove a major export success but sales of cut-price supersonic trainer/fighters could become an interesting signifier of Beijing's expanding influence in Africa, Asia and Latin America in years to come.

Sébastien Roblin holds a Master's Degree in Conflict Resolution from Georgetown University and served as a university instructor for the Peace Corps in China. He has also worked in education, editing, and refugee resettlement in France and the United States. He currently writes on security and military history for War Is Boring.

'Courtesy The National Interest'.

Rafale cocktail continues to fox US

The Government and the Opposition have been on the warpath over the acquisition of Rafale fighters and this is not going to end anytime soon, making it a potent poll plank

By Ashoack K Mehta

The dogfight between the Government and the Opposition over the acquisition of 126 versus 36 Rafale fighters is not going to end anytime soon. The brewing scandal will become a poll issue. The main reasons for alleged irregularities are the neglect of the Defence Ministry despite the fear of financial impropriety and Prime Minister Narendra Modi who monitors every other department of the Government scrupulously. Nirmala Sitharaman being the fourth Defence Minister in as many years, is the cause of inconsistencies and delays in decision-making.

When the Rafale contract could not be consummated by the UPA-II, 27 months after the fighter was declared lowest bidder (L1) on June 30, 2012, it took less than a year for Prime Minister Modi to announce in Paris on April 10, 2015, his intent to order, for operational reasons in a new contract, 36 Rafales in flyaway condition.

Only National Security Advisor Ajit Doval was involved in this decision. The then Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar was brought in at the 11th hour. Even Air Chief Marshal Arup Raha was merely consulted. Due process was followed. The actual contract was signed between two Defence Ministers on September 23, 2016, 18 months after the declaration of the intent for the delivery of 36 aircraft starting September 2019 and ending April 2022.

Several questions have been asked by the Opposition and answers have been provided by the Government which remain focussed on cost and probity. The real mystery is: Why the original project of 126 Rafales 18 in flyaway condition and 108 for Make in India did not materialise between Dassault Aviation and Hindustan Aeronauticals Limited (HAL)? In between what was lost was transfer of technology, Make in India, bigger offsets and significantly, four additional squadrons of Rafale.

The Indian Air Force (IAF) has forever complained about dwindling combat strength due to the Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) project that began in 1983, having produced only half a squadron with merely an initial operational clearance. Today, the IAF's inventory shows 32 squadrons (actually 28 squadrons) with four squadrons (two each of MiG 21 and MiG 27) number-plated, which is one of the lowest combat strength ever.

Given the operational scare this had created, the Government on April 6, 2018, virtually repeated the Medium Multi-Role Combat Aircraft (MMRCA) process of 2007 with precisely the same contenders for 110 additional jets for Make in India but curiously not with HAL, the public sector unit which has produced nearly 2,000 aircraft. And Dassault Rafale may be back in the race with its preferred strategic partner, Reliance.

Reverting to MMRCA 2007 is like cutting your nose to spite your face. It will be worth enquiring how the 126 Rafale project was axed with associated deprivations principally on factor of cost. The flip-flop on Rs 59,000 crore cost of 36 Rafale is hilarious. On November 17, 2017, newly minted Sitharaman, at a Press conference confidently directed Defence Secretary Sanjay Mitra to disclose details of the cost. That never happened.

On February 5, 2018, she informed the Rajya Sabha that the price could not be revealed due to a confidentiality clause from a secrecy agreement signed by the UPA Government in January 2008, whose longevity was 10 years. After junior Minister Suresh Bhamre twice revealed in Parliament and Ministry of Defence officials' off-the-record briefing for media on costs and India-specific enhancements, it was disingenuous on Sitharaman's part to bandy an expired secrecy agreement during the July 10 no-confidence motion in Parliament. It is abundantly clear that the secrecy clause covered only technical and operational parameters, not the cost.

Due process was violated. A serving CAG official and a former Secretary, Defence Finance explained to me the impropriety of Modi's provisional contractual announcement in Paris. The 126 Rafale

contract under negotiation was guillotined and L2 Euro fighter Typhoon (which was actually L1 mystery number three) was excluded from the new contract, making the single-vendor purchase non-competitive. Legal and technical issues are riddled in this contract.

The DPP-mandated approvals were taken only before the contract was signed. Defence offsets worth Rs 30,000 crore are to be ploughed back as per DPP. The story of Indian strategic partner for Dassault, probably Reliance group's Anil Ambani, will require a separate column as conditions for its entry are suspiciously coincidental. Incidentally, HAL and Dassault had entered into a work-share agreement on offsets on March 10, 2014.

Cost of contract and alleged fraud are political chaff. The 36 instead of 126 Rafale contract has seriously imperiled the combat capability of the IAF given the non-performance of LCA. The wheel was reinvented with tenders sought for MMRCA 2.0 for 110 fighters 16 in flyaway mode and the rest, Make in India. If all goes well, the first fighter materializing by this route may only be in 2026, a full four years after the last of 36 Rafales are delivered.

IAF's strength was 29.5 squadrons in 2005; 37 squadrons in 2012 and 28/32 squadrons in 2018. Forecasts suggest that these numbers may be 30 squadrons in 2022 and 24 in 2032. Sitharaman has said that by 2020, IAF will have 32 squadrons while it had inherited 34 squadrons in 2014 when NDA took over. By 2025, another 10 squadrons will be retired.

Air Chief Marshal Dhanoa said that the authorised combat strength of 42 squadrons will be reached by 2032. Inconsistencies in forecast are a direct consequence of Government's whimsical decision-making, question marks over LCA and discarding IAF's Long Term Equipment Plan. Wuhan notwithstanding, Indian service chiefs are consistently stating readiness to fight a two-front war with China and Pakistan which have 65 and 24 fighter squadrons each.

Last year, Dhanoa said: "A two-front war with present numbers is like playing a T20 match with seven players." The 36 Rafale contract killing the one for 126 fighters was a strategic error of judgment on Modi's part. Likewise, Sitharaman's reported decision to transfer the Aero India 2019 four months in advance to Lucknow from its traditional venue Bengaluru, (apparently for punishing Karnataka) demonstrates the Government's willingness to subordinate national security to political interest.

The Government truncating the contract from 126 to 36 is the real scandal, far outweighing cost and probity. The myth that inter-governmental agreements are Ganga-swachh was disproved during the acquisition of the Sukhoi 30 when every Government from PV Narasimha Rao's in 1991 and those that followed, enriched themselves. Bofors is chicken-feed compared to Rafale. Happy Independence Day.

Sanctions 2.0 : Tightening the noose, but around whom?

By Andrew Korybko

The US' new sanctions against Iran, Turkey, and, Russia appear to be coordinated and designed to tighten the noose around Eurasia but risk backfiring by sending American interests to the gallows instead. The US' new sanctions against Iran, Turkey, and Russia appear to be coordinated and designed to tighten the noose around Eurasia but risk backfiring by sending American interests to the gallows instead.

Washington wants to punish all three of these countries for what are ostensibly separate reasons, but a deeper reading of the strategic situation reveals that the common thread connecting each of them is the progress that they've collectively made on advancing multi-polarity through the Astana framework in Syria and the related bilateral cooperation that sprung up between them as a result.

None of this was ever really about Iran's alleged violation of the 2015 nuclear agreement; Turkey's imprisonment nearly two years ago of a suspected spy masquerading as a pastor, or the ridiculous assertion that Russia poisoned the Skripals, but about cold, hard geopolitics.

The US thought that it could turn the economic screws on each of these multipolar Great Powers in order to divide them from one another and consequently make it easier to pick them off one-by-one by pressuring their governments into foreign policy concessions, but the proverbial "law of unintended consequences" suggests that the opposite might actually happen and all three of them could emerge stronger as a result, though provided that they have the political will to withstand this structural onslaught and the severe destabilization that it might provoke for some of them.

Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev warned that the US' promised imposition of new sanctions against his country by the end of the month would predicting that some of Moscow's asymmetrical responses could target its airspace, outer space, energy, and titanium cooperation with its rival.

Iran and Turkey plan to deepen their economic relations, which could be regarded as a "declaration of economic war", and RT published an insightful piece even see the emergence of a trilateral trading network between them and Russia given the former's interim free trade agreement with the Eurasian Union and the latter's desire to clinch something similar.

It goes without saying that they'd all prioritize the use of national currencies in order to avoid using the dollar, while Russia and Turkey would continue to economically disengage from the US. The success of this "master plan" would greatly diminish American influence in Eurasia, but it'll take some years to implement and reap tangible results, during which time the US will certainly devise ways to undermine their multipolar efforts.

Andrew Korybko is joined by Pouya Sharif, Iranian student activist from Germany and Rostislav Babyak, adjunct professor of History and Political Science at University of Texas at El Paso.

My view on reviews

Book Name : Saray Bazar Me Raqsaan
Author : Asim Anjum
Publisher : Media Graphisc, A-997,
Sector 11-A, North Karachi.
Pages : 224
Price : Rs. 450/-

Nasim Anjum: A veteran fiction writer, literary critic-cum researcher, playwright, short story writer, editor of monthly "Chand Gari", sub-editor of "Sports International" as well as columnist. She has three collections of short fictions to her credit. Now she has come out with her new novel "Saray Bazaar Raqsaan".

It is her fifth novel. Previously, her four long fiction publications (novels) "Kainaat", "Nark", "Patwaar" and "Aahat" had been published by the renowned publishers and got popularity among the readers.

It may be mentioned here that two additions of her two novels "Kainaat" and "Nark" published on readers demand. Nasim Anjum may be called a multi-dimensional literary figure and also a busiest writer.

"Sary Bazaar Raqsaan" is a pathetic story of a girl whose parents along with her were burn by the extremist Hindus when they were migrating from India to Pakistan after partisan. Miraculously she saved but injured and found faint near by the incident by a noble Hindu family and they brought up and patronize her as daughter.

Though she was alive and growing up but the miseries and difficulties remained always with her even after marriage. She had to alive under the clutches of injustices, up-handedness, Cheatings, beatings, fear and terror. She was also raped by a miscreant, merciless and greedy TAFU. It is not possible to give the summery of the novel. All events, which occurred in the novel, may be known to study the book.

The author has brilliantly highlighted the various social loopholes such as corruptions, political-cum religious exploitations, Hooliganism, Karokari, Kidnapping and Cheating. But there is no any impression of sloganize, propaganda, teaching-like open advices. She has that very style of expression which may be called artistic.

Her vocabularies, idioms, phrases and metaphors are attractive and matching with her subject matters. As a seasoned fiction writer she knows that very technique that how any particular event and situation can be applied that would be charming and interesting for her readers.

The main character (Neelam), Tafoo, Ba Ba Sain and his family members, Nasir (Neelam's husband) have not only been created successfully but also well-treated. Her way of expression is smooth and qualitative. The wrap and woof of the novel under discussion is well-managed having compact texture.

In her novels and short stories she comes up as a genuine champion of women's rights, freedom, equality justice as well as their respects.

She is not like those so-called women writers who pose themselves unnecessarily sympathizers and champions of their own folk. The novel has the quality of arresting the readers' attentions and compels them to study it till the finish.

My views on reviews

By Shafique Ahmed Shafique

Name of Book	:	Raushni Chahiye (Collection of Short stories)
Author	:	Prof. Shahnaz Perveen
Publishers	:	Rang-e-Adab Publications, Urdu Bazar, Karachi.
Pages	:	160
Price	:	Rs. 500/-

An educationist, seasoned writer and researcher Prof. Shahnaz Perveen having three books to her credit adds another new book to her literary account. Her new publications have come out under the title of "Raushni Chahiye". The book is a collection of 20 short stories and six mini-short stories. Most of the stories have published in several literary magazines and got appreciations by the readers, writers and critics. Her first book was "Sannata Bolta Hai" (silent speaks) and the name of second book was "Aankh Samunder" (The eye Ocean). These two books have already been applauded by the critics, writers and readers.

She has remarkable literary background. Her mother a poets having a poetic collection which published under the title of "Khaaboon Kay Weeranay" (The Desolates of dreams). The late Ejazul haque Ejaz, her brother, has also an anthology of poetry "Lahr Lhr Piyass" (Thirst in every wave) to his credit.

Her younger sister is also an essayist and short story writer. Prof. shahnaz got tht very environment fromher childhood, which cultivated her real eagerness of writing, literary conscientious, aesthetic sense, well manners and well as real educative taste in her personage.

Vast studies of Urdu and other foreign literatures have created freshness f feelings, variety of ideas, depth of thoughts as well as capacious imaginations in her personality. She is a serious spectator of society and never takes any event unconsciously, she tries to go into the depth of season after reason.

Her short stories such as "Raushni Chahiye Zindagi kay Liye", "Apna Apna Qafas", "Else, Wonderland May", "Paspae", "Bazi Ger", "Phir Hua Ye", "Justoojo Kia Hai", "Khush Boo Ki Tlash", "do Naina Mat Khaiyo" and "Kam Bakhat" Zalim Aurat" may be referred in this connection. These pieces are very vivid examples of my opinions.

These are witnessing by themselves that the author of the book "Raushni Chahiye" has well capacity of observing her surroundings and can pick up materials for fictionalize them.

Her story "Raushni Chahiye Zindagi Kay Liye" which is the title story of the book is written very minutely and tis texture is also wofed artistically. It is a story of four pages but thas four thousand stories in its lines and between the lines. It is mirroring the sour realities or our socio-politics, socio-culture, educational environment, terrorism, killings of innocent students, growing power of those who are the enemies of literacy and helplessness of concerned sectors and their attitudes.

It is also pinpointing the environment of rear of women, children grievances whose faithfulness, innocent spirit of love and affection are ruthlessly being smashed. The prevailing endless mental torture and deceiving behavior of the champions of anti-peace and love are making the whole society totally shattered.

Being a seasoned and sensitive female writer has very keenly felt the issues of her gender not only she has felft but has mirrored them vividly and smartly. In this connection, her above referred two short stories "Apna Apna Qafas" and "Kambakht Aurat" may be referred here.

Helplessness of woman folk, their torment, grieved situations and cunningness of male have been well expressed. She has very finely pinpointed about the mentality, self-conceit, way of thinking, self-praising, mimic and self-deceiving attitudes of those Pakistanis who are living in US, UK,

Germany and other Western countries. The second story of the book under review is an undeniable example of these fact.

The book "Raushni Chahiye", no doubt, is an valuable addition to the short fiction world of Urdu literature.